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#### Abstract

Green marketing is the recent buzzword ruling the corporate world. In today's context of global warming, climate change and environmental pollution, this concept has evolved as a savior for the mankind. Firms using this strategy & started utilizing ecological marketing approach as a mere competitive edge. The time has come for firms to explore every opportunity to enhance their products/ services in terms of quality, performance and social responsibility and environment friendliness. In view of this scenario the paper is an attempt to segment the customer on the basis of their concern for environment and willingness to purchase eco friendly products. The study also aims to check the level of Green initiatives taken by the Telecom companies and concludes to suggest the ways to improve the Green framework in telecom companies. The study concludes that majority of the people are not aware of the concept of green marketing. For those who are aware may not be prepared to pay higher prices for green products. As a result, in such situations, one faces the additional challenge of creating awareness and willingness to spend on green products. Unless there is widespread awareness about the long-term implications of continuing to use non-green products, it becomes difficult for the companies to practice Green Marketing. The telecom companies need to advocate for a business model which relies on energy efficiency measures that harnesses clean energy sources for its operations. At the same time, the sector should also support legislation to stop the climate crisis.

#### Introduction

Demand for ethically produced, eco-friendly products has been gaining steam for years and is expected to grow at a faster pace. Value drive the behaviour of today's socially and environmentally conscious consumers, who believes that the fastest way to make an impact on the environment is to buy green. Eco-friendly approach provides a healthier environment and sustainable society. Recognizing this trend, more retailers as well as corporate houses are using this strategy & started utilizing ecological marketing approach as a mere competitive edge. Hence, sustainable competitiveness is closely dependent on as to what extent the manufacturing companies are greened and being environment friendly. It can't be perceived as a cost center, environmental management is now gaining wider acceptance as a legitimate business factor and is being viewed as a profit center whereby creating opportunities through innovation becomes a new focus of creating sustainable competitive advantage. Because of these pressures and the current attention to corporate integrity, many companies find that being recognized for responsible business practices are considered to be new business imperative. Ethical business practices are no longer a matter of private domain, rather an extended financial performance aspects involves sustainability measures that take reporting beyond the traditional measures of performance and quality (Gary Cokins, 2009).

Hence, the term "Green Marketing" refers to a holistic marketing concept where in 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

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becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for switching to green products and services. Peattie (1995) defined green marketing as “holistic management process of responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the needs of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way.” Fuller (1999) defines sustainable marketing as “the process of planning, implementing and controlling the development, pricing, promotion, and distribution of products in a

manner that satisfies the following three criteria: (1) Customer needs are met, (2) Organizational goals are attained, and (3) The process is compatible with eco-systems.” Kardash’s (1976) observed that the potentially green consumers are differ from the traditional consumers, because if two products were identical in every way but one was less damaging to the environment then most consumers would select the least damaging product. Osukoya (2007) argued that small firms have several advantages over big firm in adopting environmental practices. Consumers tend to see small firms more environment friendly than their bigger counterparts, and small firms are in a position to react actively to the increasing demands of green products and services in almost all segments of markets.

#### **Green Marketing: As an Opportunity**

Today’s consumers are becoming more and more conscious about the environment and are also becoming socially responsible. Therefore, more companies are responding to consumers’ aspirations for environmentally less damaging or neutral products. Many companies want to have an early-mover advantage as they have to eventually move towards becoming green. Some of the advantages of green marketing are:

- It ensures sustained long-term growth along with profitability.
- It saves money in the long run, though initially the cost is more.
- It helps companies market their products and services keeping the environmental aspects in mind. It helps in accessing the new markets and enjoying competitive advantage.
- Most of the employees also feel proud and responsible to be working for an environmentally responsible company.

#### **Strategic Reasons for using Green Marketing Initiatives**

**Opportunities** Organizations perceive environmental marketing to be an opportunity that can be used to achieve their objectives.

