

Sustainable Marketing Strategies for Cycling: Moving Towards Greener Earth

Dr.Mrudula Trivedi

Assistant Professor, Dept.of Commerce and Business Management, Faculty of Commerce

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. mrudulatrivedi@yahoo.co.in

Abstract – Last three decades have witnessed many positive changes in India in terms of economic growth and prosperity. However, this growth has affected our environment and health of people adversely. Pollution and related health issues are major concern today for our nation. Indian city roads are witnessed by heavy vehicular population and increasing pollution. Studies indicate that approximately 75% Indians use two wheelers for personal mobility and it contributes more than 50% pollution in the atmosphere. Rapidly increasing income further fuels car population on our roads. Similarly, life style based diseases are increasing at a faster pace and poses threat to our lives. There is growing evidence now that such diseases are triggered by consuming the food which is full of fat, salt and sugar. To address this issue, cycling can be used as sustainable mobility solution. If we evaluate India, then here bicycle culture is missing. Absence of cycling tracks and cycling sports policies, less usage of bicycles and people's participation and engagement in cycling as a sport is poor. So, aggressive efforts and right marketing strategies are essential to make popular cycling as a sustainable mobility solution. Demand for cycles would increase if we have developed designs which are preferred by various segments of the market. Organizations should employ Sustainable Marketing strategies to achieve the objectives of health and physical fitness for people and greener earth.

Key Words: Pollution, Life style based diseases, Sustainable Mobility, Promoting Cycling, Sustainable Marketing Strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Present Health Status

Today life style based diseases are increasing at a faster pace and poses threat to our lives. There is growing evidence now that non-communicable diseases are triggered by consuming the worst kind of food which is full of fat, salt and sugar. We are losing our health because of the processed food.[1]

Our work does not involve physical labour but it gives lot of stress. Our indisciplined schedule leaves no time to do exercise on regular basis. As per World Health Organisation (WHO) report of 2015 Non-communicable Diseases (NCD) Global Survey, 1 in 4 Indians face the risk of death from an NCD before they hit the age of 70 from heart and lung diseases, stroke, cancer and diabetes. As per indiataoday.in report, percentage of deaths from NCDs is 60%, total number of NCD deaths is 5869000 and probability of premature mortality from NCDs is 26%. [2] Considering the high cost and long duration of treatment, these diseases are not only a financial burden to the common man but also a huge cost to the economy. The Harvard School of Public Health has, in a study on economic losses due to non-communicable diseases

(NCDs), estimated that the economic burden of these ailments for India will be close to \$6.2 trillion for the period 2012–30.[3]

Air Pollution

Environmental degradation attacks our body and in turn it reduces our efficiency to work and live with peace and happiness. This is the major reason to protect the environment. According to CSE report of December, 2015, air pollution is one of the top 10 killers in the world and is the fifth leading cause of death in India. It results in about 6,20,000 premature deaths which are caused by stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ischemic heart disease, lower respiratory infections and trachea, bronchus and lung cancer, among others. The report states that death toll due to uncontrolled air pollution-related illnesses alone have increased worldwide by a whopping 300 per cent in the last decade, from 800,000 in year 2000 to 3.2 million in 2012. In Delhi, which was named as the most polluted city of the world by WHO in 2014, air pollution is responsible for 10,000 to 30,000 annual deaths," it said.[4]

Above data are creating a scary picture for us as a nation and needs immediate attention. According to CSE report of December, 2015, air pollution is one of the top 10 killers in the world and is the fifth leading cause of death in India.[5]

Studies indicate presence of malaria, dengue, death rise due to heat wave and heat related problems in new born babies are increasing. Body Burden cites WHO estimates that say that 13.1 million people in India will die of cancer by 2030. This is 20 times than the current death toll in the country. "Increasing numbers of studies are establishing that the risk of getting cancer has more to do with the state of one's environment than his or her genetic makeup,"[6]

II. NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY SOLUTION

Present health status in India is alarming situation for us and sound actions are required in this direction. Life style modification and food pattern need to be changed. Similarly, adverse environmental impact calls for controlling and minimizing pollution by modifying present mode of transportation. We need to shift from current mode of transportation to sustainable mobility solutions which offer opportunity to exercise for physical fitness and at the same time its green mobility too. In view of this, organizations should focus from traditional marketing to sustainable marketing and along with government, all stakeholders should support and adopt green transport mode. In present scenario, sustainable marketing can have great role to popularize green transport and to restore human health in India.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this study an attempt is made to understand pollution and life style based diseases present in India using secondary data and relevant information available on different websites. On the basis of the analysis of present situation, most effective sustainable marketing strategies are designed here which can address the issues under study.

