International Journal of Business, Management and Visuals (IJBMV), ISSN: 3006-2705
Volume 8, Issue 2, July-December, 2025, Available online at: https://ijbmv.com

Green Business Practices Adopted by Indian Companies: A Pathway to Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, environmental sustainability has become a strategic priority for businesses across the globe. Indian companies, driven by regulatory requirements, stakeholder expectations, and growing environmental concerns, have increasingly adopted green business practices to minimize their ecological footprint and contribute to sustainable development. These practices include energy conservation, renewable energy utilization, waste management, water conservation, sustainable supply chain management, green manufacturing, eco-friendly packaging, and carbon emission reduction initiatives. The adoption of green business practices has enabled Indian companies to improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, enhance brand reputation, and achieve long-term competitiveness. Leading organizations such as Tata Group, Infosys, Mahindra Group, and ITC Limited have implemented various sustainability initiatives, including carbon neutrality programs, renewable energy projects, green buildings, and circular economy practices.

These efforts align with national and international sustainability goals, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study examines the various green business practices adopted by Indian companies, their impact on organizational performance, and the challenges encountered during implementation. It also explores the role of government policies, environmental regulations, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in promoting sustainable business operations. The findings suggest that while Indian companies have made significant progress in integrating environmental sustainability into their business strategies, challenges such as high initial investment costs, technological constraints, and lack of awareness continue to hinder widespread adoption. The study concludes that green business practices are essential for ensuring environmental protection, economic growth, and long-term business sustainability in India.

Keywords: Green Business Practices, Sustainability, Environmental Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, Renewable Energy, Green Manufacturing, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

The growing concerns regarding climate change, environmental degradation, and depletion of natural resources have compelled businesses to rethink their traditional methods of operation. In India, increasing environmental awareness among consumers, stringent government regulations, and global sustainability commitments have encouraged companies to adopt green business practices. Green business practices refer to environmentally responsible strategies and activities that minimize negative impacts on the environment while maintaining economic growth and profitability. These practices not only help organizations comply with environmental regulations but also enhance their reputation, customer loyalty, and operational efficiency.

Green marketing practices in India have emerged as a significant driver of sustainable development, reflecting the growing commitment of businesses, consumers, and policymakers towards environmental conservation. Indian companies across sectors are increasingly adopting eco-friendly initiatives such as sustainable sourcing of raw materials, energy-efficient manufacturing, recyclable and biodegradable packaging, waste reduction, carbon emission control, and the promotion of environmentally responsible products. Government initiatives, including the promotion of renewable energy, plastic waste management regulations, and sustainability reporting frameworks, have further encouraged organizations to integrate green practices into their business strategies. Additionally, rising consumer awareness regarding environmental issues has increased the demand for green products, motivating businesses to adopt ethical production and marketing practices. These efforts not only enhance corporate reputation and customer loyalty but also contribute to resource conservation, pollution reduction, and long-term economic growth. Thus, green marketing has become an essential pathway for achieving sustainable development in India by balancing economic progress with environmental protection and social well-being.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bazyte (2014) discussed the relatively new worldwide trend of adding a "green" slant to business. The purpose of the research was twofold: firstly, to clarify the definition of "green business", secondly, to test the hypothesis that the differences in business penetration by "green" ideas in various countries are to a large extent determined by national specifics in terms of economic development and public consciousness. The survey was conducted by the authors in Lithuania and Ireland. The collected primary data were processed with the SPSS program and analysed by methods of correlation analysis. The research revealed considerable differences in the "green" attitudes and practices of Lithuanian and Irish companies, the former being more concerned with costs than benefits of becoming "green", and the latter demonstrating awareness that being "green" opens new revenue-raising opportunities

Sachdeva & Garg (2015) investigated the scale of adoption and implementation of GSCM practices of Indian industries. The study revealed that the Indian companies are lacking on the front of adoption and implementation of GSCM measures in their supply chains. As GSCM has the potential to drive economic gains and can act as a big motivator for companies which are going green. As India leaps towards higher levels of industrialization and economic growth, GSCM becomes more of a necessity rather than an option for Indian companies to survive the competition.

Bicakcioglu (2018) investigated the drivers that lead exporting manufacturing companies to adopt environmentally friendly actions, exploring green business practices and examined the outcomes which resulted from companies' green business activities. The study particularly focused on green business strategies of Turkish manufacturing exporters. Thirty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with executive managers from 22 companies and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The study revealed that two internal (i.e., capabilities and resources) and four external stimulating forces (i.e., stakeholder pressures, institutional-based, network-based, and external factors) encourage companies to implement green business operations, which were also classified under six functional themes. The findings of the study provided a holistic insight into green business strategies within the exporting context by outlining both theoretical and managerial implications. (Bıçakcıoğlu, N. (2018). Green business strategies of exporting manufacturing firms: Antecedents, practices, and outcomes. *Journal of Global Marketing*, *31*(4), 246-269.)

