

Sustainability Marketing- An Innovative Face of Modern Marketing

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Abstract:

Objective:

To find out the innovative methods or styles used in the form of sustainable marketing strategy for modern day marketing by the companies in order to gain more market share and project themselves as socially responsible companies.

Approach:

Secondary quantitative data analysis has been performed over here. As the main source is secondary data, a descriptive study is selected in this research paper.

Findings :

Demographic profiles of consumers have been analysed over here. Consumers have also become literate to understand the hazards of economic development, specially the environmental side. Showing concern for environment and ecology alone without delivering quality product does not ensure buying of a product. These aspects acts as added credibility for a product or the company. Companies with good quality product practicing sustainability marketing strategy gets an edge over competitors during product selection by consumers. Companies are modifying the traditional marketing mix. Innovative thoughts are incorporated into the marketing mix, whereby it is being clearly projected that they are acting responsibly towards the concern for degradation of environment and ecology. In the case of tourism industry the motives and attitudes of managers are likely to be influenced by the location, size or ownership pattern of business. In general business, it is found that sustainability is not the influencing factor in case of positioning, rather single benefits of sustainability like its competitive cost or beneficial to health gives an extra mile over the competitor.

Conclusion:

Companies have understood the philosophy that doing business only for profit motive cannot be justified to the customers and society. This compels them to think of the option of doing business in a socially responsible way and be a corporate citizen.

Stiff competition has compelled the company to think beyond the traditional marketing mix and plan innovative ways of marketing where the concern for sustainability is upheld. Companies need to learn from modern marketing that old traditioned production concept will not hold good in case of sustainability. They not only will have to embed sustainability in product and services, but also in the marketing mix. Companies will have to reconsider their marketing strategies so as to reduce social and environmental impact. This creates a positive image about the company and the product and also becomes an added deciding factor in the buying decision process.

Keywords: *Innovation, Sustainability marketing, Environment and Ecology, Corporate citizen*

I. Introduction

The world is limited by space and resources, though it's the human resource which is growing leaps and bounds. The relation between resource use and growth of human population is inversely proportional. The mankind has evolved through many phases or ages-from stone age to iron age to this era of robot and artificial intelligence. In this evolutionary phase the homo sapiens have made an extensive use of nature and its resources. All this growth has come at the cost of degrading nature.

1.1 Resource consumption and growth:

The resources that is available to us in the form of nature's boon are broadly classified into two types-

i) Non-renewable resources- That which once consumed is not refillable, at least in short time, and includes such items like fossil fuels.

ii) Renewable resources- The resources which gets rejuvenated after getting consumed and are also non-polluting in nature, and includes solar energy, hydel energy, etc.

It is very true that we should minimise use of resources, mainly the non-renewable ones, to save our future but the relationship of economical growth and consumption of resources is inversely proportional.

1.2 Sustainability Marketing- The concept

The word 'sustainable' means development of the present generation preserving resources for the future generation. The term 'sustainability' has an ambiguous meaning. There has been no concrete definition or concept of sustainability. Generally, sustainability is referred with three dimensions- environment, social and economical. The non-renewable resources are the resources which are used the most, which also includes the fossil fuels. Most operations of today run with the help of non-renewable resources. When the business is carried out with the motto of development but considering the minimal consumption of resources so as to preserve for the future generations' development, it is termed as sustainable development. When such innovative methods and practices are introduced in the marketing mix so as to show the sustainable development, it is termed as sustainable marketing.

II. Literature Review

Rising concern for voracious use of resources and destruction of the environment and social equity became a prime issue in the 1980s(Hunter,1997;Mowforth and Munt,2009), which paved the way for emergence of the term 'sustainable development'. 'Brundtland Report' defined sustainable development as 'the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'(WCED,1987). In tandem with this United Nations World Tourism Organization(UNWTO) defined sustainable tourism as 'development that meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.

The definition of sustainable development and sustainable marketing is yet widely researched and discussed(Wall,1999; Butler,1999; Sharpley,1999).Till date no precise, all-encompassing and universally accepted definition has been identified(Sharpley,2000; Mowforth and Munt, 2009). In the case of tourism industry the complexity of definition has been highlighted as a barrier in the application of the concept of sustainable development into sustainable business practices and specific actions. Sustainability is the process of improving quality of human life staying within the limitation of the world environment. It stresses on development of present human race without damaging the environment or creating blockades for the growth of future environment. In consideration of consumer economies, in which we live in, our consumption pattern is facilitated and influenced by marketing thinking, processes and practices, and thus marketing sometimes get the blame for the unsustainable nature of our consumption (Kjellberg 2008). But still, marketing has a pivotal role in instigating development of more sustainable pattern of production and consumption within our societies in coming period. (Belz and Peattie 2012). The link of marketing and sustainability can be classified into three eras. The first era was the era of 'ecological marketing'(1970s) in which environmental problem issues such as air pollution, environmental impact of pesticides, etc. were considered(Henion and Kinnear,1976). The second era stood for 'environmental marketing'(1980s), which focused on development and marketing of 'green products' or products with superior socio-environmental performance and target being the 'green consumers',thus indicating consumers interest on sustainable issues. The third era is the age of sustainable marketing which seeks to synchronize the ethical and ecological concerns of the green marketing with relationship marketing, which helps to facilitate long-term sustainability oriented value relationship with customers(Belz and Peattie,2012)