**Social Responsibility** Organizations believe that they have a moral obligation to be more socially responsible.

**Governmental Pressure** Governmental bodies are forcing firms to become more responsible.

**Competitive Pressure** Competitors’ environmental activities pressure firms to change their environmental marketing activities.

**Cost of Profit Issues** Cost factors associated with waste disposal, or reductions in material usage force firms to modify their behaviour.

Some marketers have also used the opportunity to charge higher prices, implying better quality.

The telecom companies needs to advocate for a business model which relies on energy efficiency measures that harnesses clean energy sources for its operations. At the same time, the sector should also support legislation to stop the climate crisis.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

- To segment the customer on the basis of there concern for environment and willingness to purchase eco friendly products.
- To check the level of Green initiatives taken by the Telecom Service Providers.
- To suggest the ways to improve the Green framework in telecom companies.

#### **Research Methodology**

The study is based on the response collected in form of questionnaires from 200 respondents aged between 20-25 years. This age group is chosen as respondents as this is the customer segment mainly targeted by the telecom companies. The level of Green Initiatives taken by the Telecom companies is obtained from the responses of 100 employees each of four major telecom players(Airtel , Vodafone , BSNL and Idea) in Rajasthan market. This study is an attempt to identify the segmentation of such alarmed customers which can be termed as green customers. This study is done on a sample of 200 respondents aged between 20 – 25 based on certain parameters to check there level of green concerns. The level of green initiatives and green elements that the telecom service providers in the state is also examined. The paper concludes with the suggestions for improving the green framework in these companies to meet the untapped customer potential and telecom players that can position themselves to take advantage of this demand - through their choice of components, or establishment of a full green proposition including devices and the 4Ps - will be able to create compelling differentiators that drive consumer purchasing.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Figure I reflects the response on the level of green concerns of youth customers using telecom services. Only 10 % of the customers can be treated as passionate green customers as they will go out their way to help tackle climate change and be initiators in the use of eco friendly products. The maximum customers (64%) are green supporter as, (37%) concerned about the environment and aware (27 %) about the environment issues. As per the response however 16% customers are unlikely to choose green alternatives with 5% are still doubtful about the value of environment initiatives. These customers can be regarded as neutral for Green effects. There are 5% customers who are not at all aware about the environmental concerns.

Figure II reflects shows that on the scale of checking the willingness to use green products, 27% consumers have indicated a willingness to pay a premium for green products and services in the telecom industry. 42% valued an environmentally friendly network and showed interest but with no additional cost/sacrifices at there end. As per the responses 23% of the customers availing the telecom services will buy into green initiatives but with a additional functional benefits offered to them by the telecom companies.

### Green Initiatives by Telecom Companies

The telecom service providers companies have lagged somewhat in embracing the green movement, but this is rapidly changing. Sustainable and environmentally conscious practices like innovative green phones and a telecom network infrastructure that consumes less energy, these companies can start to influence both products and services.

As evident from the Figure III , 65% employees agree to the fact that there companies are taking initiatives to partner with Green Brands this can be a form of Co-Branding with mobile handset companies and strategic partnering. This can be by offering the mobile connection with handset companies that are using the green content in there manufacturing. For example the Sony Ericsson T650's battery and relatively low use of hazardous materials earned the mobile phone recognition from Greenpeace as the greenest one on the market. Since 2006, all new models of the company's mobile phones are free of PVC plastic. Likewise, Samsung launched its first mobile phone made of bioplastic, a material produced using corn extractions. The phone is part of Samsung's effort to develop materials that are more renewable and eco-friendly than common plastic produced from petroleum. The phone includes an alarm function to

encourage the user to unplug the charger when the device is fully charged. The product also meets Energy Star requirements. Also, Nokia Siemens Network (NSN) aims to cut the energy consumption of some of its mobile base stations by as much as 50 percent by 2012.

