

Marketing Green Buildings - Well Structured Process or Forgotten Minor Detail? Evidence from Finland

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Abstract

Previous research has shown that buildings have a significant impact on the environment and small changes in their sustainability can create major improvements to the current environmental impact of the whole society (e.g. Eichholtz et al. 2009; Junnila 2004). The technology needed to build environmentally efficient buildings and the knowledge about their benefits is available, however, the ways of marketing these benefits to the public and customers and through this increasing the amount of green buildings, has not been a subject of much research. The aim of this article is to examine the current marketing situation of green buildings from a Finnish real estate developer's perspective and deepen the market's understanding on this subject.

The theoretical part of the paper is conducted through an extensive literature study and for the empirical part; three different green building development projects were examined. Great amounts of marketing material provided by the real estate developer were studied and interviews were made with their specialists on the green building field.

Results indicate that the environmentally efficient characteristics of the buildings are not considered to be their major selling arguments but simply something that is expected in today's market and thus the green marketing actions of the real estate development company were subtle and quite ineffective.

Based on the results of this study, it seems that at the moment, the marketing of green buildings lacks green ambition and not all are equally convinced about their differentiation potential. If the building market will end up in a situation where having a certification is enough in terms of being environmentally friendly, the development of a more sustainable built environment will fail, as no developer will be motivated to be innovative and more sustainable. However, by increasingly concentrating on the different benefits of green buildings and effectively communicating those to the customers, greenness can be made into a truly competitive marketing argument. The question is about being innovative and finding ways to compete differently from the competitors.

1 Introduction

The questions concerning sustainable development are constantly growing in importance. Already in 1995, Hart (1995) argued that in the future, strategy and competitive advantage of companies will be rooted in capabilities that facilitate environmentally sustainable economic activity. The situation has not changed and even today, operating in a sustainable way creates a competitive advantage. Companies want to minimise their environmental impact and improve their social equity while showing a profit. Nowadays, the reductions in the environmental impact have become a strategic issue for many organisations, not only because there is a growing pressure from stakeholders and public, but also since it is shown that financial markets increasingly value the benefits of eco-efficiency and that the market assigns more value-relevance to environmental information. (Nousiainen & Junnila 2008)

Buildings have a profound impact on the environment and thus even small changes in their sustainability can create major reductions in the current ecological footprint of the whole society (Eichholtz et al. 2009; Junnila 2004). Although companies have channelled substantial amounts of know-how and resources into achieving environmentally friendly improvements in their performance, and engaging in sustainable development in their business practices, only a few have truly exploited the full value of leveraging their performance in communication and marketing initiatives and thus, improving their image and operations (Axelrod 2000). In the green building market, a well-designed and implemented marketing strategy is definitely important as the market is constantly growing and the competition is increasing rapidly. Real estate developers are one of the major actors in the building sector and their actions and decisions greatly affect the development of green building market. Effective green marketing strategy should be a major priority for them.

The aim of this paper is to examine the current marketing situation of green buildings from a real estate developer's perspective and deepen the market's understanding on this subject.

The study is based on an extensive literature study and an empirical case study conducted in Finland. The literature study is focusing on the production of the most recognized authors of the marketing field (for example "The Principles of Marketing" by Kotler and Armstrong [2008]) and a large amount of research papers on the subjects of marketing and green buildings. The empirical study concentrates on three different green building development projects. This part of the study is conducted by examining large amounts of marketing material provided by a Finnish real estate developer company and by interviewing their specialists on the green building field. The projects were chosen to give an as comprehensive as possible picture of the current marketing situation from a real estate developer's point of view.

In the next section, previous research on the green marketing field is presented and the key theories behind the study are discussed. Thereafter, the case study which the results of this paper are based on is presented, followed by the results, discussion and the conclusions.

2 Previous Research on Green Marketing

The aim of marketing green buildings is to increase the amount of green buildings while making an organisational profit. This means that both the constructors and the developers have to market their services and expertise to real estate investors, and real estate investors have to market the building itself to possible new tenants. The tenants will be able to benefit from green buildings if they are capable of marketing their values which are rooted in sustainable development further to their customers. Yudelson states in his article *Marketing Green Buildings* (2007b), that the engineers he has met often tend to see marketing as something beneath them or assume that good results simply market themselves. In reality, this is hardly the case, as if achievements are not efficiently brought into the public knowledge, they may be forgotten and become insignificant (Yudelson, 2007a).

