

“Green marketing practices through customer engagement: A Review”

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Abstract: Today the primary concern of green marketing is customer engagement. Smart marketers are focused not only on whether customers view their message, but to what extent they engage with it. The motive of green marketing campaigns is to influence customer attitude and behaviour by communicating the benefits of engaging in environmentally responsible behaviour, such as recycling, conserving energy, purchasing locally or regionally grown/raised food, etc. A growing number of customers expect the companies they buy their products from, must have a positive impact on the environment and society. They demand products that generate less waste, and look for the ways to make their own social and environmental contribution. These concerns are the major influencing factors to engage the customer for green marketing.

This paper focuses on the success of green marketing efforts put by marketers through different ways of customer engagement. It further reviews how the different tools of customer engagement bring better customer experience and influence them to feel connected with green marketing practices.

Key words: green marketing, customer engagements, environment.

I. Introduction to Green Marketing:

Green Marketing is also referred as Environmental Marketing or Ecological Marketing. The term green marketing came into prominence in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The American Marketing Association held the first workshop on ecological marketing in 1975. The proceedings of this workshop resulted into one of the first book on green marketing, titled Ecological Marketing.

Today there is a widespread concern about protecting the environment over the world. Trees are being cut and replaced by concrete jungles; more automobiles are playing on the roads than ever before and emitting carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide that cause air pollution. With increasing industrialization, urbanization, and purchasing power, more and more household can afford Air conditioners and Refrigerators. Most of these Air conditioners and Refrigerators, especially in developing countries like us are not CFC free. Many factories let their unwanted chemicals run into nearby water resources without processing them and thereby causing water pollution and posing threat to aqua life in it. All These factors affecting the environment balance, leading to serious problem such as global warming, air and water pollutions, respiratory diseases, and many other social as well as health issues.

Evolution of Green Marketing:

Environmentally responsible or "green" marketing refers to the satisfaction of customer needs, wants, and desires in conjunction with the preservation and conservation of the natural environment.

The evolution of green marketing can be divided in three phases:

1. The first phase was termed "Ecological" green marketing. During this period all marketing activities were concerned to solve environment problems and provide remedies for such problems.
2. The second phase was "Environmental" green marketing and the focus shifted to clean technology that involved designing of innovative new products, which takes care of pollution and waste issues.
3. The third phase was "Sustainable" green marketing. It came into prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000.

Customer Engagement:

The concept of customer engagement (CE) has emerged from the body of knowledge on the phenomenon of the customer active presence in value co-creation process which is a component of relationship marketing.

What Is Customer Engagement? Many attempts have been made to define customer engagement. However, taken together all of the definitions seem to suggest that customer engagement is comprised of two critical elements:

Affinity - means feelings of liking or attraction towards a brand.

Activation - is related to customer repurchase and recommendation of the brand to others because of emotional attachment towards a brand.

Beyond repurchase and recommendation, customer can do posting on various social media, can form and organise or participate in brand based communities or even can participate in brand sponsored public or charitable events.

Effects of Affinity and Activation: In effect, **affinity** is what holds customer attention and keeps focused on a brand. Activation takes the form of continued transactions and interactions with a brand, as well as attempts to get and keep other current/potential engaged with that brand.

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the effect of corporate commitment to engage customer for green marketing activities.
2. To understand the effect of customer education program to engage customer for green marketing activities.
3. To understand the effect of customer involvement and contribution on customer engagement for successful implementation of green marketing practices.

Successful Green Marketing through Customer Engagement:

Now corporations are adopting sustainable purposes in order to guide all of their activities, bonding with today’s customers and growing their commercial success. Without customer engagement, corporate sustainability programmes fail.

Corporate Commitment -

Walmart has been highly vocal in pledges to the environment since 2005, addressing impacts such as renewable energy use and emissions in its supply chain. Such public commitments hold the company accountable to the public, while cementing a brand image that customers can feel good about supporting.

Google has publicly committed to sourcing 100% of its energy needs from renewable sources, demonstrating a commitment through heavy investment (\$1 billion+) in renewables research and development since 2010.

SC Johnson’s Green list is a ranking system that guides the company’s product sustainability towards continuous improvement over time. The system, which was initiated in 2001, classifies ingredients for SC Johnson household products based on their impact on human health and the environment. In addition to facilitating sustainable purchasing choices, the system ensures that the lowest-impact ingredients will be used in developing new products or in improving existing ones.

From the above examples it is quite clear that, the corporate commitment is the demonstration to stimulate customer engagement in green marketing practices.

Customer Education -

Customer education initiatives and programs is another way which makes the customer ready to engage themselves for green marketing orientation

After conducting an audit on the lifecycle of jeans, Levi’s found that customer care habits account for nearly half the energy and water used by jeans in its lifetime can be curbed. In an effort to curb these impacts, Levi’s launched a customer education campaign through a new care instruction tag on all its jeans. **The Care Tag campaign**, which calls for cold water, line-drying the jeans, and donating them to Goodwill, informs customers that their participation is a vital part of Levi’s sustainability platform.

To counter the higher calorie content of its products, Coca-Cola encourages physical activity and a balanced lifestyle through its sustainability platform **Live Positively**. Customers can get involved in Coke-sponsored events and activities around healthy living and learn about calorie counts in products as well as what drives obesity and how it may be prevented.

The success of these two events shows that informing and educating customer can lead to better customer engagement to practice green marketing effectively.

Customer Involvement:

Successful companies are able to frame their green marketing efforts in terms of what consumers are able to contribute. Collaborative themes and language spur customers to action as an integral part of the company’s sustainability strategy.

Starbucks: My Starbucks Idea – Starbucks maintains an open forum on mystarbucksidea.com where consumers can submit their ideas on anything from social responsibility to products to community engagement. Through this forum, Starbucks has implemented several consumer-driven changes towards more sustainable business.

Patagonia: Worn Wear and ‘Don’t Buy This Jacket’ – In 2011, Patagonia launched an ad campaign with the tagline ‘Don’t Buy This Jacket’ in an effort to bring attention to today’s overuse of limited resources. The result was hugely successful, and the campaign quickly went viral on social media.

Building on the success of this campaign, Patagonia used YouTube to introduce its Worn Wear initiative, accompanied by Twitter and Facebook hashtags #WornWear and #AntiBlackFriday. Through Worn Wear, consumers will participate in Patagonia’s Responsible Economy by repairing and reusing existing Patagonia gear.

"Worn Wear is a set of tools to help our customer partner with Patagonia to take mutual responsibility to extend the life of the products Patagonia makes and customers purchase. The program provides significant resources for responsible care, repair, reuse and resale, and recycling at the end of a garment’s life."

The above examples enforce that customer contribution/involvement lead to customer engagement for the purpose of green marketing.

II. Conclusion:

This study investigates about Successful Green Marketing through Customer engagement. Customer engagement is now the primary focus of green marketing. Aspirational are receptive, best practices are established, and now commercial success depends on creatively engaging with them. Aspirational are receptive i.e. readiness (knowledge, liking, preferences, conviction) of the customer for green marketing is moving to an upward stage. Best practices are established – Customer engagement tool has contributed a lot in policy formulation of green marketing practices.

Corporate commitment towards green marketing is prerequisite for customer engagement. Successful green marketing practices are the outcome of customer education and involvement that lead to customer engagement. Future of Green marketing is associated with the creative application of customer engagement tool.

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