Rai & Jambhulkar (2018) highlighted the concept and origin of the term green business and found that even today; the substance of the green business concept is rather ambiguous as demonstrated by the variety of its definitions that could be found in different sources. Green business practices are still far from being universally embraced and applied by business entities around the world, with perceptible differences of business penetration by the "green" ideas in various countries. This is due to several reasons, one of them being the fact that the "greening of business" is still largely perceived as an extra burden (in terms of cost increase or revenue loss), and the other reason being related to the national specifics in terms of cultural, political, and economic differences. The study highlighted the relevance of green business practices in current scenario and analyzes how these practices are implemented by selected reputed companies in India and what impact it has on their performance and efficiency.

Sangroya et al (2020) discussed the different aspects of green management operations in India and reported the current state and barriers for green energy management. The study performed an extensive literature review and covered several aspects of green energy management operations. It was concluded that the current state of various aspects of green energy management operations and provide viable business models. The study explained the various facilitators and barriers of green energy management and reported the opportunities and challenges in developing and managing green energy supply chain.

Mehraj & Qureshi (2022) examined and compared the perceptions, initiatives, and challenges perceived by manufacturing industries in India in respect of green marketing. The data were collected from a sample of 700 manufacturing industries employing a random sampling method. The study found that there was a high degree of acceptance of green marketing in the Indian industry, irrespective of the sector. The findings suggested that all sample industries are concerned for the environment and believe that green marketing is significant for sustainable development. The study also suggested that businesses should view protection of the environment as a market opportunity rather than solely as a means of complying with mounting environmental challenges and regulations. Green marketing should become the norm rather than the exception in a developing country like India.

Singh & Singh (2024) observed that industrialization had contributed to global environmental problems especially in developed countries and the rising concern for the environment had compelled business entities to revise their business models towards green lean (GL) management. The study empirically assessed the complementary impact of GL practices on environmental performance. Data was collected from 124 Indian manufacturing industries and analyzed using structured equation modeling technique. The result suggested that GL practices such as top management commitment, government support, human resource management, health and safety of employees and public pressure have significant and positive effect on environmental performance of sampled industries.

Objective of the study

1. To examine the various green business practices adopted by Indian companies.
2. To study the benefits and challenges of implementing green business practices in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. It aims to examine the green business practices adopted by Indian companies and evaluate their contribution to environmental sustainability, economic performance, and social development. The study is based on secondary data and focuses on understanding the current status, benefits, and challenges of green business practices in India. Relevant information was collected through a comprehensive review of published literature, corporate sustainability reports, government reports, and scholarly articles related to green business practices in India. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. Information from various secondary sources was classified, compared, interpreted, and synthesized to identify major green business practices, their benefits, implementation challenges, and their contribution to sustainable development.

Concept of Green Business Practices

Green business practices involve integrating environmental considerations into business operations, decision-making processes, and organizational strategies. The primary objective is to reduce resource consumption, waste generation, and environmental pollution while promoting sustainable development.

The major dimensions of green business practices include the following:

1. Green Product Development – Designing and producing products that are environmentally friendly, recyclable, biodegradable, energy-efficient, and made from sustainable materials.
2. Green Production Practices – Adopting clean manufacturing processes that minimize waste, reduce pollution, conserve energy, and optimize the use of natural resources.
3. Green Supply Chain Management – Integrating environmental considerations into sourcing, procurement, transportation, warehousing, and distribution to reduce the overall environmental impact.
4. Green Packaging – Using recyclable, reusable, biodegradable, or minimal packaging materials to reduce plastic waste and promote resource efficiency.
5. Green Distribution and Logistics – Implementing fuel-efficient transportation, route optimization, electric vehicles, and eco-friendly logistics practices to reduce carbon emissions.
6. Green Promotion and Communication – Promoting products and services through environmentally responsible advertising, digital marketing, transparent environmental claims, and consumer awareness campaigns.
7. Waste Management and Recycling – Reducing, reusing, and recycling materials while ensuring the safe disposal of hazardous waste and adopting circular economy practices.
8. Energy and Water Conservation – Using renewable energy sources, energy-efficient technologies, rainwater harvesting, and water recycling systems to conserve natural resources.
9. Corporate Environmental Responsibility – Incorporating sustainability into corporate policies, complying with environmental regulations, publishing sustainability reports, and engaging in environmental initiatives as part of corporate social responsibility.
10. Green Consumer Engagement – Encouraging consumers to adopt environmentally responsible purchasing and disposal behaviors through awareness programs, eco-labeling, and sustainability education.