IV. SUSTAINABLE MARKETING

Sustainability simply means something which remains for longer time over the years. Sustainable Marketing involves developing and promoting products and services that meet consumer and business user needs utilizing society's natural, human, and cultural resources responsibly to ensure a better quality of life now and for future generations to come.[7]

Since, we use resources which are limited, valuable and non-renewable they should be prudently utilized. While preparing products, design plays an important role. Products should be designed in such a way that it satisfies consumer requirements and at the same time uses minimum resources. Sustainable marketing is not just about taking steps to appear more environmentally friendly or more socially conscious and advertising that fact to consumers. It is more substantive and meaningful. Sustainable marketing draws on traditional marketing methods and in addition requires the following:

-Understanding of consumer's values, emotions, and buying behavior related to sustainability.

-Knowledge of the evolving sustainability marketplace.

-Organizational commitment to sustainability and to positive relationships with their customers, communities, and the planet.[8]

In view of the above discussion, we need a strategy which is multipronged and aims at making people healthy, minimizes pollution, generates profit for the organization and delivers customer satisfaction too. Sustainable mobility solution must be growth oriented and consumer must prefer it over other alternatives. Cycling is the best personal mobility option in present scenario which is capable of delivering all the benefits simultaneously. To promote Cycling, effective sustainable marketing strategies are required to be designed.

V. CYCLING AS SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY SOLUTION

These are the days characterized with heavy usage of high-tech electronic gadgets, sedentary life style, less physical work, heavy vehicular usage and more computer work. However, most neglected mobility option is bicycle which is not part of our life style. Although Leonardo da Vinci drew some rough sketches of a contraption that looked like a bicycle, it was a Frenchman, De Sivrac, who built the first bicycle-type vehicle in 1690. Pedals were added in 1840 by Scottish blacksmith Kirkpatrick Macmillan, who is said to have invented the first real bicycle. Cycling as a sport was born in the 19th Century. The first recorded short race took place in 1868 over a 1,200-meter course in Parc Saint-Cloud, Paris.[9]

The researchers put the 150 countries they analyzed into four groups according to the average percentage of households that own bicycles:

Group 1 (81%): Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Burkina Faso

Group 2 (60%): USA, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, China, Australia, New Zealand and several European countries

Group 3 (40%): Russia and parts of Eastern Europe, the UK, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, the Indian subcontinent, Maritime Southeast Asia, Mexico, Chile, Panama and Nicaragua

Group 4 (20%): most West, Central, and North African nations, the Middle East and Central Asia.[10]

It is important to note the reasons which can be attributed for less usage of bicycle. Today, trees are cut heavily and prevailing weather conditions does not support cycling. Similarly, lack of cycling infrastructure such as dedicated cycling tracks, attractive design innovations in cycling, lack

of status attached with cycling and most importantly absence of cycling culture do not motivate people to buy it.

Bicycle Sales in India

In India, Industry estimates put the market at 15 million bicycles a year, worth around \$1.2 billion. According to the bicycle makers lobby, only 90 out of 1,000 people in India own bicycles, compared with 149 out of every 1,000 in China and 400 out of every 1,000 in the US.[11] Growing with a moderate growth rate of about 6%, bicycle sales in the country are dominated by sales of entry-level/low-value models (60%) and bicycles for children (35%); remaining sales (5%) being in the medium value and high-value segments.[12]

Perceptions about Cycling

In India every child must have done cycling in childhood and their teenage. There is a element of fun and latent demand associated with cycling in the market. People of all age groups learn cycling at early age and they love to do cycling. However, teenagers as well as office goers do not continue with cycling as it is not holding status appeal in the society. Schools, Colleges as well as Corporates have never considered cycling as an integral part of life style. However, a small percentage of working class does leisure cycling or is taking part in cycling events. But the number is very less. Cycling as an exercise is not yet adopted by large number of people.

