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## Green Marketing: A Driver for Green Brand Equity and Sustainable Development

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### **Abstract:**

*Green marketing has recently caught the attention of policy makers wherein research is focused to discover the new techniques and processes to be used in designing environmentally safe products and services. This article gives a basic conceptual framework of green marketing as a driver to sustainable development and green brand equity. The emphasis is given on the need and importance of green marketing for sustainability in the present domain. The article discusses the model, which explains the various variables which are responsible for the green brand equity and sustainable development like green products, eco-brands, eco-labels and eco-advertisement. The sustainable development is achieved through the mutual combination of the economic, community and environmental developments. These variables lead to better business performance and also address the various eco-concerns including ozone safety, energy efficient operations, better pollution control measures, organic and ecologically safe products, health safety, recyclable and biodegradable packaging and integrated waste management. Besides, the framework also explains the influence of the business environment on the various variables used in it. Finally the article studies the critical review involving various initiatives towards green marketing taken by some Indian and foreign companies.*

**Keywords:** Green marketing, Sustainable development, Green brand equity, Green products, Eco-labels, Eco-advertisements

### **1. Introduction**

The concern about the environment from last few years is growing at very significant rate. It has not only become a serious public issue but has also attracted the attention of policy makers and researchers academic researchers. Issues such as air and water pollution, fossil fuels depletion, global warming, deforestation, acid rain, ozone layer reduction and others are on the current political and economic agenda and have achieved widespread public support (Akehurst *et al.*, 2012). The environmental and social concerns have received much impetus during the 1990s, which was considered as the “Earth decade” or “decade of environment”, and has led to an increase in environmental awareness among the consumer (Prothero, 1996 and Kalafatis *et al.*, 1999). The sharp rise in environmentalism has emerged in the US and Western Europe (Rahbar and Wahid, 2011). The momentum of the environmental crisis has crossed the threshold mark, which has fostered to green-wash the public perception (Barber, 2010). In this context a new market called as niche market of environmental minded consumer has emerged which is provoking the corporate to re-evaluate the human consumption habits and forms the green strategies for such responses (Todd, 2004). Green marketing tools i.e. eco-label, eco-brand and environmental advertisement will make the public perception easier towards the awareness of green product attributes and characteristics, consequently, guiding them into purchasing environmental friendly products (Rahbar and Wahid, 2011).

In the present scenario Green (friendly) marketing has been perceived as a driver towards sustainable development and for building good brand image (Banyte & Gadeikiene, 2008). Grant (2007) has suggested that the primary goal of green marketing is not only to make people willing to go green but green marketing has to inculcate in them the thirst and hunger for “go green”. Besides, green marketing has to educate the people about various environment concerns which can be addressed by it, as if it influences the changing lifestyle and behaviour of potential consumers.

### **2. Concept of Green Marketing**

The concept of Green Marketing has originated from the traditional marketing (Polonsky, 1994; Charter *et al.*, 2002), which is based on the notions of customer satisfaction, customer retention, customer loyalty, value delivery etc. In the same way green marketing has imbibed the concept of sustainable development. So, green marketing broadly refers to the promotion or advertising of products with eco-concerns. Generally, the most commonly used expressions which are associated with green marketing are ozone friendly, recyclable, zero carbon, refillable, renewable and eco-friendly etc. (Sarkar, 2012).

Green, pro-environmental, sustainability, environmental friendly and ecology are the different synonym terms which are commonly being used to describe that the company's processes and products are energy efficient, they are recyclable and refillable, less waste are formed, least polluting and conserve natural resources (Sarkar, 2012). According to the American Marketing Association, "Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment" (AMA, 2007, 2008, 2010). Many people believe that Green Marketing refers to the promotion of the products which are environmental friendly but Green Marketing is a broader concept which can both be applied to the consumer goods and industrial goods and services as well. So, Green Marketing deals with the promotion of the green products, services, ideas and concepts (Polonsky, 1994).