These dimensions collectively help organizations reduce their environmental footprint while enhancing operational efficiency, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. They also serve as key variables in research on green business practices and sustainable development.

Green Business Practices Adopted by Indian Companies

➢ **Renewable Energy Utilization**

Many Indian companies have invested in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

* Infosys has established solar power plants and aims to reduce carbon emissions significantly.
* Tata Power has invested extensively in renewable energy projects.
* Mahindra Group has committed to achieving carbon neutrality through clean energy initiatives.

- **Green Manufacturing**

Green manufacturing focuses on reducing environmental impacts during production processes through efficient use of resources and cleaner technologies. The initiative taken by the organizations include: energy-efficient machinery; reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; sustainable sourcing of raw materials and adoption of cleaner production technologies. Companies such as Tata Steel and ITC have implemented eco-friendly manufacturing practices to reduce waste and conserve energy.

- **Waste Management and Recycling**

Indian companies are increasingly adopting waste management systems to minimize landfill disposal and promote resource recovery. The various practices include: recycling industrial waste; paperless office operations; E-waste management programs and Circular economy initiatives. ITC's "Waste Recycling Program" and various corporate recycling projects demonstrate commitment toward sustainable waste management.

- **Water Conservation Measures**

Water scarcity is a major challenge in India. Companies have implemented various measures to conserve water and improve efficiency like rainwater harvesting; wastewater treatment and reuse; water-efficient technologies and Watershed development projects. Many manufacturing organizations have achieved significant reductions in water consumption through these initiatives.

- **Sustainable Supply Chain Management**

Businesses are increasingly integrating environmental considerations into procurement, logistics, and supplier relationships. The organization uses some of the common key practices such as, sustainable sourcing; green transportation; reduced packaging materials and Supplier sustainability assessments. This helps reduce the overall environmental footprint of business operations.

- **Green Buildings and Infrastructure**

Several Indian companies have adopted green building standards to improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impacts. The practices adopted by companies are Energy-efficient lighting; natural ventilation; solar energy systems and water-efficient fixtures. Many corporate offices and industrial facilities have obtained green building certifications.

Benefits of Green Business Practices

The common benefits of green business practices are economic, environmental and social. These benefits make green business practices an essential strategy for organizations seeking sustainable growth, improved competitiveness and long term value creation.

Environmental Benefits

Green business practices are environmentally responsible strategies that help organizations minimize their ecological footprint while ensuring sustainable growth. These practices include efficient resource utilization, waste reduction, renewable energy adoption, eco-friendly production methods, and sustainable supply chain management. The major environmental benefits are discussed below:

- **Reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Green businesses reduce carbon emissions by adopting renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power, improving energy efficiency, and optimizing transportation and logistics. Lower greenhouse gas emissions help mitigate climate change and contribute to a cleaner atmosphere.

- **Conservation of Natural Resources**

Green business practices promote the efficient use of natural resources, including water, energy, forests, and minerals. Companies adopt resource-efficient technologies, recycle materials, and use renewable resources wherever possible, ensuring that valuable resources remain available for future generations.

- **Waste Reduction and Better Waste Management**

Organizations following green practices focus on reducing waste through the principles of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (3Rs). They minimize packaging materials, recycle production waste, and safely dispose of hazardous substances, thereby reducing the burden on landfills and preventing environmental contamination.

- **Pollution Prevention**

Green manufacturing processes reduce air, water, and soil pollution by limiting the use of toxic chemicals and harmful emissions. Cleaner production technologies ensure that industrial activities have a lower environmental impact and improve the quality of the surrounding ecosystem.

- **Water Conservation**

Many industries consume large quantities of water during production. Green businesses implement rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, water recycling, and efficient irrigation systems to reduce water consumption and preserve freshwater resources.

- **Protection of Biodiversity and Ecosystems**

Sustainable sourcing of raw materials, responsible land use, and reduced pollution help protect forests, wildlife habitats, and aquatic ecosystems. Businesses that avoid deforestation and support sustainable agriculture contribute to the conservation of biodiversity.

- **Increased Use of Renewable Energy**

Green organizations increasingly rely on renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, biomass, and hydropower instead of fossil fuels. This reduces dependence on non-renewable resources, lowers carbon emissions, and supports the transition to clean energy.

- **Promotion of Circular Economy**

Green business practices encourage a circular economy in which products are designed for durability, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, and recycling. This approach minimizes waste generation, reduces resource extraction, and extends the life cycle of products.

