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OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

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GREEN FINANCIAL INITIATIVES – CURRENT TRENDS AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**SWETA KUMARI****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT****PADMASHREE D.Y.PATIL UNIVERSITY****NAVI MUMBAI****GAGANDEEP NAGRA****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT****PADMASHREE D.Y.PATIL UNIVERSITY****NAVI MUMBAI****DR. R .GOPAL****DIRECTOR****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT****PADMASHREE D.Y.PATIL UNIVERSITY****NAVI MUMBAI****DR. RENU VERMA****ASSOCIATE DEAN****IBS****GURGAON****ABSTRACT**

The impact of our daily activities on the environment and the desire to go green has expanded from just individuals to organizations. Green car loans, green finance, green home loans, alternative energy venture capital, eco-savings deposits, and "green" credit cards; these items represent merely a handful of initiatives taken by the Indian financial sector to promote environment friendly financial products and services. In an age where environmental risks are on a rise, options for reconciling environmental matters with lending and financing arrangements have a greater significance. The purpose of this paper is to examine the currently available "green" financial products and services, to identify awareness level and the customer's attitude towards such products and to understand the current and potential demand for "green" financial products and services with a focus on lesson learning opportunities. The research was carried out among users of green financial products in Mumbai using a structured questionnaire and an in depth interview with bank managers dealing with such products. Research findings gave an insight into major areas focused on existing and potential issues related to of "green" financial products and services. The paper has major implications in identifying the key opportunities for Indian financial institutions in terms of the development and marketing of "green" financial product and services.

KEYWORDS

environment friendly, green finance, eco saving deposits, green credit cards alternative energy venture capital.

INTRODUCTION

With the entire world becoming environment conscious, financial industry is not far behind in its contribution towards greener world. Financial institutions interact with the environment in a number of ways e.g. as investors, as innovators, as valuers, as powerful stakeholders and as polluters. This association of financial institutions and environment clearly demonstrates that these institutions have an enormous influence on the achievability of sustainable growth targets. This is true of a number of aspects of their business. On one hand, they can act within their own spheres of responsibility to ensure a direct and positive effect on the environment, for example with eco-efficient administrative buildings or waste reduction measures. On the other hand, the financial institutions can play a significant role by integrating environmental issues into their decision making process through financing the environmental business sector on relatively easy terms, developing 'Green' financial products exclusively for environmental businesses etc.

Financial markets will only use their influence for the benefit of the environment if they see that this is in their broad interest i.e. it will help them generate profits, either directly or indirectly. Thus if financial institutions are to integrate environmental considerations into their decision making they need to be convinced that, not only are they profitable in the narrow sense, but are sufficiently important to merit their attention.

Green financial products are introduced in the financial industry providing platform for ethical and eco-friendly investment. Many organizations have realized that there is direct correlation between competitiveness & profitability and environmental protection. Keeping this in mind financial institutions have developed "green" financial products with the aim of promotion of sustainable development. These green financial products must reduce negative environmental impacts or provide environmental benefits. The banking sector influences the economic growth and development in terms of both quality and quantity, thereby changing the nature of economic growth.

Banking sector is one of the major sources of financing investment for commercial projects which is one of the most important economic activities for economic growth. Therefore, banking sector can play a crucial role in promoting environmentally sustainable and socially responsible investment (SRI). Banking sector is generally considered as environmental friendly in terms of emissions and pollutions. Internal environmental impact of the banking sector such as use of energy, paper and water are relatively low and clean. Environmental impact of banks is not physically related to their banking activities but with the customer's activities. Therefore, environmental impact of bank's external activity is huge though difficult to estimate. Thus, encouraging environmentally responsible investments and prudent lending should be one of the responsibilities of the banking sector. Further, those industries which have already become green and those, which are making serious attempts to grow green, should be accorded priority to lending by the banks. This method of finance can be called as "Green Banking", an effort by the banks to make the industries grow green and in the process restore the natural environment. This concept of "Green Banking" will be mutually beneficial to the banks, industries and the economy. Not only "Green Banking" will ensure the greening of the industries but it will also facilitate in improving the asset quality of the banks in future.

Green Banking thus refers to the initiative by banks to encourage environment friendly investments, to give lending priority to those industries which have already turned green or are trying to grow green and thereby help to restore the natural environment. This initiative of green banking is mutually beneficial to the banks, industries and the economy. Moreover Green banking will ensure that the asset qualities of banks are improved in future. Contrary to the belief, environmental friendly technologies make economic sense for the industries and actually lessen their financial burden as well. The polluting industries face more resistance and often forced to close down or face massive resistance from the public. This adds to their cost enormously. So adopting environmentally sustainable technologies or modes of production is no more considered as a financial burden, rather it brings new business opportunities and higher profit. Green banking optimises costs, reduces the risk, enhance banks reputations and contribute to the common good of environmental sustainability. So it serves both the commercial objective of the bank as well as its social responsibility.

IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF GREEN FINANCE

Banks like any other business directly interact with the environment as consumers of natural resources. During their day to day business banks heavily contributes towards the carbon emission in terms of use of paper, electricity, stationary, lighting, air conditioning, electronic equipment etc. even though this is moderate compared to other carbon sensitive industries like steel, oil and gas etc. In the case of banks, the direct interface with the environment has considerably increased due to rapid growth of the banking industry.

Banks affect the environment indirectly by financing intermediaries that have an external impact on the environment. They are the major source of long term funding to various industries such as cement, fertilizers, nuclear power, steel, oil and gas, paper etc. which pollute the environment heavily.

Being a major source of fund provider, banks can play a crucial role in ensuring environmentally sustainable and socially responsible investments in the economy. Banks should try and reduce the increase in carbon footprint caused by them either directly and indirectly and should play a vital role in ensuring sustainable and environment friendly development.

In addition, if the lending decisions of the banks are not done prudently as per the environmental criteria, then it may lead to credit risk, legal risk and reputational risk. It is at the interest of the banks to practice green banking and thereby avoiding the aforesaid risks involved in the banking sector.

1. Credit Risk:

The credit risk can happen indirectly in the case when banks lend to companies whose businesses are adversely affected due to changes in environmental regulation. The costs of meeting new environmental requirements might be enough to put some companies out of business. Credit risk can also arise when a bank had given advances to a real estate firm whose property value fell because of environmental issues. Moreover small and medium enterprises (SMEs) engaged in manufacturing business do not have sufficient capital to shift to clean production methods. Hence there are chances of credit risk in these loan portfolios as well in case government comes out with stringent environment regulatory rules.

2. Legal Risk

Banks are at a legal risk if they themselves don't comply with the environmental regulations. But more than inadequate environmental practices followed by debtors may lead to legal risk. The banks will be at a legal risk when they take possession of a collateral property (under SARFAESI or due to loan default) which is contaminated or is a pollution causing asset. For example, A company which has taken loan may incur legal liability to clean up the contaminated site which may further lead to bankruptcy. In such a case the bank's ability to recover the loan is stalled and if the polluted site is part of the collateral security, the value of the property intended to set off default losses is also reduced. If a bank has a proactive environment management system put in place then it can reduce this risk to a great extent.

3. Reputational Risk:

Banks should watch out from financing environmentally objectionable projects. Banks are certain to lose their reputation if they are involved in some big projects which adversely affect the environment and causes pollution. In addition if loans are advanced to industries which pollute the environment, those industries will face restriction from public and are often forced to shut down their business, thereby creating over and above the reputational risk causing credit risk as well.

OBJECTIVES

- To build a conceptual framework of green finance
- To get an insight into "green" financial products and services that are currently being offered and the problems faced in developing such products
- To identify the level of awareness and demand for such green products among investors
- To identify the key opportunities for Indian financial institutions in terms of the development and marketing of "green" financial product and services

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is exploratory in nature. Primary data is collected through two sets of questionnaire one for individual green investors and other for green fund officials. In this way a dual view of the market for green capital is revealed, both from the inside – understanding the current offer – and from the outside – to understand the needs and the awareness level of the investors. The research was carried out among 100 users of green financial products in Mumbai using a structured questionnaire and an in depth interview with bank managers dealing with such products. SPSS was used for data analysis. Primary research is supported by secondary data collected from newspaper, magazines and various websites. The topic being new literature available is limited.

DATA ANALYSIS

An in-depth interview with the green fund officials of various branches of SBI banks gave an insight on the various kinds of green products being offered.

SOLAR POWERED ATM'S

How do you gain access to your money if your bank is many miles away? Well, ATMs. But how does a village have an ATM if it can't power the thing? Vortex Engineering has come up with a solar-powered solution for providing ATMs to people in rural areas

"The initial lot of 400 solar ATMs, aptly called Gramateller ('gram' means village), the world's largest order, placed by the State Bank of India (SBI), has been winning accolades for performance and substantial energy savings. The ATMs were installed in 2010-11 across several states, usually within 20-50 km of the district headquarters.

Following SBI's success with solar ATMs, the Catholic Syrian Bank also placed an order for 50 Gramatellers and Indian Bank for 20, while 10 more have been ordered by other banks

The Gramatellers are more hearty versions of traditional ATMs. They cost a bit more but pay for themselves with about two years thanks to the solar energy, whereas traditional ATMs are a constant expense as they eat up generator fuel. In fact, a solar-powered ATM saves over 90% of annual expenses spent on traditional ATMs.

The Gramatellers have a 12-hour back-up battery and needs at least five hours of sunlight daily to keep it charged. And, thanks to this back-up battery, customers can use the ATMs even when power is cut off to the rest of the village. Because they're less expensive in the long run, other banks in countries in Africa and East Asia are also interested in purchasing units to provide to rural customers.

Solar power is literally putting money in the hands of banking customers, giving them more control over their own funds. And all for a cheaper cost to both banks and the environment.

GREEN HOME LOANS

Showing sensitivity to the environment, the State Bank of India (SBI) is offering various discounts for housing loans taken to buy or build "Green" home. It is doing this by offering various discounts for home loans taken for such buildings. This scheme is called SBI "Green Homes".

