

# From Green Vision to Market Reality: Exploring Sustainable Initiatives and Challenges in India

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## ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization and heightened environmental awareness, the relevance of green marketing has surged in India. This exploratory study investigates the evolution and significance of green marketing, shedding light on its golden rules and integration into the marketing mix. Emphasizing the imperative for sustainable green marketing, the study explores its objectives and delves into challenges faced by Indian companies. Recent data underscores the profitability of green marketing, propelled by consumer demand. A scrutiny of the Indian corporate sector reveals noteworthy green initiatives by key players such as H.C.L., O.N.G.C., Kansai Nerolac, Wipro, I.T.C., Tata, and Godrej. Challenges encountered include conveying new environmental concepts, managing costs, and gaining stakeholder cooperation. The study advocates aligning marketing practices with environmental considerations for holistic, eco-friendly approaches fostering sustainable growth in both business and the environment.

*Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, environmental issues, green marketing evolution, Indian corporate sector, green marketing challenges, sustainable development.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Promoting green products is swiftly gaining popularity in the marketing industry, and data on green marketing suggest that it may be quite profitable for companies. Recent studies indicate that the revenue from green marketing was 4.6 billion US dollars in 2019 and is projected to increase to 5.6 billion US dollars in 2025. Consumer demand is one of the key factors causing this increase. 92 per cent of consumers claim that they are more likely to trust companies that actively display environmental awareness or social responsibility. It is clear that green marketing benefits not just the environment but also the financial health of companies (Yaqub, 2023).

Sustainability, or environmental issues, is one of the causes of the development of green marketing. Green marketing, as stated by the American Marketing Association, is the promotion of goods that are thought to be ecologically friendly and sustainable. Green marketing, as a result, includes a broad variety of initiatives, such as modification of products, modifications in the manufacturing process, packaging improvements, and advertising adjustments. With growing awareness of the effects of climate change, non-biodegradable solid waste, the harmful effects of pollutants, etc., consumers as well as marketers are becoming more sensitive to the need for a switch to green products and services. Green marketing refers to a holistic marketing concept in which the product, marketing consumption, and disposal of goods and services take place in a manner that is less harmful to the environment. Consumers typically consider phrases like phosphate-free, refillable, recyclable, ozone-friendly, and environmentally friendly. If a company wants to maintain its edge in the market, it must incorporate environmental considerations into every facet of marketing. (Porter, 1998)

### 1.1. Evolution of Green Marketing

According to Peattie (2001), the evolution of green marketing has three phases:

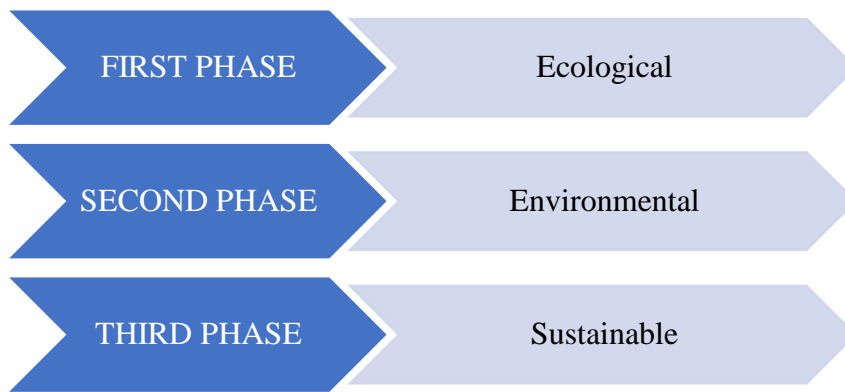


Fig1: Evolution of Green Marketing

The first stage was known as "**Ecological**" green marketing, and all marketing operations during this time were focused on addressing environmental issues and offering solutions.

The second phase was "**Environmental**" green marketing when the emphasis turned to clean technology and the creation of novel new goods to address difficulties with waste and pollution.