The Natural Marketing Institute (NMI) has estimated that the market size of the ecologically-sustainable or green products to reach \$420 billion by 2010 (Bonini and Oppenheim, 2008). For enhancing brand equity and gaining competitive advantage the environmental associations with existing green brands may play an important role (Montoro-Rios *et al.*, 2008). As the number of firms which aspire to go green is progressively increasing, there is a challenge forward for them to distinguish their products and services in a much crowded market-place (Chatterjee, 2009). The successful green product development can help companies and economies move towards environmental sustainability (Chen and Chang, 2012). Green products become a powerful competitive weapon in the market because more consumers become concerned about the environment and more people are willing to pay more for green products (Bhat, 1993). Consumers pay more attention to the prevalence of environmental protection activities such that consumer environmentalism is more popular in the world (Chang, 2011).

Nowadays consumers are sending very powerful ecological message via their buying behaviours. The power of "green purchase" has forced firms to change their marketing tactics (Chen and Chang, 2012). Green-wash is defined as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service". As the consumer mostly makes their purchase decision on the basis of corporate advertising and through green-wash the confidence of the consumer is build in advertising. (Parguel *et al.*, 2011). And thus through Green-wash the firm is able to surpass their competitors (Harmann and Kapelus, 2004; Parguel *et al.*, 2011). Besides, the demand of green-related or green products is growing in the market, green-wash continues to grow, although consumers pay more attention to it (Horiuchi and Schuchard, 2009). Firms need to apply various green marketing tactics in order to raise perceived value of their products and decrease perceived risk of their products with respect to environmental consideration to enhance their competitive advantage (Chen and Chang, 2012). Furthermore, green products are gaining more popularity in the market-place; hence green marketing has become more prevalent nowadays. The various green marketing functions include developing, differentiating, pricing and promoting green product etc.

Green Brand Equity is a set of attributes (brand assets and liabilities) about commitments and environmental concerns linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service (Aaker, 1991 and Keller, 1993). The green brand equity includes below mentioned items; (Yoo *et al.*, 2000; Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005 and Chen 2010)

- To prefer this brand over other brands because of its environmental commitment, even if other brands are of the same worth.
- Besides, the other brand has the same environmental features as this brand but you will prefer to purchase this brand only.
- The environmental performance of other brand is as good as this brand but, you will purchase this brand only.
- It seems better to purchase this brand as if the environmental concern of other brand is not so much different from this brand in any way.

### 3. Green Product

Green product is that product which has got some specific attributes that address the current eco-concern which have caused a greatest threat to the man and biosphere. In simple words we can say that green products are pro environmental and benign for the environment in which the business functions and operates (Baumann *et al.*, 2002). So green products have now become an important and hot topic of discussion due to their eco-concerns and this apparent interest for all products green is well established. One simple example from an operations standpoint is that switching to compact fluorescent (CFL) or LED light bulbs has resulted into substantial savings- both in terms of costs and natural resources (Chun and Giebelhausen, 2012). Therefore green product addresses the eco-concerns through resources, manpower and energy.

From the resource point of view the green products help in resource reduction and recyclability improvement by using the recyclable material. The green product also addresses the energy concerns by reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emission, power consumption and stand-by power (Simula *et al.*, 2009). The human concern like hazardous substance management and reduction in noise pollution are the issues which are being addressed by the green products. Thus the green products are the outcome of the green marketing which addresses the important eco-concerns which we are facing in the present scenario (Figure. 1).

### 4. Business Environment

The business environment constitute the environment which is external to the business and this environment continuously influences the whole framework which lead to sustainable development from the green marketing through the various levels or variable (Figure 1). The business environment constitutes the economic, political-legal, technological, socio-cultural, demographic and global environment. These environments and the various stakeholders which are associated with them directly and indirectly influence the green marketing and sustainable development. Therefore, the business environment is placed at the centre of the

model (Figure 1) and the various links are shown from it towards the various variables which are responsible for sustainable development.

