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### **Environmental Stewardship as a spinoff of Green Marketing post COVID-1**

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#### **Abstract**

**Problem:**For long, marketers have been emphasizing on adoption of eco- friendly products which were observed as under-performing and often price- inflated. Consumers were clouded with scepticism pertaining to green marketing interventions. This doubt proved to be a deterrent in the way Green marketing aspired to percolate in the market. A much needed ecological blow was needed to put the consumers mind on the track of environmental responsibility. The advent of Corona virus disease (COVID- 19) as a pandemic created trepidations in this direction. In the light of lockdown and amongst all hue and cry observed globally, it is the eco- system that has unearthed a new lease of life and undergoing a reboot. As witnesses to a clean unpolluted environment, the consumers are now slated towards environmental responsibility and are appreciating the urge to keep the ecological system balanced. Nature conservationists and advocates of green marketing are ready to find opportunities in the face of a pandemic challenge like COVID-19. Environment stewardship has emerged as a spinoff of Green marketing that will last post COVID- 19. This paper attempts to find how ecological stewardship has emerged as a positive outcome of green marketing after the COVID-19 pandemic gradually withdraws from mother earth.

**Design/ Methodology:**Conceptual framework analysis has been employed to draw inferences from reliable secondary data source repositories. The deductions drawn in the paper are inductive in nature and are an outcome of systematic search data mining technique.

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**Findings:** Environmental stewardship is expected to be respected and green marketers be worshipped as the new epitomes of consumer- ecology dichotomies. Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) (as a part of Green Marketing) takes the course of environment stewardship among the stakeholders by targeting at both conscious and sub- conscious levels of the consumers. The aftermath of COVID-19 has bitter experiences for the mankind but it also entails certain positive spin-offs in the form of corporate environmentalism and stewardship towards ecological equations.

**Conclusion:** This paper is expected to steer the opinions of social advocates of environmentalism, business strategists, opinion leaders and consumers in a positive direction mediated by Green marketing in times of pandemic COVID- 19. The paper is anticipated to open new frontiers in the direction of corporate stewardship and put market strategists under pressure to align consumers mind with ecological balance post COVID-19.

**Keywords:**1 Corporate sensitivity,2 COVID-19, 3Environment stewardship,4 Green marketing.

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## **1.0 Research objective**

To observe the ways in which businesses have developed environmental stewardship as a positive spinoff of Green Marketing in times of COVID- 19 and also anticipate its post-pandemic effects.

## **2.0 Introduction**

The world is shaken by the pandemic COVID-19 and human beings have well understood the power of Mother Nature and its fury. Despite all technology and modern up gradations human beings have become a puppet in the hands of nature. Populations have now understood that ecological nature needs to be conserved and its resources be so utilized that the sensitive balance of eco-system is not disturbed. One such tool that has emerged over the global horizon is that of Green marketing. With all human sensitivity in place and the rejuvenated respect for environment, Green marketing is the probable solution towards attainment of sustainability. Post COVID-19, consumers have altered choices and their environmental stewardship has observed a remarkable elevation. Generation Y which is said to be the millennial generation is extremely sensitive to the ecological environment. The

advent of Green marketing has started bringing behavioural changes in manufacturers and consumers which, in turn, has spawned a sensitive attitude to the ecological environment as a spinoff. This sensitive attitude will expectedly magnify as COVID-19 prevails and eventually recedes because negative reinforcement (due to ill effects of COVID -19 like economic downfall, loss of life, inconvenience etc.) brings change in behaviour and outcomes. Therefore, despite all negativity spread by COVID-19, the element of positivity that would touch every human species would be environmental stewardship and sensitive attitude towards nature conservation. This will be partly mediated via Green marketing interventions. This research paper delves into this ideology and attempts to observe the mannerism in which the business enterprises would develop an element of sensitivity as a positive spinoff of Green marketing during and post COVID-19 pandemic.

### **3.0 literature review**

#### **3.1 Concept of Green Marketing**

With the passage of time, both retailers and consumers have begun to get tremendously particular about how the products are produced, the amount of energy consumed in its manufacturing and its subsequent distribution (Ben Berry, 2009). Consumers and retailers are also conscious about the green distribution patterns of the products so manufactured. This paves way to the concept of green marketing because the generation Y is growing significantly conscious about environmental stewardship and is becoming not only ecologically sensitive but also responsive towards it. In this light, three factors of responsibility have become indispensable:

- i) Economic factors
- ii) Environmental factors
- iii) Social factors

The three factors when aligned together become pillars of the concept of sustainability which, in turn, is substantiated by an underpinning called as 'Green Marketing'. As stated by Peattie in 1995, Green Marketing refers to the holistic management process which is responsible not only for anticipating, identifying but also satisfying the needs of both customers and society at large in a sustainablecumprofitable manner. Green marketing refers to the process of development, planning and promotion of goods / services that satiate the consumers' needs in terms of either

