



A conceptual understanding of Green marketing in the Indian context

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Abstract

Marketing is one of the core areas of an organization and acknowledged as the revenue generating unit of the business. The concept of marketing has been evolved with time and moulded based on the external & internal driving forces. Society, environment & economy affect the dimension of the marketing orientation and direction. Initially, marketing adaptation was product-centric, then consumer-centric and finally the stakeholder becomes as a key focus. The 1980s onwards consumers become aware of the global scenario and environment and start seeking the origin of the product used in day-to-day life. Rising concern about the environment boost the cognitive attitude of the customers and create the market demand pressure for nature benevolent products. Organizations, firms measure this sentiment and design green product-develop the concept called green marketing. The green marketing concept is the combination of the green brand experience, green brand image, green trust and green satisfaction. Companies fabricate its green products' attributes in a composite manner that delivers a pleasant green brand experience and gradually build up the trust. Generation Y & Z are reactive towards the welfare of their family as well as nature. So, green marketing has its own niche segment of consumers that is Gen-Y & Z. The concept of sustainable marketing is the inception of "Marketing 5.0".

Keywords: marketing, environment, brand experience, brand image, generation Y & Z, green marketing

1. Introduction

Every organization aims to develop products or services that have the ability to satisfy the consumers' need & want and successful practice of this objective adds value to the organization's growth. Inability to meet the demand of the consumers forces the company to die. So the company tries to sense the changes in the direction & orientation of the consumers' desire, in order to sustain in the long run. The definition of "marketing" by Kotler, is "human activity directed at satisfying needs and wants through exchange processes." The term "exchange process" signifies the relationship between the organization and consumer and this exchange process happens in a controlled framework that is generalized as "marketing system." (Dholakia, Khurana, *et al.* 2010). This framework is evolved with times and this evolution is classified into three versions or segments, namely Marketing 1.0, 2.0 & 3.0. Marketing 1.0 originated during the era of industrialization when products were very general and basic. The objective of this primitive stage was to optimize the resource & operation to control the product's price. The concept was like lowering the monetary value would influence the affordability. The development of information technology introduced the concept of marketing 2.0. The orientation of marketing became more complex because consumers were well informed about the product specification and global brands. So the marketing strategy has been switched towards the *customer orientation* from the *product orientation*. The consumers' needs & wants were well described and the job of the marketing switched *one to one* relationship style. Consumers with mind & heart were needed to be addressed with the functional & emotional value proposition. Gradually, with the flow of time marketing, 2.0 is progressed into marketing 3.0 where consumers are considered as a complete human being with more refined needs and their demand is influenced by

social, economic & environmental changes. One more element—"spirit" has been added with the value proposition of marketing 2.0 and relationship style with consumers is developed to *many to many* with the objective "make the world a better place" (Kotler, Kartajaya, and *et al.* 2010) [3]. The consumer's perception and the outlook have become a major driver for marketing a product. The growing environmental consciousness influences the customers to judge the product beyond its functional benefit and think about the after use waste disposal. A new school of thought is developed with this concern about environmental degradation—"Green Marketing". This is not a new archetype. The process of waste management is available for many decades but that process is not full proof. The system cannot recycle the hundred percentage and leaves a toxic element in the environment. This claim forces to transform the "liner system" into something new, a concept that fits with both the aspect—"sustainability" and "profitability" (Leonard, 2010) [4]. According to Polonsky, green marketing is the change in the marketing strategy that generates value for individual, society and also for the environment. In a more elaborative sense, a marketing system that integrates environment focuses on nurturing alternative way for value addition and modifies the consumption pattern from "acquiring goods" to "sustainably want satisfaction" (Polonsky, 2011) [5]. The implication of green marketing strategy is a serious issue, because, green marketing companies characterize the environmental enhancement to create differentiation in the existing marketing. Consumers become more dubious about the ingredient source when green products are marketed. Again, marketers find it difficult to position the green product because of the price entry barrier, created convention goods and as a result, the green product is restricted to the niche market (Peattie, Crane, 2005) [6].

The article will focus on two objects: First, a review of the green marketing concept and consumer's attitude; Second, how this concept is applicable in Indian commercial aspect. Finally, the article will conclude, is there any scope for the development of the green product in India's emerging market?

