

## Contribution of Green Marketing in Creating Sustainable Organization

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### **Abstract**

This paper reviews the relationship between green marketing and organizational sustainability. In order to achieve the review objectives, a systematic review of literature was conducted by using an archival method. This review process has used more than fifty research papers which are relevant to reviewed concepts. Findings of the review suggest that there are positive relationships among the green marketing and economic performance, green marketing and social performance and green marketing and environmental performance. Overall findings of the review suggest that green marketing has power to create organizational sustainability by equally contributes to economic, social and environmental performance. Finally, this review proposes a conceptual model which is useful to test and understand the relationships among the reviewed concepts empirically in the future.

**Keywords:** Green marketing, economic, environmental, social, sustainability

### **INTRODUCTION**

The globalization of the economy, increased social and environmental awareness, media attention and pressure of multiple stakeholder groups have raised the importance of sustainability (Einwiller et al., 2016). Hence, organizations and business around the world strive to adopt sustainability as one basic pillar of their operational model to contribute to sustainable development. Fundamentally, sustainability deals with three types of performance dimensions such as economic (financial), social and environmental performance which are necessary for the environment as well as organizations (Elkington, 1997). In this context, increasing numbers of organizations appear willing to report their economic, social and ecological sustainability performance (Schaltegger and Wagner, 2006) and this is further supported by the growth in reporting standards such as the global reporting initiative (Ehnert et al., 2016).

In this scenario, organizations increasingly required to focus on creating, identifying and implementing the sustainable management practices which simultaneously contributes to the economic as well as social and environmental performance. In the contemporary business

environment, most of the organizations are paying the great attention on environmental protection and management to gain sustainable competitive advantage. On other hand, rising environmental awareness has led public actors and regulatory bodies to expand the corpus of environmental law and has led firms to invest in their environmental management systems to improve their reputation and reduce the risk of environmental disasters (Kassinis and Vafeas, 2006). Thus, organizations are implementing several green practices such as green human resource management (green HRM), green marketing, green accounting, and green management to reduce the ecological footprint. Among these green practices, green marketing is considered as the essential tool to improve the environmental sustainability of organization. Green marketing is defined as the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying the requirements of customers and society in a profitable and sustainable way (Welford, 2000). In this context, some researchers revealed that, green marketing also has the capacity to contribute to the development of economic and social performance of organizations (Rettie, et al., 2012; Miles and Covin, 2000; Menck and Olivera, 2014; Woolverton and Dimitri, 2010; Font and McCabe, 2017; Liskova et al., 2016; Mathur and Mathur, 2000; Chia-Jung and Pei-Chun, 2014).

In this context, there is a need to explore the relationship between green marketing and organizational sustainability theoretically and empirically. Even though, green marketing equally contributes to enhance the economic, social and environmental performance of organizations. The existing literature mainly deals with the contribution of green marketing on enhancing the environmental performance of organization rather than its relationship with social and economic performance. Most of the studies only revealed the relationship between green marketing and environmental performance (Paco et al., 2014; Grundey and Zaharia, 2008; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Souza et al., 2015; Ottman et al., 2006; Chan, 2014; Song-Turner et al., 2014; Smith and Brower, 2012; Graci and Dodds, 2008; Chan and Han, 2014; Grant, 2008; McDonagh and Prothero, 2014). (Paco et al., 2014; Grundey and Zaharia, 2008; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Souza et al., 2015; Ottman et al., 2006; Chan, 2014; Song-Turner et al., 2014; Smith and Brower, 2012; Graci and Dodds, 2008; Chan and Han, 2014; Grant, 2008; McDonagh and Prothero, 2014). Previous studies failed to report the social and economic aspects of green marketing beyond the environmental aspects. However, the clarity is needed in how green marketing can play an active role in determining the economic, environmental and social performance to enhance the organizational sustainability. The aim of this article is to present: a literature review on the importance of green marketing for the development of

sustainable organizations. Therefore, researchers conduct current study to fill this gap in and attempt to add knowledge to, the existing literature. The findings of this review may be useful in testing these relationships empirically in this field and pave the way for the future researchers to further explore these relationships.

