

Gender matters for green marketing

In a telephonic interview earlier this week, I was asked if I felt disadvantaged being a woman in the world of architecture? It has been a while since I felt bracketed as a 'woman'. But of course, we are all too familiar with harassment of women at the work place, female foeticide, honour killing and grotesque instances that smacks you on the face. In a world rampant with gender biases I found the findings of a recent study that men are not as 'green' as women, darkly humorous! Men, Women and Sustainability? Gender has apparently much to do with sustainability — it is more than meets the eye.

Gender equality is listed among the top Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

This is an issue at the heart of human rights and is recognised as an essential goal on its own, vital to accelerating sustainable development. This goal drives basic human rights on gender issues — equal pay-scales, flexible working hours, decent work for women, safety at work, etc.

The ultimate aim is to increase women's access to ownership and management of the ecosystem for goods and services, including 'climate finance' which refers to financing channeled by national, regional and international entities for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects and programmes. Women have always been considered agents of change, and when they are given equal platforms as men

there is growth that is inclusive, just, equitable and of course sustainable. With women's engagement, there can be success in eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable consumption and sustainable management of ecosystems/natural resources.

Studies show that men are not as environment friendly as women! Shoppers who engage in green behaviour are stereotyped by others as more feminine, and also perceive themselves as more feminine. Studying this from a marketing and branding aspect, it seemed that manipulating some details will get men to being more open to purchase environmentally sensitive products. It would rely on two approaches — affirming a man's masculinity before introducing him to environmental products and changing the associations people have with green products.

Applying this understanding of consumer behaviour, several small tweaks in advertising — from cars to charitable donations; and in marketing strategies such as naming, colours, logo design and so on were made, to see if there would be a better uptake of those products by men. Sure enough, there was an increased interest after these changes. Women favoured the more traditional green marketing, while more men were drawn to the masculine branding. By altering the appeal it was found that men were more willing to choose 'green.'

On a higher level, there is the global trend among international organisations for affirmative action to bring women on to the same platform as men, so they become agents of sustainable change. At the ground level there is a movement to moderate the choice and consumption patterns among men so they feel comfortable 'going green'!

So there it is folks — in a world of differences between men and women, sustainability too is intrinsically tied to gender. Have a laugh!



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