Telecom companies have started their marketing efforts based on the theme of Green Campaigns. 80% of the employees agree to the presence of some sort of green campaigns mainly done for advertising of telecom brand. For instance, Idea cellular has introduced its concept of Save paper and use mobile instead campaign, it has also set up a bus shelter with plotted plants and climbers to convey the message of Go Green. Aircel branding campaign to 'Save Tigers', Airtel campaign to 'Save Diesel' as part of Green Peace Movement for telecom towers.

With the better promotion of use of m-commerce facility, the process of e billing is now being accepted by the customer. As part of marketing initiatives, 85% employees agree that promotion of e-billing is being practiced in there companies as a part of eco friendly initiatives. e-billing not only reduce paper waste and thus help in promoting conservation, but also offers benefits such as improved organization, more control over credit score of customers and enhanced security.

As part of there product offerings 95% of the employees of telecom companies that they offer green application package like mobile banking, e-tickets for any kind of bookings etc. but still need to promote and create awareness on use of these packages and services is required.

Telecom companies can implement the concept of paperless with minimal material support in advertising through the use of paper and plastics. More use of teleconferences and more teleworking for working by the employees needs to be practiced as it can save the fuel of company cars and unnecessary expenses. Though 45% the employees of telecom companies believes that this practice is still restricted. The telecom companies needs to sensitize there employees on the issues related to environment concerns as for a matter of fact only 26% employees believe that the meetings related to waste reduction programs are held in there companies.

### Conclusion

Business activities cannot avoid exerting an influence on conditions in the natural environment. As a result increasing number of companies are going green, positioning their products, services or brand on the basis of pro-environmental characteristics. Green

marketing should not be considering just another approach of marketing. But it is consider as one important dimension to repositioning the firm's position on ecological footprint. Hence, green issues are not just about an environment, it provides business a broader responsibility towards society than even before and to serve wider range of humans and can serve an opportunity to untapped the potential customer Green marketing assumes more importance and relevance in developing country like India. Present study provides an insight how far the concept of "green marketing" is used strategically by the Telecom service providers in order to gain competitive advantage and as well as future possible challenges. For which the level of green initiatives and green elements, that the telecom service providers operating in Rajasthan state, are identified to present a checklist for the telecom service providers. Influenced by rising energy costs, extensive media coverage, and increased public awareness, consumers are realizing that their resource-intensive lifestyles have long-term and far-reaching environmental impacts. Today's lifestyles have created severe problems throughout the developed and developing world; prominent examples are scarcity of fossil fuels, pollution, and climate change. In response, alarmed consumers are changing their buying behaviors to support more sustainable and environmentally friendly products.

#### Suggestions

- Telecom companies to develop a clear understanding of consumer expectations and their upside with regard to green products and services within the telecommunications industry.
- Telecom companies should engage with the broader ecosystem of device and network equipment suppliers as well as partners.
- There is a need to develop the business case, based on incremental ARPU and reduced costs.
- Develop a clear understanding of consumer expectations and their upside with regard to green products and services within the telecommunication industry.
- Marketing activities of telecom companies must reflect that the company as a whole is actively involved in supporting the environment.

- Telecom companies should take sponsor initiatives in the local area such as reforestation and invite staff to take part in relevant volunteer work.

There is a need for a multilayered framework in all corporate functions and business units, from supply chain to internal operations to marketing and communications, to ensure that all aspects of the company are aligned with the organization's vision, strategy, execution, and financial control and the result is a "true green" proposition to offer the consumer.

