

Green Marketing Practices: Gaining Competitive Edge

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Abstract:

The fundamental basis of long-run success of a firm is the achievement and maintenance of a competitive advantage. Indeed, understanding which resources and firms behavior lead to competitive advantage is considered to be the fundamental issue in marketing strategy. A competitive advantage can result either from implementing a green marketing not simultaneously being employed by current or prospective competitors or through superior execution of the same strategy as competitors. The competitive advantage is sustained when other firms are unable to duplicate the benefit of this strategy. Because of its importance to the long term success of firms, a body of literature has emerged which addressed the content of competitive advantage as well as its sources and practices that may be used to achieve it. The purpose of this study is to trace the green marketing practices and how it has been applied to gain competitive advantages.

Key Words: Green, Marketing, Environment, Practices, Gain.

Introduction:

The business are increasing with respect to meet the demand of increasing people all over the world it also brings some problems with it one of these problems is environmental problems that affect all living beings negatively. These problems have come out more specific as the people are talking about these problems now a day. Now people are becoming conscious about the environment due to the publicity of mass media. People are not only customers but also they try to expose as a social and environmental workers. Because of the rising threats of harmful products and unfriendly activities in both the society and environment it makes the people think more about their future concern and greater welfare to the surroundings. These concerns reflect the more demand of eco friendly products and engaging environmental friendly activities by the people, clan, and communities etc. which also makes the businesses bound to be so. As a result, In return to these attitudes of the consumers, companies have started to form their marketing strategies so as to appeal increasing awareness of this environment-friendliness. These marketing strategies, named as green marketing, have caused companies to adopt green policies in their pricing, promotion, product features and distribution activities. Environmental problems are still the main concern for the entire world and human beings. Air pollution, greenhouse effects and ecological unbalances, are the main environmental problems that have occurred till now along with the activities of human being. As environmental concerns have increased, customers are being habituated to buy greener products. The influence of the green consumer will grow as environmental awareness among consumers spreads and improvements are made to the environmental information available through eco-labeling schemes, consumer groups and consumer guides.

Basically green marketing refers to the activities which is environmentally friendly and also do not harm any living beings by the company's products or any other activities and lead the promotional activities in such a way that drives the consumer being socially responsible and act as green. But the question is that how the consumers will reply to these green actions of the companies? And how much they are concern about go green activities in perspective of Bangladesh?

Environmental and economic concerns are changing the marketplace, customers' needs are evolving and brand loyalty is being redefined. Companies that integrate green strategies into their product development, operational processes and marketing activities are finding new opportunities for competitive advantage. Green has become a mainstream issue driving millions of consumers to find out how they can live a more eco-friendly existence. This paper focuses on gaining competitive advantages dealing with environmental friendly or green products.

Polonosky (1994), Green marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchange intended to satisfy human needs or want such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with minimal detrimental on the natural environment. Ottman (1998), define products product in which typically non-toxic, made from recycled materials or minimally packaged Pavan (2010), Characterizes green product based on a few features including original grown recyclable, contain natural ingrained contain recycled contents, do not pollute environment contain approved chemical and not test on animals.

Elkington (1994), defines green consumer as one who avoids products that are likely to endanger the health of the consumer or others; cause significant damage to the environment during manufacturing use or disposal consume disproportionate amount of energy, cause unnecessary waster use material

derived from the threatened species or environment involve unnecessary use of or cruelty to animals, adversely affect other country. Pride and Ferrell (1993), Green marketing also alternatively known as environmental marketing and sustainable marketing refers to ornamentalations' efforts at designing promotion, prizing and distributing products that will not has the environment.

