



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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GREEN MARKETING: A NEW ROADMAP FOR ORGANIZATION SUCCESS**RAJEEV KUMAR RANJAN**

MEMBER, ENERGY INSTITUTE, U.K.

ASST. PROFESSOR

UNIVERSITY OF PETROLEUM AND ENERGY STUDIES

VILLAGE AND P.O. BIDHOLI, VIA PREM NAGAR

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ABSTRACT

Green Marketing has emerged as an important concept in India as in other parts of the developing and developed world, and is seen as an important strategy of facilitating sustainable development. As, Environmentalism has fast emerged as a worldwide phenomenon, Business firms too have risen to the Occasion and have started responding to environmental challenges by practicing green marketing strategies. Green consumerism also has played a catalytic role in ushering corporate environmentalism and making business firms green marketing oriented. But most of our green activities are hinged on a set of dos and don'ts. There are three reasons why we must rethink the idea of green Marketing. First, the impact of the products on environment Second, the after-life of these green products is always not very environmental –friendly and thirdly, the hardest of all, is the question whether they are really green or not. This Paper aims at finding out what actually green Marketing is all about and how can a business firm be more competitive by using green marketing strategies to gain a competitive edge over others. It explores the main issues in adoption of green marketing practices.

KEYWORDS

Environment, Green Marketing, Business Firms & Consumers.

INTRODUCTION

According to the American Marketing Association, green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe. Thus green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising. Yet defining green marketing is not a simple task where several meanings intersect and contradict each other; an example of this will be the existence of varying social, environmental and retail definitions attached to this term. Other similar terms used are Environmental Marketing and Ecological Marketing. Thus "Green Marketing" refers to holistic marketing concept wherein the production, marketing consumption and disposal of products and services happen in a manner that is less detrimental to the environment with growing awareness about the implications of global warming, non-biodegradable solid waste, harmful impact of pollutants etc., both marketers and consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for switch in to green products and services. While the shift to "green" may appear to be expensive in the short term, it will definitely prove to be indispensable and advantageous, cost-wise too, in the long run. The first wave of Green Marketing occurred in the 1980s. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Reports started with the ice cream seller Ben & Jerry's where the financial report was supplemented by a greater view on the company's environmental impact. In 1987 a document prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need", this became known as the Brundtland Report and was another step towards widespread thinking on sustainability in everyday activity. Two tangible milestones for wave 1 of green marketing came in the form of published books, both of which were called Green Marketing. They were by Ken Peattie (1992) in the United Kingdom and by Jacquelyn Ottman (1993) in the United States of America. One of green marketing's challenges is the lack of standards or public consensus about what constitutes "green," according to Joel Makower, a writer on green marketing. In essence, there is no definition of "how good is good enough" when it comes to a product or company making green marketing claims. This lack of consensus—by consumers, marketers, activists, regulators, and influential people—has slowed the growth of green products, says Makower, because companies are often reluctant to promote their green attributes, and consumers are often skeptical about claims.

Despite these challenges, green marketing has continued to gain adherents, particularly in light of growing global concern about climate change. This concern has led more companies to advertise their commitment to reduce their climate impacts, and the effect this is having on their products and services. According to a survey of marketing and communication leaders completed by St. Louis-based public relations firm Fleishman-Hillard Inc. and the American Marketing Association, 58% believe their companies will increase their environmental sustainability efforts in the months ahead. Further, 76% of U.S. consumers surveyed by Esty Environmental Partners, Landor Associates, Cohn & Wolfe, and Penn, Schoen & Berland for the 2009 Global Green Brands Survey said they will spend the same or more on green products in the next year.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green marketing has been an important academic research topic since it came.(Coddinton.1993;Fuller;1999;Ottman,1994).Attention was drawn to the subject in the late 1970's when the American Marketing Association organized the first ever workshop on "Ecological marketing" in 1975 which resulted in the first book on the subject entitled "Ecological Marketing" by Henion and Kinnear in 1976.The first definition on "green Marketing according to Henion (1976) was "the implementation of marketing programmes directed at the environmentally conscious market segment".Peattie and Crane (2005) claims that despite the early development, it was only in the late 1980's that the idea of Green Marketing actually made an appearance because of the consumers growing interest in green products. As per fuller (1994);Green marketing can be defined as a process of planning, implementing and controlling the development ,pricing, promotion and distribution of products in a manner that satisfies the three following criteria:

- Customer needs are met
- Organizational goals are attained

- The process is compatible with ecosystems

Furthermore, Green marketing was given prominence in the late 1980s and 1990s after the proceedings of the first workshop on Ecological marketing held in Austin, Texas (US), in 1975. Several books on green marketing began to be published thereafter. According to the Joel makeover (a writer, speaker and strategist on clean technology and green marketing), green marketing faces a lot of challenges because of lack of standards and public consensus to what constitutes "Green". The green marketing has evolved over a period of time. According to Peattie (2001), the evolution of green marketing has three phases. First phase was termed as "Ecological" green marketing, and during this period all marketing activities were concerned to help environment problems and provide remedies for environmental problems. Second phase was "Environmental" green marketing and the focus shifted on clean technology that involved designing of innovative new products, which take care of pollution and waste issues. Third phase was "Sustainable" green marketing. It came into prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000. In India green Marketing is a relatively new topic introduced by few multinational companies operating in India like Philips India limited, Avoiding Green Marketing Myopia (By: Jacquelyn A. ottoman, Edwin R. Stafford and Cathy L.Hartman, 2006).