"**Sustainable**" green marketing was the third phase. It gained popularity in the latter stages of the 1990s and early 2000s as a result of its focus on creating high-quality products that can satisfy consumer needs while still being affordable, convenient, and environmentally friendly.



Fig2: Characteristics of Being Green (Peattie, 2001)

## 1.2. Golden Rules of Green Marketing

- i. *Understand the customer:* Ensure that the issues that the solution companies provide aim to solve are known to and felt by the consumer.
- ii. *Giving information to the customers:* It's important to explain to them why what the companies are doing matters as well as whatever they're doing is to protect the environment.
- iii. *Being authentic and transparent:* means that the company is (a) genuinely doing what companies say companies are doing in its green marketing campaign and (b) the

company's other business practices are in line with whatever they're doing that is environmentally friendly.

- iv. *Reassure the Customer:* Customers need to be convinced that a product does what it is supposed to do. This movie should not sacrifice product quality for environmental reasons.
- v. *Take Pricing into Account:* When using higher-quality ingredients, companies must make sure that the consumers can afford the extra cost and believe it is worthwhile.

### 1.3. Objectives of the Study

- i. To study the need for sustainable green marketing in today's era
- ii. To explore the marketing mix executed by green marketers.
- iii. To explore the green practices adopted by Indian companies.
- iv. To study the challenges faced by Indian companies in applying green marketing practices.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the introduction of the green marketing idea, writers have proposed many definitions. According to Lam and Li (2019), green marketing is the use of marketing strategies to encourage commerce that meets both organisational and individual goals while preserving, safeguarding, and conserving the physical environment. The creators of this definition acknowledge the link between organisations, the environment, and the community. From a different perspective, Alamsyah et al. (2020) examine green marketing via a promotional lens, including green advertising, green brand image, green awareness, and green purchasing intents. This viewpoint is an all-encompassing vision of green marketing, in which everything an organisation does to sell its products should incorporate green marketing ideals. Ahmadzadeh et al. (2017) describe green marketing as a strategic endeavour to offer an organization's eco-friendly products to customers. The definition is restricted and only addresses one aspect of the marketing mix. According to Papadas et al. (2017), green marketing is an organization's participation in strategic, tactical, and internal actions and processes with the overall goal of creating, communicating, and delivering products with the least environmental effect. This term encompasses all aspects of the marketing mix. Vilkaite-Vaitone and Skackauskiene (2019) agree with this description, referring to green marketing as sustainable marketing, organic marketing, eco-friendly marketing, environmental marketing, and ecological marketing. Green marketing's interchangeable names indicate the level to which it has favourably affected product design, the environment, and product benefits. Against this background, we examine the overall structure and contributing components to green marketing.

Sustainable marketing became popular in the 2000s, with many authors using the term interchangeably with green marketing. Katrandjiev (2016) defines sustainable marketing as "the process of planning, implementing, and controlling the development, price formation, and distribution of a product in a way that ensures adherence and continuity." It strives to meet customer requirements, assure the attainment of the organization's goals, and ensure that the entire process is in sync with the ecosystem. The sustainable marketing approach emphasises needs rather than necessities, comparing the demands of the current generation to those of future generations (Peattie, 2001). Sustainable development addresses environmental degradation, climate change, inequality, poverty, peace, and justice in order to establish harmony between nature and humanity. Kisieliauskas and Jančaitis (2022) define green marketing as promoting environmental sustainability to a specific audience. It strives to create an ecologically conscious image, and becoming green necessitates not only advertising an offering with environmental features but also changing businesses' messages and manufacturing processes. Sustainable marketing, on the other hand, takes the term "green" to a deeper level. It entails raising awareness about a future that is more sustainable and improved. Sustainable development addresses the degradation of the environment, climate change, poverty, inequalities, peace, and justice in order to establish harmony among nature and humanity.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study uses secondary data to support its results. To establish the conceptual underpinnings of the green marketing concept, several studies that were published in a variety of journals were carefully examined. From the companies' websites, useful data about green marketing strategies has been gathered. Publications including periodicals, books, journals, conference proceedings, etc. are considered secondary data sources.