Tracy Allen (2007), articulate the collective understanding of retailers with regard to sustainable competitive advantages in the context of green marketing. Positioning is core to sustainable competitive advantages. Srivastava (1995), mention if the world economy shifts towards an ecological orientation, it will change the competitive landscape of industries in terms of consumers preferences and demand. Rashad Yazdanifard (2011), explore the impact of green marketing strategies on customer satisfaction, environmental safety and green marketing is a tool for protecting the environment for the future generations. It is not just an environmental protection but also a marketing strategy. Henderson (1983), continuous discussion of those unique advantage of one firm over competitors; those who can adopt best or fastest gain an advantage over competitors. Ashu Kumar (2012), attempts to briefly discuss why green marketing important and mention some of the green marketing. It is still its infancy and a lot of research to be done on green marketing to fully explore its profitability. Thus green marketing is a golden goose and can be a very powerful marketing strategy though when it's done right.

Consumers will pursue to purchase eco-friendly options for products that produced high level of environmental impact correspond to those with low level of environmental impact. Malaysian consumers consider aerosols, house hold cleaning, glass based, pesticides and plastics as non-green product classifies with high level of impact to environments (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011). The recognition of eco-label has a positive impact between the information of a green product and consumer's willingness to buy. In addition, previous researches that were finalized in western nations have agreed that most consumers have positive green consciousness on eco-labeled products (Cherian & Jacob, 2012). Grant (2007) has suggested that the primary objective of green marketing is to educate and make people willing to go green, because it has an influence on changing the lifestyle and behavior of potential consumers.

Referring to the first element of green marketing mix- Product- the producer should offer products that do not have a negative impact on the environment, on the contrary, to protect it. Consumers are influenced by the labeling that guarantees that the products meet the green standards. Green product possesses the characteristic that it does not make damages to the environment. (Ranai Kordshouli and Yari Bouzanjani, 2012). Green distribution refers to all the activities about monitoring and raising environmental aspect in company's demand chain. Its attempts include collaboration with network partners for re-fostering the product or waste disposal adjustments and customer's assurance of possibility of recycling the recyclable materials (Constantinos et al., 2012).

According to Hawken (Ecology of Commerce, 1995) business has three issues to face. These are what it takes, what it makes and what it wastes. What it takes is materials from the environment, (its ecosystem) through extracting, mining, cutting, hunting and other means. What it makes is the products of commerce, goods and services that are derived from the natural environment through the process of conversion and transformation. What it wastes represents eco-costs arising from garbage, pollution and destruction of natural systems, which are the consequences of taking and making processes. And these costs are not internalized in most of the accounting systems so far. Some marketers have also used the opportunity to charge higher prices, implying better quality. Some have gone further and engaged in "green washing". This is where managers of so-called green companies only pay lip service to green

issues without actually practicing them. Consequently, green marketing suffered a backlash because of its failure to achieve its promises (Crane, Andrew 2000).

The main objective of this study is to identify competitive advantages by practicing green marketing. The other specific objectives are in the following:

- ❖ To study current situation of green marketing practices.
- ❖ Identify challenges and issues to practice green marketing.
- ❖ Identify opportunities to gain competitive advantages.

Methodology of the study:

As the study is conducted to identify that how the companies may gain competitive edge through green marketing, both the primary and secondary data have collected. Primary data has been collected from all parties (Agri-business executive, Pharmaceutical executive, Textile executive and other business executives) related to the respondents and secondary data has been collected from various secondary sources.

Research Design:

Mainly quantitative data have been used to analyze for the study. Complementarily, qualitative data regarding competitive advantages of green marketing activities of the companies have been used in this study.

Sources of Data:

These data and information for this study are being collecting from primary and secondary sources.

A. Primary data collection:

For collecting primary data a well-structured and approved (by supervisor) questionnaire has been used. For primary data collection study area, sampling techniques and sample size used are the following

Population or study area:

As the research is conducted on Executive employee level so, data has been collected from the executives of different companies in various areas. The study site is selected by taking purposive sampling technique.

Sampling & Sample size:

A total of 50 respondents have been selected for collecting primary data for the study. The total respondents have consisted of 11 Agri-business executive, 13 Pharmaceutical executive, 5 Textile executive 8 Technology and 13 other business executives.