Similarly, cycling as a mode of transport is adopted by lower income class and not by middle and higher income classes. This situation needs to be corrected. Mere persuading customers to purchase bicycle with the help of advertisements in news papers or T.V is not enough.

VI. SUSTAINABLE MARKETING STRATEGIES

1. Multiple Segments and Customised Cycle Design

Before developing bicycle designs, its important to understand heterogeneity that exist in the market. Multiple segments are present such as kids, teenagers and students, working people who love cycling as sports, health conscious people, and people from lower income class, middle income class, male cyclists and female cyclists.

Marketers need to identify different potential segments and should design cycles as per their taste and preferences.

2. Placing Visual of Cycling as a Sport and Recreating in Cities/Urban Areas

Visuals for persuading and adopting cycling as a sport and life style must be promoted and it must be done very aggressively. A city with a strong cycling visuals, minimum essential cycling tracks and segregated bike lanes and extensive facilities catering to urban bicycles, such as identified tracks at outskirts of the city, tie ups with NGOs and Cycling Clubs would boost the adopting and usage of

cycling. In India Cycling should be promoted as popular sports to restore health and clean environment.

Hence, visuals of cycling must be developed and aggressively communicated which has the power to influence people's mind. Once, visuals generate enthusiasm for cycling, frequent gaming programmes and cycling tours need to be organised. It would automatically help in developing habit for physical fitness through cycling.

Furthermore, good cycling infrastructure makes cycling a safe experience. In environment with poor cycling conditions, improving infrastructure and giving cyclists room in urban space communicates positive message that cycling is possible and socially respected way of personal mobility. When commitment for cycling infrastructure and environment protection is conveyed from corporation/government, it makes positive impact on citizens too. Similarly, traffic lights must be coordinated for cycling and should be given preference while managing traffic.

Cycling clubs and cycling on sharing must be promoted as it will help in bringing visibility of cycling as a sport and fitness option among people. It would develop cycling culture in its true sense and would help in increasing cycling usage and will enhance its image as 'cycling for fun and recreation'.

3. Instill Innovation For New Concepts of Bicycle

Product Design plays a crucial role as it has a capacity to persuade buyer. At present bicycles available in market are not delivering great riding experience. Gone are the days when simple cycles were preferred by youth of India. Infact, to revive market of cycles, new cycling concepts would play key role. Innovative concepts can be on various design points.

- 1) Material being used
- 2) Features
- 3) Incorporating new technology
- 4) Changing the basic form of cycling riding
- 5) Using Solar Power to develop new cycling concepts

4. Pricing

Imported bicycles are costly and not affordable by middle income group. We need bicycles which are excellent machines making our ride comfortable on tough Indian roads yet affordable. So, value pricing strategy is most effective. For sports and leisure segment, people will buy if its an excellent machine. They are willing to pay premium price. So, charging premium price will not discourage its buying. Marketers need to identify different segments and as per segment customized pricing will prove effective. So

for middle income group value pricing, for sports and leisure segment, premium pricing would be most suitable.

5. Place

Sustainable distribution focuses on environment as well as impact on society due to distribution such as working conditions of staff, noise level in the factory or work premises, levels of traffic, pollution and its impact on people. One of the most sustainable trends in storage solutions is the Just In Time technique. Similarly, dealer store interior should communicate messages on fitness and environment. They should use solar energy when its possible and it should be visible to visitors.

6. Promotion

Advertising of bicycles in news papers and T.V. is not enough. In fact, we are failed to educate our potential buyers. Since, majority of our population is not fully aware and are having indifferent attitude towards health and pollution, developmental marketing efforts are required. Various stakeholders must be involved in promotion of cycling as a life style product and it must be inculcated in culture of our kids, teenagers, youth and people at large.

