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#### **GREEN MARKETING: A HOLISTIC VIEW AND CASE STUDY OF ONGC**

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#### ABSTRACT

Green marketing, also known as eco-marketing is a new age marketing approach that has further enriched the existing body of knowledge of marketing and has improved marketing practices. The present paper is descriptive in nature. Beginning with an introduction about the history of this concept and reasons for its evolution, it further explores and analyses the various aspects of green marketing. It also cites some prominent examples of successful green marketing initiatives in the corporate world. The paper also highlights the problems ahead in the mission of GO GREEN, particularly in Indian market and further discusses consumer response to Green marketing initiatives. A case study of ONGC, a leading Indian company is cited to substantiate the necessity, problems and acceptance of Green marketing and go green concepts in India.

#### **KEYWORDS**

CSR, Go Green, Green Marketing, ONGC.

#### INTRODUCTION

The phrase 'Time is money' finds a huge relevance even in the current scenario. Take a look around and you'd be convinced that even the present generation believes in the aforementioned popular adage. The more time an individual has, the more he can invest it in avenues that can generate greater income for him. Having realised the importance of every second, minute, day and year, the youth leaves no stone unturned to use their time effectively. However, even as they think of ways to spend, save, invest time in the most productive way, plans at times go awry. The reason? Unforseen circumstances, familial problems and most importantly health issues.

Yes, no matter how much efforts one invests in planning his life, health issues often hinders his ability to grow and also develop his talents to their maximum potential. Yes, falling sick and facing health issues comes across as the most futile activity on which we lose our precious time. And it isn't just about wasting time, but also giving away a huge chunk from one's hard earned money. Wondering why? Well, the answer is simple. Health facilities aren't cheap in India, when compared with the pocket size of the non elite segment of the society.

Thus arises the need to have products in the market which are consumer friendly, easy to use, and effective even in terms of their quality. Hence, it's not wrong to say that "Green products" play an instrumental role in making one's life easier. As consumers express their need for green products, companies meet their demands by launch several health-friendly and non-chemical products. These Green products are made available to the public by a marketing process which is known as green marketing. However, green marketing is not just restricted to marketing of green or environment friendly products. Considering that it is relatively a newer concept, a lot needs to be done to make it appealable to masses.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The paper explores the various dimensions attached to the concept of green marketing. It looks into some of initiatives taken in India, challenges ahead and takes up the case study of ONGC, a leading energy sector giant from India. This paper is a descriptive study, where examples are cited based on the references from some secondary material available and some from the personal experiences of the authors. The study goes a step ahead and suggests some measures that can help make green marketing a household concept.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The primary objective of taking up this study is to analyse various aspects of green marketing in India. Analysis of the present state of affairs, its contribution to the environment and difficulties ahead.

The objective also involves putting forth some recommendations, to help spread green marketing reach every nook and corner of the country. To put forward basic recommendations and steps that makes green marketing more viable option for the masses.

#### CONCEPT

Green marketing does not merely imply marketing of green products; rather it is a much wider term and includes a few more things. It is believed that, green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. Thus this concept incorporates a wide range of activities, such as product modification, introduction of changes in the production process, and product packaging and so on.

Michael J. Polonsky defines green marketing as, "All activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchange intended to satisfy human needs or wants such that satisfying of these needs and wants occur with minimal detrimental input on the national environment."

Pride and Ferrell (1993) Green marketing also alternatively known as environmental marketing and sustainable marketing, refers to an organisation's efforts at designing, promoting, pricing and distributing products that will not harm the environment.

Elkington (1994: 93) defines green consumer as one who avoids products that are likely to endanger the health of the consumer or others; cause significant damage to the environment during manufacture, use or disposal; consume a disproportionate amount of energy; cause unnecessary waste; use materials derived from threatened species or environments; involve unnecessary use of, or cruelty to animals; adversely affect other countries.