### 5. Eco-Concerns

The various eco-concerns are being adhered by the green marketing through various green products. The current eco-concerns which have forced us to approach green marketing for reprisal and redressal are ozone safety, energy efficient operations, better pollution control measures, organic and ecologically safe products, recyclable and biodegradable packaging, integrated waste management etc. as shown in figure 1. These issues can only be addressed when the companies change their business operation from the traditional to the environmental oriented operations. The organizations need to save the energy, reduce the waste generation and should come up with the products which are organic and easily biodegradable. The companies should reduce the unnecessary operation and resources used in the manufacturing processes and should develop some alternative methods and resources which are eco-friendly.

### 6. Quality Environment

The quality environment can be understood in terms of the safe and clean air, water and land, improved economic conditions, reduced hazardous and health risks, enforcement of environmental laws etc. (Figure. 1). This can only be achieved when the various eco-concerns are addressed properly by green marketing, which leads to the quality environment then sustainable development can be achieved. To continue this development for long time period it needs good governance, sustainable economy, just society and using science responsibly. Furthermore, the organizations should understand the quality environment as their primary corporate responsibility then we can have better and prosperous tomorrow.

### 7. Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the 1980s in order to explore the relationship between development and the environment (Banerjee, 2003). The term sustainable development was first used in the Brundtland Commission report on global environmental and development in 1987. Since the Brundtland Commission the sustainable development has been used in variety of ways depending on whether it is employed in academic context or that of planning, business or environmental policy (Redclift, 2005). Sustainable development recognizes the need to preserve natural resources for future generations (Voumik and Shah, 2014). The sustainable development is defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland Commission, 1987). From this definition it is clear that needs themselves change so the needs of the present generation will not be the same as that of the future generations (Redclift, 1993). Also sustainable development is necessary for all of us but it may be defined differently in terms of each and every culture (Redclift, 2005).

Sustainable development is a process of achieving human development in an inclusive, connected, equitable, prudent, and secure manner (Gladwin *et al.*, 1995). Inclusiveness implies human development over time and space by integrating ecological, economic, political, technological and social systems. Connectivity entails an embrace of ecological, social and economic interdependence. Equity suggests inter-generational, intra-generational and inter-species fairness of resources and property rights. Prudence connotes duties of care by avoiding irreversibility's and recognizing carrying capacities. Security demands safety from chronic threats and protection from harmful disruption (Lele, 1991; Gladwin *et al.*, 1995; Banerjee, 2003).

Sustainable development requires 'sustainable marketing' that is marketing efforts that are not only competitively sustainable but are also ecologically sustainable (Polonsky *et al.*, 1997). Much of the economic activity is triggered by the marketing process that offers and stimulates consumption to satisfy human needs and wants (Kinoti, 2011). However, marketing's critical role in development will only be appreciated when, through sustainable marketing, it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Polonsky *et al.*, 1997). Sustainable development is often presented as being divided into the economy, environment and society (Hardi and Zdan, 1997; Giddings *et al.*, 2002). The three sectors are often presented as three interconnected rings (ICLEI, 1996; du Plessis, 2000; Barton, 2000) assumed in figure 2. The model has a conceptual simplicity and by encouraging the classification of impacts into three convenient categories, it makes analysis more straightforward. Often sustainable development is presented as aiming to bring the three together in a balanced way, reconciling conflicts (Giddings *et al.*, 2002).

Therefore green marketing plays an important role in the economic, social and environmental developments, which are the three main components of the sustainable development, by adopting and developing eco-brands, eco-labels and eco-advertisements. So green marketing has positive impact on the sustainable development in India (Rao, 2014). The economic development is achieved through continuous growth, social or community development is achieved through self sufficient and prosperous communities and environmental development is achieved through green tomorrow than today (Figure 2).

Green marketing focuses on undertaking all marketing activities while protecting the natural environment. On the other hand sustainable development demands that the future generations inherit the natural environment in the same state or better as inherited by the previous generations. This calls for the protection and improvement of the environment (Kinoti, 2011). Therefore, sustainable development is a dependent variable of green marketing and other factors (Figure 1).

