



GREEN MARKETING

Socially Responsible Frontier for New Future

Neeraj Kumar Saraswat

Shailendra Kumar Srivastava

Abstract

Purpose— The basic purpose of this paper is to understand green marketing, which helps us to redefine socially responsible frontier for a new future. The paper attempts to analyze green marketing initiatives taken by companies in India. This paper further explores whether these initiatives are green in principal or the companies are just making cosmetic changes in the name of green branding.

Design/methodology/approach— The research methodology used for the purpose of study involves case analysis approach. The case-studies of a few Indian and Multi-national companies from different sectors were analyzed to develop a conceptual paper.

Findings— It was found that there are organisations like The Hewlett-Packard Company announcing plans to deliver energy-efficient products and energy-efficient operating practices in its facilities worldwide to go 'Green'. The Supreme Court of India has enforced the use of CNG in all Delhi public transport systems to curb pollution in Delhi.

Research limitations/implications— The study is limited only to the companies' perspective and does not make any attempt to consider the customers' point of view regarding green products and strategies.

Originality/value— This is an original research paper and its findings could be important for understanding green marketing in an Indian context.

Introduction

"Going Green" seems to be the new watchword for sustainability designed to save the planet. Both environmental and commercial sectors have been captured by this approach to sustainability, therefore growing environmental concerns and resource scarcity have created immense pressure on the companies to produce green products and adopt green marketing strategies, which will help us to redefine sustainability for future generations. The concept of Green Marketing emerged between the late 1980s and the early 1990s in Europe, when certain products were found to be harmful to the environment and society as a whole. That resulted in the emergence of new types of products, called "green" products, those causing less harm to the environment and living creatures.

The Going Green is the latest strategic move made by the marketers in emerging economies like India and China. The companies are continuously engaged in developing new business models around 'Green Products'. Marketers have a wide range of green products to offer right from green clothes to green computers to green offices and home and much more. These green products not only offer a differentiating edge to the companies but also provide a feeling of contribution to environment to the customers buying them. Of late, there has been a growing consciousness in the Indian government and among citizens of environmental threats, and the perilous economic and health problems. The society as a whole is more ready and willing than before to respond to the appeals based

on green issues (Lee, Kaman 2008). All these lead to emerging markets for environmental products, services and technologies in India, create promising opportunities and redefine sustainability for both domestic and international companies.

However, the issue of concern here is 'whether these marketers are genuinely involved in green marketing or it's just a marketing gimmick played by them' In this conceptual paper, we seek to review and understand the green marketing initiatives of different companies in India and to propose few parameters for sustainable green marketing.

Green Marketing

The **American Marketing Association** defines green marketing as:

- **Retailing definition:** The marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe
- **Social marketing definition:** The development and marketing of products designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality
- **Environments definition:** The efforts by organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns

The Phases of 'Green Marketing'

Phase I- Ecological Green Marketing: The focus of this phase was to help solve environment problems through remedies.

Phase II- Environmental Green Marketing: Here the focus was on clean technology that involved designing of innovative new products, which take care of pollution and waste issues.

Phase III- Sustainable Green Marketing: This phase came into prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000, when it became necessary for companies to produce environment friendly products as the awareness for such products was on the rise and customers were demanding eco-friendly products and technologies.

Socially Responsible Frontier

Is Tom's of Maine toothpaste really green if consumers leave the water running while they brush their teeth? Is an ENERGY STAR-rated light bulb really green if it remains on after everyone leaves the room?

It is one thing to design a product to be greener, but the way a consumer uses and disposes a product responsibly is the other thing. Negative environmental impact made throughout a product's life-cycle cannot be minimized without proper consideration of the use and disposal of products responsibly.

"Responsible consumption"—what I consider the next frontier of green marketing—It is about conserving resources associated with using products. That includes encouraging consumers to use only what is needed and consciously reduce waste.

Sustainability leaders are striving for the ideal goals of zero waste and zero energy, but we will never get to zero until people learn to responsibly consume and properly dispose of the products they buy.



Sustainable Marketing

CSR Europe has an excellent description of sustainability in their **Sustainable Marketing Guide**: "Sustainability is a necessarily broad church for it encompasses all of those issues which impact our lives: population growth, biodiversity, human rights, social inclusion, equality and diversity... to name but a few. The list contains a combination of social (e.g. human rights, equality, diversity) and environmental (e.g. waste, energy use, pollution) issues which are inevitably intertwined and connected."

They continue, "In a business context, sustainable development means taking a triple bottom line approach so that the business measures, its success not just on financial performance, but on its environmental and social performance too. The goal: to meet the needs of this generation without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹" ¹Brundtland Commission Report, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.

C-level executives are rapidly becoming aware and are driving adoption of sustainable business practices, Wal-Mart and its vendors being a leading example. Public opinion, legislation and economic issues have coalesced to make the triple bottom line the business model of the 21st century. So in addition to the standard 4 Ps (product, price, placement, and promotion) of classic marketing, sustainable marketing adds 3 more: People, Planet, and Profit.

Defining “Sustainability”

The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) defines sustainability: “Sustainability is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.

Sustainability is important to making sure that we have and will continue to have, the water, materials, and resources to protect human health and our environment^[1].

Redefining “Sustainability”: Re Empowering the Term

“Sustainability” as a term is not as powerful as it used to be. It has been incorporated, some would argue co-opted, to such a degree that the very idea of “sustainability” can now refer to everything from water bottles with the use of less plastic, to corporate boardroom growth forecasts. We all have a basic understanding of what sustainability is – it’s vaguely good for the earth, it’s “green” (another one of those troublesome terms), it makes for great marketing, and most importantly, it implies that something can operate in form or function in perpetuity – whether that something is a product or a way of living. Granted, it’s an exceptional idea, and an exceptional word, and that is precisely the problem^[1].



Sustainable as the Norm

Using the word “sustainable” as a modifier only further validates the view that the “sustainable” thing in question is exceptional and out of the norm, when sustainability should be the norm. For example, the use of durable water containers as opposed to plastic bottles is indeed very “sustainable”. It does not harm the environment, it is an activity that could theoretically go on in perpetuity without any undue waste of natural resources, and it saves money to boot. Therefore, durable water containers are exceptional. It is a wrong conception they should be the norm. In the same way, double-paned windows, insulated walls, and air-tight ductwork should be the norm when it comes to home construction.

Ironically, this is more or less what humans have been doing since their inception working with nature in order

to survive and flourish. But in recent times, or at least since the advent of cheap and readily available fossil fuels, that sentiment has mostly given way to something decidedly abnormal – the dangerous idea that humans can consume limited resources with zero consequences^[1].

Sustainable – A Necessary Reality

Therefore, we would propose that we add an addendum to the EPA’s (Environmental Protection Agency) definition: “*Sustainability is; what is natural and normal, working with the environment and not against it*”. This redefinition is necessary and critical because as long as we continue to view sustainability as an exceptional convenience rather than a necessary reality, we can never truly commit to tackling important environmental issues ranging from climate change to interior air quality. We should be redefining sustainability for the benefit of future generations^[1].