GREEN MARKETING AND CONSUMERISM: INTERTWINED

Green Marketing is of no use if the consumers are not willing to purchase the green products so it becomes imperative for the green marketing companies to market the benefits of using the green products which would be useful for both the consumers and the environment. This would give a definite edge to the green marketing companies over other companies which are not using green marketing in the long run. So, green marketing becomes all the more useful and widely accepted if its uses and benefits are clearly communicated to the consumers. Polanski (1994) defines Green marketing as 'All activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges internal to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with minimum detrimental impact on the environment. Or more simply it comprises of all those marketing activities which the firm undertake to create a positive impact on the environment. Green marketing has been in existence since decades and has been used without been formally recognized (Kuhre 1997). But after the excessive media exposures and strict government environmental regulations firms have started thinking of acting in a more eco responsible- manner. Companies used green marketing by way of redesigning their products and packaging and advertising to increase consumer awareness about green marketing. Environmental protection is today one of the essentials items on the agenda of consumers, this growing concern among consumer for the environment is known as green consumerism. Elkington (1994) defines green consumer as one who avoids products that are likely to cause significant damage to the environment, health of the consumer, use of disposal, cause unnecessary wastes and adversely affect other countries. Rise of environmental concern among consumers has been viewed as perhaps the biggest opportunity for the enterprise the industrial world has ever seen.

Following are the reasons which are responsible for the growth of green consumerism. They are:

- Heightened awareness of green issues among people.
- Increased level of information.
- Emergence of an increasing number of green substitutes.
- Increased Marketing activity among social charities. (Peattie 1992; Strong 1992).

Because of this green consumerism, green marketing has gained prominence over the years and will continue to be the much talked about concept in the corporate world.

WHY GREEN MARKETING?

After discussing about what Green Marketing is all about it is important to find out why any company should adopt Green Marketing and what the benefits of using Green Marketing are. The first indication of consumer interest in green products came through a survey. The survey stated that more than 92% of European MNCs claimed to have changed their products in response to green concerns and 85 % claimed to have changed their product systems. Green products introduced by more than double to 11.4% of all new household products in the U.S.A 1989 to 1990 and continued to rise to 13.4% in 1991. As the figure suggests that the interest of the consumers in Green Marketing is considerably increasing so the companies should try to satisfy the needs of the consumers and seriously think of adopting Green Marketing strategies. Grant (2007, pp.20-24) claims that Green Marketing is at a tipping point and that what the companies do next will decide if Green Marketing continues to develop and gain momentum. In the present times when the government regulations around the globe are very strict and the whole world is talking about global warming, climate change and environment protection the companies would be left with no option but to adopt green marketing otherwise it might be too late to survive in the greener world.

The consumer's world over in general and India in particular are increasingly buying energy efficient products. The 5-Star rated products sales in 2009-10 witnessed a 31 % increase over the preceding year. The 5-Star rated products are 30% more energy efficient than products with 1-Star rating. Consumers are buying these products even when they have to pay a little extra. The star rating for white goods was introduced in 2007 on a voluntary basis. It now covers the entire white goods category. In financial terms India saved Rs-8000/- crores, which is 1/6th of country's annual food subsidy thanks to the sale of 5 star appliances. The popularity of such marketing approach and its effectiveness is hotly debated. Supporters claim that environmental appeals are actually growing in number—the Energy Star label, for example, now appears on 11,000 different companies' models in 38 product categories, from washing machines and light bulbs to skyscrapers and homes. The difference is, however, that green—rightfully so—is on the wane as the primary sales pitch for products. On the other hand, Roper's Green Gauge shows that a high percentage of consumers (42%) feel that environmental products don't work as well as conventional ones. Given the choice, all but the greenest of customers will reach for synthetic detergents over the premium-priced, proverbial "Happy Planet" any day, including Earth Day. New reports however show a growing trend towards green products.

ENERGY EFFICIENT

2007-08	0.2% of total star rated products sold
2008-09	1.4% of total star rated products sold
2009-10	44% of total star rated products sold

(Source: Bureau of Energy Efficiency)

Higher sale of 5-Star rated appliances helped save 2,000 MW of power in 2009-10 compared to 600 MW in 2008-09.