Considering the spurt in the number of cases of adulteration, which are put forth by media, people have a genuine reason to be worried about the health of their near and dear ones. Besides leaving people shocked, these media reports play a key role in making people aware of the adulterated food products such as

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sweets, milk and other milk products and artificially injected fruits and vegetables, all to ensure they are now more aware and cautious. Hence, it is seen that there is a rise in the sale and marketing of safer food grains and food products, what we commonly call "Organic products". It is believed that these organic food products are grown without using any chemical fertilizer. Such organic products are believed to be non toxic and cause no hazard to the life of the consumer in any way. Thus, farming of organic food products is the latest change our agricultural production process has witnessed.

Besides this, another aspect of green marketing includes adopting processes that help save paper, which on a larger scale avert chopping down trees and contributing to save the environment. Some examples that we have witnessed that have started contributing to saving trees and the environment at large are as follows;-

- 1. The ban on use of polythene/plastic bags which came into force a couple of years back, compelled the customers to depend on bags made of jute, cloth or paper. All these products are degradable and eco friendly. The accidental consumption of polyethylene plastic which is available in the form of bags, foil wraps kills thousands of cows every year. Since the plastic accumulate in the intestines of the cows, it affects their capacity of food intake. Since the cows don't get enough nourishment, their ability to produce milk, respiratory system are badly affected. To avert such drastic consequences, most shops and even malls have shifted to the use of paper bags in a big way. All known brands have attractive and well designed paper bags in which they pack their products and hand them over to their customers.
- 2. Initiating the process of e passbooks or e-statements is also effective. Most banks, both from public and private sector offer their clients the option to opt for electronic statements of their bank transactions and account balance details. Since, it helps in saving paper in a big way, it proves to be an eco-friendly process.
- 3. The State Bank of India's green IT project is another applaudable initiative. This banking sector giant has launched eco and power friendly equipment in its 10,000 new ATMs. This has helped the bank save a lot on its power costs and earn carbon credits. It has also adopted banking processes which has helped them cut down the usage of paper, by avoiding the use of deposit and withdrawal slips. The SBI has also started taking help of wind energy to reduce its emissions. This green banking program is one of its first kind.
- 4. Digital booking of air and railway tickets, which has become a part of green marketing initiative, is another way of contributing to environment. Thanks to e commerce and even m commerce, air and railway tickets can now be booked without involving use of paper.
- 5. The first Indian company to launch environment friendly computer peripherals is Wipro Infotech. It is known that Wipro launched RoHS [Restriction of Hazardous Substances] Compliant products in Indian market. This is directed to reduce e-waste and add to another step towards green marketing.
- 6. Introduction of eco friendly fuel, namely Compressed Natural Gas, popularly known as CNG. It is comparatively less polluting fuel, as on combustion it creates lesser amount of undesireable gases. Under the order of Supreme Court, in 2004, the Delhi government made it mandatory for all city buses and auto rickhaws to run on CNG with the intention of reducing air pollution.
- 7. Indian Oil, a giant from Indian corporate sector has taken many initiatives for green marketing. The R&D Centre of the company, certified under ISO-14000:1996 for environment management systems; is engaged in the formulations of eco-friendly biodegradable lube formulations.

The benefits that green marketing has resulted in should not be viewed with a myopic sight. There cannot be and will not be any immediate visible result. It is a process that calls for time before results begin to come into sight. It took decades for a man to create a hole in the ozone layer and so it might take as much if not more time, to fix it. The benefits of shifting to green marketing can be understood only in the long term. The long term benefits of green marketing activities are certain. These initiatives will go a long way in saving the environment. The concept of green marketing paves the way for sustainable development. Natural resources that are saved today by adopting new and changed processes will help in making these resources available for many more generations to come.

#### **CHALLENGES IN GREEN MARKETING**

The concept of Green Marketing promises to create a better environment, however it faces some challenges. These challenges are :-

1) The GO GREEN and Green Marketing are comparatively new concepts, hence it will take some time for the masses to accept it. There is a need to create a lot of awareness about this concept. The message needs to be spread intensively among the masses to ensure every person is aware of green marketing and GO GREEN initiatives. This will make it easier for the masses to be a part of this initiative.