### 8. Initiative towards Going Green

The initiative is taken by some MNC and Indian firms towards going green in order to protect or minimize the impact on the environment from the different harmful products and processes. Some examples in this context are being given as under;

The main focus of LG Electronics' green product strategy is to lessen the environmental impacts on the whole value chain while enriching lives. This green product strategy consists of three components; resources, energy and human. The basis of this green strategy is a model that takes into consideration high energy efficiency, raw material usage reduction and human welfare. LG Electronics tries to reduce the resources used in its business operations, while attempting to decrease the emission of pollutants. The LG is providing training in all their facilities and is retaining talented individuals to enhance the green management capabilities and to business partners. LG Electronics' vision is to grow into a leading environmentally conscious company by working to protect the global environment and creating products with environmentally friendly features. The CEO of the company in an exclusive interview says

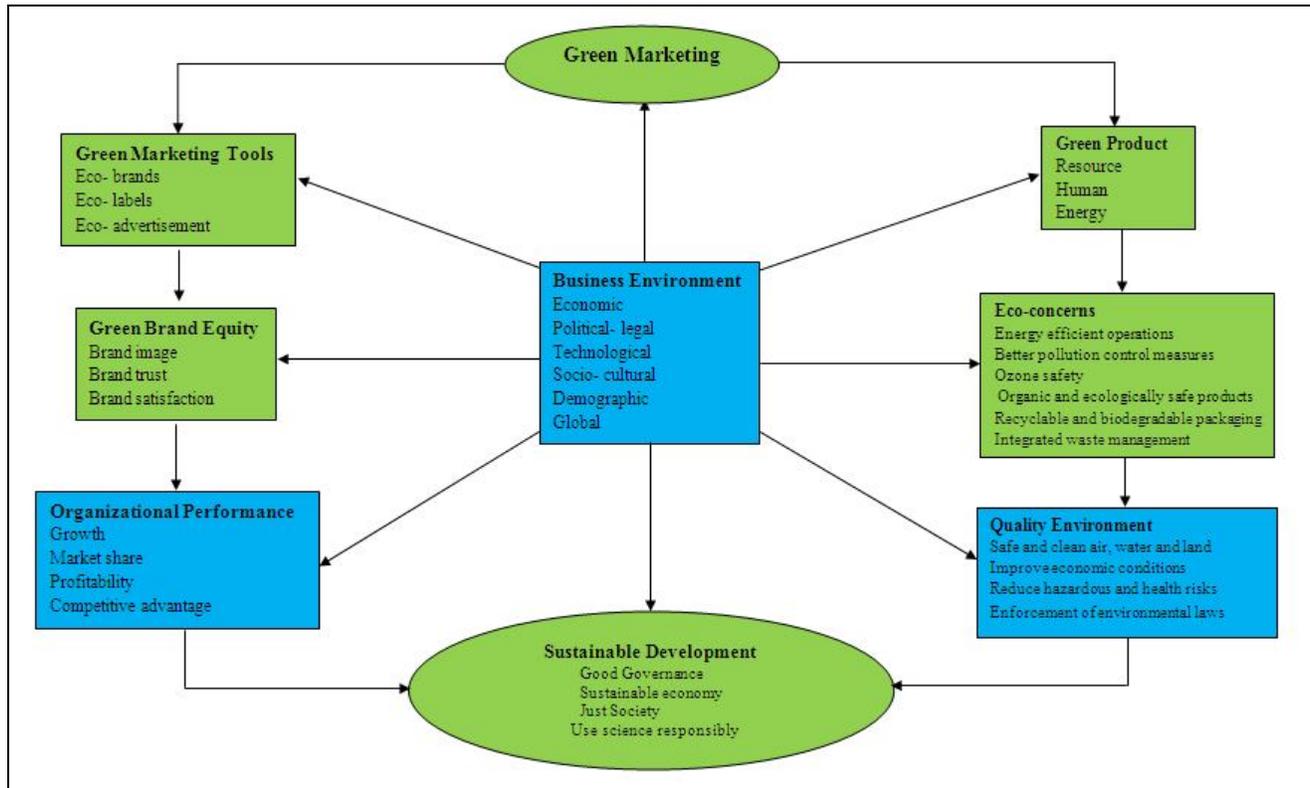


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of Green Marketing and Sustainable Development

that “we first announced our environmental policies in 1994. We have also developed activities to minimize environmental burdens associated with our operations. LG Electronics' environmental strategies are being implemented across the entire value chain. We are especially focused on issues related to green product features, climate change, and recycling”