III. Concern For Next Gen Development:

Economical development, in general, bore a direct relationship with consumption of resources. If mankind has to carry on development, specially economical development, it will lead to increased consumption of resources, thus minimising with time the resource left available for next generation. Development also leads to degradation of environment and gross imbalance in health, social equity and our value principles to some extent. This unplanned use of non-renewable resources and degradation of environment became a matter of concern for the people as a whole. Post 1980 people showed their worry for saving or protecting the environment and minimise the consumption of resources but maintaining the development cycle. The consumption rate of resources increases at first with the advent of growth and industrialization but after sometime the rate of consumption of resources decreases. This is the phase when people start realizing the negative effect of growth and development, thus inventing and innovating methods and developmental plans to carry on sustainable development. The consumption of energy in developing countries are on a rise in the backdrop of their development(Fig.1) Emission of carbon-di-oxide from the consumption of energy was only 0.1% in 2016 which has been the lowest average emission growth . Average emission of carbon-di-oxide during

2014-16 has been lowest, counting on three year period since 1981-83. Renewable power(not including hydro) grew by 14.6% in 2016. Hydroelectric power generation rose by 2.8% in 2016 and wind provided almost half of renewable growth, closely followed by solar energy with one-third of renewable energy support(Fig.2). Asia Pacific surpassed Europe and America in production of renewable energy. On the contrary the consumption of coal globally fell by 53 million tonnes of oil equivalent.

IV. Sustainability And Modern Business:

4.1 Sustainability marketing strategies as innovative weapon of competitive business

Marketers have been looking and adapting various marketing strategies to gain competitive advantages in the market, in the current decade it has been the area of sustainability which the marketers are trying to capitalize upon. Some authors have defined sustainability in terms of environment or green issues and some by the social issues, but sustainability has got three dimensions- environment, social and economical. There is a need to develop an effective marketing strategy which will address the problems of environment, social and economical in an integrated way, but it is difficult and complex since companies has their own business objectives which demands for different marketing strategies comprising of unique set of decisions. Evolution of marketing has witnessed five phases- production concept, product concept, selling concept, marketing concept and societal marketing concept. Societal marketing concept has taken into account the social and ethical issues in business, but it is time to consider sustainable development into consideration.

Sustainability has not remained an option but has become the need of the situation, where marketers focus on delivering products keeping in mind the requirement of the future generation and thus creating, communicating and delivering sustainable values to the customers. The whole idea of marketing focuses on consumers so Mc Carthy re-designed the marketing mix from 4P's(Product, Price, Place and Promotion) to 4C's(Customer solution, Customer price, Convenience and Communication). Sustainable marketing strategy aims to gain competitive advantage through a position which is desirable, different and defensible). One the one hand sustainability principle stresses on the need to conserve more and consume less whereas marketing philosophy strives to achieve more sales, thus more production and more consumption of resources. The most difficult task is to maintain a balance between the sustainability principle and marketing philosophy. Competitive advantage can be gained by following sustainable strategies but it is equally important to address the related issues and challenges of practicing the sustainability principles. To design such sustainable strategies where all the three aspect of environmental and social parameters are met with economical gains lies the real challenge for the business.

4.2 Sustainable Business Development :

Global companies are concerned about development of a sustainable business model. Companies are realizing that operating business as profit center only wouldnot bear the desired fruit in the long run. Customers are getting more and more aware and at the same time critical about environmental and societal degradation. This changing scenario have compelled the organizations to act as responsible member of the society and project themselves as corporate citizen. Companies across the globe, who are market leaders or performing excellently have responded to the need of the situation and have started branding themselves as environmentally and socially responsible companies. They have made the biggest innovation in their marketing mix.

Companies who are into manufacturing like- Adidas, Nike, IKEA, etc. are making products using such materials which are environment friendly and non-polluting in nature. Adidas has gone further to even produce material from the waste. They collaborated with Parley for Oceans, an organisation that addresses marine threat, and producing sports gear from marine plastic which otherwise causes pollution. BMW, the premier car maker, has made an objective to apply upgraded and innovative technology to reduce waste, water, energy and solvents by 45%. In this way their marketing strategy embodies sustainability as one of the most important factor. Generally companies are focusing on products which are bio-degradable and recyclable. Such responsible companies have even modified their process in such a way so as to minimise, as much as possible, the use of water, non-renewable energies and harmful chemicals. Ongoing experiments are being carried out to minimise the use of non-renewable energies and maximise the use of renewable energies in the production and operations of a business, thus preserving the resource for our future generations. Also, companies with noble perspective has been taking great initiatives in developing children and youths. Arranging for free camps for skill developments, supporting and conducting sports initiatives and other developmental activities speaks for the companies' move towards becoming corporate citizen. The companies who were otherwise dedicated to earn profit now turned their attention to become a member of the society , save the environment and reduce consumption rate of non-renewable and scarce resources. This caring for future generation and the world in itself is a marketing for the company.

