



NEED OF DIGITALISATION FOR ECO-LABELLING IN INDIA

Prof. Srishti Shetty

Assistant Professor,

Ghanshyamdas Saraf College of Arts & Commerce

Abstract

Ecolabels are regarded as an exceptional marketing and advertising tool that informs contemporary consumers about the green traits of a product. In the recent years, digitalisation of ecolabelling and sensitizing towards environment has increased a lot. With an aim to promote sustainable living environment- government, NGOs and various other organizations are working towards the goal of maintaining the environment. This paper talks about Ecolabels which is a tool towards promoting environmental sustainability and how it can grow through digitalising. In a crux the study explains that individuals are moderately aware about eco labels. They do lack the awareness and knowledge regarding eco labels. Also due to low government efforts, low media coverage and difficulty in availability of green products, eco labelling do face a barrier in reaching its sky. Also, people are not much motivated towards environment and thus they prefer to buy cheap over green.

Keywords: *Ecolabels, Environmental Certificates, Awareness, Perceptions, Sustainability.*

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Introduction:

Due to increasing threats to environment such as global warming, greenhouse emissions, depletion of Ozone layer, pollution and other hazardous environmental effects on the rise- countries have woken up to the fact that there is immediate need to develop policies for protection of environment. A multiple mediation model about green purchase behaviour was developed. Results highlighted the crucial role of ecolabel credibility through digitalisation that positively influences attitude towards green product purchase as well as ecolabel involvement. Due to such an alarmed situation, the concept of sustainability has become a major topic

for discussion among the ecological conscious individuals across the world. It has led to emergence of a new type of consumer whose buying behaviour exhibits environmental sensitivity. Thus, individuals have switched to green practices influencing a change in today's consumption pattern thus leading to a significant change in consumerism over time where more and more consumers are shifting their preference from conventional products to green products. This has narrowed down to the emergence of a concept called eco labels. Eco labels commonly known as green stickers are placed on environmentally friendly products. Since consumers cannot verify the characteristics of green products



directly, they need to rely on ecolabels which act as an information tool and a source of credibility of the product being a greener ones. It has emerged as one of the effective communication tools to communicate these actions to the consumers. Ecolabels can be regarded as a crucial green marketing and advertising tool that is widely used to provide consumers with knowledge about the green aspects of the product.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study deals with the following major objectives:

- To understand Eco- labelling in India find out various methods to digitise it.
- To understand the Governance Structure for Eco Mark Program.
- To know about the other Green Labels in India.

Research Methodology:

For the purpose of study, necessary data was made available from secondary sources.

Eco Labels & Digitalisation:

Eco-labels are voluntary certification practiced around the world. It is developed by governments, manufacturers, and third-party organisations independently through using innovative digital techniques. The Global Ecolabelling Network supports that an ecolabel “identifies products or services proven to be environmentally preferable within a specific category”. The International Standards Organization (ISO) defines ecolabels as the labels that “provide information about a product or service in terms of its overall environmental benefits, such as the recyclability of its packaging, or the absence of noxious ingredients”.

Digital Ecolabels can be considered as certification marks that inform consumers about the environmental qualities of products/services and

assure them of the truthfulness of these claims. Digital Ecolabels enhance transparency and consumer trust towards environmental claims. Digital Ecolabelling improves consumer perception about a brand in the name of ecological concern and green marketing.

Consumers on a daily basis are exposed to eco-labelling with messages on labels, such as, environment-friendly, ozone-friendly, earth-friendly, degradable, recycled, recyclable, renewable, reusable or for that matter biodegradable. Although, consumers make choices based on other decision criteria, product labels provide an informative base for a consumer to make choices. Environmental labels are increasingly being recognized as an important market tool for identification of green products.

Eco-labelling can be based on two types of criteria: product related, and production-related. Product related criteria are related to the environmental impact of products only. Production-related criteria are related to process and production methods (PPMs) which cover the environmental impact of an entire production process.

Eco-Labelling in India:

In 1991, Government of India launched its first eco-label, known as ‘Eco-mark’ through Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) that follows a cradle-to-grave approach (from raw material extraction, to manufacturing, and to disposal) and advocates pro-active and promotional roles of the consumers, the industry, and the government at one platform to address environmental protection issues and to implement environmental protection strategy.

The EcoMark Logo- An earthen pot symbolises the Ecomark scheme that uses a renewable resource like



earth, does not produce hazardous waste and consumes less energy in making. It puts across its environmental message and the image has the ability to reach people to promote a greater awareness of the need to be kind to the environment. The scheme identified 16 categories of consumer products for the purpose of development of eco-criteria and labelling. The manufacturers of these categories of products can apply to the Bureau of Indian Standards, if their products are meeting the relevant standards notified, for the award of eco- logo. Ministry has also launched publicity campaigns for providing necessary awareness among the consumers and manufacturers. The Government of India has notified the final criteria for the following product categories:

1. Soaps and Detergents. 2. Paper 3. Food Items 4. Lubricating Oils 5. Packaging Materials 6. Batteries 7. Electrical/Electronic Goods 8. Food Additives 9. Wood Substitutes 10. Cosmetics 11. Aerosol 12. Propellants 13. Plastic Products 14. Textiles 15. Fire-Extinguisher 16. Leather

Objectives of the Scheme:

- To reward genuine initiatives by companies to reduce adverse environmental impact of their products.
- To assist consumers to become environmentally responsible in their daily lives by providing information to take account of environmental factors in their purchase decisions.
- To encourage citizens to purchase products which have less harmful environmental impacts.
- Ultimately to improve the quality of the environment and to encourage and sustainable management of resources.