Spreading information about environmental achievements and getting the message through is not without difficulties, as First and Khatriwal (2008) state referring to a project conducted by Nielsen (2001). The goal of the project was to clarify the process of communicating environmental accomplishments to the wider public. Despite the possible evidence of the advanced and environmentally friendly actions of the companies and their high environmental performance, the lack of information and understanding makes it difficult for the consumers and customers to reward these achievements (First & Khatriwal 2008). This concrete lack of incentives is by definition, not promoting the development of environmentally friendly actions in the future. Marketing has to be improved in order to change the situation.

2.1 Yudelson's Marketing Strategy for Green Buildings

Yudelson divided a successful green building marketing strategy into four different steps: Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning and Differentiation (see Figure 1). The marketing has to be based on a clear and strong marketing plan with room for flexibility, and the whole company has to be dedicated to the implementation of this plan. The company has to segment the potential customers and choose the segments that would be most profitable to target. When it comes to business-to-business markets (B2B) and high-value, highly customised products, such as buildings, the targeting strategy should be customised and the marketing strategy should be developed for each customer separately (Baines 2011, pp. 232-233). It is also essential to clearly communicate the values of the company and demonstrate what differentiates the company from its rivals, why the company's offering is more attractive? As the market for green buildings is still so young, it would be rational for the company to find an unused position in the market and create it into its own. When pursuing this strategy, the company should acquire concrete evidence, such as building certificates, to demonstrate its superiority and sustainable actions (Yudelson, 2007b). Empty promises are hardly enough to attract long-term customers. The market for green buildings is becoming increasingly more global and new actors are constantly entering the market. Being international provides the companies with a larger market area, but it also increases the competition. The goal of efficient and well-designed marketing is to emphasise the company's assets and create a competitive position in the market.



Figure 1: Four Steps to Competitive Success in Green Building Marketing (Source: Yudelso 2007b)

2.2 Image as a Marketing Factor

Image or brand is also a crucial factor when it comes to marketing green buildings. A well-known brand name and the benefits it has to offer consisting of reliability, credibility, responsibility and cogency, can be developed further by taking environmental aspects into consideration. (Miles & Covin 2000) Mulder (2006, pp. 168-197) states that people prefer products that promote sustainable development. This is often out of emotional or ethical reasons. Consumers often form more favourable perceptions of offerings provided by a company or brand they already feel positive about and companies that describe themselves as environmentally and socially responsible, have often more loyal customers than companies without these aspirations (Kotler & Keller 2009, p. 124; Mulder 2006, pp. 168–197). A strong brand and fulfilling the expectations created by it are fundamental for the company’s success. The brand and marketing will bring the customers to the company and the technology and innovativeness assures that the customers will choose to stay.

The brand positioning strategies can either be classified as functional or emotional. A green positioning strategy that is based on functional brand attributes aims to build brand associations through delivering information on the environmentally friendly attributes of the building. However, if the brand strategy relies on positioning the product solely by its functional attributes, the fact that the reduction of a building’s environmental impact may not deliver large enough individual benefits to the buyer might make this strategy less successful. This kind of strategy could also be easily imitated by competitors and might limit the brand differentiation capacity. The company should complement this strategy by concentrating also on different types of emotional brand benefits, which might be a feeling of wellbeing and satisfaction from socially visible consumption of green brands. Thus the actual functional benefits should be tied together with emotional attributes. According to a study by Hartmann et al. (2005), the emotional latent dimensions of green positioning strategy in green marketing seems to have a stronger influence. However, they emphasise that emotional positioning should not be regarded as exclusively the most effective strategy, but should

be used as a complimentary method in positioning the brand. Relying exclusively on emotional attributes might lead to weaker attitude effects caused by possible misinterpretation of vague green claims. A combined strategy appealing both to financial and emotional benefits will yield a stronger attitudinal effect than either emotional or functional positioning on their own. Thus the green branding communication strategies should be aimed at associating the brand with pleasant, emotional imagery of nature, while presenting information about the truly environmentally sound building attributes and organisational benefits. (Hartmann et al. 2005)

