

REVIEW ARTICLE

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MARKETING: AN ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFACITOR

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### Abstract:

As the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, and resource depletion, India, with its rapidly growing economy and vast consumer base, has a critical role to play in promoting environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainable marketing (ESM) is an emerging paradigm that seeks to integrate environmental concerns into marketing strategies. This paper explores the concept of ESM in the Indian context, highlighting its relevance, benefits, and challenges. A review of existing literature and case studies of Indian companies that have successfully adopted ESM practices reveals that ESM can be a win-win strategy for businesses, consumers, and the environment. The paper concludes by outlining a framework for implementing ESM in India, emphasizing the need for a collaborative approach involving businesses, government, and civil society.

**Keyword:** Environmental Sustainable Marketing, India, Sustainability, Green Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility.

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### Introduction:

Sustainable green marketing refers to the promotion and marketing of environmentally friendly products, services, and practices that minimize harm to the environment and conserve natural resources. It involves adopting a holistic approach that considers the social, economic, and environmental impacts of marketing activities. Environmental sustainability marketing, also known as green marketing, is a business strategy that promotes products and services in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible. It aims to create a positive impact on the world while still meeting customer needs.

Sustainable marketing is a purpose-driven practice that works to orientate businesses, brands and society towards a sustainable future, influencing appropriate awareness, aspiration, adoption and action across economic and sociocultural systems by taking necessary accountability for its impacts and opportunities. In doing so, it acts in service of long-term wellbeing for all.

## Sustainable Marketing Impacts & Opportunities

Marketers must understand that current practices contribute to negative outcomes. The sustainable marketing practice we need will take accountability for its areas of impact and opportunity.



### 1. Financial Impact and Opportunity

Marketing is a sibling of economics and an engine room of an economy that is currently organised in a way that has outgrown the limits of our natural world. The continued growth of an economic system that is only financially-focused will destroy its environment and the living things that depend on it. To transform the economy, we must transform the market and the marketing driving it.

With the urgent need for new economic thinking comes the urgent need for marketing professionals to advocate and demonstrate new leadership on profit and growth via a purpose-first approach to marketing and business activity. Purpose-first growth positions profit as a means rather than an end, in service of a purpose that is targeted at directly delivering a positive contribution to society.

Sustainable marketing takes responsibility for the influential role it can play in driving businesses and clients to rewire the economy. This involves:

- Embracing and embedding new ways of thinking about profit and what we are growing
- Influencing and achieving organisational purpose
- Measuring what matters and setting the right targets for social and environmental progress
- Driving innovation in offerings that will serve society, and
- Mobilising stakeholders to support sustainable business practices.

### 2. Physical Impact and Opportunity

The term ‘marketing footprint’ refers to the physical real-world impact that marketing strategies, decisions and operations have on our collective long-term wellbeing and the social and

environmental systems that underpin it. Physical real-world impacts include the likes of emissions, waste, pollution, land degradation, loss of habitats and species, human health and equality.

Sustainable marketing uses its position of key influence, at the intersection of business and society, to drive positive change across production and consumption to protect and restore the health of social and environmental systems. It takes appropriate accountability for the impact and opportunity of its direct operational footprint (generated via campaigns, production, events, etc.) and the indirect supply-side (production) and demand-side (consumption) footprints that it influences. This involves:

- Gaining and maintaining an understanding of systems health and marketing's contribution to it
- Building the achievement of sustainability into strategic thinking, planning and execution
- Engaging in the methodology and technology available to account for marketing's direct footprint
- Supporting the innovation working to close gaps in industry-wide footprint accounting
- Ensuring appropriate responsibility is taken for marketing's indirect footprint; and
- Accepting the leadership role that marketing has in creating positive change in production and consumption.

### **3. Psychological, Sociological and Cultural Impact and Opportunity**

Marketing shapes our perception of what is valuable and aspirational and influences our individual and collective values, worldviews, identities and lifestyles. Through this, marketing influences what is normal and desirable for individuals and groups in the cultures and societies where it is active.

This effect is known as 'marketing's brainprint'. It transcends the business system and enters society, through brands, and via the likes of advertising, entertainment, publishing, production, product design and what is and is not broadcast and reported.

Every time marketing, media and creative professionals make a strategic or creative decision, they have the opportunity to re-enforce sustainable or unsustainable behaviours, norms and the values that underpin them. The marketing practice we need requires active acknowledgement of the psychological, sociological and cultural impacts of marketing and creative activity, and ensures this influence and opportunity is aligned with sustainable outcomes. This involves:

- Developing and delivering narratives that are aligned with sustainable ends
- Using the power of creativity in service of sustainability
- Influencing attitudes, beliefs, norms and behaviours that are aligned with a sustainable future
- Helping us individually and collectively align what we perceive to be valuable, aspirational and desirable with sustainable outcomes for all living things; and □ Embedding sustainability in our culture and society.