- **Improved Air and Water Quality**

By reducing industrial emissions, chemical discharges, and untreated waste, green businesses contribute to cleaner air and water. Improved environmental quality benefits ecosystems, public health, and the overall quality of life.

Economic Benefits

Green business practices not only protect the environment but also generate significant economic benefits for organizations. By improving resource efficiency, reducing operational costs, encouraging innovation, and enhancing market competitiveness, sustainable business practices contribute to long-term financial growth. The major economic benefits are discussed below.

- **Reduction in Operating Costs**

Green businesses reduce expenses by using energy-efficient equipment, conserving water, minimizing waste, and optimizing resource utilization. Lower electricity, fuel, and raw material consumption significantly decreases production costs, thereby improving overall profitability.

- **Improved Resource Efficiency**

Efficient utilization of natural resources enables organizations to produce more output with fewer inputs. Sustainable production techniques reduce material wastage, improve productivity, and increase operational efficiency, resulting in better financial performance.

- **Increased Profitability**

Although the initial investment in green technologies may be high, businesses often recover these costs through long-term savings, improved productivity, and increased customer demand for environmentally friendly products. This leads to higher profit margins over time.

- **Enhanced Competitive Advantage**

Companies adopting green business practices differentiate themselves from competitors by offering eco-friendly products and services. This strengthens their market position, attracts environmentally conscious consumers, and builds customer loyalty, ultimately increasing market share.

- **Higher Customer Demand and Sales**

Consumers are increasingly willing to support businesses that demonstrate environmental responsibility. Green products often enjoy greater consumer acceptance, resulting in higher sales, repeat purchases, and stronger brand preference.

- **Access to New Markets**

Sustainability certifications and environmentally responsible practices enable businesses to enter domestic and international markets where environmental standards are mandatory. Green products also create opportunities in emerging markets focused on sustainable consumption.

- **Better Investment Opportunities**

Investors increasingly prefer companies with strong environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance because they are often viewed as more resilient and better prepared for future risks. Sustainable businesses may therefore find it easier to attract long-term investment.

- **Government Incentives and Financial Support**

Many governments encourage green business practices through tax benefits, subsidies, grants, concessional loans, and incentives for renewable energy adoption and pollution control. These financial supports reduce investment costs and encourage sustainable business expansion.

Social Benefits

Green business practices contribute significantly to society by improving public health, creating employment opportunities, promoting ethical business conduct, and enhancing the quality of life. These practices encourage organizations to operate responsibly while balancing economic growth with social welfare. The major social benefits are explained below.

- **Improvement in Public Health**

Green businesses reduce air, water, and soil pollution by adopting cleaner production technologies and minimizing harmful emissions. A cleaner environment lowers the incidence of respiratory diseases, waterborne illnesses, and other pollution-related health problems, leading to healthier communities.

- **Employment Generation**

The transition to a green economy creates new job opportunities in renewable energy, waste management, recycling, sustainable agriculture, environmental consulting, green construction, and eco-friendly manufacturing. These sectors contribute to economic development while promoting environmental sustainability.

- **Better Quality of Life**

Reduced pollution, cleaner surroundings, improved air and water quality, and efficient use of natural resources contribute to a healthier and safer living environment. Green business practices enhance the overall well-being of individuals and communities.

- **Enhanced Employee Health and Safety**

Organizations implementing green workplace initiatives provide healthier working conditions by reducing exposure to hazardous chemicals, improving indoor air quality, and maintaining safer production processes. This leads to higher employee satisfaction, lower absenteeism, and improved productivity.

- **Increased Employee Engagement and Motivation**

Employees often take pride in working for organizations that demonstrate environmental and social responsibility. Green initiatives improve employee morale, strengthen organizational commitment, and increase retention by fostering a sense of purpose and responsibility.

- **Consumer Awareness and Responsible Consumption**

Green businesses educate consumers about sustainable products, recycling, and environmentally responsible purchasing decisions. This encourages responsible consumption patterns and promotes environmental consciousness across society.

- **Strengthened Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Green business practices complement corporate social responsibility by integrating environmental protection, ethical governance, and community development into business operations. Organizations build stronger relationships with customers, employees, governments, and local communities through responsible business conduct.

- **Community Development**

Many organizations support local communities through environmental conservation projects, tree plantation drives, waste management programs, educational initiatives, and clean energy projects. Such activities improve social welfare and strengthen community relationships.