This article is structured as follows. Next section provides method of review, third section presents the review of the relevant literature about green marketing, economic performance, environmental performance and social performance and propose the prepositions. Next, based on the literature review and discussion, this paper proposes a conceptual model and finally, it ends up with conclusion.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to achieve the review objectives, a systematic review of literature was conducted by using the archival method as recommended by Tranfield and others (2003). In consideration of nature and objective of this review, methodology proposed by Tranfield and others is considered as most appropriate, since they suggest how to conduct a literature review systematically by using an archival method, which enables the reviewer to structure research and build a reliable conceptual framework and knowledge base in this research area. This review process includes classifying the literature from the sources such as journal articles, edited works, and other research papers relating to the review topic, analyzing, reflecting and reporting the findings of the review. This review considers the research works on and related with 'Green Marketing' appeared in the literature. This review has used the archival method for data collection, because it enabled the researchers to structure research and builds a reliable knowledge base on existing literatures on and related with Green Marketing and also applied reflections.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Green Marketing and Environmental Performance**

Environmental protection become an increasingly focus of activity because of the specific environmental threats such as bad weather, rising global temperature, melting ice, accumulating greenhouse gases, encroaching seas, inundated coastal lines and many more (Ahmad et al., 2009). In order to respond these issues, organizations are increasingly required enhance their environmental orientation to reduce their negative environmental impact as well

as increase the positive environmental impact (Thevanesand Arulrajah, 2018). In this context, green marketing is a critical area of green practices which highly contributes to improve environmental orientation of organization.

Green marketing consists 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 (Grundey and Zaharia, 2008). This explanation indicates that green marketing plays a pivotal role in unleash the environmental performance of organization. Hence, nowadays, organizations turn their spot light on creating and implementing green marketing mix to gain the competitive advantage. Green marketing includes ecologically safer products, recyclable and biodegradable packaging, energy-efficient operations and better pollution controls. Further, Mathur and Mathur (2000) used four categories of green marketing: (1) green products (2) recycling (3) green promotions and (4) appointment of environmental policy managers to analyze the wealth effects of green marketing strategies. Ginsberg and Bloom (2004) used the primary marketing-mix tools of product, price, place, and promotion (4Ps) to divide green marketing into four main strategies: (1) lean green strategy (2) defensive green strategy (3) shaded green strategy and (4) extreme green strategy. These, practices and strategies are really fruitful in improving green image of the organization.

A majority of consumers have realized that their purchasing decisions have a direct impact on ecological problems around the world (Laroche et al., 2001). In this sense, they are willing to buy and ready to pay more for green products to prove their environmental responsibility and accountability (Paco et al., 2014; Mainieri et al., 1997, Mattijssen et al., 2018; Kim et al. 2012). Specifically, findings suggest that the majority of consumers prefer such environmental household product benefits as safe to use around children, no toxic ingredients, no chemical residues, and “no strong fumes over such benefits as packaging can be recycled or not tested on animals (Ottman et al., 2006). Hence, organizations are paying a great attention on producing green products such as hybrid automobiles, eco-friendly paint, organic foods, energy efficient electronic equipments, recycled copy paper and environmentally friendly cleaning products to attract the environmentally oriented customers (Paco et al., 2014).