One major challenge for green marketers -- old and new -- they are likely to face as green products and messages become more common are confusion in the marketplace. "Consumers do not really understand a lot about these issues on Green marketing, and there's a lot of confusion out there in the minds of the customer about what actually green marketing is all about," says Jacquelyn Ottman (Author of "Green Marketing: Opportunity for Innovation.") Marketers sometimes take advantage of this confusion, and purposely make false or exaggerated "green" claims. Critics refer to this practice as "green washing" which means trying to sell the customers those products which are not environmental friendly but the company claims them to be environmental friendly.

In a nutshell most of the companies are venturing into green marketing because of the following reasons:

OPPORTUNITY

In India, around 25% of the consumers prefer environmental-friendly products, and around 28% may be considered healthy conscious. Therefore, green marketers have diverse and fairly sizeable segments to cater to. The Surf Excel detergent which saves water advertised with the message and the energy-saving LG consumers durables are examples of green marketing. We also have green buildings which are efficient in their use of energy, water and construction materials, and which reduce the impact on human health and the environment through better design, construction, operation, maintenance and waste disposal for example what ONGC have done it in case buildings called Green Buildings as an initiative of Green Marketing some other examples in India can be of, the green building movement, spearheaded by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) - Godrej Green business Center.etc

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Many companies have started realizing that they must behave in an environment-friendly fashion. They believe both in achieving environmental objectives as well as profit related objectives. The HSBC became the world's first bank to go carbon-neutral last year. Other examples include Coca-Cola, which has invested in various recycling activities.

GOVERNMENTAL-PRESSURE

Various regulations recently framed by the government to protect consumers and the society at large led to the adoption of Green marketing as an compulsion rather than a choice. The Indian government too has developed a framework of legislations to reduce the production of harmful goods and by products. These reduce the industry's production and consumers' consumption of harmful goods, including those detrimental to the environment; for example, the ban of plastic bags in many parts of the country, and prohibition of smoking in public areas, etc.

COMPETITIVE-PRESSURE

Many companies take up green marketing to maintain their competitive edge. The green marketing initiatives by niche companies such as Body Shop and Green & Black have prompted many mainline competitors to follow suit.

COST-REDUCTION

Reduction of harmful waste may lead to substantial cost savings. Sometimes, many firms develop symbiotic relationship whereby the waste generated by one company is used by another as a cost-effective raw material. For example, the fly ash generated by thermal power plants, which would otherwise contributed to a gigantic quantum of solid waste, is used to manufacture fly ash bricks for construction purposes.

PATHS TO GREENNESS

Green marketing involves focusing on promoting the consumption of green products. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the companies to adopt creativity and insight, and be committed to the development of environment-friendly products. This will help the society in the long run. Companies which embark on green marketing should adopt the following principles in their path towards "greenness."

- Adopt new technology/process or modify existing technology/process so as to reduce environmental impact.
- Establish a management and control system that will lead to the adherence of stringent environmental safety norms.
- Using more environment-friendly raw materials at the production stage itself.
- Explore possibilities of recycling of the used products so that it can be used to offer similar or other benefits with less wastage.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

The marketing strategies for green marketing include:-

- Marketing Audit (including internal and external situation analysis)
- Develop a marketing plan outlining strategies with regard to 4 P's
- Implement marketing strategies
- Plan results evaluation

CONCLUSION

The popularity of such marketing approach and its effectiveness is hotly debated. Supporters claim that environmental appeals are actually growing in number--the Energy Star label, for example, now appears on 11,000 different companies' models in 38 product categories, from washing machines and light bulbs to skyscrapers and homes. On the other hand, Roper's Green Gauge shows that a high percentage of consumers (42%) feel that environmental products don't work as well as conventional ones. New reports however show a growing trend towards green products. Moreover a clever marketer is one who not only convinces the consumer, but also involves the consumer in marketing his product it has to adapt to the requirements of the market and it has to be done sooner rather than later. Green marketing should not be considered as just one more approach to marketing, but has to be pursued with much greater vigor, as it has an environmental and social dimension to it which is going to rule the world in coming times. With the threat of global warming looming large on the world, it is extremely important that green marketing becomes the norm rather than an exception or just a fad. Recycling of paper, metals, plastics, etc., in a safe and environmentally harmless manner should become much more systematized and universal. Marketers also have the responsibility to make the consumers understand the need for and benefits of green products as compared to non-green ones and the benefits they can reap in the future. In green marketing, consumers are willing to pay more to maintain a cleaner and greener environment. Finally, consumers, industrial buyers and suppliers need to pressurize effects so as to minimize the negative effects on the environment. Green marketing assumes even more importance and relevance in developing countries in the world like India and others.

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