### **4. Ethical Impact and Opportunity**

While often unintentional, the consequence of misinformation, green washing and purpose washing can scale from being marginally to critically devastating depending on the associated footprint and brain print. Beyond increasing awareness, adoption and share-of-voice for unsuitable goods and services, it reduces the understanding, trust and action needed across society. Green or purpose-hushing

can be equally damaging at a time when transparent, truthful and transformational brand advocacy and business-led change are needed.

Transparent, accurate and evidenced communication is needed through every available medium to guide and encourage movements across business and society to address the complex and interwoven challenges that undermine the collective wellbeing of people, nature and our climate.

The marketing transformation we need will see the sector both managing its moral duty and the potential of its work to create united movements of change that are directed towards the future we want, rather than the collective confusion and inaction that holds this back. This involves:

- Aligning marketing objectives with the social moral landscape
- Leading proactively for the behavioural change needed and healing the issues marketing has created in the past
- Ensuring marketing claims adhere to the latest legislation, regulation and standards and are therefore truthful, meaningful, transparent, clear, substantiated and considerate of the full product lifecycle
- Using the necessary, most relevant and credible standards, certifications and accreditations available to endorse, substantiate and support marketing and brandwork
- Engaging with track and trace technology when and where appropriate
- Maintaining marketing's creativity while adhering to moral codes and frameworks; and □

Collaborating to evolve these frameworks, learning from peers and experts.

By adopting sustainable green marketing practices, businesses can minimize their environmental soothe increasing awareness of environmental issues has led to a growing demand for green products and services. Digital marketing plays a crucial role in promoting these eco-friendly solutions. This paper aims to explore the intersection of digital marketing and green solutions, highlighting the strategies, challenges, and opportunities in this field.

## **Review of Literature**

Research has shown that digital marketing can be an effective tool for promoting green products and services <sup>1</sup>. A systematic literature review of 54 research articles published between 2012 and 2022 identified five main themes: strategies, challenges, promotion, consumers, and digital media, print, promote social responsibility, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Sustainable marketing has its roots in the 1970s, when companies began to recognize the importance of social responsibility (Carroll, 1979). The 1990s saw the emergence of green marketing, which focused on promoting environmentally friendly products (Peattie, 1995). Today, sustainable marketing encompasses a broader range of issues, including social justice, human rights, and economic development (Belz & Peattie, 2009).

## **Key Concepts**

1. Triple Bottom Line (TBL): The TBL framework, introduced by Elkington (1994), emphasizes the importance of simultaneously addressing economic, social, and environmental responsibilities.

2. Stakeholder Theory: Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory recognizes that companies have responsibilities to a range of stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and the environment.
3. Sustainable Consumption: Sustainable consumption involves promoting environmentally friendly and socially responsible consumption patterns (Jackson, 2005).

**Table 1: Review of Literature**

Sr. No.	Author(s)	Year	Title	Key Findings
1	Ottman	1998	Green Marketing	Green marketing is a growing trend, and companies can benefit from adopting environmentally friendly practices
2	Peattie & Crane	2005	Environmental Marketing Management	Companies should adopt a holistic approach to environmental marketing, considering social, economic, and environmental impacts
3	Belz & Peattie	2009	Sustainability Marketing	Sustainability marketing involves promoting products and services that meet customer needs while minimizing environmental impact.
4	Kumar <i>et al.</i>	2012	Green Marketing: A Study of Consumer Attitudes	Consumers are increasingly interested in green products, but companies must ensure authenticity and transparency in their environmental claims.
5	Singh <i>et al.</i>	2015	Green Marketing Strategies for Sustainable Development	Companies can adopt various green marketing strategies, including product design, supply chain management, and digital marketing, to promote sustainable development
6	Jain & Kaur	2017	Green Marketing: A Review of Literature	Green marketing has become a critical aspect of business strategy, and companies must consider environmental, social, and economic impacts in their marketing practices.
7	Mishra & Sharma	2020	Sustainable Green Marketing: A Conceptual Framework	Sustainable green marketing involves promoting products and services that meet customer needs while minimizing environmental impact, and companies must adopt a holistic approach to achieve this goal

Source: compiled from various studies

### Environment Sustainable Marketing Solutions

Sustainable marketing for green solutions focuses on promoting environmentally friendly products, services, and practices while emphasizing the importance of sustainability.