2) Lack of standards or benchmarks to measure the authenticity of messages from green campaigns, dampens the long term benefits of green marketing. An organization and a benchmark are urgently required to validate, measure and compare the claims made under green campaigns. It makes it essential to establish a regulatory body to ensure that the spirit of green products and green marketing campaigns is not spoilt by false claims.

3) Investing in something that can have a bearing on our health and on the environment in which we all live, should not be viewed on a short term basis. The gestation period of investing in such campaigns and creating environment friendly products is quite long. Hence, investors and business houses should accept that investing in environment will take some time before results start showing up. Hence, patience and consistency becomes imperative.

4) Very often firms fail to establish a clear connection between their product/ service and how it contributes to saving the environment. Hence, consumers do not relate to the claims made by such firms. This clarity is very essential to put across the message to the consumers.

5) Business Houses need to realize that boasting about green products and green practices will not help much. It is better to quantify the results produced by adopting such products and services. A standardized quantification methodology for measuring benefits generated by green marketing practices needs to be evolved.

#### **ONGC's INITIATIVE**

ONGC is an outcome of the vision of India's first prime minister, The foundation of ONGC was laid down in 1955 by Shri Keshav Dev Malviya as an Oil and Gas division, under Geological Survey of India, in 1955. A few months later, it was converted into an Oil and Natural Gas Directorate. In 1956, the Directorate was converted into Oil & Natural Gas Commission. In the year 1997 ONGC was named as one of the Navratnas by the Government of India and in the year 2010 it was conferred with the title of Maharatna.

Since its inception, the journey of ONGC, has been an example of conviction, courage and commitment. From a modest beginning, ONGC has grown to be one of the largest E&P companies in the world in terms of reserves and production. It has also made commitment to contributing in every possible way to save the environment.

As per ONGC's annual report 2012-13, the various steps taken by this energy sector giant, are mentioned below;-

1) ONGC claims that it is pursuing green energy options. They are setting up another Wind Farm (102 MW) in Rajasthan. Besides this, ONGC is also focusing on alternate sources like - Geothermal energy and Kinetic hydro power generation projects are also being pursued. Sustained growth remains the mantra of ONGC. 2) In an attempt to reduce the carbon foot print of the company, ONGC initiated a Green initiative and saved printing of more than 2.00 lac Annual Reports of 2011-12 consisting of 284 pages.

3) As another Go Green initiative, ONGC requested its investors to register their email id's. This was done to so that all future communication about Annual General Meeting and Annual Report can be sent to the investors through mails. Another measure adopted to save on consumption of paper. The Annual Report in its e-form, was made available for download on the company's website www.ongcindia.com .

4) ONGC was ranked at 386 by the Newsweek Green Ranking 2012 and 15 among the energy companies. It is ahead of many global energy giants like Chevron, Lukoil, ConocoPhillips, Gazprom and a few more. This acknowledges the 'Grow GREEN' motto of the company.

5) The company also adopted 'Green Building' initiative for its upcoming offices at Chennai, Dehradun, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai in order to prove its honest commitment in contributing to create a cleaner tomorrow. A 'Green Building' at Dehradun has already been inaugurated.

6) ONGC believes that the world today has only two options, either to stop generating GHGs (Green House Gases) and put a full stop to the development process. Or synergise development with environment. ONGC, is striving to position itself as a leading organisation in sustainable management. It aims to achieve

sustainable development through a holistic approach to carbon management. Carbon Management Group synergises ONGC's all business activities in terms of sustainable development.

7) A striking CSR initiative of ONGC which also targets at contributing to environment saving is the Harit Moksha (green cremation systems to reduce wood consumption during traditional cremations).