Further, high-level usage of polythene, plastic and paper is creating major threats to the natural environment. Researchers indicated that package of the product should be effective to protect

and balance the bio-diversity and realizing the needs of eco-system. Thus, government and other environmental regulatory agencies emphasized the organizations to reduce the polythene, paper and plastic usage. In order to respond this issue, organizations adopting several green packaging practices such as recyclable and biodegradable packaging, flat packing, providing paper bags instead of polythene bags, using recycled paper, phosphate-free detergents, refillable container for cleaning product and bottles using less plastic and etc. (Ajike et al, 2015). For instance, IKEA (famous furniture exporting company in the world) incorporates environmentally friendly efforts into day-to-day business and continuously supports initiatives that benefit causes such as children and the environment. To cut transportation costs, IKEA uses flat packaging; customers assemble the products at home. Beyond, reducing the transport cost of the company, this practice really contributes to reduce the ecological footprint by mitigating the fuel consumption of the organization. In addition to that, some organizations have mentioned green awareness slogans and jargons in their products to emphasis the importance of environmental protection and management to their customers which turn leads to enhance their environmental responsibility. Cherian and Jacob (2012) suggest other factors that can contribute to persuade consumers to purchase green products: environmental awareness, the information available on environmental themes, green advertising promoted by companies and the range of green products made available.

In the technological environment, display marketing, social medial marketing, affiliated marketing, search engine marketing, e-mail marketing, mobile marketing, pay per click marketing and content marketing are the digital marketing techniques apply by the organizations to fulfil the consumer's needs and wants. These new trend marketing techniques contribute to mitigate the ecological footprint of organizations by reducing the paper, plastic, polythene usage. Further, these practices also contribute to enhance the positive environmental image by reducing the marketing related transportation of the organizations. Beyond that, organizations are creating and implementing several innovative green marketing practices and initiatives to prove their environmental responsibility and gain the sustainable competitive advantage. Nowadays, most of the Sri Lankan organizations highly committed to adapt green marketing practices and initiatives, ultimately reflects in reducing the negative environmental impacts of the organizations. In overall, this trend improves the environmental performance of organizations. Therefore, this review proposes a preposition:

***Proposition 1: Green marketing contributes to improve the environmental performance of organization.***

### **Green Marketing and Economic Performance**

According to Jabbour and Santos (2008), performance in innovation is an important aspect for an organization to enhance the economic performance. Miles and Covin (2000) suggested that requirements to improve financial and environmental performance simultaneously encourages firms to seek innovative ways to use green marketing as a source of enhancing reputation, competitive advantage and ultimately financial performance. In addition to that, Smith and Brower (2012) indicated that, organization can gain the advantage over competitors by being aggressive and innovative on the green frontier. In this sense, organizations are creating and introducing several green marketing strategies and practices in order to satisfy the customers. Further, researchers revealed that, customers are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products (Kapelianis and Strachan, 1996; Laroche et al., 2001). For instance, nowadays customers preferred more organic products rather than artificial products. In general, organizations set higher prices green products and customers also ready to pay that, ultimately, these trends lead to enhance the profitability of the organization. Through this organization, it can be improved environmental quality and customer satisfaction (Ottman, et al., 2006).

Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) stated that green marketing practices can increase its competitiveness by helping to position it differently in the competitive arena. In addition to that, Wymer and Polonsky (2015) suggest that greening of production can lead to cost-savings or to greater profit through adding value or increasing the competitiveness and attraction of the firm to the market. Organizations which are not complying with environmental rules and regulations are typically forced to pay punitive fines or charges, and/or may suffer erosion of competitive position due to the reputational damage. Finally, this leads to reduce the profitability of organizations. Thus, organizations may reduce these negative effects by adopting green marketing initiatives, practices and strategies which turn leads to enhance the financial performance through the unleash the sustainable competitive advantage.

Beyond that, organizations adopting several innovative marketing strategies such as display marketing, social media marketing, affiliated marketing, search engine marketing, e-mail marketing, mobile marketing, and content marketing to reach their customers. These marketing

strategies are more effective and efficient green marketing strategies compared to traditional marketing strategies. For instance, in Sri Lanka, there were 6.7(32%) million people are internet users and 6 million (29%) people actively using the social media (Hootsuite report, 2018). Hence, Sri Lankan organizations can access the vast number of customers easily through the digital marketing. Further, it is possible to reach the 6 million Sri Lankan people through adapting social media marketing. In addition to that, these methods provide several benefits to the organizations such as get the feedback immediately, capital reduction, easy to check whether marketing tool is effective or not, result maximization, easy to access the target customers and etc. Finally, these trends definitely contribute to enhance the profitability and reduce the negative impacts environmental impacts by reducing the paper, paper and plastic usage and mitigate fuel consumption.