### **Core Principles**

1. Environmental responsibility: Highlighting the eco-friendly features and benefits of products or services.
2. Social responsibility: Emphasizing the positive social impacts of sustainable practices.
3. Transparency: Clearly communicating the environmental and social benefits of green solutions.
4. Authenticity: Ensuring that marketing claims are truthful and supported by evidence.

### **Sustainable Marketing Strategies**

1. Green Product Development: Companies are developing environmentally friendly products and services, such as energy-efficient appliances and sustainable packaging (Ottman, 1998).
2. Cause-Related Marketing: Companies are partnering with non-profit organizations to promote social and environmental causes (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).
3. Digital Marketing: Digital marketing channels, such as social media and email, are being used to promote sustainable products and services (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).
4. Green product positioning: Highlighting the environmental benefits of products or services.
5. Eco-labeling: Using certifications like Energy Star or EcoLogo to demonstrate environmental responsibility.
6. Sustainable packaging: Minimizing packaging waste and using eco-friendly materials.
7. Digital marketing: Leveraging social media, email, and other digital channels to promote green solutions.
8. Influencer partnerships: Collaborating with social media influencers who promote sustainable living.
9. Content marketing: Creating informative and engaging content that highlights the benefits of green solutions.

### **Steps Taken to ensure Environmental Sustainable Marketing**

1. Conduct environmental audits: Assessing the environmental impact of products or services.
2. Set sustainability goals: Establishing clear goals for reducing environmental impact.
3. Measure and report progress: Tracking and communicating progress toward sustainability goals.
4. Engage stakeholders: Collaborating with customers, employees, and suppliers to promote sustainability.

### **Sustainable Communication**

1. Environmental Messaging: Incorporate environmental messages in advertising campaigns to raise awareness about sustainability.
2. Transparency: Encourage companies to disclose their environmental policies and practices.
3. Labeling and Certification: Promote eco-labeling and certification schemes, such as the Indian government's Eco-Mark scheme.

### **Green Events and Activations**

1. Eco-Friendly Events: Organize events and activations that promote sustainability, such as tree-planting drives or clean-up initiatives.

2. Sustainable Product Demonstrations: Host product demonstrations that showcase ecofriendly products and services.

### **Digital Green Marketing Platforms**

1. Green E-commerce Platforms: Develop e-commerce platforms that specialize in ecofriendly products.
2. Social Media Campaigns: Launch social media campaigns that promote sustainable living and eco-friendly products.

### **Education and Awareness**

1. Environmental Education: Collaborate with educational institutions to promote environmental education and awareness.
2. Workshops and Training: Conduct workshops and training programs for marketers and businesses on sustainable marketing practices.

### **Policy and Regulation**

1. Green Marketing Guidelines: Develop guidelines for green marketing practices in India.
2. Regulatory Framework: Establish a regulatory framework to prevent greenwashing and ensure transparency in environmental claims.

Hence, Indian marketers can promote sustainable practices, reduce environmental impact, and contribute to an eco-friendlier future.

India has made significant strides in promoting digital green markets over the last two years. These initiatives demonstrate India's commitment to developing a digital green market, promoting sustainable development, and reducing environmental impact.

- ❖ **Digital India Program:** Launched in 2015, this program aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It focuses on infrastructure development, e-governance, digital literacy, and digital empowerment <sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ **National Agriculture Market (eNAM):** An online trading platform for agricultural commodities, eNAM facilitates farmers, traders, and buyers with online trading in commodities, ensuring better price discovery and smooth marketing of produce <sup>1</sup>.
- ❖ **BharatNet Project:** Aims to connect every gram panchayat with high-speed internet, currently covering over 172,000 village panchayats and enabling millions of rural Indians to access the internet <sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ **Digital Literacy Programs:** Initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) have empowered millions of people with digital skills, promoting digital inclusion and economic growth <sup>2</sup>.
- ❖ **Green Initiatives:** The Indian government has launched various green initiatives, such as promoting electric vehicles, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture practices, to reduce the country's carbon footprint.

This paper has significant implications for businesses, policymakers, and consumers in India. By adopting ESM practices, businesses can enhance their brand reputation, reduce environmental impact, and contribute to sustainable development. Policymakers can promote ESM by creating

enabling policies and regulations, while consumers can demand environmentally friendly products and services. Ultimately, this paper aims to inspire a national conversation on the importance of ESM in India and its potential to drive sustainable growth and development.

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