DETAILS OF THE DISCOUNTS OFFERED**Rate of interest**

The interest rate charged for a "green" home loan would be 0.25% lower than the rate charged for loans for non-"green" homes.

BENEFITS TO THE CUSTOMER

- **Equated Monthly Installments (EMIs) would be lower** – resulting in less expenditure every month
- **Pay less interest** over the tenure of the home loan
- Lower EMI also means that you would be **eligible for a higher loan amount**. Banks cap the EMI amount as a percentage of your monthly income – so lower the EMI, higher is your loan amount eligibility.

GREEN COUNTER

- On its 204th State Bank of India, the country's largest Public Sector Bank has launched its 'Green Channel Counter' This facility would give customers ease and comfort in transacting their business at branches. The customers need not fill up any pay-in slips or draw cheques for depositing or withdrawing money from their accounts, saving paper, and thereby contributing to the concept of 'Green Banking'. This novel facility would be a game changing move in the industry by reducing process time, as duplication in writing/feeding account details and transaction details by the customer as well as the person behind the counter is avoided by simply capturing these details by swiping the SBI Shopping cum ATM Card on a device available at the Single Window Operator's (SWO) counter. At the Green Channel counter, there is a Point of Sale Machine (POS), on which the customer swipes his card. He is then asked by the machine to select the type of transaction, viz. (0) Cash Deposit, (1) Cash Withdrawal and (2) Funds Transfer. Once the customer selects the type of transaction by entering the option, the message 'Enter the Amount' is displayed. The customer is asked to confirm the input amount followed by a message "Please Enter the PIN". When the PIN is entered by the customer, the transaction gets transferred to the terminal of SWO who after entering the denomination of the cash to be paid / received, pays / receives cash and the transaction gets completed.

DATA ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE GAVE THE FOLLOWING RESULTS**MOTIVE BEHIND INTRODUCING A GREEN FINANCIAL PRODUCTS**

Most of the green fund officials have introduced green financial product for maintaining a good reputation among public (67%), while 12% felt that it was their social responsibility 13% of the officials answered that their major objective was media coverage and publicity and the remaining 8% have opted for green product for complying with legal issues on environment

POPULAR GREEN FINANCIAL PRODUCTS

Majority of the officials agreed that green home loans (43%) are very popular among customers followed by green auto loans (23%) green cards, 16% green counter (11%) and solar powered ATM's (7%)

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED IN INTRODUCING A GREEN FINANCIAL PRODUCT

Problems faced in developing an introducing a green product like solar powered ATM or green counter included non profitable environmental analysis business models (41%), customers lack of desired response (40%), company's inability to choose and evaluate green technology (12%) and concern for continuation of green policy by the organization (7%)

STEPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO MINIMIZE THE CHALLENGES OF INTRODUCING A GREEN FINANCIAL PRODUCT

The following factors were identified on a five point likert scale to tackle the problems of developing a green financial product. (5= strongly agree 1= strongly disagree) their mean were as follows:

| Ways to overcome challenges | Mean scores |
|--|-------------|
| Provide strong government assistance | 3.13 |
| Reflect environmental factors into credit ratings | 3.45 |
| Making environmental initiatives taken by an organization a part of mandatory disclosure | 2.67 |
| Giving tax incentives to the customers opting for green products | 4.23 |
| Hire trained professionals for development of green financial products | 1.3 |

Most of the people agreed that giving tax incentives to the customers is the best way of promoting green financial product followed by reflecting environmental factors in credit rating

AWARENESS LEVEL OF THE CUSTOMER

Following table shows the % of awareness for different kinds of green financial products

| Product | % of people knowing about it |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Green home loans | 67 |
| Green auto loans | 45 |
| Green counter | 33 |
| Green cards | 32 |
| Green financing | 21 |
| Solar powered ATM | 19 |
| Green insurance | 9 |

MOTIVES BEHIND PURCHASING A GREEN FINANCIAL PRODUCT

Most of the customers (72 %) said that they would opt for a green financial products only if it gives them some monetary benefits while 28% said they would opt for it even if it is little costly as they have concern for environmental issues

BENEFITS OF CHOOSING A GREEN FINANCIAL PRODUCT

Customers expect that benefits of choosing a green financial product may be in the form of lower interest rate (65%), less paperwork and documentation (29%), flexible repayment plan (6%).

CONCLUSION

There are some issues which impede the growth of Green financial products. Green products have still not been able to position themselves as an economically viable option as many lower cost products exist in the market. Unlike of what is happening today in Europe, where the market of "green" financial products & services is growing substantially, globally, even though the market appears to grow, it is in an early stage, with indefinite boundaries and without having gained unified characteristics, differentiating it from the traditional industries. Financial institutions and banks in particular have an important role to play in this context by contributing to the creation of a strong and successful low carbon economy. They should expand the use of environmental information in the credit extension and investment decisions. The endeavour will help them proactively improve their environmental performance and creating long term value for their business.

In future, business with a higher carbon footprint would be seen as a riskier business and banks may keep themselves away from financing such business and would look for financing new technology solutions that capture or reduce carbon emissions.

The Green Banking is thus the order of the day and it will definitely benefit the banks, the industries and the environment as a whole.

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