

Strategic Marketing with Customer Centrality as the New Normal: A Case Study

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Abstract: The theoretical framework for customer centrality studied on strategic marketing includes the following. They include (i) planning in external environment which affects the business, (ii) marketing process to analyse objectives and control, (iii) customer segmentation for targeting, (iv) customer acquisition and retention, (v) CSR activities for the betterment of society, (vi) internal marketing on how employees should focus towards the customer satisfaction, (vii) event marketing to attract the audience, (viii) stakeholder expectations and marketing myopia and (ix) future strategic marketing for sustainability. Figure 1 generated for this case study captures and conveys the theoretical framework in a simplified way to give a consistent view in the context of strategic marketing from literature. Considerable effort in this study was in mapping the process followed by the company with the theory. The marketing related activities within the company are managed by a dedicated business development department. This case study explores the theory in details and maps how this theory is used in practice for a leading aircraft simulation company.

1. Introduction

In this case study, several key themes relating to customer-centrality have been identified as follows:

- Theme1: Strategic Marketing planning
- Theme2: Strategic Marketing Process
- Theme3: Customer Acquisition and Retention
- Theme 4: Internal Marketing
- Theme5: Corporate Social Responsibility in marketing strategy
- Theme6: Stakeholder Expectation
- Theme7: Event Marketing-Experiential marketing
- Theme8: The future of marketing strategy
- Theme9: Sustainable Marketing

Each theme has been explored with due consideration being given to (a) practice and (b) the extant body of literature. Figure 1a shows the outline of strategic marketing focused on customer centrality. The themes initially focused on strategic planning and process. The focus was then on customer segmentation and internal marketing. The themes in strategic marketing especially CSR and stakeholder engagement was considered next. One of the key theme that was discussed is to enhance the experience of the customer in event marketing. The focus then shifted to more futuristic marketing strategy. This case study explores the theory in details and tried to map how this theory is used in practice for the company.