2.3 Green Building as a Marketing Object

A product with a fixed location can mostly compete with quality and price, thus the possibly higher price of green buildings is experienced as a negative factor. If the demand for green buildings will not increase, producing them will not be financially beneficial as the higher construction costs and the extra time that has to be invested during the design phase cannot be balanced out with the acquisition price. Thus, the aim of improved marketing is to create demand concentrated on green buildings and the benefits they can provide the company and the environment with. Through marketing, the greenness can be made into a quality for which investors and occupiers are even willing to pay a premium. Marketing has to be understood in a wider scope than just matching the existing demand and supply. It is also a means of creating new requirements and needs. Marketing has to be designed and implemented in a way that customers realise their need of commodities which they did not even know existed before. It aims to affect how customers price different characteristics and qualities. The true benefits of green buildings have to be recognised and effectively and clearly communicated to the customers. It is essential to remember that the environmental claims used in marketing have to be clearly specified as customers can form negative views of the green advertisements and the products promoted if they feel that the claims lack reliability and specification (Rahbar & Wahid 2011). Claims that lack sufficiently concrete support may lead to suspicion of possible greenwashing. Clearly stated facts and efficient information communication are the most important elements of marketing green buildings.

Green buildings have a variety of benefits they can offer to investors and tenants. However, not all of them are of equal importance to the customers and therefore it does not pay to market everything for everyone. The benefits offered by green buildings could be divided into strategies that primarily reduce costs or that primarily add value (Heerwagen 2000). Currently, the market has been paying too much attention to the cost reducing benefits when in reality the value adding benefits are outnumbering them. These value adding benefits are concerned with adding value to goods and services, work life, customer relationships etc. However, when it comes to decision making, the cost are almost always the most important consideration. This is due to the fact that cost reductions are easy to document whereas benefits and intangible value are extremely difficult to evaluate reliably. These latter benefits are also often apparent only after a while whereas cost cutting can be noticed immediately. The decision makers have to listen to both their stakeholders and their internal operations, which leaves them with a dilemma. Efficient marketing should address both the emotional and value-adding benefits and the monetary benefits. This way, both the decision-maker's personal opinion and the financial aspects will be accounted for. (Heerwagen 2000)

Heerwagen (2000) summarises successfully the benefits created by green buildings to the company into four different categories of performance. These categories are financial outcomes, business process outcomes, stakeholder relations, and human resource development (see Table 1).

<p style="text-align: center;">FINANCIAL OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced resource utilisation - Reduced operating/maintenance costs - Reduced risks/avoided costs - Increased overall productivity - Increased resale value of property - Reduced absenteeism 	<p style="text-align: center;">BUSINESS PROCESS OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process innovation - Increased work process efficiency
<p style="text-align: center;">STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved public image - Increased ability to sell to pro-environmental customers - Community outreach and education - Improved ability to work with community stakeholders 	<p style="text-align: center;">HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved quality of work life - Improved personal productivity - Improved well being - Reduced turnover and increased ability to attract high quality workers

Table 1: Potential links between green buildings and organizational performance (Source: Heerwagen 2000)

Communicating these benefits clearly to the customers would be ideal. When it comes to green buildings, which are still relatively new to the market, information communication is of crucial importance. Customers need to be made aware of all the benefits, functions and advantages of green buildings, both the benefits to the company and to the environment.

3 Research Method

The empirical study will confine to three individual green development projects and their marketing, and the organisational green marketing strategy of the development company as a whole. The real estate development company studied is a large international company active in the green building field. The three development projects are a large office development, which is located in the immediate vicinity of a railway station, and a commercial centre, an extensive shopping centre development with an innovative location above a highway, and a so called big-box development located in a commercial area near a highway. All the three buildings are built with special emphasis on the environmental aspects and the success of this will be assessed with an international environmental assessment method. The research will look into the marketing process and strategy of these three different building developments in an attempt to identify the opportunities and challenges of marketing green buildings. The idea is to concentrate on each development individually and then to ascertain if there are any similarities between them and the marketing strategies that could be used.

The reason for choosing the three different development projects was that they each represent very diverse types of buildings and thus their marketing differs from each other. Considering all three buildings and their marketing broadens the understanding of the extent of what is required for successful and effective marketing and emphasises the fact that no project is alike and thus the marketing has to take this into account.