#### SOME SIMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The adoption of green ways of lifestyle is effective only when it reflects in our every aspect of life. Thus adopting green products, a greener lifestyle happens with a change in the mindset of people. No amount of theoretical writings, discussions and displays will promote green marketing and green products, unless it is adopted consciously by every individual and by all organizations. Though this amount of widespread acceptance will take some more time, below are listed some recommendations for promoting the cause-

- 1) To replace use of polythene completely, customers must be given cloth/ jute or paper bags to carry the products they purchase from shops and malls, free of cost. The cost of these eco friendly carry bags should not be transferred to the end consumer. Big malls should bear the cost themselves or these bags must be provided at a very nominal charge.
- 2) Moreover, the bags given at malls etc, must be durable; so that they can be used repeatedly. Customers would be hesitant to pay for such onetime use bags. Paying for a durable eco friendly carry bag, will not hurt customer much.
- 3) These eco friendly bags should be produced in bulk. This provides an added opportunity for small scale industries to thrive. For example- making jute bags from locally available jute, will help jute producers earn supplementary income.
- 4) The initiative taken by Indian Railways, where tea and coffee was being served to the travelers in kullahd, rather than plastic cups was a commendable step. However, it was called off after some time. The same should be re-introduced pan India. This will surely help reducing plastic waste from Indian Railways.
- 5) Earthen onetime use bowls and platter can be used to serve food to travelers in trains. This again will help reduce plastic waste. This creates another opportunity to earn livelihood by *kumhars*.
- 6) Intensive campaigning needs to be done at school level, so that benefits of using eco friendly products are made known to the next generation at a tender age. Schools and colleges across nation must be motivated to minimize the use of non biodegradable products to the maximum.
- 7) Placing of separate bins for collecting degradable and non degradable waste must be made mandatory in every public sector and private sector organization. Big displays must be put up near these bins, to inform people, what type of waste material should be thrown in which type of bin.
- 8) Awareness about what is degradable and what is non degradable waste should be created right from junior classes in schools.
- Terrace gardens must be made mandatory for all high rise buildings, so that it helps checking pollution to some extent in highly congested metro cities like Delhi.
- 10) Organic food products need to be advertised intensely. They must be made available at affordable prices, else the charm of using such products takes a back seat. Pricing policy must be such that it can be purchased for consumption by masses.
- 11) If possible use of refrigerators for getting chilled water during summers can be replaced by using matkas or surahis.
- 12) Recycling seems to have lost its shine. It needs to be looked at as an environment friendly option and people must be educated on how to reuse some of the common products at home and in offices.
- 13) Goonj, an NGO has a remarkable system of recycling some of the material they collect from general public. Demonstrations can be given to showcase how some material can be reused or recycled.
- 14) Taking steps to establish an industry dedicated to waste management and recycling, thus also helping generate employment opportunities.
- 15) One side used paper, which has other side unused, should be put into use, rather than discarding it away as a waste.
- 16) Use of energy-efficient lamps and other electrical goods that help saving electricity must be made a norm.

#### CONCLUSION

"Green Marketing" is slowly spreading its wings and getting noticed and accepted gradually. This understanding of importance of maintaining ecological balance and saving the environment is not limited to any particular country or geographical region. Green marketing is not just another approach of marketing, rather it is a philosophy in itself. Considering the benefits that green marketing brings with itself, it needs to be followed with much more commitment and vigour. Due to changing climatic conditions resulting from global warming and harmful effects caused by the hole in ozone layer, adopting green marketing practices becomes inevitable. Across globe, green marketing must become a mandatory norm to be adhered to both by individuals and institutions. Reuse, Recycling and Reinventing is the key to sustenance. This message must be adopted and be woven into our lifestyle to achieve faster results. In case green products cost slightly more than the non green products, consumer awareness must be created about the benefits of such products. A justification about the high price of these goods, must be given to the end consumer along with the long term benefits that use of such use of green products and adopting green practices becomes much easy.

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