2. The concept: marketing & green marketing?

"Market" is a place (real or virtual) that consists of two entities- buyers & sellers. When "ing" is suffixed with the word "market", it turns to an activity of exchange. More specifically, it can be explained as marketing is the activity to bridge the seller & buyers with the orientation of selling & buying (Palmer, 2012) [7]. So, the consumers' need is the basis of marketing and companies or organizations aim to fulfil the demand. The company makes the products as customers want or according to the viewpoint of the buyers. According to Robert. J. Keith, there are four eras of the evolution of the marketing concept. The first era is the "Production oriented" where manufacturing was done considering the new product concept not by analysing the market. Second era "Sales oriented" was the inception of the concept "marketing" because this time companies started thinking about his/her wants, about the distributor, supply chain. Now, comes the third era "Marketing oriented" where companies considered the need for developing the marketing department to serious measure the consumers' need. The last one is "Marketing control" and in this era, organizations prioritise the marketing research, technical research and promotional activities (Keith, 1960). So, there is a shift in the concept of marketing with time. In the 1990s, with the development of automation and retail industries, the marketing orientation is modified. Customers & customer-driven marketing channels are enacted. "Just in time", "quick response", "efficient customer response" etc. like concepts are implemented in the marketing strategy. In this phase, the products offer more value to the end users and the corporate performance in the market has become the centre of concern (Svensson, 2005) [9].

The concept of "green products" has been developed in the late 1980s. During this time the inter-relationship between individual and environment had mounted to the mature state that motivated the consumers to think about green products. Non-phosphate detergents were introduced in the German market in 1986; in Europe people were willing paying premium for organic foods; California based wine company, Encorel, introduced the reuse the old bottle for wine. Pressure from consumers, politics & media had pushed the corporate to think about the new way of designing products that were free from harmful ingredient and safe for the environment. The customers' demand for green product compelled the corporate to invest in the R&D, think about the new product and redesign the marketing strategy & packing process (Vandermerwe & Oliff, 1990) [10]. People became aware of future generation & sustainable development and also realized the necessity to change the production method to mitigate the harmful impact on the environment.

The term "generativity" was coined by psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in 1950 and this term signifies the willingness to contribute or do something good for a future generation. Research by Urien & Kilbourne validates the argument that people with high generativity have strong intention to behave in an environmentally responsible person (Urien &

Kilbourne, 2010). So, consumers felt a psychological impulse that by adopting green products they had become a part of the global initiative and their social status had been uplifted (Vladas, Tybur and Bergh, 2010) [12].

The above discussion signifies that the reasons behind the development of green products were jointly boosted by environmental issues as well as social status. The twenty-first century introduced a new consumer segment generation Y who is tech-savvy and well aware of the environment. This segment of the consumer's analyses the origin of the product and the impact on the environment. So they have the rational thinking ability about the choice of the products and influence their associates for purchasing green products (Lu, *et al.* 2013) [13].

A new segment of consumers and avenue of marketing have been developed- "green consumer" & "green marketing", with the rising concern about the environment.

2.1 Green brand, brand equity and loyalty

Make branding of a product is a tool to create differentiation from similar producers. Brand may be a name, a logo, a symbol or combination of these that develop a unique identification for goods & service. All these name, logo or symbol are the elements of the branding. From the consumers' perspective brand is a very essential objective in the marketing activity because for the customers it carries knowledge about the manufacturer or provider and information to make a purchase decision. Past experience (internal memory) and physical market (external environment) help the buyers in the decision making process & selection of the particular brand (Keller, *et al.* 2017) [14].

The objective of the marketing management activities is to boost the sales and for this purpose, it is essential for structuring the brand such a way that reflects in the consumers' evoked set. In other words, the concept of "customer-based brand equity" has to be nourished by marketers. Customer-based brand equity is a "differential effect" of brand knowledge on the consumers' purchasing decision. The differential effect is the customers' attitude towards a particular brand with respect to the same products of other manufacturers. Brand knowledge is developed with the help of brand awareness and brand image. Customer-based brand equity could be negative or positive. Positive means the association with the brand is favourable while negative bears the opposite meaning. So, it can be concluded that high brand knowledge and positive brand image result in strong customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993) [15].