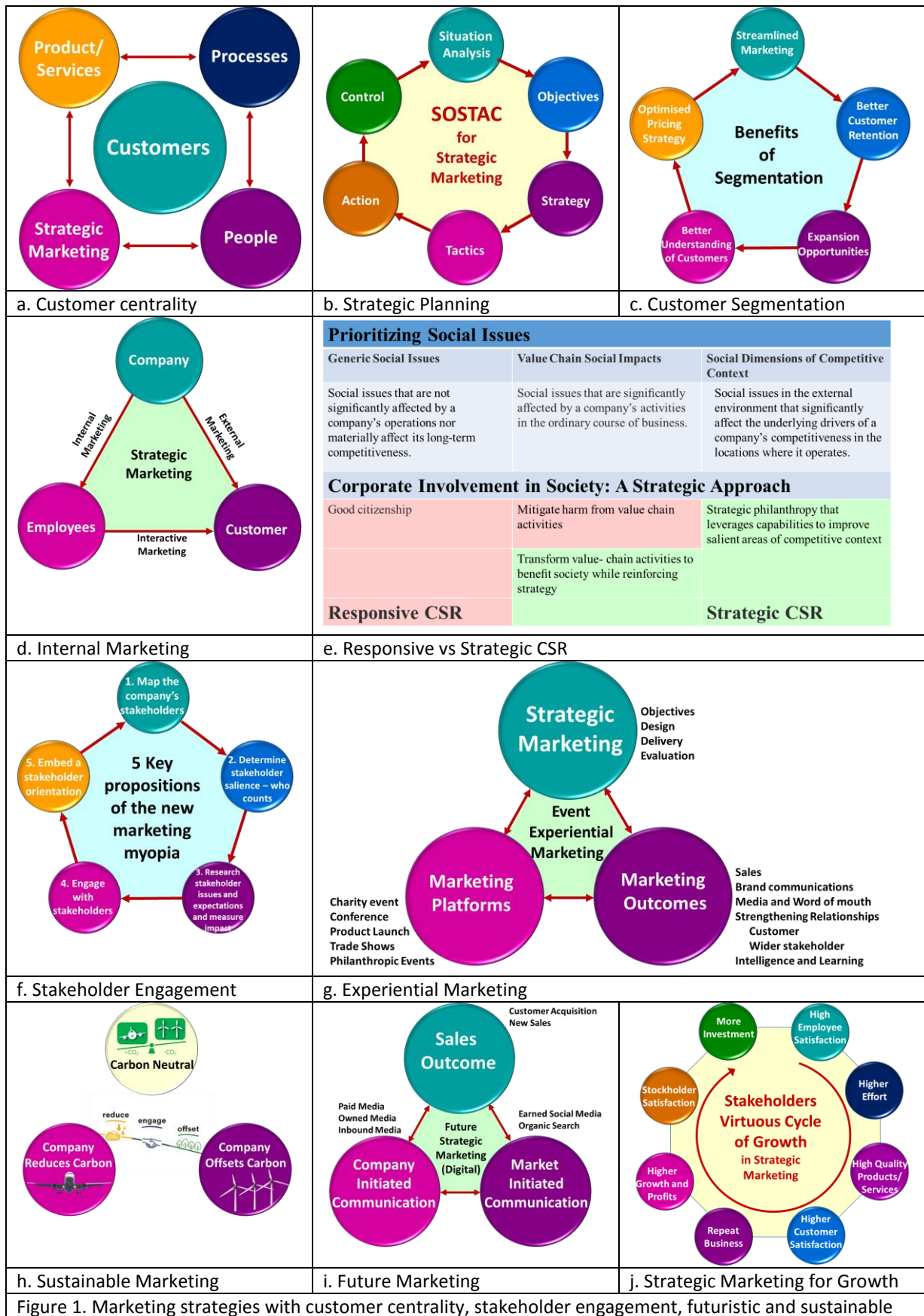


Figure 1. Marketing strategies with customer centrality, stakeholder engagement, futuristic and sustainable

2. Customer Centrality – Strategic Marketing

2.1 Theme1: Strategic Marketing planning

- (a) Practice: In practice, in Marketing strategy, vision of the organization is global training partner of choice for customer safety, efficiency, delight customer, create value and drive innovation. The company is working with the three segments flight simulators for civil aviation, simulator for flight, land and Naval for defence & safety and simulator for healthcare. In this COVID-19 challenging situation the company targeted on mainly on healthcare segment and use the tactics in marketing strategy, with in a short span of time developed prototype for three ventilators very much required for COVID-19 patients, signed the contract with the government for 10,000 ventilators.
- (b) the extant body of literature: Strategic Marketing planning for customer centrality, in current situation with changing environment organizations has to think how they can do marketing, what are the strategies used, whole world is facing challenge with COVID-19 pandemic, GDP in all countries gone to negative value in this situation how organizations do marketing strategy. In theory, the companies should understand the changing market world and environment apply tactics and use strategy in business Crittendon and Crittendon (2012).

In strategy potential segments has to be breakup, organization or business has to decide which segment to target, what's the size, the growth, who has common interest, how the company product and service perceived with in the mind of consumer.

Because of Covid19, many companies and governments have come together to share data, and to develop vaccines to control the virus. Crick and Crick (2020) the article provides theory on how co-opetition (competition and cooperation) are possible because of the external environment. This trend can be extended even to normal times and strategic marketing. McDonald (2016) says Strategic Marketing planning is all about that organization should focus on customer needs, have an eye on competition and on customer driven standard.

2.2 Theme2: Strategic Marketing Process

Strategic marketing process for customer centrality, in theory and practice SOSTAC model developed by PR Smith is used. It is an important tool in strategic marketing analysis and widely used in strategic marketing planning as well. SOSTAC means Situational analysis, Objective, Strategy, Tactics, Actions and Control. Figure 1b shows the SOSTAC model.

- (a) Practice: Planning: In Practice, Strategic Marketing process is very important to any organization, SOSTAC for marketing.

Situation Analysis – SWOT is normally used to analyse the company's situation. The strength lies in having a local simulation partnership by being close to the customer. The weakness lies in gaining defence contracts and hence need to gain and maintain the trust of governments across the world. Online simulation is growing field and hence is an opportunity for growth. The growth is consistent with the growth of the airline industry.