All such efforts have been acclaimed praiseworthy by mankind globally and helped the companies to uplift their brand image. These responsible acts gave the companies recognition and competitive edge over

others who were reluctant to take the path. Though these innovative efforts by companies were an important factor in consumer buying decision making process, but it was not all the deciding factor. Product quality still remains the main deciding factor along with other peripherals. It is the product which comes first and then its marketing, since a low quality product cannot sustain in the market for long. It can be an one time sale with the virtue of excellent marketing or false commitment.

TABLE:

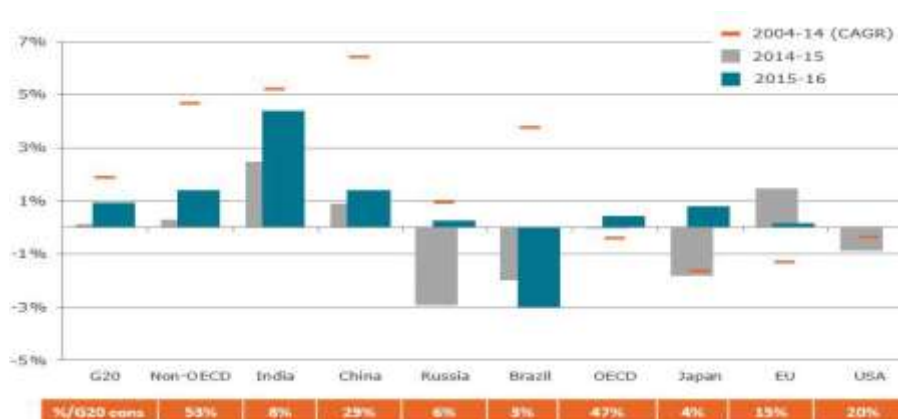


Fig.1 Growth in Energy Consumption for G20 Countries

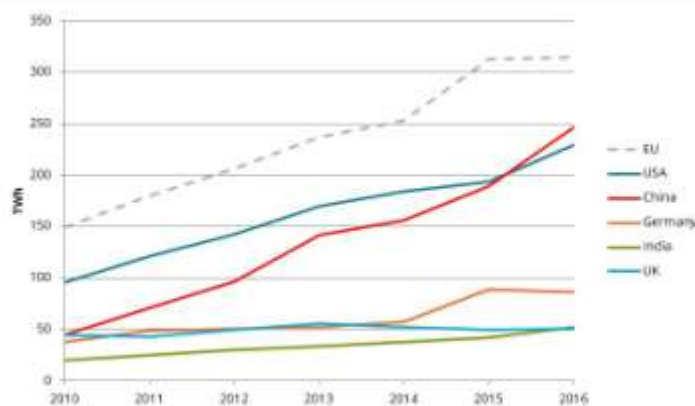


Fig.2 Wind electricity production trends in main wind energy production countries

V. Conclusion:

The humans were blessed by nature with resources to grow and develop and ensure comfortable life. In the rat race we forgot the blessing and moved on to gain more and more and develop selfishly, without bothering for others and generations to come. Humans have voraciously fed on such unparalleled resources in the name of growth and development for ages. This led to an imbalance- both societal and environmental, which stir concern among the civilization. People started realizing the move towards a dead end and this concern has percolated among the organizations- the prime causal agents for ecological and societal degradation. Many companies realized the fact that ways have to be chalked out to save resources but maintain growth and development simultaneously. The companies came up with innovative concept in every sphere. Methods were designed so as to maintain growth and development but with the consumption of minimum resources. There are limitations. Its a complex situation where if we need growth and development there will be consumption of resources, whereas consumption of resources, mostly limited ones, leads to imbalance in environment and society. We the human beings need to suffice certain needs and wants to survive and to maintain that requirement resources have to be used. One possible way out is to find recyclable replacement or substitutes of the non-recyclable and limited natural resources. The advancement of science and technology showed the way for the thoughts to be materialised. In the modern era there has been shift from production concept to product concept and so product quality and attributes remains the prima facie. But companies took initiatives to brand themselves socially and environmentally responsible companies. Innovation in marketing mix helped them to upgrade their brand value in the market. Customers have started recognizing such responsible brands and this become an important factor in their buying decision process. So, sustainable marketing is currently the

innovated face of modern marketing. This paper shapes the various faces of the struggle for sustainability and sustainable development, in the context of which sustainability marketing plays a crucial part.

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