Positive values such as freedom and health, physical fitness, modernity and energy, its green and economical mode of transport should be highlighted in promotional campaigns. Recognition to cycle users in organizations, schools, and communities must be given as they are directly contributing in reducing pollution and they are the role models for many others.

7. Role of Government

Government's role would be critical as cycling promotion helps the society with dual benefit. A comprehensive cycle strategy is required to be prepared for bringing synergy effect in urban planning. It makes us healthy as well as minimizes pollution.

Bringing Change in People's Perception

In India, cycling is not considered positively as a mode of transport. Government must launch nation wide promotional campaign which is aimed at changing perception of people. In fact, popularizing high end bicycles, sports bicycles, and electric bicycles with the help of sports and film celebrities, this goal can be achieved.

Government may formulate policies for green mobility and in turn provide directions to schools and colleges for organizing green mobility fairs, competitions on design innovations in bicycles, nature camps to sensitise people about environment, environment day celebration, and life style theme based role plays and skits, healthy food cooking competitions, launch green bank account scheme to deposit trees adopted and grown every month/year by students and citizens, number of people convinced by students for adopting cycling, cycling distance covered in kilometers by

each student, health status of each student etc. All these steps would definitely change people's perception about cycling and would become serious about health.

Tax Incentive

Government should impose heavy tax on two and four wheeler users and should provide incentives to buy cycle. United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium and Holland have all introduced tax incentives for bike commuters. Especially the English Cycle to Work schemes and the Dutch regulations are inspirations to other countries.

The 1999 Finance Act introduced in the UK an annual tax exemption to promote healthier journeys to work and reduce environmental pollution. As part of the government's Green Transport Plan, this allows employers – both private and public – to lend cycles and cyclists' safety equipment to employees as a tax-free benefit. The American Government passed in October 2008 a \$700 billion rescue package including the Bicycle Commuter Tax Act. With this act, bike commuters may receive up to \$20 per month (\$240 a year) tax credit for every qualified month that they bike to work.[13]

These steps may not bring results immediately, however, it reflects govt.'s commitment for green transport and helps in developing world class cycles, cycling habit and would make India a greener earth.

VI. CONCLUSION

World over pollution and life style based diseases are rising and pausing question mark on our growth pattern. India is also suffering from huge economic losses due to pollution and diseases. Our growth has increased but it has affected our environment and health of people adversely. Indian city roads are witnessed by heavy vehicular population and increasing pollution. More than 75% Indians use two wheelers for personal mobility and it discharges more than 50% pollution in the atmosphere.

If we look at rising income and purchasing power, consumption pattern and life style of people in India then yes its urban India which is shining, growing and witnessing solid economic development, infrastructure development and emerging as major platform for growth of commerce and industry. However, the most important question is are we having healthy life style? Obviously not as our life style is attracting many diseases at a faster pace and pauses threat to our lives. There is growing evidence now that such diseases are triggered by consuming the food which is full of fat, salt and sugar. Fast food, processed and semi processed food are consumed everyday which is damaging health of people.

Cycling can be used as strategic solution which has power to address both the issues, that is to minimise ever increasing pollution and life style based diseases. Cycling

can be used as sustainable mobility solution. In India bicycle culture is missing. Usage of bicycle is not respected by our society. So, attitude towards cycling is not positive. Further, we do not have sufficient infrastructure which can encourage cycling such as safety lanes for bicycle commuters. We also do not have specially developed cycling tracks, absence of favourable cycling sports policies. People's usage of bicycle, their participation and engagement in cycling as a sport is poor. So, aggressive efforts and right marketing strategies are essential to make cycling as a sustainable mobility solution. Demand for cycles would increase when we have developed designs which are preferred by various segments of the market. Organisations should employ Sustainable Marketing strategies to achieve the objectives of health and physical fitness for people and greener earth. Identifying right market segments, design bicycles as per taste and preferences of different target segments, developing major cities and urban areas with visuals educating and persuading people towards cycling, innovations and new designs of cycling and tax incentives for cycling at work place are important strategies that can be employed as part of Sustainable Marketing. This shift from traditional marketing to Sustainable Marketing for cycling would definitely help us towards making our earth greener and better.

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