For the empirical part of the study, great amounts of marketing material provided by the company were examined and interviews were made with their specialists on the green building field. Eight employees with specific knowledge about the three development projects studied were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in a very informal manner as semi-structured theme interviews with one or two interviewees at a time. As a base for the interviews, there was a framework of questions prepared to direct the conversation through the main points of the effective marketing of green buildings identified in the theoretical part of the research. Most of the questions remained unanswered, as the marketing process is not a very straightforward one, but nevertheless gave insight to the marketing actions and the strategy of the company. The discussions gave a clear picture of the extensive workload behind successful marketing and the difficulties of it. However, one has to keep in mind that interviews are not an objective research method as the interviewees have subjective opinions which have to be taken as such. They provide qualitative information which reliability cannot easily be proven. Nevertheless, interviews offer a straightforward method of research and, when analysed with caution, they provide valuable and updated information. Detailed notes were written during the interviews and these were transcribed later during the day of the interview.

4 Results

4.1 Office Development

Marketing should always begin by segmenting the market, but according to the interviewees, the development company in question does not use customer segmentation when marketing their office developments. The results indicate that although the markets are rapidly growing, the need to target different marketing actions to different market segments does not seem profitable. However, even in business-to-business marketing, segmentation is always advisable, as segmenting the market makes the marketing actions more effective. Although the development company does make continuous customer surveys to keep themselves updated with their customers' requirements, they do not specify different marketing messages to different customers or segment their customers according to their possible green aspirations.

As the building market in Finland is still somewhat closed and stable, the main marketing tool is personal selling. Having good contacts with prospective customers is crucial for the success of the company. According to the interviewees, the customers more or less have to be dragged from the market instead of the customers contacting the developer regarding a development advertisement. Marketing is considered to be a supporting operation and the premises will not be sold or rented due to the actions of the marketing department. In the end, it is the personal selling actions and facts that sell the property, not the images created by the marketing department. However, marketing department is responsible for making the markets aware of the company and their

offerings, and positioning the company in the minds of the customers through brochures, advertisements, public relations and seminars.

During the personal selling process, the most important thing is to listen to the customers and create solutions to fix their problems. Based on the interviews it was found out that only if the customers are particularly interested in the green characteristics of the building, these are presented in more detail to them and the green marketing is mostly about pointing out a few green facts and not going too deeply into the subject. Many companies expect the building to be certified, but are not interested in what it actually means that the building is a green one. The results indicate that the reason for choosing to occupy a green building stems from the company policy and is not based on a personal opinion. The interviewees wanted to emphasise that the person in the decision making position is not able to act according to his or her own ambitions and values, but in the end, the company policy is what dictates the final decision. Thus soft benefits and emotional arguments do not have value in the decision making process. This, however, seems a bit cynical, as the company does have its employees and customers to think about when making the location decision. When it comes to office developments, employee satisfaction is of high importance. Even if the soft benefits would not appeal to the decision maker, the fact that consumers' awareness of sustainable development is constantly growing and that emotional attributes often pander to them, cannot be left unnoticed. According to the interviewees, investors are indifferent to the soft marketing actions and require green and certified buildings only because of their possibly more liquid value in the future. However, offering an opportunity to invest in a sustainable and innovative building that will most probably offer satisfied tenants for years to come is definitely something that will attract investors, and thus addressing the different benefits the tenants will receive is certainly advisable.

The major green attributes of the office development were identified and the marketing material for the project was quite successful when it comes to green marketing. Especially the use of an emotional marketing argument was a positive observation. The emphasis was not put on the cost cutting opportunities of an environmentally efficient building, but on the fact that if choosing to invest in or to occupy this building the company would be taking a concrete action towards sustainability. Also the greenness of the building was very visible throughout the marketing material. However, international customers were not taken into consideration effectively. The marketing material in English was not sufficient and totally lacked information concerning sustainability, a problem that was consistent throughout the marketing material for the three projects examined.

The marketing in general is meant to attract interest towards the company and its offering and in the case of the office development, the company was quite successful. The green attributes were clearly presented and emphasised. However, personal selling which is regarded a significant part of marketing seriously lacked green ambition. The greenness of the building was not considered a valuable characteristic as it is, but rather as something extra, and the company had decided not to have the greenness as main point-of-difference.