B. Secondary Data

The secondary data, we have used internet secondary data and secondary literature source such as magazines. We also used information about green marketing and competitive advantage from books and scientific articles from online libraries.

Data Analysis Method:

Various statistical tools and techniques have used to analyze the collected data and information for the research.

Conceptual Framework:

The term Green Marketing came into prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The proceedings of this workshop resulted in one of the first books on green marketing entitled "Ecological Marketing".

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Reports started with the ice cream seller Ben & Jerry's where the financial report was supplemented by a greater view on the company's environmental impact. In 1987 a document prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need", this became known as the Brundtland Report and was another step towards widespread thinking on sustainability in everyday activity. Two tangible milestones for wave 1 of green marketing came in the form of published books, both of which were called Green Marketing. They were by Ken Peattie (1992) in the United Kingdom and by Jacquelyn Ottman (1993) in the United States of America.

A major portion of people believe that green marketing refers solely to the promotion or advertising of product with environmental characteristics. Terms like phosphate free, Recyclable, Refillable, Ozone friendly and environmental friendly are some of the things consumer most often associate with green marketing. While these terms are green marketing claims, in general green marketing is a much broader concept one that can be applied to consumer goods, Industrial goods and even services. For example, around the world there are resorts that are beginning to promote themselves as "ecotourism" facilities such as facilities that "specialize" in experiencing nature or operating in a fashion that minimize their environmental impact. Green marketing refers to the process of selling products or services based on their environmental benefits. Such a product or service may be environmental friendly in itself or produced or packaged in environmental friendly way. Green or environmental marketing consist 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.

The green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, change to the product process, packaging changes as well as modifying advertising. Yet defining green marketing is not a simple task. Indeed the terminology used in this area has varied, it includes: Green marketing, Environmental marketing and Ecological marketing. While green marketing came into prominence in the late 1980 and early 1990, it was first discussed much earlier.

Analysis and Findings:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents with mean scores (N=50)

Age	Number of Respondents		Gender					Occupation/Job Nature		
			Sex	Single	Married	Total	%			
20-30	25	50%	Male	15	24	39	78%	Agriculture	11	22%
30-40	16	32%	Female	2	9	11	22%	Pharmaceuticals	13	26%
40-50	8	16%	Total	17	33	50	100%	Textile	5	10%
50-60	1	2%	%	34%	66%	100%		Technology	8	16%
60-70	0	0%						Others	13	26%
	N=50	100%		N=50					N=50	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Table 1 depicts the demographic information about the respondents which reveals that 50% of the respondents were under the age group of 20-30. 32%, 16%, 2% come under 30-40, 40-50, 50-60 and 0% of respondents were above 60 years of age. Table also depict the gender information which include 78% of male, 22% of female among them 34% are single and 66% are married. The table depicts occupational information about the respondents where 22%, 26%, 10%, 16% of respondents come under Agriculture, Pharmaceuticals, Textile, Technology and 26% from other occupations.

1. Environmental friendly product is useful for our health.

Table 2. Respondent's awareness about environmental friendly product.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	32	16	1	1	0	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	160	64	3	2	0	229
Percentage (%)	69.87	27.94	1.31	.87	0	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, 69.87% respondents are strongly agreed and 27.94 % respondents are agreed with this fact. Respondents feel the benefits of environmental friendly products and enforces Environmental friendly product is useful for their health.

2. The product we use as usual has harmful effect to our health.

Table 3. Respondents perceptions regarding as usual products.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	4	31	4	7	4	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	20	124	12	14	4	174
Percentage (%)	11.49	71.26	6.89	8.04	2.29	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, 11.49% respondents are strongly agreed and 71.26 % respondents are agreed with this fact. Most of the Respondents said, there are some negative impacts on consumer’s health of as usual products.

3. Environmental friendly product is essential for our health.

Table 4. Respondent’s acceptance of environmental friendly products.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	39	10	1	0	0	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	195	40	3	0	0	238
Percentage (%)	81.93	16.80	1.26	0	0	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that Respondents are Strongly Agree about the necessity of environmental friendly product.