Hence it can be concluded that green business practices create value across all three dimensions of sustainability. Economically, they improve profitability and efficiency; socially, they enhance employee well-being, stakeholder trust, and community development; environmentally, they reduce pollution, conserve resources, and protect ecosystems. Therefore, adopting green business practices enables organizations to achieve sustainable growth while balancing business success with social responsibility and environmental stewardship. This integrated approach is consistent with the concept of the Triple Bottom Line (People, Planet, and Profit) and supports long-term organizational success.

Challenges in Implementing Green Business Practices in India

Despite the growing emphasis on sustainability, many organizations in India face significant barriers to adopting green business practices. These challenges are particularly evident among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which often have limited financial and technological resources. The major challenges are discussed below.

- **High Initial Investment**

The adoption of green technologies, renewable energy systems, energy-efficient machinery, and pollution-control equipment requires substantial capital investment. Many businesses, especially MSMEs, find it difficult to bear these upfront costs despite the long-term economic benefits.

- **Lack of Financial Resources**

Limited access to affordable finance is a major obstacle. Green projects often require long repayment periods, and many organizations struggle to obtain loans or investment due to perceived financial risks.

- **Limited Awareness and Knowledge**

Many business owners and employees have insufficient knowledge about sustainable practices, environmental regulations, and the long-term benefits of green business. This lack of awareness slows the adoption of environmentally responsible strategies.

- **Technological Constraints**

Many organizations, particularly in traditional industries, lack access to advanced green technologies and technical expertise. The high cost of importing sustainable technologies and inadequate research and development further hinder implementation.

- **Inadequate Infrastructure**

India continues to face infrastructure-related challenges such as insufficient recycling facilities, limited waste management systems, unreliable renewable energy infrastructure, and inadequate public transport in some regions. These limitations make it difficult for businesses to implement sustainable operations effectively.

- **Resistance to Organizational Change**

Employees and management may resist adopting new technologies and sustainable work practices due to fear of increased costs, disruption of existing processes, or lack of training. Organizational culture can therefore become a barrier to sustainability initiatives.

- **Supply Chain Challenges**

Implementing green practices requires cooperation from suppliers, distributors, and logistics providers. Many suppliers may not follow sustainable practices, making it difficult for companies to establish environmentally responsible supply chains.

- **Balancing Profitability with Sustainability**

Businesses often face pressure to maximize short-term profits while investing in sustainability initiatives that provide long-term benefits. This conflict between immediate financial performance and environmental responsibility can delay green investments.

The implementation of green business practices in India is challenged by financial constraints, technological limitations, inadequate infrastructure, regulatory complexities, limited awareness, supply chain issues, and consumer price sensitivity. However, with stronger government support, improved access to green finance, technological innovation, employee training, and increasing consumer awareness, these barriers can be gradually overcome. Addressing these challenges will enable Indian businesses to achieve sustainable growth, enhance competitiveness, and contribute to long-term environmental and social well-being.

Future Prospects

The future of green business in India appears promising due to:
* Growing environmental awareness
* Increasing investor focus on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) criteria
* Technological advancements
* Government incentives for renewable energy
* Rising consumer demand for sustainable products

Businesses that integrate sustainability into their core strategies are likely to achieve long-term success and competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

Green business practices have emerged as a strategic imperative for Indian companies seeking to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability. The increasing adoption of renewable energy, green manufacturing, waste management, water conservation, sustainable supply chain management, eco-friendly packaging, and green marketing reflects the growing commitment of Indian businesses towards responsible and sustainable operations. These initiatives not only help organizations reduce their environmental footprint but also enhance operational efficiency, strengthen corporate reputation, improve stakeholder confidence, and create long-term competitive advantages. The study reveals that green business practices generate significant environmental, economic, and social benefits. They contribute to the conservation of natural resources, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, cost savings through efficient resource utilization, and improved corporate image. Furthermore, these practices support national sustainability goals and align with global initiatives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Government policies, environmental regulations, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have also played an important role in encouraging organizations to integrate sustainability into their business strategies. Despite these positive developments, several challenges continue to hinder the widespread implementation of green business practices in India. High initial investment costs, limited access to advanced technologies, lack of awareness among small and medium enterprises (SMEs), financial constraints, and regulatory complexities remain significant barriers. Addressing these challenges requires stronger policy support, technological innovation, financial incentives, capacity-building programmes, and greater collaboration among government, industry, academia, and civil society.

In conclusion, green business practices are no longer optional but have become essential for ensuring sustainable business growth and environmental stewardship. Indian companies that proactively adopt sustainable practices are likely to achieve greater resilience, innovation, and long-term success in an increasingly environmentally conscious global economy. Therefore, promoting and strengthening green business practices across industries will play a vital role in achieving inclusive economic development, environmental protection, and a sustainable future for India.

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