

Sustainable Way of Consumption: Need of the Hour

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Abstract: Sustainable development and environmental protection issues have recently become increasingly established principles in our society and everyday culture in recent years. At the same time, increasing levels of consumption is one of the main contributors to the continuing environmental degradation threatening the idea of sustainable development. Therefore, along with sustainable development, sustainable consumption is also important. Sustainable consumption also plays an important role in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – first as a cross – cutting theme in the agenda as a whole and secondly as a separate goal. At this juncture, it is necessary to think about environmentally sustainable way of consumption i.e., consumption of green products which is one of the very effective tools to achieve sustainable development. The purpose of this paper is to discuss about such products and how they contribute to sustainable development. The paper is theoretical in nature, which is prepared with the help of available literature. Finally, the paper suggests some ways to increase the consumption of green products.

Key words: Sustainable development, green products, sustainable consumption, consumers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Scientists have highlighted the concept of ‘Limits to Growth’ and economists have presented the concept of ‘Steady State’ to address concern over the impact of expanding human development on the nature. The term ‘Sustainable Development’ became popular after the publication of the Brundtland Commission Report “Our Common Future” in 1987. The report alerted the world to the urgency of making progress toward economic development that could be sustained about depleting natural resources or harming the environment. It was published by an international group of politicians, civil servants and experts on the environment and development and it provided a key statement on sustainable development, i.e., “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The report highlighted three fundamental components of sustainable development; the environment is one among them. Thus, sustainable development is closely linked to our environment. This paper discusses about an important way of preserving the environment, i.e., the consumption of environmentally friendly products or green products.

2. OBJECTIVES

This paper aimed to discuss about environmentally friendly products or green products and their role in the way of sustainable development. Another objective is to provide suggestions to increase the consumption of such products and thereby contribute to sustainable development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present paper is theoretical in nature and is prepared on the basis of available literature. Multiple data bases were used in the process of searching literature for preparing this paper. Google Scholar was the main data base used for getting an overview of the currently available literature and articles are also searched from SAGE, SpringerLink and JSTOR. The terms used for searching literature include sustainable development, green products, environmental sustainability, environmentally conscious behaviour etc.

4. DISCUSSION

Sustainable Development and Green Products: The World Commission on the Environment and Development also known as the Brundtland Commission, in their report, “Our Common Future” introduced and defined the term

sustainable development as the process in which the exploitation of natural resources, the allocation of investments, and the process of technological development and organizational change are in harmony with each other for both current and future generations. Based on this context, “sustainability” is considered as a path forward that allows humans to meet current environmental and human health, economic, and societal needs without compromising the progress and success of future generations. The core idea of sustainable development is that the resources available now is also available for future generations. Thus, it is clear that it is the development that considers future generations along with the present. Sustainable development is closely connected with environment. Environment is one of the fundamental components of sustainable development. For the achievement of sustainable development, sustainability of environment is necessary. Our world is progressing in each and every aspect due to technological advancements, innovations etc. But these progresses have a lot of harmful effects on our environment. Which causes many environmental issues such as global warming, climate change, pollution, ozone layer depletion, acid rain etc. These issues have raised concerns to protect our environment, which has led to the concept of going green. Going green has much more advantage for the society as well as for our environment. One of the earliest steps that were taken regarding the preservation of environment was to use products that were supposed to be environmentally friendly and had utilitarian status for consumers. Consumption is one of the cornerstones of social welfare and an important part of people’s lives, serving as a measure of success and a way of defining personal identities. At the same time, increasing levels of consumption is one of the main contributors to the continuing environmental degradation threatening the idea of sustainable development. Therefore, developing socio – economic systems ensuring high quality of life and sustaining environmental impacts in line with nature’s carrying capacity should be perceived as the contemporary societal goal (Mont & Plepys, 2008). The ultimate aim of sustainable development is to conserve the earth. The earth has limited resources. The limited means and resources on the earth can’t be enough for the unlimited wants of people. Thus, there is always a possibility of overexploitation of these resources which has negative effects on the environment. Change in consumption pattern has led to over consumption or unsustainable consumption and over exploitation of resources (Aindril Biswas, 2016). At this juncture, we have to think about the ways to avoid overexploitation of our limited resources. Consumption of environmentally friendly products or green products is an effective way to do so. The concept of going green has much more advantage for the society as well as for the well-being of humans. Now the question arises; what actually makes a product green. In a general sense, green or environmentally friendly products are those products which do not harm the environment, whether in their production, use or disposal. That is these products are produced in an environmentally sustainable manner and they do not contribute to any harmful impact on the environment. These products have positive effects on the environment as they are less toxic, biodegradable, energy efficient, renewable due to which they are termed as green products. Shruti P. Maheshwari (2014) states that if a product has a low environmental impact, it is regarded as an environmentally sustainable product. Rajasekaran and Gnanapandithan (2013) states that we can measure green products by following measures:

- Products that are originally grown,
- Products that are recyclable, reusable and biodegradable,
- Products with natural ingredients,
- Products containing recycled contents, non – toxic chemicals.
- Products contents under approved chemical.
- Products that do not harm or pollute the environment
- Products that will not be tested on animals
- Products that have eco – friendly packaging i.e., reusable, refillable containers etc.

Thus, the products having above mentioned characteristics are considered as environmentally friendly products or green products. The following are the advantages of using green products:

- Cost effective products: Green products last longer than conventional products. Moreover, these products consume less energy and other resources reducing the bills of the users. For example; solar speakers can last for ten hours just by charging with solar energy.
- Low maintenance: If operated responsibly and maintained properly, the green products result in low maintenance costs. Take green buildings, for example. They market themselves not only for being environmentally friendly but also for less operational costs.
- Improves health: Since eco – friendly products are made from materials that are free from harmful chemicals and components, they not only improve physical but also mental health. In green buildings, large windows are installed which allows healthy and fresh air along with natural lighting in abundance. It improves mental health and reduces stress.
- Prevents overuse of resources: Green products reduce the threat of overuse of resources and fossil fuels and encourages the generation of energy using natural resources.

- Protects the environment: Green products are made from organic and biodegradable materials and are designed to use least non-renewable resources and toxic chemicals to produce energy. This reduces the generation of greenhouse gases like CFCs, ozone, methane etc. and hence prevents pollution and deterioration of environment. These are the only few benefits of using green products. In the real sense there are a number of advantages which we can derive from the use of such products.

5.CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It can be concluded that sustainable development is not possible without the preservation of environment. Thus, being a fundamental component conservation of environment is indispensable to achieve sustainable development. By using green products, we can protect our environment to some extent as the consumption of non-eco-friendly products have raising severe environmental problems. Through the preservation of environment, surely, we can achieve sustainable development to some extent. Undoubtedly it can be said that consumption of green products plays a major role in achieving sustainable development. The following are some of the suggestions to encourage the use of green products:

- Create awareness about the benefits of using green products among the people and make use of different digital media platforms for this.
- The use of green products can be increased by improving the affordability and availability of such products.
- Manufactures of green products should ensure a better quality always, which encourage consumers to use such products.
- Government should provide subsidies to encourage the consumption of green products and support green initiatives by them certain incentives.

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