Objectives – The company would like to sustain and improve where possible the current level with training more than 22,000 crew members yearly, including more than 135,000 pilots.

Strategy – The strategy to achieve the level of training is to have flexibility in operations. The models followed are GOGO, GOCO, COGO or COCO. GOGO is Government owned and Government Operated with services provided. On the extreme is to go in for Company Owned and Company Operated model. There are variations of the percentage of each of the combinations depending on the local customer interests and capability in each country within which it operates.

Tactics –Tactics are to find new global markets, development of unique simulators and find new sectors for simulation such as healthcare. In summary, the tactics is to innovative in new simulation technology and solutions.

Action – To reach and acquire customers globally and to establish the market share, it has established its presence through several acquisitions and partnerships, which has enabled its penetration into new markets. It has acquired three companies in 2020 to provide high quality services to existing and new customers.

Control – It provides control through various feedback data collected on the trainee pilots, instructions. Simulators and for entire sites. These feedback data empowers customers and help engage with local site as well as remote monitoring. They help to get support from remote experts and support teams. These data also help in evaluating a rich set of historic performance trends.

2.3 Theme3: Customer Acquisition and Retention

- (a) practice: The company with the innovative technology in simulation continued targeting on new customer acquisition, started training centres in partner with Airbus with 10 simulators, with better understanding of customer and stream lined marketing increased to 60 simulators, with excellence in customer service retains the Airbus customer and expanded business across the globe in civil aviation, defence & safety and healthcare sector.
- (b) The extant body of literature: The theory of Customer acquisition and retention in marketing strategy is very important. There are four stages in product life cycle model – introductory, growth, maturity and decline. In the introductory stage of the product marketing strategy has to be used to create awareness on the product. During growth stage, marketing has to be emphasised on product brand, tactics to focusing on customer acquisition for the quality and the brand. When enter into maturity level due to more competitions and more companies in the market, sales of the product decreases to increase the sales cost cutting tactics to be used and targeting on different segments as shown in Figure 1c to stay and survive in the competitive market, company has to innovate on the existing product or new product to retain the customer otherwise should be exit from the business, as studied in Kodak case study Cravens, Piercy and Baldauf (2009). SONY example highlights the theory of customer centrality and how it is practiced in SONY by Clow and Baack (2010).

2.4 Theme 4: Internal Marketing

- (a) Practice: Internal marketing strategy in customer centrality is training, motivating employees in the organization to learn good practice to serve the customer (Celsi and Gilly, 2010; Payne and Helman, 1992).

- (i) In practice, the company follows a work process where it is mandatory for each employee has to set minimum of five SMART goals every year. Among five, one goal should focus on customer satisfaction. The core team will be interacting with the customer at the beginning, task will be allocated to team members, process starts from customer requirement specifications gathering the data for the product development, analysing the data and discussing with the customer to comply with the requirements. Once customer has agreed, system design and development process start, for each mile stone after consulting with the customer next phase will be starting and final product delivered with thorough testing make sure zero snags before delivery of the product and on time. Each team member works towards the customer satisfaction.
- (ii) For motivating the employees on success full completion of the project performance award will be given. Helman (1992) says, Internal Marketing is customer focused, evolution in removing barrier between managers and employees, each employee as well as employer should understand the company goals on customer satisfaction internally and externally to achieve success in the business. To support Helman (1992), in the organization, every month a face-to-face discussion will be scheduled with the manager, in every quarter, a staff performance discussion will be there, every half-yearly the discussion on appraisal will be conducted. Another mandatory goal on personal development for upskilling is providing online training to employees.
- (iii) The company publishes in-house newsletter in the organization, circulating through electronic media to all employees.

b. the extant body of literature: Internal Marketing

Marketing management should understand that marketing activities within the organization is more important than outside. To make marketing success all the departments should work together. Engineering department should design excellent products, finance should do the right funding, purchase department should procure right materials then production department will produce right product at the right time. When all departments go hand-in-hand company goals can be achieved. Company senior management should give clear picture to all employees, to work towards the customer satisfaction. Figure 4 shows, to achieve marketing excellence, three areas need to be focused external, internal and interactive marketing (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Employee satisfaction is also a major key point in internal marketing strategy. If employees satisfied then there is a good relationship with the stakeholder and employer. Internal marketing strategies main aim is to reduce conflicts in the departments across the organization, develop excellent co-ordination and co-operation in all the department will lead to the excellent external marketing to achieve organization common goals.