## 4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Need for Sustainable Green Marketing in Today's Era

- i. *Cost and earning-related issues:* Green marketing, which corporate units and organisations may employ as a tool, can be used to track businesses. Companies, organisations, and organisations that can reduce hazardous trash and scrap may save a lot of money, reduce expenditures, and increase profits.
- ii. *Adopting a corporate social responsibility strategy:* Visionary firms that are adaptable and inventive are beginning to recognise their social duty. As a result, they must act responsibly and in a way that protects the environment. Many, however, see this as an opportunity to grow money while avoiding corporate accountability. In this case, companies can choose between the two options listed below:-
  - a. Thinking that they are doing corporate social responsibility, or
  - b. being responsible without spreading these facts for the welfare of society and the environment, is being ecologically responsible. For instance, Body Shop is found to provide clients with environmentally friendly alternatives to conventional cosmetics. Instead of only being a competition vehicle, this concept is closely related to the broader corporate culture.
- iii. *Encouraging Business Opportunity:* Around 30 per cent of Indians desire to purchase eco-friendly goods. Progressive businesses and organisations perceive this as a chance to seize and gain an edge over those who have not embraced green marketing. For instance, the waxed paper company took the position of Clamshell Packaging as a result of McDonald's numerous consumer complaints over the creation of polystyrene and ozone.
- iv. *The consequence of competition on businesses:* The requirement for businesses, firms, and organisations to keep their competitive spirit is another crucial factor in the field of green marketing. Companies constantly monitor their rivals and concentrate on their environmental/ecological behaviour, practises, and initiatives. The corporate sector has made the necessary modifications to decrease its negative environmental consequences as a result of the intense pressure from competitors.
- v. *Government pressure:* Governments demand that businesses always put their customers and society first. Government regulations on green marketing are intended to significantly reduce costs for the community and for consumers.

### 4.2. Green Marketing Mix

The term "marketing mix" often refers to the assortment of strategies used by a business to introduce a product or service in the market. The marketing mix must take environmental considerations into account when using green marketing. The extended marketing mix is the term used to describe the marketing mix for items in the service industry. The four Ps of marketing also referred to as the marketing mix, are product, price, place, and promotion. In the extended marketing mix, which applies to service items, people, process, and physical evidence included to create the seven Ps. According to the principles of green marketing, every component of the marketing mix, from product development to market introduction, must reflect a green perspective (Kotler, 1991).

If a product's production process is environmentally friendly and doesn't harm the environment, it may be referred to as a "green product." A company must reduce environmental contamination during the production process. It is important to extract raw materials from products in a way that protects natural resources. As has been mentioned, waste management is a crucial subject in this context. Businesses will need to implement eco-friendly designs, and packaging should reduce dangers and pollutants. Since adjustments to the product would result in a turnaround in sales, product upgrades are worth investing in the fact that they inevitably include significant sunk costs. Reverse logistics, which involves customers returning discarded packaging, wrapping, and even used goods to the company, would significantly contribute to environmental protection (Peattie, 1999).

The cost of being green is high because it requires installing new machinery, equipment, and personnel as well as paying for external expenditures and recycling garbage. These expenses would affect a product's price. Green price is hence a premium price. Because of the high price, promotions are under additional pressure. These costs will need to be supported by marketing strategies, and

customers will need to be convinced to pay more. All of this would necessitate persuasive advertising messaging. However, if packaging is eliminated, the cost of green items might be minimal. In fact, given that packaging expenses account for a sizable portion of the unit cost, several businesses have discovered this to be an appealing prospect (Peattie, 1999).

Green distribution entails channel selection that minimises harm to the environment. The majority of environmental harm occurs during the movement of products. As a result, safety measures will need to be implemented during the shipment of goods (Peattie, 1999).