4.2 Shopping Centre Development

Shopping centre developments are extensive projects and may take decades before being completed. According to the interviews, the company begins the projects by segmenting the market and this is done continuously to keep their customer register updated on the changes in the market. However, it was found out that the segmentation has not been taken further than segmenting the companies and potential customers according to the size of the organisation. The green aspirations of a possible customer are not a segmentation criterion and the company does not concentrate more on companies with such ambitions as, according to the interviewees, this would limit the clientele substantially.

Based on the interviews, finding and choosing the right customers is a process that requires extensive market knowledge, good contacts with the different customer organisations, and immense amounts of personal selling. Personal selling is the main marketing communication medium even for the company's shopping centre developments, with webpages and brochures as supporting marketing tools. According to the interviewees, personal selling is adapted to suit each customer by trying to sense the customer's main interests. If the customer organisation has clear environmental aspirations and shows interest in the green characteristics of the building, then slightly more emphasis is put on these factors, but in case the customer does not seem interested in them, these will be left without much attention. However, the materials the customers are provided with are the same for each customer.

According to the interviews, the shopping centre development in question is not specified as a green shopping centre, i.e. greenness is not its main selling argument and thus, the fact that the project truly is a green shopping centre with several aspects working towards sustainable development, in both environmental and social respect, was left with secondary importance, or even ignored in some of the marketing material. It was found out that this was partly because the project group had decided not to label the development as a green shopping centre, as they did not feel there were enough important green characteristics that could be associated with the development, and felt that being green was not one of the major selling points of it. Another reason was that they had actually not really come to think of all the true benefits the centre has to offer to its end-users, investors and the local residents and the residents of cities nearby. Also, at the very least, mentioning on the company's own webpage that the shopping centre is a green development project had not been addressed. Nevertheless, the brochures did include some good points about the sustainability and environmentally friendly aspects of the project, but they clearly were not the main points-of-difference.

According to the interviewees, marketing shopping centres to end-users and investors through emphasising the soft green values is not without difficulties. The retail companies considering the option to occupy premises in developments such as the development in question are often chains of stores which are familiar with real estate transactions. They may easily feel that too emotional and intangible marketing arguments make the offering appear weak and they often like to concentrate more on the financial facts. They do not want to waste time on arguments that seem financially unimportant to them.

4.3 Big-box Development

The third building is very different from the two other buildings discussed, due to its specific nature and the simplicity of its construction, and thus in its case the possibilities for efficient green marketing are limited.

When it comes to segmenting the market for big-box developments, there is definitely room for improvement. The segmentation is very unprofound and according to interviewee, practically non-existent. The company does try to map out the customers' main values to be able to emphasise these in the marketing, but does not go deeper than that. No separate segments are identified from the market. Green values are not a segmentation criterion and thus, pointing out green values when marketing big-box developments is virtually inexistent.

Based on the interviews, when it comes to big-box developments, it appears that money is the only thing that matters currently for the investors and end-users. According to the interviewee, the customers have not yet woken up to the green revolution and green values are almost irrelevant in their decision making process. However, the situation is expected to change in the future, and especially the investor owners could truly benefit from the possible increase in value of the property, or at least from the property's more durable value in the long run. The results indicate that currently, most of the big-box development customers are not able to see the big picture about the benefits of green buildings and thus are not prepared to pay a premium for these. Location is the key attribute and everything else is less important. Especially the green attributes have a very marginal effect on the decision making process and the environmental certificates are considered unimportant by the customers. The different big-box developments can only compete with each other through locational attributes as all such developments are of very similar quality and characteristics. No end-user organisation will choose a big-box building in a wrong location, no matter how green it would be.

As mentioned in the earlier section, big-box developments are very simple buildings with few special and unique characteristics. For example, these buildings should have a minimum amount of window space, limiting the amount of open views and natural daylight for the customers and the employees. In addition, there are only a small amount of employees working in such buildings, making the benefits derived from more effective employees marginal. The consumers do not travel to these shops to spend time and enjoy themselves, but to make bargains such as a cheap TV or a washing machine, thus it does not really pay off to make the premises more welcoming and comfortable. Even the exterior features of the building should give an affordable expression as these shops are for bargain hunting and too luxurious and innovative exterior might give the customers a wrong impression. In addition, the end-user organisations are often chain stores, which have very specific requirements on how their premises should look like inside and this makes it impossible for the development company to truly differentiate the interior of the building. According to the interviewee, these facts seem to eat up the strength of many of the green marketing arguments and thus the company uses only the energy efficiency and the lower operational expenses of the building as their green selling arguments, when marketing big-box developments to their customers. However, even these green attributes were left to their absolute minimum and practically ignored in the marketing material and webpages, which seems irrational as the building nonetheless is a green one – a fact that should be emphasised.