The theory studied in internal marketing (strategic marketing) taught by Professor Elizabeth Lloyd-Parkes, the organization should work towards the internal marketing key concepts such as up-skill the employees, motivate employees for better customer satisfaction. The advantages of internal marketing are employee empowerment that gives responsibility to each employee, his/her professional and personal development improvement in business culture, organization vision and employees' social needs.

In contrast, there are some issues implementing in internal marketing strategy, managers are not understanding the concepts of internal marketing, not well competent with the process. Conflicts among departments, bureaucracy, ignorance with subordinates which leads to the failure. Many companies rarely using the internal marketing in marketing strategy and planning process, some companies not communicating the marketing plans to even their sales department clearly as highlighted in Piercy and Morgan (1990).

2.5 Theme5: Corporate Social Responsibility in marketing strategy

Corporate Social Responsibility is a theme for customer centrality for marketing strategy as shown in Figure 1e.

(a) Practice: In practice, as a part of the business process, corporate social responsibility is one of the main objectives. Several examples of customer centric CSR in Annual Report (2020) are outlined below.

- (i) Most recently, taking part in the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the management have taken a safety measure to their customer, employees and their families worldwide. At this challenging situation, healthcare simulation is one of the business segment, has made use of this situation in marketing strategy to be customer centric and as part of the CSR activity, donated 600,000 N95 masks to the Quebec government in Canada.
- (ii) As innovation is in the root of the company over past seven decades, as soon as the pandemic started, immediately made a prototype for ventilator, which is very much required for the COVID-19 patients. It signed the agreement with the Canadian government to supply 10,000 ventilators to save COVID-19 patients on 10th April 2020.
- (iii) To create awareness about COVID-19 for employees, a website was created to keep the employees informed about COVID-19 situation worldwide and suggestions made to avoid travelling to affected countries and work from home option was provided to employees. During the initial outbreak, employees were alerted not to go to the office in China to ensure the safety of the employees. For the national security interest, few of the facilities turned into emergency management centres for the safety of the public.
- (iv) In fundraising campaign as part of CSR, collected one million dollars (\$1,015,015) in 2019 through contributions made by employees and corporate donation. The company donated and sponsored several activities such as education, wild fire disaster in Australia, as well as for people affected by flood.
- (v) As part of CSR, the company has adopted a good ethics practice by protecting data of employees, customers and all stakeholders associated with the security risk inherent in new computing technologies.
- (vi) One of the company's CSR goal is to promote gender equality and to empower women in aviation and it continues to sponsor scholarship for women cadets in training school.

In summary, in spite of CSR activities, it has more potential and can donate more for betterment of the society. For example, the \$1,015,015 donation is very little when compared to the revenue

growth. It could also cooperate with other organisations to scale its CSR activities to have a larger impact and to reach a wider audience.

(b) The extant body of literature (CSR): There is a lot of literature on CSR (Porter and Kramer, 2002; Porter and Kramer, 2006; Vilanova, Lozano, and Arenas, 2009; Dowling, 2016; Sanclemente-Téllez, 2017) and in the Annual Report (2020) for the development of society, for communities improving their quality of life. Good ethics should be followed as a business process, CSR sustainable goals are Eradicate hunger and poverty, education for each child, gender equality and women empower, stop child morality and environmental sustainability.

- (i) In Kotler and Lee (2005), the CSR is used as marketing strategy to target high earners, for example, on the people who earn more income \$30,000. In 1993-1994, the survey by Cone/Roper shows the companies significantly benefitted in business by CSR, the survey shows- 84% said they had good opinion on the organization that the organisation contributed to make the world better. 78% said they like to buy a product from the company which cares about good cause, 66% said they switched to the brand that supports good cause. In 2002, the study report by Cone corporate citizenship reported 84% of American citizens desired to switch brands that are associated for good cause.