Rising environmental concern & international regulations push companies to think about green products. Also, organizations incorporate that developing the green product as well as a marketing concept, a point of difference could be realized. Managers apprehend that adopting the environment-friendly product, they can prevent the unrest, penalties and environmentalist protest. So green marketing and product have a positive association with the corporate objectives and investing in this segment will prove helpful for sustaining in a competitive business environment (Chen, *et al.* 2006) [16]. Buyers' perception about the brand or how buyers evaluate the brand, is defined as the brand image (Keller, *et al.* 2017) [15]. Consumption of the green products reflects the consumers' commitment towards nature and this commitment enhances the customers' satisfaction related to

sustainable development & environmental concern. So, the model developed by Yu-Shan Chen relates “green brand image”, “green satisfaction”, “green trust” and “green brand equity”. According to the model products that are an environmental friend or sustainable, fabricates a “green brand image”. This brand image communicates the reliability of the brand and the commitment towards the environment-flourish the “green trust”. Now consumer believes that buying a green product, (S) he is doing justice towards nature and feels to be the part of a global commitment-boost the “green satisfaction”. The “green image”, “green trust” and “green satisfaction” are allied with “green brand equity” (Chen, 2009) [17].

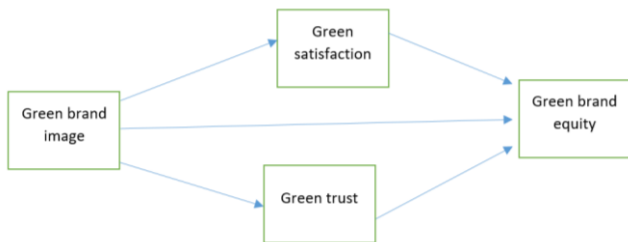


Fig 1: Yu-Shan Chen model for the drivers of green brand equity.

Hartmann, *et al.* described that consumers also select a green product for its utilitarian and psychological benefits. Utilitarian benefits help buyers to perceive that the purchase of the green product will provide additional benefits and it will be cost effective. According to Truffer, *et al.* eco-labelling is supportive for the consumer to reduce evaluation cost and identify the environmentally friendly product. In case of psychological benefit, the purchaser of the green product feels a “moral satisfaction” that the decision is beneficial for nature as well as the society-“warm glow” (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992) [19]. Customers are willing to buy the green brand because they feel the way they consume benefits the society-a pro-social behaviour motives them to opt for the green product-“self-expression”. Also, the use of natural image positively influence consumers and delivers a message that the brand has a positive association with the environmental benefits-“nature experiences” (Hartmann, Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2011) [20]. Lin, *et al.* support the concept of the Hartmann and their research promotes a model that exhibits inter-relationship among these assets of the purchase intention model of Hartmann. According to Lin, *et al.* utilitarian benefits & self-expression benefits have a positive influence on the green image and functional benefits are positively integrated with green brand loyalty. This model also, emphasises on the correlation between “green perceived risk” and green brand image. When consumers are not familiar with the products’ “green” characteristics or there exists any ambiguity, the perceived risk is developed. This perceived risk affects the brand image as well as trust. The above phenomena are described as “greenwashing” (Parguel, *et al.* 2011) [21]. A study by Chen, Tien & Lee supports the negative association among greenwashing and brand image, satisfaction & brand equity. Lin, *et al.* in their research paper elaborate that with the increase of the perceived risk the trust & satisfaction decreases and at the same time utilitarian benefits & self-expression benefits on green brand image diminishes. So the green brand loyalty depends upon the green marketing approach. Marketers should prioritise on the utilitarian

benefits and reduce the perceived green risk to strengthen brand loyalty (Lin, *et al.* 2017) [13]. An organization should develop its green marketing strategy such way that motivates consumers to evaluate the company in a positive way as well as perceive the service or product with a strong association. In today’s business context “green” concept is an essential tool to build customers’ loyalty, trust & satisfaction (Martínez, 2015).



Fig 2: Lin, Lobo & Leckie model for green brand benefits and their influence on brand loyalty.

2.2 Green organizations

A green brand survey in 2011, indicates that in the developed countries like the United States, France & Australia customers focus on the brands that come with environmentally friendly products and also in the developing countries like Brazil, India & China the reaction of the consumers is the same. The survey shows that Germany prioritizes on green energy while Australia identifies auto & technology domains for sustainable development (Cohn & Wolfe, 2011) [25]. Al Lannuzi classifies the drivers for green products into two categories-market drivers & regulatory drivers. Market drivers are basically demand push from the consumer who seeks products that have a less negative footprint on the environment. In order to meet these growing demand companies come up with a three-step plan:

1. Supplier sustainability assessment.
2. Product Life Cycle analysis.
3. A tool that motivates consumers to utilize the product in a sustainable way.