4. Bangladeshi companies are dealing with Environmental friendly product.

Table 5. Present situations of Bangladeshi companies to deal with Environmental friendly product.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	1	10	6	27	6	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	5	40	18	54	6	123
Percentage (%)	4.06	32.52	14.63	43.90	4.87	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that most of the Bangladeshi companies are not habituated to deal with Environmental friendly product.

5. Consumers prefer environmental friendly products.

Table 6. Measuring consumers preferences towards Environmental friendly product.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	12	20	8	8	2	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	60	80	24	16	2	182
Percentage (%)	32.96	43.95	13.18	8.79	1.09	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that most of the executive said the consumer's preference is not so good.

6. Additional investment is required to develop environmental friendly product.

Table 7. Entrepreneur’s thinking to develop environmental friendly product.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	9	25	5	8	3	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	45	100	15	16	3	179
Percentage (%)	25.13	55.86	8.79	8.93	1.67	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, major portion of the executives thought that additional investments are required to develop environmental friendly product.

7. Wastage may be reduced by dealing with environmental friendly product.

Table 8. Recycling recommendations.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	15	24	7	3	1	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	75	96	21	6	1	199
Percentage (%)	37.68	48.24	10.55	3.01	.005	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, majority of the respondents thought that wastages are recyclable or reducible.

8. Expert or expertise knowledge is required to develop environmental friendly product.

Table 9. Respondents opinion towards Experts.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	14	31	3	2	0	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	70	124	9	4	0	207
Percentage (%)	33.81	59.90	4.34	1.93	0	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been expressed that the expertise knowledge or the experts involvement is required to develop environmental friendly product.

9. Consumers are aware about their health.

Table 10. The level of Consumer awareness to their health.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	5	15	4	19	7	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	25	60	12	38	7	142
Percentage (%)	17.60	42.25	8.45	26.78	4.92	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that Respondent said Bangladeshi consumers are not enough conscious regarding their health.

10. Consumers pay more willingly for their health or environmental safety.

Table 11. Consumers spending behavior for their health safety.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	4	16	5	15	10	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	20	64	15	30	10	139
Percentage (%)	14.38	46.04	10.79	21.58	7.19	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been explored that the health conscious consumers are agree to pay more but the rest ignore to pay more for their health safety.

11. Latest technology is used to develop environmental friendly product.

Table 12. Respondents views regarding innovation.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	5	29	5	8	3	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	25	116	15	16	3	175
Percentage (%)	14.28	66.28	8.57	9.14	1.71	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that most of the respondents are on behalf of innovation to develop environmental friendly product.

12. Continuous improvement is required to retain existing customer.

Table 13. Measurements of consumers purchase pattern.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	12	19	4	14	1	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	60	76	12	28	1	177
Percentage (%)	33.89	42.93	6.77	15.81	.56	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that consumer's choice is always changeable according to time.

13. Consumer search for low prices product.

Table 14. Consumers price sensitivity measurement.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	23	18	2	5	2	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	115	72	6	10	2	205
Percentage (%)	56.09	35.12	2.92	4.87	.98	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been depict that most of Respondents are strongly agree and agree regarding consumers price sensitivity. It refers consumers are diversified about price.

14. Dealing with environmental friendly product is difficult for all companies.

Table 15. Level of difficulty.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	3	17	5	21	4	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	15	68	15	42	4	144
Percentage (%)	10.41	47.22	10.41	29.16	2.77	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that some of Respondents said dealing with environmental friendly product is not difficult. Some respondents said it is difficult.

15. Companies are reluctant to produce environmental friendly product.

Table 16. Companies willingness to produce environmental friendly product.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	4	18	6	27	5	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	20	72	18	54	5	169
Percentage (%)	11.83	42.60	10.65	31.95	2.96	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings most of the respondents agree that companies are reluctant to produce environmental product. On the other hand a major portion said companies have willingness to produce environmental friendly product.