Marketing or promoting a big-box development is not easy. The customers need information in an easily digestible form and magnitude. Facts are easy to present and understand but the more soft benefits are trickier. According to the interviewee, most customers do not care for the intangible benefits and ignore them in their decision making process. However, this assumption could also originate from the fact that most of the people marketing these projects, himself included, are engineers, who tend to be interested in facts and might therefore be unable to see the value in the soft benefits. Many of the benefits of green buildings are very difficult to calculate and prove in a straightforward manner, but this should not make them less important. Taking these benefits into consideration, when marketing big-box developments, might prove to be profitable, provided that benefits are presented in a down-to-earth and believable manner. Here, it has to be repeated that the range of green attributes for a big-box development are very limited.

4.4 Green Marketing on the Development Company Level

When trying to position the company in the minds of the customers, pointing out the company's own green actions is of utmost importance. It is not sufficient for a development company to develop green buildings and market benefits of green buildings to their customers, but the company itself must also emphasise sustainable development in their own actions. A reliability dilemma exists if the company itself is not practicing sustainability in the way they are marketing it. A development company in a non-green building trying to market the importance of locating into a green building and working towards sustainability is obviously less credible than one that has made the decision to relocate into a green building and experienced the true benefits of this decision. Of course, if the building currently occupied by the company is not downright polluting the environment, but a normal modern building just lacking an environmental certification, the credibility of the company is not really endangered. However, making a conscious decision to relocate into a green building would further enhance the image of the company.

The company studied had succeeded in providing information about the green ambitions of the company and emphasising the fact that all their future projects will be completed according to the principles of sustainable development. What they seemed to have forgotten is the importance of setting an example with their own organisational actions or showing it. It came clear that the company in question does implement some sustainable principles even in their everyday work, but the importance of letting the customers know about this had not been addressed. The marketing material and homepage lacked information concerning the company's own environmental actions, which would prove that they really do practice what they preach. Being aware of how it is to work in a green building, to make the small everyday decisions towards sustainability and thus understanding the true scope of the benefits that can be achieved, makes it considerably easier for the company to talk to its customers about green buildings and their benefits and improves the reliability of the company as a truly environmentally conscious actor in the market.

When choosing the right customers to target, it is important that the customers share the same values as the company itself as the customers can be seen as a means of marketing the company further. By having visible customers, even the company will gain valuable publicity. It is essential to the company to find the right customers to be able to

concentrate the marketing on them and serve to their full content. These target companies should be the ones that share similar values and thus offer possibilities for long term partnership. For example companies that already have environmental objectives and aspirations would most probably be interested in investing in or occupying green buildings. Such companies might conduct environmental reporting, dedicate assets on corporate social responsibility (CSR), use an environmental management system, or have an environmental strategy and a green office plan. Currently the Finnish real estate market is quite limited and closed, but in the future more and more foreign international investors will enter the market and offer a global market to operate in. The fact is that at this point, however, it seems too risky to concentrate only on companies with green aspirations as this would seriously decrease the clientele.

A serious place for improvement appeared to be within the internal marketing and communications of the company. The marketing department seemed to have clear ideas concerning the green marketing actions, yet the people actually being in contact with the clients were considerably less aware of these. It felt that the communication between the different actors was lacking and thus impairing the strength of the green marketing strategy. Although it is clear that marketing is not the same as selling, one cannot disregard the fact that selling is an essential part of marketing. However, these different departments seemed to be working quite separately of each other and it did not look like they had consistency in their general guidelines. The marketing department was clearly promoting the greenness in their marketing actions, but the selling personnel did not really find the green attributes to be of much value in the selling process. The selling personnel ignored the soft marketing actions used by the marketing department and gave the impression that the two different departments were not really working together, but more or less minding their own business. Increased communication would certainly improve the efficiency of the marketing actions. In addition the general understanding of the benefits of green buildings, both tangible and intangible, should be improved.

