

Sustainability – The Future of Survival

We are living in an unequal world. This inequity is created partly by nature and partly by us. With the growth of civilizations, different nations have moved on the ladder at a different pace and it has resulted in unequal rights on both natural and man-made resources. A part of this inequity has come from the way the world is designed by nature. One cannot decide where to be born, which society, faith and religion to follow and the resources to have access to. This is given by nature. If you are born in a land locked nation in an arid zone of Africa, you are bound to be in extreme poverty. Of course, your desire to see the sunnier days in life, to overcome this poverty trap is through your education, migration and entrepreneurial efforts. Growth and modernization of civilization have led to the formation of greater human civilization over centuries but even this growth has brought further inequity in society. In the process of development and growth, nations have fought wars, made pacts and invested globally to have access to resources. Innovation in science and technology has built greater demand for these finite resources.

Greater is the development, higher is the demand on resources leading to an unsustainable world. The human race has been able to drive out other races (making some of them even extinct from the earth) from this competition to have control over the resources. Population growth coupled with development in science and technology has fueled the consumption of finite resources of the world at an unimaginable speed. It seems as if there is no tomorrow and we will end up consuming everything that the mother nature has bestowed on us over billions of years in a couple of centuries. This sheer drive for materialistic pleasure has resulted in an increased concern for the future generations. Policy planners and futurists have started asking questions about the future that we intend to handover to our next generation,

Concern for sustainability is forcing policy planners, governments and business strategists to rework their vision and build a future based on sustainable consumption. People are talking about a symbiotic relationship between people, planet and profit.

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Sustainable development is a more complex phenomenon as it has a complex stakeholder structure beginning from an Individual to global governing bodies like UNO. The world population by 2060 is likely to increase by 50%. This explosion will demand a different economic structure, pricing of goods and services, social responsibility and viability of corporations in the long run. The World Bank has also recognized way back in 1992 that environmental degradation has the capacity to destroy societies. Sustainable development is the magical answer to bring a balance in our society despite a debate on the scope, nature and direction of sustainable development (Castro, 2004).

Sustainable marketing is a sub-domain of sustainable development and is based on two domains. Firstly, we need consumer marketing in our world for society's survival and secondly, the excessive consumptive pattern can cut down our societal fabric. Sustainable marketing is a process of planning, implementing and controlling the development, pricing, distribution and promotion that satisfy the consumer needs, organizational objectives and ensure eco-system compatibility (Fuller and Gilleett, 1999). It is the eco-system compatibility that drives the argument about earth's resources being finite and the human race doesn't have a single, monopoly based consumption right over these resources. The governing philosophy in practice is centered around anthropocentrism, classical utilitarian, or human centered ethics. The anthropocentrism is based on growth oriented economic development and earth's resources linked with human progress. There is an open acknowledgement that Western civilization affliction is an addition to material consumption (Singer 2001). This kind of consumption takes us to non-sustainability. There is a counter argument that sustainable development- sustainable marketing will jeopardize our standard of living, individual autonomy and self-identity through limiting consumption preferences (Beekman, 2004).

Biotic egalitarianism or life centered ethics (Rosen, 2000; Singer, 2001) talks about the human and non-human species on biospheric terms. It is the human behavior that constitutes moral significance implications in Western philosophy where civilization is looked upon as a 'ladder of life' and 'value judgement'. So the fundamental question is whose and what values do we follow? Justification of moral judgement is the basis of sustainable marketing (Is not that the question that Erin Brockovich asks in Erin Brockovich (2000) or Danny Archer's questions in the movie Blood Diamond (2006)). Sustainable development analyzes the relationship between the human race and nature (Magee, 2001). The anthropocentric view doesn't value the relationship between human demands related to natural resources. Bond (2005) is of the view that the pressure on earth has almost doubled since 1970s. The consumptive pattern is not sustainable for the future generation. So what kind of policies should be in place for a sustainable world ? (Beekman, 2004).