(a) Output

(b) Quality

(c) Affordable prices and service

or a combination of the above without bearing an adverse impact on the ecological environment in context to the usage of raw material(s), production to energy consumption ratios etc. (Davis, 1991; Kangis, 1992; Meffet and Kirchgeorg, 1994; Jain and Kaur, 2004; Peattie and Crane, 2006; Grant, 2008; Pride and Ferrell, 2008). Also, with the advent of time the Generation Y is getting more aware of the usage of eco-friendly products and their essence in the long run for human sustainability. They are also ready to shell out extra money for maintaining this ecological stewardship and are in turn pressurizing the corporate machinery to adopt strategies based on green marketing (Peattie and Crane, 2005). Therefore, in contemporary times the concept of green marketing is encompassing both the preservation and conservation pretexts of the ecological environment (Coddington, 1993). It can also be said that the definition of green marketing has also broadened itself over a period of time. It covers not only the environmental aspects but has widened its horizon in addressing several issues of sustainability in its stride. Green marketing has also grown trifocal in accommodating social, environmental and economic concerns under single roof.

### 3.2 Environmental Stewardship as a spinoff of Green Marketing

In the concept of Corporate environmental responsibility (CER), an organization encompasses sustainability and bears a positive outcome on the society and the ecological environment at one go and at the same time takes full cognizance of environmental commitment (Jamison et al., 2005). It is at this juncture that CER takes the course of sensitivity because the stewardship towards the environment has a bearing on the conscious and sub-conscious minds of the stakeholders. Due to a multitude of both intangible and tangible offerings (generated via Green marketing) organizations are compelled to get environmentally responsible and ecologically sensitive (Hansen and Mowen, 2007). In the light of such consciously driven ecological sensitivities of the stakeholders many industries have begun to run environmentally responsible programs. With an increase in learning opportunities, public interaction, acquaintance to a multitude of ecological advocacy groups, knowledge dissemination communities, the implementation of environmental protection has attained an international legitimate accord (Sawhney, 2004). This is expected to even see a

better pinnacle as pandemic of COVID-19 draws an end. A spurt in sensitization in the direction of environmentalism mediated through green marketing, consumers are shunning down the high polluting goods and services even if they are available at cheaper rates in the consumer market. Initially, organizations were only inclined towards maximization of profit margins with negligible consideration being given to rising environmental issues (Charter and Polonsky, 1999). However, slowly the scenario changed when consumers started getting sensitized on rapidly rising pollutants, ozone depletion and other ecological concerns. It was at this time that Green marketing came as a rescuer amidst all sensitive human presence. The innovative ideas slanted towards environmentalism (through Green marketing) led to lowering in the detrimental impact of anthropogenic pollution and maintained a balanced ecological equilibrium that the entire world cherished (Fisk, 1974). Polonsky (1994) manifested that both production centres and service offeres have shown an inclination towards the demand of consumers for eco- friendly goods / services (Coddington, 1993). Growing environmental conscience of consumers translate into increasing demand for green products and services (a part of green marketing) which marked the beginning of trade of green goods/ services (Chan, K., 1999; Ottman, 1992; Peattie and Ratnayaka, 1992; Salzman, 1991; Vandermerwe and Oliff, 1990).

### 3.3 Intertwining Green Marketing with COVID-19

With immense hue and cry and negative delineation of global economy during and post COVID 19, there would be a much needed urge for revival of economy. Revival of economy specially after being inflicted with a biological origin issue would demand a respect for environmental (mediated through Green marketing) and economic issues (can be again mediated via Green marketing) in a single slot. In order to attain economic mileage, it is imperative to emphasize on ecological considerations for business organizations taking due cognizance of the fact that economic and environmental performance are positively correlated (Russo and Fouts, 1997). Orlitzky et al. in the year 2003 conducted empirical studies in order to relate the corporate environmental performance with monetary success. Post COVID 19 aftermath, this gap can partly be filled by Green marketing as it aims at improving financial performance by giving due respect to the ecological environment. As per Dasgupta et al. (2000), it has been observed that developing nations often tend to emphasize more on material well-being for attaining monetary success. As a result of it, such countries often tend to ignore environmental laws because they observe financial success to be supreme over environmental compliances. Subsequently, rise in pollution levels becomes an uninvited side-