Green marketing must be incorporated into a company's advertising. Through advertising, public relations, direct marketing, and sales promotions, the customer's need to be environmentally conscious must be emphasised. The two platforms that are most frequently utilised to portray a company's positive attitude toward the environment are public relations and advertising. Going green can occasionally end up being a significant PR effort because it links the company with the community. Green marketing can be used to promote products and defend their benefits and costs (Peattie, 1999).

The majority of consumers are not genuinely aware of the importance of green products due to a lack of information, so green promotional strategies should take this into account. A business can use a variety of green promoting methods to fill this informational gap. To show appreciation for a green product, consumers need to be aware of the kinds of environmental issues the solution will address. Customers should also be provided with a variety of environmentally friendly alternatives that can be used. Since some people have concerns about how well-functioning "green" items actually operate, customers require to be assured of their efficacy (Peattie, 1999).

Direct marketing channels would be more appealing to consumers that favour green items. Public relations could be envisioned as a way to create a favourable perception of the organisation as a whole. Green marketing must concentrate on identifying requirements and encouraging customers to purchase environmentally friendly products. Therefore, marketing research is required to back up green marketing strategies (Gottfried, 2004).

A business that decides to use green marketing as an operational approach will need to make some internal changes. The business process needs to be restructured because of this. It is erroneous to think that an organization's marketing department is the only one capable of using green marketing to turn things around. Green marketing will actually need to function as an environmentally friendly approach by coordinating with other organisational activities. This suggests that a corporation must alter its corporate philosophy in order to achieve a competitive advantage. By coordinating the marketing approach with the business strategy, there must be a strategic match (Grant, 2007).

Through careful consideration of particular actions, one can bring about the shift in the company model that green marketing demands. To set benchmarks and assess the existing performance concerning environmental effects, an environmental audit must be conducted. If a company's management pushes beyond what is typically considered green marketing, it will help the company's green strategy. It is necessary to show the management's keenness. By implementing instructional programmes, employees require to be motivated to contribute positively at all times. To inform a company's stakeholders, that good performance results must be released regularly. Through ongoing learning, the processes and products must be integrated (Menon et al., 1997).

Marketers can use a life cycle evaluation of products, which allows for the listing of a product's many beneficial and detrimental contributions at various phases of its life cycle. This investigation would shed light on negative consequences during the product processing, packaging, transportation, and sales stages (Menon et al., 1997).

It is not overstated to say that firms cannot easily resolve environmental challenges. The assistance of numerous stakeholders must be gathered in this effort. Strategic collaborations can be useful in this situation. Joining forces with customers, suppliers, regulators, employees, pressure groups, and competitors is a common component of strategic alliances (Grant, 2007).

### **4.3. Sustainable Green Initiatives Taken by the Indian Corporate Sector**

**i. Hindustan Computer Limited (H.C.L.):**

- a. *Eco-safe Plan:* H.C.L. has implemented the "Eco-safe" plan, which focuses on creating, identifying, and maintaining a sustainable management system for the environment at the corporate level.
- b. *Impact:*
  - Environmental Stewardship: The "Eco-safe" plan positions H.C.L. as a leader in India's environmental efforts, showcasing a commitment to environmental stewardship at the corporate level.
  - Holistic Approach: By emphasizing product lifecycle management, H.C.L. adopts a holistic approach to environmental sustainability, considering the entire life cycle of its products.

**ii. Oil and Natural Gas's Green Initiative (O.N.G.C.):**

- a. *Green Crematoriums:* O.N.G.C. is actively involved in the development of energy-efficient "green crematoriums" that are intended to replace traditional hardwood fire crematoriums across the country.
- b. *Impact:*
  - Environmental Responsibility: O.N.G.C.'s initiative showcases a commitment to environmental responsibility, particularly in an industry that may not be inherently associated with green practices.
  - Social Impact: The introduction of green crematoriums aligns with societal expectations for more sustainable and eco-friendly practices, contributing to positive social impact.