Walmart developed its sustainable goal “Zero waste” with the aim not to produce waste and encourage the concept of circular economy-“take-make-dispose” approach. In order to progress in the zero waste object, Walmart adopted three strategies:

- Elimination of waste from the operation.
- Focus on the improvement of the product & packaging.
- Expand the recycling process through developing infrastructure and educating consumers.

Walmart emphasises on bringing waste material in the product system and utilize that waste to manufacture the new product with the help of the suppliers (Walmart, 2016). Another company Lowe’s, a home improvement company, developed its sustainable goal by inducing “wood policy” where the suppliers are asked to disclose the source of the wood and mandate that the source should be controlled source. Also, they have introduced energy efficient and water sense product to save energy & water. In 2017, its ENERGY STAR products successfully saved consumers’ \$5B utility cost and it aims to increase the amount to \$40B by 2025 (Lowe’s, 2017) [28].

SC Johnson initiated its “Greenlist” programme in 2001 with the objective to choose the material carefully, so that it will not harm the environment as well as human health. The

“greenlist” programme started with collecting data about the harmful ingredients and its impact on the environment as well as on human health. With the help of the hazard assessment, SC Johnson determined the safety standard. The company developed a four steps evaluation process for hazard measurement and created a guideline that is safe for nature & human being. SC Johnson introduced a list of “Not allowable” ingredient list and identified better alternatives. Also, the company focuses on the usage of renewable energy for operation purposes. In 2016/2017, 35% of the company’s required energy is derived from the green sources (SC Johnson, 2017) ^[29].

Timberland came with a unique proposition of “Green index” that reflects the environmental effect in one to ten scale rating. The company monitored the use of PVC in the footwear and promotes the use of recycling and organic material for shoe manufacture ^[1]. Philips greener product programme accents on the six green focal areas-energy efficiency, packaging, toxic material, weight, recycle and disposal (Lannuzzi, 2012) ^[26].

Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre is the pioneer in the country to introduce LEED Platinum Rated Building, located in Hyderabad. The structure is designed in such a way it utilizes 90% of the natural light and double glass layer protects the outside heat to penetrate inside. The application of “jail wall” helps to flow the natural air inside the building. Also, the water treatment and restriction over the wastage is taken care of in this building ^[2].

Indian Tobacco Company (ITC), in 2000, started an initiative named “Welcome Environ” with the objective to promote sustainability. ITC publicised the environment related affairs and communicate the message “reduce, reuse and recycle” to the stakeholders. ITC Green Center is the second in India and seventh in the world to accomplish a platinum rating from Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The green practices the company adopted is:

- Recycle the water that building consumes and received due to raining. Waterless urinal and separate water treatment plant help to optimize water usage.
- Design the building in “L” shape to have natural light & heat. High ceiling to control the room temperature and reduce the usage of air conditioning. Thick wall and double glazed window and glass help to reduce solar heat up to 65 per cent.

ITC is one of the leading brands in the hotel industry in India. The effort to design the building in a greener fashion is a benevolent step towards nature and stakeholders (Singh *et al.* 2011) ^[30].

Kempegowda International Airport Limited (KIAL), Bengaluru is India’s first GreenCo rated airport and achieved GreenCo silver in 2012. The airport utilizes renewable energy to operate its function and design system in an energy efficient manner. Brakes India Limited has successfully adopted green practices and water saving policy. Other companies namely Sundram Fasteners Limited, L&T India, HIL etc. have contributed significant effort in creating examples for green building and practices in the country (CII, 2015).

Product based regulation has pushed companies to design and alter their ingredients in an environmentally friendly manner. Changes are made in the sector of packaging, emission control and chemical usage. Innovation in the packaging industry is influenced by sustainability norms. Phasing out PVC & petroleum based ink and usage of cardboard have been taking place in the industry. Amazon introduced cardboard boxes that can be easily opened without using a box cutter and it is recyclable (Martin, Schouten, 2012) ^[32].