2.6 Theme6: Stakeholder Expectation

- (a) practice: In practice, engaging with primary and secondary stakeholders Annual report (2018), one area I would recommend is to pay more attention to competitors event marketing strategy, for example Thales aviation provide a better experience in event marketing. Organizations has to recognize the importance of the stakeholders, if they nurture the stakeholder- employees, customer, suppliers and distributors there will be growth and profit to the organization. A company should create a best employee satisfaction, employee will put more efforts to produce good quality of product and service, which gives high level of customer satisfaction, which leads to repeat of business orders, from repeat business company profit will increase from which stockholder will be satisfied and they can invest more as highlighted by Kotler and Keller (2016).
- (b) The extant body of literature: Stakeholders in an organization, primary stakeholders are – customers, employees, suppliers, shareholder and communities. The secondary stakeholders would include media, government, consumer advocacy groups, competitors and certain non-Governmental organization and possible interactions between them. To avoid marketing myopia the organizations/marketers has to consider the five positions. Five key propositions to be considered that stakeholders are important in strategic marketing engagement and not just customers (Smith, Drumwright and Gentile, 2010) as shown in Figure 1f.

2.7 Theme7: Event Marketing-Experiential marketing

Figure 1g captures the 'experiential marketing' with strategic planning, suitable marketing platforms and expected marketing outcomes (Crowther, 2011).

- (a) Practice: In practice, the company participates in aviation trade shows, defence aviation exhibitions for their event marketing. Customers and stakeholders can experience the feel of real time simulator in the exhibitions and has 7 decades of experience in civil and

defence aircraft simulators customer can trust the brand and feel of the quality of the product.

- (b) The extant body of literature: Importance of event marketing in customer centrality. The event marketing to attract and targeting the audiences Kotler (2002). Event marketing is experiencing the product and brand by Parsons, Maclaran and Chatzidakis (2017). It is live experiencing the product by Getz (2007). The advantages of event marketing are strengthen the relationship with customer and stakeholder, good opportunity for brand development and meet customer face-to-face. The best platforms exhibition and trade fairs.

2.8 Theme8: The future of marketing strategy

- (a) Practice: In practice for future marketing strategy, theory in extant body of literature may be beneficial for the marketing strategy. One of the key challenges in future marketing is to manage the impact of external shocks on companies and we see the performance recovering from the COVID19 crisis.
- (b) The extant body of literature: Future of marketing strategy in customer centrality, in modern emerging technology and the crisis like COVID19 future marketing strategy will be very challenging and crucial as well. Crick and Crick (2020) the theory says in B2B on how co-opetition (competition and cooperation) works well with competitor same strategy can be used in future marketing.

Digital marketing could be the best suited for the future marketing as shown in figure 1(i). The Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science research literature shows owned media and digital inbound marketing play a vital role in customer acquisition. Earned social media as well played an important role in owned media. Managers of the company have to be trained for digital marketing.

For future marketing strategy literature says neural imaging of a person using EEG (Electroencephalography) can be used to predict the product choice of the customer and EEG is cost effective (Telpaz, Webb and Levy, 2015). Combination of neural imaging and digital marketing could be helpful in future marketing strategy.

2.9 Theme9: Sustainable Marketing

Sustainable Marketing (Kotler, 2011; Trudel, 2019) is emerging as a theme beyond the traditional CSR. In customer central sustainable marketing, customers identify with the brand or organisation that pursues sustainable measures to prevent environment damage. Customers are willing to pay more for products and highlight those sustainable products to the society or wider social groups. Pollution, environment, climate and carbon-footprint and measures to mitigate these by organisations are considered by customers in their purchasing decisions. For strategic marketing, we could segment the demographic based on the customer's sustainability awareness and interests. Sustainability marketing currently has even expanded beyond customers to relate to all stakeholders of an organisation. Figure 1h shows the diagram for sustainability by reducing and offsetting carbon dioxide in the environment.