**iii. Indian information technology service corporation Wipro's initiatives:**

- a. *Wipro Green Ware:* Wipro has introduced a range of environmentally friendly products under the brand name "Wipro Green Ware." This initiative focuses on creating a broad range of laptops and desktops with a commitment to environmental sustainability. The initiative sets goals for becoming water-positive, carbon-neutral, and energy-saving in its primary green business activities.
- b. *Impact:*
  - Sustainable Technology: Wipro's emphasis on green products contributes to the promotion of sustainable and eco-friendly technology in the IT industry.
  - Reduction of Environmental Footprint: The commitment to becoming water-positive, carbon-neutral, and energy-saving reflects a comprehensive approach to reducing the environmental footprint of Wipro's operations.

**iv. Indian Tobacco Company Ltd.'s Initiatives (I.T.C.):**

- a. *Ozone-Treated Elemental Chlorine-Free Bleaching Technologies:* I.T.C., one of India's largest conglomerates, has introduced environmentally friendly practices in its operations. Specifically, it has incorporated "ozone-treated elemental chlorine-free bleaching technologies" in its production processes.
- b. *Impact:*
  - Reduced Environmental Impact: The use of ozone-treated and elemental chlorine-free bleaching technologies reduces the environmental impact associated with traditional bleaching methods.
  - Setting Industry Standards: I.T.C.'s adoption of green technologies sets a standard for environmentally conscious practices in the tobacco industry.

**v. Tata's new mantra: Going Green:**

- a. *Construction of an Environmentally Friendly Showroom:* Tata Motors is involved in the construction of an environmentally friendly showroom. The initiative includes the use of natural flooring materials and energy-efficient lighting.
- b. *Impact:*
  - Promoting Sustainable Practices: The initiative promotes sustainable construction practices within the automotive industry.
  - Energy Savings: Energy-efficient lighting contributes to reduced energy consumption and environmental conservation.

**vi. Godrej Green Center:**

- a. *Godrej Green Center*: Godrej has established the "Godrej Green Center," which serves as a hub for promoting better design, operation, construction, maintenance, and waste disposal with a focus on energy, water, and material efficiency.
  - b. *Impact*:
    - **Catalyst for Change**: The Green Center acts as a catalyst for positive change within the Indian construction industry by setting higher standards for sustainability.
    - **Innovation Hub**: It serves as an innovation hub for exploring and implementing environmentally friendly practices in construction.
- vii. State Bank of India:**
- a. *Green IT@SBI*: State Bank of India (SBI) has implemented a green initiative known as "Green IT@SBI." This initiative focuses on adopting environmentally friendly practices in the Information Technology (IT) sector. Green IT@SBI incorporates paperless banking practices, reducing the need for traditional paper-based transactions.
  - b. *Impact*:
    - **Reduced Paper Consumption**: The initiative contributes to reduced paper consumption within banking operations, leading to lower environmental impact.
    - **Energy Savings**: Electronic transactions and the use of technology contribute to energy savings compared to traditional banking practices.

#### 4.4. Challenges Faced by Green Marketers

The following are the primary challenges that Green Marketing must overcome:

- i. **New Idea**: Introducing new environmentally friendly ideas poses challenges as it requires breaking away from conventional norms and educating the market about novel concepts that address environmental issues.
  - a. *Consumer Awareness*: Creating awareness among consumers about the environmental issues addressed by the new idea may require significant effort. Consumers might not be familiar with the specific ecological problems the idea aims to solve.
  - b. *Educational Gap*: Bridging the educational gap regarding the benefits and impacts of the new idea can be challenging. Clear communication and educational campaigns are crucial.
  - c. *Market Acceptance*: Convincing the market to accept and adopt a new idea might face resistance due to ingrained habits or lack of understanding about the potential benefits.
- ii. **Sustainability**: Achieving sustainability in the context of green marketing involves creating a balance between environmental, social, and economic aspects. It requires long-term commitment and the ability to integrate eco-friendly practices without compromising economic viability.
  - a. *High Initial Costs*: Implementing sustainable practices often requires significant upfront investments in technology, materials, and processes, impacting short-term profitability.
  - b. *Market Perception*: Some consumers may be skeptical about the sustainability claims made by companies, leading to challenges in building trust and credibility.
  - c. *Supply Chain Complexity*: Ensuring sustainability across the entire supply chain, from sourcing raw materials to production and distribution, can be complex and may require collaboration with various stakeholders.
- iii. **Cost**: Cost challenges in green marketing arise from the need to invest in environmentally friendly practices, technologies, and materials. While these investments contribute to long-term sustainability, the initial costs can be a barrier for some businesses.
  - a. *Research and Development*: Developing and implementing green technologies or sustainable products often involves substantial research and development costs.
  - b. *Eco-Friendly Materials*: Using sustainable and eco-friendly materials can be more expensive than traditional alternatives.
  - c. *Marketing and Certification*: Costs associated with marketing campaigns promoting green products and obtaining eco-certifications can be significant.
- iv. **Non-cooperation**: Non-cooperation refers to the resistance or lack of support from internal and external stakeholders, including employees, suppliers, investors, and even customers.

Overcoming resistance and fostering collaboration is crucial for successful implementation of green marketing initiatives.

- a. *Employee Resistance*: Employees may resist changes in processes or practices associated with green marketing due to concerns about additional workload or uncertainty.
  - b. *Supplier Reluctance*: Suppliers might be unwilling to adopt sustainable practices, impacting the entire supply chain.
  - c. *Investor Skepticism*: Investors may question the financial viability of green initiatives, leading to reluctance in providing necessary funding.
- v. **Customers' persuasion**: Convincing customers to choose and adopt green products or services can be challenging due to various factors such as consumer habits, perceived effectiveness of green alternatives, and skepticism about environmental claims.
- a. *Consumer Awareness*: Many consumers may not be fully aware of the environmental impact of their choices, requiring education and awareness-building.
  - b. *Skepticism about Effectiveness*: Some customers may question the effectiveness of green products, doubting their ability to perform as well as traditional alternatives.
  - c. *Price Sensitivity*: Consumers may be reluctant to pay a premium for green products, especially if they perceive them as more expensive.
- vi. **Green Myopia**: Green myopia refers to a situation where businesses focus solely on short-term environmental gains without considering the broader, long-term sustainability of their actions. It involves overlooking or neglecting other aspects of environmental impact.
- a. *Narrow Focus*: Businesses may prioritize one environmental aspect while unintentionally neglecting or contributing negatively to other aspects.
  - b. *Lack of Holistic Approach*: Focusing on immediate environmental benefits without considering the entire product life cycle or the interconnectedness of environmental issues.
  - c. *Ignoring Downstream Effects*: Neglecting the potential negative environmental impacts in later stages of production, distribution, or disposal.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The journey through the realms of sustainable green marketing in the Indian landscape underscores the pivotal role it plays in shaping the future of businesses and the environment. As demonstrated by stalwarts like H.C.L., O.N.G.C., and Godrej, green initiatives are not merely a trend but a strategic imperative. The profitability surge, driven by heightened consumer demand for environmentally conscious products, speaks volumes about the transformative power of green marketing. However, challenges persist, ranging from the articulation of novel environmental concepts to managing costs and garnering stakeholder cooperation. Yet, these challenges are not roadblocks but opportunities for innovation and growth. The call to align marketing practices with environmental considerations echoes as a clarion, emphasizing the need for businesses to adopt holistic, eco-friendly approaches.

This is not just a shift in strategy; it's a commitment to sustainable growth and responsible corporate citizenship. As the research concludes, the imperative is clear – businesses must not only adapt to environmental concerns but actively contribute to a greener, more prosperous world. The final act in this narrative isn't an end; it's a new beginning for businesses to thrive, sustain, and leave an indelible legacy in the verdant landscape of the marketplace. The stage is set for a sustainable encore, where profitability and environmental stewardship dance in harmony, creating a legacy of resilience, responsibility, and prosperity.

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