3. Indian perspective

Consumers’ attitude has three attribute-cognitive, conative and effective. Cognitive is related to knowledge or belief, conative means emotional aspect and affective symbolizes the behavioural characteristics (Kumar, 2017) ^[34]. Environmental attitude is defined as the people’s outlook towards nature (Singh, Gupta, 2013) ^[25]. Milfont in his research described that environmental attitude is developed based on logical behaviour of certain kind of person and this kind of person trend to support “pro-environmental attitude”. Ecological behaviour is the reflection of the ecological attitude and people’s willingness. This behaviour desires to obtain a sustainable way to reduce hazards on the environment. Kaiser *et al.* applied the reasoned action theory (Ajzen, Fishbein, 1980) to develop the model for outlining the concept of ecological behaviour.

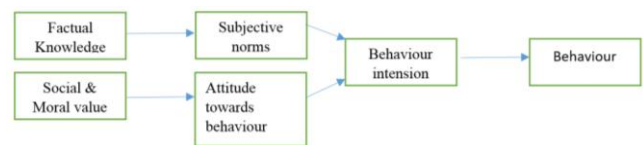


Fig 3: Theory of reasoned action; source: Kaiser *et al.* model.

So, the following model argues that environmental knowledge and value has a symbolic influence on developing behavioural intention. But the behaviour of a person is beyond the control. So, psychological and non-psychological influencers affect the behaviour of an individual. Sometimes particular incidents or social norms affect the behaviour towards the environment. It can be concluded that ecological knowledge and value has marginal influence on the behaviour.

India is an emerging economy with the GDP growth of 7% and it is expected that growth rate will become 7.3% in FY2018-19, as forecasted by the World Bank ^[3]. Growing the purchasing power of the middle class Indian and boom of the social media platform turn the Indian market lucrative one. Study on the Indian consumers by Singh & Gupta explains that the relationship between ecological attitudes with ecological behaviour stands true in the following context. People who care about the environment demonstrates “recycling behaviour”. People who perceive the intensity of the environmental damages, they change their attitude towards green buying. The research on the Indian consumers’ buying intention of rooftop solar PV by Aggarwal *et al.* (2019), discusses that there are seven factors that motivate the buying behaviour. Seven factors dominate the buying behaviour- “performance expectancy”, “environmental beliefs”, “hedonic motivation”, “price-value

¹ <http://greenindex.timberland.com/about/>

² http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/CII_Sohrabji_Godrej_Green_Business_Centre-Case_Study.pdf

³ <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/world-bank-pegs-indias-gdp-growth-at-73-in-2018-19/article25948515.ece>

beliefs”, “social beliefs”, “self-efficacy” and “effort expectancy”. Among these factor “social beliefs” has a strong influence on the purchasing decision making. Word of mouth, creative marketing, and policy development have a positive impact on social belief. Aggarwal *et al.* finding is supported by Vladas *et al.* research which explains social status and belief affects the green buying decision. Punyatoya (2015) [40] argues eco-labelling, eco-brand image helps to develop the green brand trust among the Indian. At the same time perceived brand value impacts the brand image and consumers who carry strong perception, demonstrate purchase intention.

Indian urban people consider healthy food such as organic food consumption will keep their physics good and thus they promote organic food industry. At the same time, the urban population believes supporting the organic food industry is an effort to project environment concern. Educated and established in career urban Indian consumers wilfully pays for the organic food but students are less reactive toward purchasing organic food though they are aware. Likeliness towards organic food is a green attitude because this eliminates the environmental hazards related to the processed food industry (Sondhi, 2014) [41].

But there is a counterstatement in case of the Indian consumers’ behaviour towards the green product. The environmental knowledge, green product awareness and benefits are appreciated by the Indian consumers. On the other hand price sensitivity issue is a dominating factor. There is a gap between willingness to pay and ability to pay (Datta, Ishaswini, 2011) [42]. Manaktola & Jauhari agree with the previous statements about the consumers’ willingness to pay a premium. In their paper, the findings elaborate that consumers believe it is firms’ responsibility to avail products at regular price. Aindrila Biswas (2016) argues that along with “perceptual factor”, “contextual factor” is also a contributing factor while consumers opt for green products. “Contextual factors” include policies, infrastructure, pricing and incentive etc.

So, it is debatable that not only the awareness or knowledge is not sufficient for Indian consumers, in order to vitalize the purchase intention. Indian consumers take the product cost along with utilitarian benefits, into consideration before purchasing. At the same time policy modification and incentive for being green consumer are essential to change the orientation towards eco-goods.