- (a) Practice: The Company's Annual Activity and Corporate Social Responsibility report (2020) has made evident unprecedented contribution to environment and sustainability issues. The planning, action and measurement of the impact of the sustainability issues are published in

the report and made available to the public. Some specific sustainability activities, actions, control and derived metrics are highlighted below:

- (i) The company identifies sustainability activities with all stakeholders including customers. First, to retain the licence, the company has to comply with sustainability measures specified by the regulators. The company also has a wider global agenda to participate in five out of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where it sees the environment issues affect the wider society.
- (ii) In practice, the company supports the theory by Kortam and Mahrous (2020) by supplying simulators for Civil aviation and defence. Customers by using simulators for training their pilots can reduce millions of tonnes of carbon-di-oxide each year. In case, they used actual aircrafts for training pilots, millions of tonnes of carbon-di-oxide are generated by burning of the fuel. The company reports in 2018 Annual Report (2018) that the simulators operated by the company save over five million metric tonnes of CO₂ per year. In 2020, the company has achieved training of more than 135,000 pilots in simulators.
- (iii) To offset carbon, the company has Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) and abides by the principles of the United Nations Global Compact as a signatory and reports to the Carbon Disclosure Project.
- (iv) The company adopted to ensure environmental sustainability, to create awareness of environment issues from carbon di-oxide produced by vehicles, Un-interrupted power supply generators. The company has committed to carbon neutrality FY2020 created a comprehensive process to address climate change. The president and CEO of the company announced at Montreal Council on Foreign Relation Event, the company wants to contribute its share in fighting against global warming for the well-being of the future generation, for better society and cleaner environment.
- (v) The company is the first Aerospace Company in Canada committed and become carbon neutral in summer 2020 as highlighted in the Annual Activity and Corporate Social Responsibility report (Carbon Neutral, 2020). To become carbon neutral for the use of live training fuel emissions, business-related air travel and energy consumption has purchased carbon-offset certificates and renewable energy certificates (RECs).
- (vi) On 22nd April of every year on account of International Earth Day, the company is planning for the activities such as planting trees in the premises. In every day-to-day activity to reduce the waste and recycling process Tea bags after use are collected separately and coffee beans separately for making compost out of the waste and used for the plants. To reduce the waste instead of paper cups, re-usable cups are used for drinking coffee and tea. During lunch hour to save electric power all monitors will be turned off and unnecessary room lights will be turned off.

The company as outlined above since 2020 has achieved better control and has reported tangible measures on sustainability activities, thus establishing a sustainable brand and helps in engagement with its customers as well as other stakeholders.

- (b) The extant body of literature: The Sustainable marketing strategy in customer centric is the combination of Modern marketing, ethical eco-friendly marketing and relationship marketing as outlined by Trivedi, Trivedi and Goswami (2018). Many companies failed, many companies believe, that practicing sustainable marketing strategy has major advantages. However, few believe its organizational marketing mix strategy for the organization to deal with the customers for added value for business. Its better companies should practice sustainable

marketing strategy, as it is very much essential for the society rather than long term goal and great commercial success. The theory considered by Kortam and Mahrous (2020) argue that organisations should care for the environment in which they operate. However, the article also alerts there is likely to be a myopia, and hence suggest that strategy should look at broader and more themes for marketing. Use of Coal affects the environment (Coal Report, 2014), but has been the fuel to drive growth for more than 150 years. Even though developed countries have moved away from traditional coal fired power plants which cause environmental damage, emerging economies still rely on coal. Organisations should be aware of the environmental damages that could happen, and in some cases what is attractive today, could be environmentally damaging several years later.

3. Conclusion

This case study is about strategic marketing theory and practice. As part of the theory, several strategic marketing themes have been studied in this module. The focus of the themes are central to customer. However, it is also essential that strategic marketing should engage all the stakeholders. The focus was on strategic marketing and critically analysed several research reports, annual reports, online documents that are publicly accessible and listed in the reference below. It is evident that the company has several strategic marketing in place that matches the theory. However, it has to focus more in CSR related activities, such as fund raising for donation is very little when compared to the company revenue turnover is in \$billion. Part of sustainability activities mentioned in CSR report is about five sustainable goals selected from United Nations 17 sustainable goals, and there will be lot of work done along the sustainable agenda in the near future.

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