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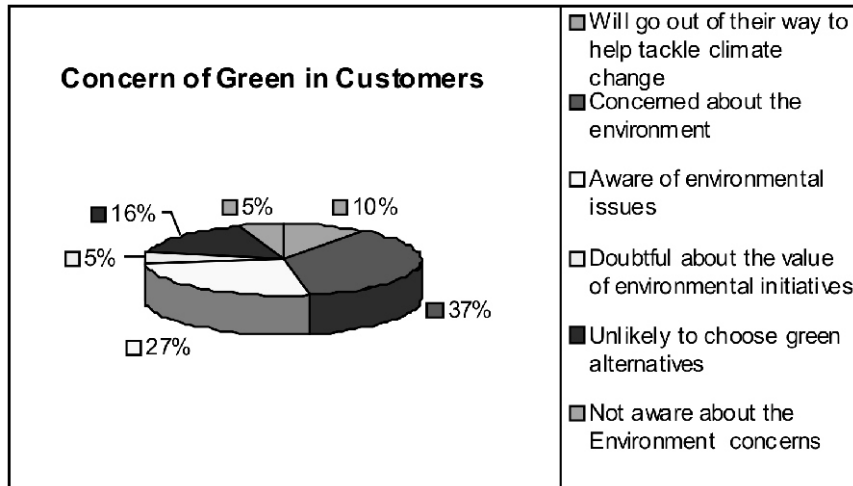


Figure I : Green Concern in Customers

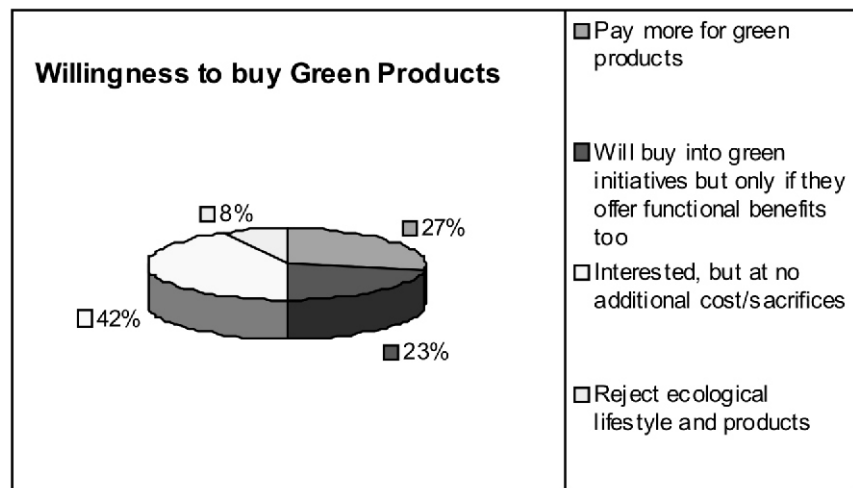


Figure II : Willingness to buy Green Products

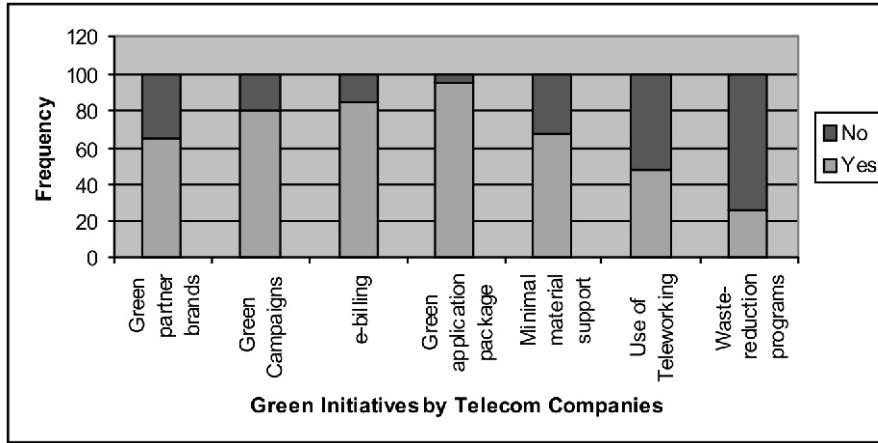


Figure III : Frequency Distribution of Response of Employees on Green Initiatives by Telecom Companies