Kirmani & Khan (2018) [45] have recommended two models for green marketing in the Indian context. First one is the aggressive marketing strategy and the other one is the mild strategy. The former one suggests targeting the consumers have strong between attitude towards eco-product and capability to pay. The target group for aggressive marketing is acknowledged with eco-labelling and packaging. The latter strategy is designed for a group of people who currently do not hold a positive attitude and willingness to pay. The mild strategy will initially educate the consumers and influence purchasing behaviour. Ghodeswar (2014) [46], has pointed out the importance of creative price for green marketing. Firms should make consumers realize the value for money in case of green products as it is an advanced concept. Standard of the product and price has to be alien so that the phenomena like greenwashing can be removed. Also, the concept of consumer direct association is essential for the retailer to fit the green product in the evoked set. Another important method to make a green product

acceptable in the country’s market is consumer empowerment. The said concept describes that consumers can make changes in society through their contributions. A marketer should account that the awareness programme for green product triggers the empowerment concept (Tiwari, 2014) [47].

From the above discussion, it is observable that to make successful marketing of green products the following objectives have to be taken into consideration:

- Awareness towards environmental degradations.
- Motivation (empowerment) to develop a green attitude.
- Price-quality balance.
- Develop green trust.

In the Indian context, it is very much imperative that the firms should maintain the price and quality relationship because being developing economy it is difficult for common to keep equilibrium between environmental concern and individual financial health.

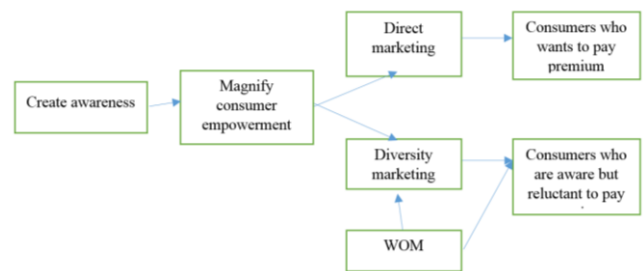


Fig 4: Proposed model for green marketing in the Indian context.

4. Conclusion

Sustainable development has three dimension economy, environment and social value. The term “triple bottom line” was construed in the 1990s by John Elkington and this term refers to the three dimensions of sustainable development. Sometimes triple bottom line is linked with the 3Ps concept-people, planet & profit (Hammer, Pivo, 2016) [33]. The concept of green marketing is developed based on this triple bottom line approach. Green marketing is not about developing or producing organic, nature benevolent product; it has own marketing mix. Green product, green brand experience, green brand image, green trust, and green satisfaction are the core competence of the green marketing concept. Green consumers have a strong cognitive behaviour and they are curious about the origin of the ingredients of the products, manufacturing and supply chain. So, greenwashing could be harmful to the brand image and the company, because this action will damage the brand trust. Green consumers are a niche segment, so construction of the brand image is essential for sustaining in the long run. Firms should focus on the following essential elements for designing a successful green marketing strategy:

- Conceptualize the green objective and convey the concept within the organization. Employee, top management and executives have to visualize this concept before getting into actual marketing.
- Eliminate the symbolic “green product”. This causes the diminishing of the consumer’s trust.
- The utilitarian benefits of the product should exhibit a green concept. Sustainability has to be communicated through the product and packaging.
- In the end, transparency is an important factor to gain

green loyalty.

From the Indian context, the country focuses more on developing or architect green building and emphasize on waste reduction. This initiative is implacable at a large scale and requires millions in monetary unit. But, uncertainty arises in terms of consumer brand equity. Do these eco-friendly constructions thoughtful enough to modify the consumers' perception? Internal stakeholders of the said companies will find themselves associated with a great social initiative and their social status quo will be glorified. But the external stakeholders, do they associate themselves with the green initiative?

Consumers will find positive interconnection with the green initiative through the utilitarian and self-expression benefits. In the Indian market, the lack of indigenous green products makes the consumers reluctant while the moment of making a purchasing decision arrives. Knowledge about eco-product, green marketing and its effect on nature is not sufficient to foster the purchasing intention. Price and availability are the core factors behind the buying decision. Indigenous green product development will be functional to bridge the supply-demand gap in the country's market and it will also, bring the price down to the common man's pocket limit.

Generation Z and generation X are more concern and sensitive about the environment and they make a rational choice about the product. The concept of green marketing will be considered as marketing 5.0, in the upcoming years because it has created a separate marketing attribute for future generation.

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