In this context, Miles and Munilla (1995) have also indicated that more and more progressive companies are following an “eco-marketing” orientation in an effort to gain a competitive advantage by positioning their products in the emerging “green consumer” segment. Further, several researchers have identified various benefits of green marketing, which includes better brand and reputation (Lawrence, 1991; Porter and Linde, 1995), and better profitability and return on investment with robust sources of competitive advantage. Hence, green marketing practices are highly recommended green practices to achieving these economic goals of organizations. Therefore, most of the famous companies such as IKEA, Apple, Coca-Cola and more adopt green marketing to improve the environmental management system of the organizations to enhance the environmental<sup>3</sup> and economic performance. Thus, green marketing practices are considered as the critical and essential components to enrich the economic performance of organizations. According to the above literature, this review establishes that green marketing has a positive relationship with economic performance as a second preposition of this review:

***Preposition 2: Green marketing contributes to improve the economic performance of organization.***

### **Green Marketing and Social Performance**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have become the hot topic in the field of modern management. Further, a business that makes nothing but money is considered as the

poor kind of business. This statement clearly emphasizes the importance of CSR of organizations. Because of the increasing awareness of the importance of CSR, companies appear to be bringing the concept of CSR into marketing programs (Hoeffler and Keller, 2002). CSR is defined as the obligation of a business to maximize its positive impacts and minimize its negative impacts on the society. CSR is concerned with the ways in which an organization exceeds the minimum obligations to stakeholders specified through regulations and corporate governance (Johnson et al., 2008). In simpler words, CSR is defined as the fulfillment of the expectations of the organization's stakeholder groups (e.g. consumers, employees, investors, communities, government, environment, etc). In this context, several researchers argued that most of the organizations began using CSR as a marketing tool in order to enhance the corporate financial performance. Moreover, Mass (2016) argued that environmental performance of an organization paves the way to improve the social performance of an organization. On a more general basis, the theme of environmental orientation is treated under CSR, along with many categories of society-related issues. On the other hand, Wood (1991) pointed out that lack of investment on CSR may represent hard-to-overcome threats to the corporate image, hard-to-recover losses of markets, reduction of support by stakeholders, and consequently the eventual death of the organization. Many firms are beginning to realize that they are members of the wider community and therefore must behave in an environmentally responsible fashion, thus resulting in environmental issues being integrated into the firm's corporate culture.

The rising demand for CSR leads to the application of environmental tools of green marketing (Peattie, 1995; El-Ansary, 1974; Kotler, 1972; Prothero, 1990; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Peattie and Peattie, 2009). In other words, organizations may prove their environmental concern by adopting the green marketing practices such as creation of green products and services, green packaging and green labelling, and etc. Hence, green marketing is termed as one of the crucial socially responsible actions of an organization which not only benefits the organization but also the society.

In general, nowadays most of the food manufacturing organizations are adding high-level toxic chemicals, artificial sweeteners and food preservatives to increase the taste and preserve the food for a longer period. These chemicals are very harmful to the health of the customers. In addition to that, evolutionary psychology predicts that individuals are motivated to continue their own gene pool and protect their young (Buss, 2004) when media give shocking information about products that are not organic or green, it pushes consumers to buy in order



to protect their children from real or perceived harm (Hjelmar, 2011). Thus, recent days, customers are raising the higher demand for green products to improve their health and safety by eliminating the diseases which are caused by highly toxic chemical added artificial foods and fast foods. In this sense, one of the objectives of green banking is to persuade the consumers to buy green products and to inculcate the habit of participating in practices of reuse and refilling of products fulfill the ethical and moral responsibilities (Paco et al., 2014). Most environmental products are grown or designed to minimize or eliminate the use of toxic agents and adulterating processes, market positioning on consumer safety and health can achieve broad appeal among health-conscious consumers (Ottman et al., 2006). Ultimately, this contributes to prove the CSR of organizations by enhancing the health and safety of their customers.