16. Transition from traditional business to deal with environmental friendly product is quite different in Bangladesh.

Table 17. Changing business or migration from traditional business.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	4	25	7	13	1	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	20	100	21	26	1	168
Percentage (%)	11.90	59.52	12.50	15.47	.59	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been illustrated that, Most of the Respondents said transition from traditional business to deal with environmental friendly product is quite different in Bangladesh.

17. Government should take initiative in making companies to deal with environmental friendly product.

Table 18. Government’s role to promote environmental friendly products.

Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number of Respondents	29	18	2	1	0	50
Point Assigned	5	4	3	2	1	
Total Outcome	145	72	6	2	0	225
Percentage (%)	64.44	32.00	2.66	.88	0	100

Source: Field Survey.

In the above findings, it has been found that Government’s role is not remarkable to promote environmental friendly product. For this reasons most of the consumers are strongly agree that Governments should take more initiative to develop environmental friendly product.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

The consumer attitude towards green marketing is diversified by the multi characteristics consumer of Bangladesh. Majority of the people are not aware of green product and their usages. Male are more positive minded than female in respects of different issues of green marketing in Bangladesh. Consumer loyalty is the most important factors used to take decisions for purchasing green by consumers. Though it is not clear to the general people what kinds of benefits are involving in environmental friendly product but they are eager to buy green product due to Global warming. For making green marketing effective or gaining competitive advantages companies have to maintain three things-

- (i) Being Genuine: Being Genuine means that firms are actually doing what firm claim to be doing in firms' green marketing campaign. The rest of firm's business policy is consistent with environmental friendly. Both these conditions have to be met for firm's business to establish the kind of environmental credentials that will allow a green marketing campaign to succeed.
- (ii) Educating Customers: Let the people know whatever the firms are doing to protect the environment and what the matters behind it are.
- (iii) Giving your customer's an opportunity to practice: It refers personalizing the benefits of firm's environmentally friendly actions, normally through letting the customers take part in positive environmental actions.

After interviewing with respondents, analyzing data and preparing the report, the researcher's recommendations are the following:

- (i) Role of Governments, corporate sectors and society towards green environments, Government should strengthen the environmental governance. There is need of changing the mind set of administrators on the environmental issues in relation to proper environmental clearance report.
- (ii) Government should make extra provision in budget for implementing environmental policies.
- (iii) Government should make compulsion of social audit to corporate sectors.
- (iv) Government should take steps to makes laws about "go green" recycling materials etc.
- (v) Business organizations should use renewable sources of energy and green channel of distribution. These may beneficial to cut down their cost effectively.
- (vi) Society, employees and customers should take initiative for green products and services which are healthy to environment.
- (vii) Youth are great green warriors of future. If youth are responsible then green with any activity is possible.
- (viii) Consumer movement, consumerism or the point of environment issues should be strengthening.
- (ix) Government should use mass communication to provide information and knowledge to public about the importance of green products and services for their generation and for their children.
- (x) Employee should take about green working environment and tries to make management to devise green environment policy at workplace as well as surrounding the company etc

Conclusion

From the above we can conclude that green marketing is not going to be an easy concept. The firm has to plan and carry out research to find out how feasible it is going to be. Green marketing has to evolve since it is still at its infancy stage. Adaptation of green marketing may not be easy in the short run, but in the long run it will definitely have a positive impact on the firm. Government and social organizations may compel all the organization to practice green marketing for sustainable development. Customer too will be ready to pay premium price for green products. A smart marketer is one who not only convinces consumers but also involves him in marketing his product. Green marketing should not be considered as just one more approach to marketing but has to pursue with much better vigor as it has societal and environmental dimensions. Marketers also have the responsibility to make the stakeholders aware about the need and the advantages of green products. The green marketers will have full support of the government and the consumers also will not mind paying more for a cleaner and greener environment.

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