Figure 2: Source- IUCN Report, 2006

Procter and Gamble found that the laundry has a potential impact on the environment. They found that the greatest impact of laundry is due to the washing machine usage and the hot water consumption. So they changed their marketing approach and came up with the product addresses this problem and launched a new brand of washing powder, Tide that is a cold water born brand. Another retailer that has chosen success by way of 'going green' is green paint and flooring company Bio-Shield. Bio-Shield worked with marketing firm, 'Mind Over Markets' to educate consumers about the hazards of indoor air pollution through a campaign called "Beauty Without the Beast." Both of these firms recognized that above all, they were appealing to those consumers who want to make their homes beautiful. They simply appealed further to consumers on a deeper level by including messages like "A baby crawling on a conventional carpet inhales the equivalent of four cigarettes a day" that were substantiated by credible sources like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Scientific American Magazine. After the implementation of this campaign, Bio-Shield experienced a 63 percent increase in sales (Weinberg *et al.*, 2010).

Nokia India Pvt. Ltd. has launched a green campaign to recycle electronic waste. As a result of this campaign 1300 green recycle bins were installed at the Nokia Priority dealers and the Nokia Care centers to collect the mobile phone accessory wastes. Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) took the green initiative by 'save two buckets of water by using Surf Excel Quick Wash detergent'. The household can save water using this brand of washing powder as compared to the ordinary brands. Henkel India Ltd launched a program throughout India by the name of 'eco-learn' - which is a learning initiative taken by the company to inculcate among consumers the intentions regarding the environment and sustainability. Many benefits can be sought by the corporations if they take initiative of going green. Let us consider the success of compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). In 2005, the sales of CFLs were less than 5 percent of the total light bulb market. After two years later in 2007, the year the public woke up to the looming threat of climate changes, the sale was estimated as 20 percent of it, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Companies, such as GE, that sell CFLs have increased their revenues, enhanced their brands and strengthened their competitive positions.

From these examples we can conclude that few corporations have realized the green market's true potential, but businesses undertakings must help consumers change their behaviour by removing all the barricades between intentions and actions.

## 9. Conclusion and Implications

The green marketing is an evolving concept and has attracted the corporate world to have consensus with various eco-concerns through the green-wash of their products and operations. Green marketing addresses the various eco-concerns i.e. energy efficient operations, better pollution control, ozone safety, organic products and recyclable packaging, through the green products. The need of the hour is to shift the locus of control of the consumer from the traditional consumerism to the green consumerism. This green consumerism is achieved only when the marketer uses green marking as a strategy to make a green consumer, because marketing is now no more delivering value to the consumer but it is to create a green need in the consumer. So the companies need to identify this unique segment of market (niche market) which is enriched by the green consumerism and then should target this segment using the green marketing tools (eco-brands, eco-labels and eco-advertisements) in order to get maximum benefit from this and thereby avoiding green myopia. This will help companies to build green brand equity and achieve sustainable business performance. Furthermore, the companies should design their products, using green technology (techno-green) and green chemistry (chemo-green), in such a way so that they should cause least detrimental impacts on the environment surrounding us. This will lead to better physical environment leading to sustainable development. In addition to that companies should incorporate the green marketing provisions in their corporate DNA and should take green marketing as the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of the business. The government should also initiate the special incentive scheme to encourage the use of eco-labels, eco-ads and eco-brands. Government should enact certain regulations that will push corporate towards green marketing. Some companies have taken the initiative towards green marketing but present situation demand a global campaign from the corporate towards green marketing so as to secure our future and make earth green.

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