Increasing usage of polythene, plastic and paper usage are extremely hazardous to the natural environment and human lives. In general, organizations highly contribute to increase the usage of polythene and plastic through their products and services. One example of this is where McDonald's is often blamed for polluting the environment because much of their packaging finishes up as roadside waste. In this sense, Governments are investing more for the waste management projects. In order to respond this issue, organizations strive to take the route to progressively and effectively achieve significant reduction in polythene and plastic usage by adopting green packing practices such as recycling packaging and bio gradable packaging. An example of a firm that promote its environmental initiatives is Coca-Cola which invested large sums of money in various recycling activities, as well as having modified their packaging to minimize its environmental impact (Lal, 2015).

Green marketing is practices by the many of organization to making effort to sustainable development and it recognized to do attractive business to the consumers. Susan (2018) explained that business can increase the brand loyalty among social conscious consumers by demonstrating a high level of social responsibility. In social perspective, green marketing can be used to increase the publicity of the organization. If the marketers have ability to show them as "greener", it will be impact to enhance the public relation. Green organizations can be position as a socially responsible organization because they can promote its CSR by going green. (Rizwana, 2016). Corporate advertising about the green concerns regarding the wild life protection, recycling, environmental clean help to achieve the social image. Other CSR like allocating fund for planting trees, donations provided for various animal conservation

programs, conducting awareness programs can help to achieve the social sustainability of the organization. Beyond that, organizations take several efforts to improve the environmental responsibility of customers by publishing green messages in their products labels. In overall, this trend improves the social performance of organization. According to the above literature, this review establishes that green marketing has a positive relationship with social performance as a third preposition of this review.

***Preposition 3: Green marketing contributes to improve the social performance of organizations***

## **DISCUSSION**

Organizations maintain a strong commitment to show and report their economic, social and environmental performance to ensure the organizational sustainable performance. Hence, organizations turn their spot light on identifying, creating and implementing the sustainable management practices to confirm their organizational sustainability. In this context, sustainable management practice(s) should have ability contribute economic, social and environmental performance of an organization equally. Based on the criteria of sustainable management practice, this review has identified green marketing as the one of the sustainable management practices. Based on the cited literature, it is possible to conclude that green marketing has power to equally contribute to the economic, social and environmental performance of organization. Thus, green marketing can be termed as the sustainable marketing. In this review process, in addition to the available literature support, the reviewers have given some generally acceptable logical justification to validate or prove why green marketing can be considered as sustainable marketing practice. This review clearly pointed out sustainability contribution of green marketing. The following Table 1 shows contribution of green marketing to the organizational sustainability.