The angrier side of sustainable development emerges from the radical environmentalism (remember Green Peace Movement and their demonstrations); may have an evolutionary origin with conservatism and utilitarianism; may have emerged as a natural response to the discussion on thinking forums and journals. The three fundamental pillars of sustainable development are: Firstly, the existence of a theoretical base with practical implications; secondly modelling can increase theoretical promotion and operational gateways and thirdly, a spatial framework can be developed for environmental advocacy and management (Robert and Hills, 2002). The domain of sustainable development research focuses on four major areas: ecological, economic, social and cultural. Discipline of sustainable marketing emerges from arguments that earth's eco-system suffers from a consumer driven, mindless consumption drive that has emerged due to population growth, rapid access to consumption capital and massive adoption of consumer centric technology propelling exponential demand for derived goods and services from natural resources.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to develop a business model that favors economic growth as well as sustainable business practices- it is always at the cost of the phenomenon to bring in a desperate debate about the future of the world. In one of the articles published in Wall Street Journal titled 'The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of the Mankind', the authors accept the steam engine of consumption asking for a mindful and retrained consumption (Melloan, 2002). The alternative view point ignores this sensibility and argues that there is enough in the world and earth has a capability to recreate forever arguing that economic and technological interventions are always positive- at least greater good than the preached negatively. However, the demand of consumption is alarming- we are moving from a 6.1 billion population in 2000 to 8.9 billion in just fifty years. This fifty percent growth in population will put huge outflow of earth's material resources (Daniels, 2003).

These alarming growths for resources need to be researched well to find strategies and solutions. There cannot be any other high impact research other than the question of earth's survival. The Neo-Classical theory emphasizes on decision making abilities between firms, maximizing shareholder value and profitability with a weak sustainability approach (Goldstein, 2002; Faucheux, Muir and O' Connor, 1997). It can be argued that capitalism theories have not been able to deliver greater social equity- in terms of poverty reduction, social equity, or equitable access to technology. The invisible hand theory introduces the dual role of economic development and environmental sustainability within a capitalistic system (Castro, 2004). The capability theory has the ability to promote business opportunities through the promotion of horizontal flows like sustainable product design, lean and balanced engineering processes and technological capabilities to promote methods and machines reducing/controlling pollution (Goldstein, 2002).



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Societal actions change when we are confronted with a major concern/threat. So we assume that society's view point towards sustainability will change when we face such adverse situations- but are we too late for the same and when we arrive at the door of the hell, will the Satan allow us to look back and self-correct? Passmore's 'Chain of Love' principle propagates public sentiment adopting new values that will protect the environment. This principle is based on the emotional tie between generations. It is based on the foundation that as we love our next generation, we will make the world sustainable at any cost.

Economic growth drives consumption and mass consumption which is the antecedent to pollution. So the key focus of research ought to be product, process and machine designs that can restraint wastages. Adoption of Product System Life Cycle (PSLC) can lead to sustainable consumption (Fuller and Gillet, 1999) and Material Flow Analysis (MFA) based on Buddhist economics can lead to sustainable consumption (Daniels, 2003). The MFA is like an ecological blueprint with a potential to have a positive impact on the earth.

A new debate has emerged on environpreneurialism. This has three propositions. The first focuses on innovation and technology than regulatory or consumer activism; second, focuses on the adoption of entrepreneurial viewpoint and the third focuses on the coalescence of environmental, economic and social objectives Lyon and Laxwell, 1999). The three major assumptions are one, recognizes that business has a negative impact on the environment and people will seek for products with low environmental impact (Ottman, 2003); sustainable development and marketing are internal driven philosophies guiding business than a business or regulatory decision (Ryan, 2003, Mirvis, 1994) and third, socially responsible business proposition goes well with environpreneurialism (Osterhus, 1997). Let me end with questions that eco-designers are working on to build a business model:

- Can two or more functions be put into one product (product convergence)?
- Can the product used be rented /shared instead of the product purchased (shared consumption)?
- Can low impact material be used (material discovery)?
- Can material usage be reduced (lean manufacturing)?
- Can water or energy consumption be used (therapeutic use)?
- Can **the** product's lifetime be extended (no-replacement demand)?
- Can products be reused, remanufactured and recycled (rebirth of products)?

We at NMIMS Management Review would like to open up this discussion on sustainability and work towards building an environment. Social and governmental



(ESG) framework that will guide the future research. We welcome high impact research papers in this area so that we can put forth a cohesive argument towards sustainable business practices and decisions for a better world.

Happy Reading!

Dr Tapan K Panda

Editor in Chief

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