When it comes to the green development projects, there was definitely lack of building specific green marketing. Nearly all the green marketing the company was conducting was spreading out general information about the organisation's green aspirations and their developments in general. The information was mostly specified on the building type level and the green attributes of each project were not properly identified and the benefits provided by them were not stated in a clear manner. The green marketing of the green development projects needs improvement and new and more innovative marketing communication actions to differentiate the company further from other competing real estate developers.

Factual messages are of major importance when it comes to green buildings, and a general guideline is that when customers experience high involvement, the emphasis of the message should be on the informational content, with the key attributes and the associated benefits highlighted. These messages provide rational, logical information and should be presented in a straightforward, no-frills manner. This approach would fulfil the need of presenting the functional and tangible benefits and appeal mostly to the investors and people in the decision making positions. However, also the emotional aspects have to be addressed in the marketing in order to position the company in the most positive light in the minds of the customers.

5 Conclusions

Green buildings are built and developed continuously, but especially in Finland marketing green buildings is still a matter of secondary importance. The aim of this study was to examine the current marketing situation of green buildings from a real estate developer's perspective and deepen the market's understanding on this subject.

As mentioned in the 2nd chapter (see Chapter 2 Summary of Previous Research on Green Marketing), Yudelson (2007a) argues that engineers often tend to assume that good results market themselves and do not realise that if achievements are not efficiently brought into the public knowledge, they may be forgotten and become insignificant. It seems that green buildings are currently facing this very obstacle. Green buildings came to the market too fast without the market being entirely prepared for them and after a few years of excitement, they now seem to be facing a slight downturn of interest. Having a shade of green in their actions or building an, to some extent, environmentally friendly building is nowadays a standard requirement for most companies and is thus regarded as nothing to boast about. This has led to the fact that the green benefits and their extent have been forgotten before they had even been truly understood. Pointing out the benefits of green buildings and emphasising the importance of information communications is definitely not stating the obvious but something that has to be taken into consideration in marketing.

At the moment, the marketing of green buildings lacks green ambition and not everyone is convinced of their differentiation potential. If the building market will end up in a situation where having a certification is enough in terms of being environmentally friendly, and the greenness is not seen as an efficient differentiation factor, the development of a more sustainable built environment will fail, as no developer will be motivated to be innovative and more sustainable. It is understandable that actors on the building market are suspicious about more innovative green solutions, as these might lead to stricter building regulations and possibly lower profits. However, by concentrating more on the different benefits of green buildings and how to effectively communicate them to the customers, greenness can be made into a truly competitive marketing argument, the demand for green buildings can be increased, and the developers will be able to require higher prices for them. The question is about being innovative and finding ways to compete differently from the competitors.

In order to effectively market green buildings, the company should first segment the market, choose which segments to target their marketing actions on, decide on how the company wants to differentiate itself and its offering, and finally, find a good position for the company among its competitors. The importance of information communication is emphasised as a key factor for efficient marketing. A combined strategy addressing both the financial and emotional benefits should yield a stronger attitudinal effect than positioning the company solely through either emotional or functional arguments. When it comes to project specific marketing, identifying the green benefits characteristic to the development in question and highlighting these would be advisable.

Each development project studied in this paper was different and the differences should be addressed in the marketing actions. The companies interested in shopping centre developments are often not the same companies that look for new office premises and therefore same marketing arguments may not be as effective to both customer groups.

Each development has unique attributes and benefits that should be identified in order to make the marketing as efficient as possible. It is advisable to take time to find the green attributes that clearly make the project in question stand out in the eyes of the potential customers.

The main limitation of this study is the small sample size. One case study does not allow making market wide generalisations but nevertheless offers indication of the current situation. Studying the marketing actions of several companies and taking the customer perspective into the study would enable a better understanding of how the situation truly is and how it could be improved. However, the aim of this study is to give insight into the difficulties most real estate development companies are currently facing and it attempts to formulate general guidelines to improve the marketing of green buildings.

An interesting subject for further studies would be to empirically test how a more innovative and targeted marketing strategy and actions could benefit the company in the future, and what the true extent of emotional, health and image benefits of green buildings is. These are challenging subjects to study, but the result would significantly profit green building marketing and provide the whole real estate market with important information concerning the true scope of the benefits provided by environmentally efficient buildings.

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