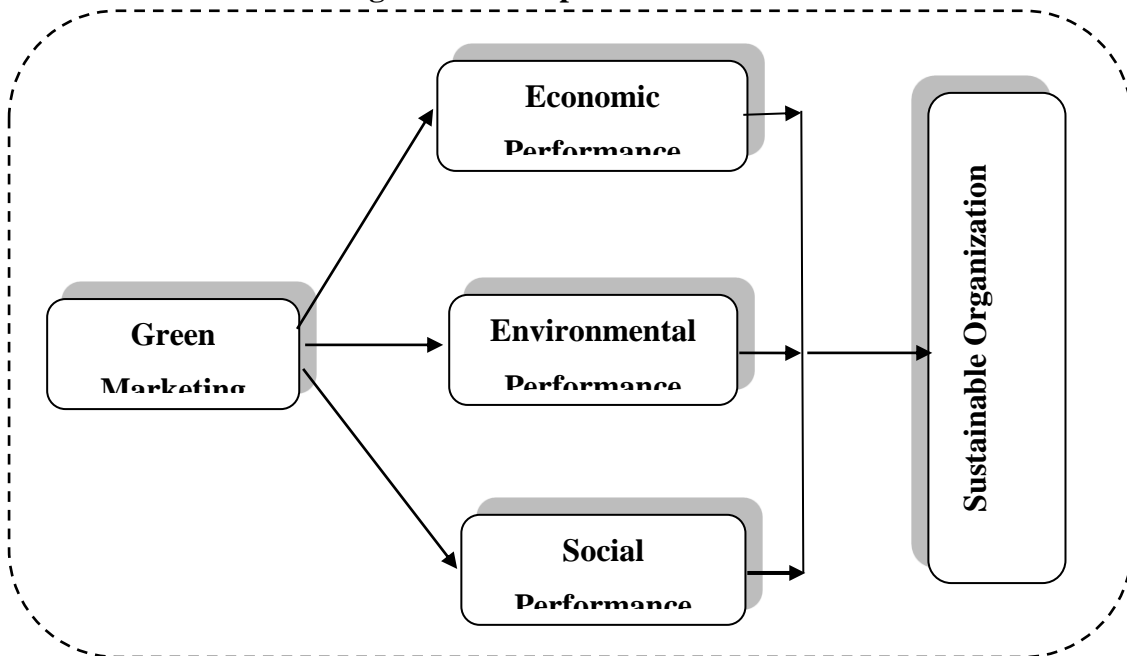
**Table 1: Contribution of Green Marketing to the Organizational Sustainability**

Economic aspect	Environmental aspect	Social aspect
<p>Reducing organization's marketing expenditure (e.g. transportation, accommodation etc.).</p> <p>Improving the profitability by respond to green consumerism.</p> <p>Contribute to access more customers through green marketing strategies (e.g. social media marketing, search engine marketing).</p> <p>Improving the competitive advantage by enhancing social and environmental image.</p> <p>Getting higher profitability by setting higher prices for green products and services.</p>	<p>Supporting eco-innovation, material, energy and water savings, etc.</p> <p>Reducing the paper, plastic and polyene image</p> <p>Improving the green image and green reputation</p> <p>Contributes to compliance with local and international laws.</p> <p>Reduce the carbon footprint of organization</p> <p>Reduce the fuel consumption by reducing the market related transport</p>	<p>Improving the health and safety of through the green products</p> <p>Contributes to enhance the waste management system by reducing the paper, plastic and paper usage.</p> <p>Contributes foster green behaviors among the community through the green awareness messages</p> <p>Supports to the green projects such as tree planting under the green CSR projects.</p> <p>Contribute to create green environment by reducing the environmental pollution.</p> <p>Improving the social image of the organization</p> <p>Satisfy the needs and wants of stakeholders</p>

Based on Table 1, this review provides evidences to accept the green marketing has power to be considered as sustainable management practice. Hence, green marketing can be termed as sustainable marketing. Thus, findings of the study suggested that organizations can apply the green marketing initiatives and practices to enhance the organizational sustainability in order to contribute to sustainable development. In this context, green marketing really supports to gain the sustainable competitive advantage.

Further, based on the review, this paper proposes a conceptual model that shows the relationship between green marketing and organizational sustainability (economic, social and environmental performance) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



*(Developed for the study purpose)*

## CONCLUSION

This review suggested that green marketing can be treated as the sustainable marketing practice in order to contribute to economic, social and environmental performance to unleash the organizational sustainability. The identification and exploration are based on literature support as well as reviewers' reflections. Theoretically, green marketing must produce results in three dimensions of sustainable development. In practice, further studies need to identify whether organizations really practicing green marketing practices or apply the practice of green washing to create the image of green organizations for business gains. This review has proposed a conceptual model which is useful to test proposed prepositions in this review empirically in the future.

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