effect of this lethal economic growth. Changes, however, are anticipated post COVID- 19 as now the generation Y has developed a sentiment for biological issues and have begun to exhibit a sense of corporate environmental citizenship. People now understand the power of ecology and how it can bring a turmoil in the lives of people. This pandemic has generated lot of sensitivity among people. In contrast, when a developed nation has acquired a relatively high standard of living, it issues a stringent environmental legislation with full focus on protection of the ecological environment. In discussions pertaining to corporate environmentalism, several scholars are of the opinion that standards of environmental protection are not even across nations and that economically weaker countries generally suffer from higher levels of environmental pollution and therefore have poor environment quality (Agyeman, 2002; Bullard and Johnson, 2000; Dobson, 1998; Shrader- Frechette, 2002; US EPA, 2003; Zarsky, 2002). In this light, post COVID- 19, when people already have developed psychological sensitivity towards environment then Green marketing appears to be a viable solution. Developing nations have been resorting to laxity in enforcement of ecological laws and neglecting the monitoring part of its implementation (Kusku, 2007; Kusku and Zarkada-Fraser, 2004; Lang and Ho, 2000). Economic laws often override environmental concerns which result in subsequent deterioration. Economic standards are often violated in the light that expected penalty of non- compliance is lesser than expected cost of compliance. Economies of developed nations usually exhibit more environmental stewardship than their developing counterparts with stringent and well established rules and regulations to manage corporate behaviour (Nwabuzor, 2005). This is expected to change because post COVID- 19 all inhabitants of this mother earth would learn the power of nature (ecological environment) and develop sensitivity and respect towards it. Additionally, globalization is also anticipated to change the outlook of people towards ecological environment post COVID-19 and the only marketing resort before them appears to be green marketing. Awarding people with positive incentives by resorting to minimized pollution regimes could result in (i) lowered per unit costs (ii) investment subsidies (iii) tax breaks etc. and this in turn, would ensure better compliance to environmental norms (Priyadarshini and Gupta, 2003).

## 4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Paper category:** Conceptual

**Research type:** Exploratory

**Applied analysis:** Qualitative

**Research tool:** Conceptual framework analysis (by dividing the filtered literature into three vital frames).

**Data mining technique:** Systematic search employing specific key words pertinent to the topic into consideration.

**Deduction mechanism:** Inductive

## 5.0 Findings

Based on the literature and applied research methodology the following probable inferences may be drawn:

- The three factors of corporate responsibility namely economic, environmental and social factors are the foundation stones of sustainability and they collectively act as precursors of Green marketing.
- Profit realization tendency of business organizations has observed a paradigm shift. This shift has been from profits to environmentalism.
- The probable reason for growing environmental stewardship is the sensitivity of consumers (especially Generation Y) towards ecological stewardship.
- Green marketing is a positive spinoff of the ecological consciousness that is driven by consumer sensitivity for the ecology.
- COVID- 19 has interjected a strong respect for biological existence (rather than materialistic existence) of human beings. This respect is anticipated to reflect itself in the corporate behaviour of organizations as well. Literature suggests this as a reason for the advent of Green marketing.

- Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) (as a part of Green Marketing) takes the course of environment stewardship among the stakeholders by targeting at both conscious and sub-conscious levels.
- The aftermath of COVID-19 would be negative in many aspects (especially economic aspects) but its positive spinoff is a changed mind-set of stakeholders that embraces economic prosperity but without compromising on ecological equilibrium. This is the point where Green marketing would play a pivotal role. Literature also suggests COVID-19 as a lesson to be learnt that a lethal weapon may be born if the biological & ecological equilibrium is shifted in either direction of a balanced sustainability equation.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Corporate responsibility is the pavement on which foundation of sustainability rest. It is a combination of social, economic and environmental factors that act as precursors of Green marketing. Earlier, business corporations were concentrating only on profit generation. However, the advent of COVID-19 taught them a lesson for life. Having understood the brutality of Mother Nature, organizations started getting sensitive over environmental concerns. Green marketing came at the rescue of this eco-centric philosophy of the organizations and consumers. Green marketing catered to the sensitive eco-concerns of the millennial generation at one point and simultaneously earned profit for the businesses spawning them. The sensitive respect for the biological existence of all beings took the shape of corporate environmental responsibility by aiming at both conscious and sub-conscious levels of the human mind. The aftermath of COVID-19 has bitter experiences for the mankind but it will also entail certain positive spin-offs in the form of corporate environmentalism and sensitivity towards ecological equations. It is anticipated that this paper would be an eye-opener for those who are ignoring positive (although marginal in today's time) spinoffs of COVID-19 especially in context to ecological equilibrium. This paper is expected to steer the opinions of social advocates of environmentalism, business strategists, opinion leaders and consumers in a positive direction mediated by Green marketing in times of pandemic COVID-19.

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