Government Schemes that is Helping Digital Eco Labelling:

The Ministry has favoured a system in which the criteria for awarding any label should not forgo the quality of products and should focus primarily on the direct impact of a product during use and disposal, along with aspects of energy efficiency and also trying to digitalise it. The criteria are transparent, so that the basis of judgment will be clearly understood and appreciated. The basic criteria cover broad environmental levels and aspects, but are specific at the product level. A product is examined in terms of the following main environmental impacts:

- a) Causing substantially less pollution than other comparable products in production, usage and disposal.
- b) Recyclable or recycled compared to other comparable products.
- c) Making significant contribution to saving non-renewable resources or minimizing use of renewable resources compared to other comparable products.
- d) Contributing towards reduction of adverse environmental health consequences.
- e) Price not substantially higher than comparable products.

Governance Structure for Eco Mark Program:

As per the Government of India's notification for Ecomark, the implementation of the scheme is managed by specially constituted committees, which are as follows:

Steering Committee:

The Government of India has set up a Committee in the Ministry of Environment and Forests and notified on March 6, 1991. The Ministry of Environment and Forests determines the categories of the products for coverage under the scheme and also formulate strategies for promotion by creating



mass awareness, implementation, future development and improvement in working of the scheme. This Committee ensures involvement of other ministries, industries, associations, non-governmental organizations and it is responsible for notifying final criteria in the Gazette of India.

Technical Committee:

The Ministry set up a Technical Committee on March 6, 1991 and subcommittees for each product categories with expert in field for drafting the criteria and to identify the specific product to be selected and the individual criteria to be adopted, including, wherever possible, inter-se priority between the criteria if there be more than one. It identifies specific products for classifying as environmental-friendly. It also recommends the most appropriate criteria and parameters to designate various products as environment-friendly. It reviews from time to time, the implementation of the scheme by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). The Central Pollution Control Board has become the member of Global Eco-labelling Network (GEN) since March 2000.

Other Green Labels In India:

1. GREENPro :GreenPro is a product certification granted by the Confederation of Indian Industry, an industry association that aims at helping environmentally conscious customers to make a greener choice. GreenPro Ecolabel is accredited by Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) through GENICES – GEN’s Internationally Coordinated Ecolabelling System. GreenPro helps the end users in the building sector and manufacturing industries to choose right products, materials and technologies to reduce the environmental impacts during construction, operation and maintenance of buildings and factories. The

certification follows a complete lifecycle approach for certifying products. This means that the product is scrutinized from the raw material to the end of product’s life.

2. INDIA ORGANIC: India Organic is a certification mark for organically farmed food products manufactured in India. India Organic – National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) is a labelling standard developed by the Government of India granted to organically farmed food. The certification mark was established in 2000. The India Organic certification standards ensure that the product or its raw materials used were grown only through organic farming, by following the norms of organic production, without any use of chemicals, i.e. fertilizers, pesticides or induced hormones.

3. GOTS :The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) was developed with the aim to unify the various existing standards and draft standards in the garment manufacturing sector. GOTS defines worldwide recognized standards that ensure organic status of textiles from harvesting of the raw materials, through environmentally and socially responsible manufacturing up to labeling. GOTS certified final products may include fibre products, yarns, fabrics, clothes, home textiles, mattresses, personal hygiene products, as well as food contact textiles and more.

Findings:

- In the recent years, digitalisation of ecolabelling and sensitizing towards environment has increased a lot
- Government is providing a lot of incentive for



manufacturers and importers to reduce environmental impact of products.

- Effective strategies based of ecolabels has been made and also the government is working towards a positive attitude towards green product purchase that ultimately will enhance green product purchase behaviour.

Suggestions:

- Also, instead of creating several eco labels for the same kind of product, the concerned authorities should try to create comprehensive eco label for one type of product covering all the aspects of sustainability.
- Since there is low awareness of the eco labels among the respondents, the government of India must take initiative to create awareness about the same as they once created for BEE star label in 2006.
- And also, creating a greater role for industry trade associations to encourage the sharing of information and data, and minimize the lack of awareness of newer, cutting-edge environmental technologies.

Conclusion:

When a firm can attain positive results and gain consumer acceptance through implementing eco labeling, it serves as an incentive to design and improve products with higher environmental performance to replicate this success (Wagner, 2008). Various studies indicate that there is evidence to suggest consumers are seeking environmental information about product labels for relevant information. Through eco-labelling programs, governments and/or non-governmental program authorities seek to influence consumer

decisions and encourage the production and consumption of environmentally preferable goods and the provision and use of environmentally preferable services. In this regard eco-labelling can be intended to bring about environmental improvement. Green product labels can be used for positioning the product's image and as product differentiator.

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