

Strategies for Marketing Greenness: A Case Study of an Architectural Design firm in China

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This paper is based on a case study conducted in China on green perception and motivation as well as green marketing strategy and practices of an architectural design firm. The study is set in the context of growing emphasis on environmental protection and building energy efficiency investment and the implementation principles of sustainable development in China. Drawing on the literature on firms' motivation to go green and characteristics of firms which are instrumental in inducing firm's green initiatives, this paper selected an architectural design firm to investigate whether all of some of those drivers as identified from literature are relevant to green initiatives decision making. Findings from this case indicate that while motivations identified from the literature contribute to the firm's greening commitment, it is the top management's knowledge, leadership and vision that are the decisive driving forces. In addition, the research has found that traditional Chinese culture also plays an influential role in the firm's greening behaviors. Results further suggest that green building is still in an early adopter period. Problems and implications for green marketing practices are also discussed.

JEL Codes: M31, Q56

1. Introduction

The building industry is one of the fastest growing, most dynamic and competitive sector in China. Figures from the Global Green Building China Focus (GGBCF) 2011 show that, worldwide, building consumes nearly 40 percent of the world's energy, 25 percent of its wood and 15 percent of its water (GGBCF, 2011). The energy-efficient building and green building initiative of China has increasingly become the central focus of government and concerned parties in the industry (Qiu, 2008). Management of the various impacts related to the building industry—carbon dioxide emissions, energy consumption, resource conservation, improving the quality of stormwater and reducing habitat destruction caused by urban growth—through regulatory mechanisms are difficult, given the complex context of China. Given that green concept is relatively new in business practices in China, questions emerge for consideration. Such questions have been applied to the activities of the firm selected for particular consideration in this case study. These questions are: what is the firm's perception of green? What motivates them? Who are the influential stakeholders and how do they approach and market green in the Chinese context? How effective are their green efforts? Research reported in this paper has been designed to contribute to the literature on these aspects of green motivation and green marketing, using a case study of an architect design firm.

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The first part of the paper discusses the growing literature on the influences driving firm greening, with particular reference to the building industry. The second part of the paper draws on a conceptual framework proposed by Song-Turner (2010) (see Appendix 1), which provides a diagrammatic representation of a guide for empirical investigation and analysis of firms' green motivation and green marketing practices, through a case study. Following that key findings are presented and discussed in reference to the literature and the conceptual framework, with conclusions and implications of these provided from the case findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Green Marketing Literature

Academic and popular literature indicates that "green" as a concept has often been talked about and discussed in today's business and building industry (Witepski, 2007; Kassaye, 2001). The problem is that no one really knows what "green" is. "Green" may mean different standards and practices in different industries. In this paper, the authors will not attempt to define what is "green" but rather examine the perceptions of what makes something "green" from the subject's perspective. Yudelson (2007) states that green is used most often to refer to new technology and new products that have sustainable impact on nature and the environment. In his book, green building is also introduced as building that considers and reduces its impact on the environment and human health. A green building is designed to use less energy and water and consider the life cycle of the material used. This definition is adopted in this paper to examine a firm's green approaches in this field.

Green topics in marketing and engineering have for decades come under the rubrics of sustainable solutions, green designs, and green processes (Charter, Peattie, Ottman & Polonsky, 2002; Ottman, 1998, Simula, Lehtimaki & Salo, 2009). Peattie and Crane (2005) suggest that all descriptions of a form of marketing which represents progress towards sustainability be considered as green marketing. Green marketing in the building industry in the Western world has been referred to as holistic processes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of architectural enterprises. These are marketing activities from a green perspective (Yudelson, 2007). Literature on how a firm in the building industry in China perceives green marketing and why and how they go green are limited given the increasing number of applications for green building labels (Nelson, 2012). This paper draws on Yudelson's (2007) description, with a view to adding to understandings of how green marketing actually works at a firm level in China.

2.2 Motivation (Reasons to go Green)

What literature there is on firms' motivations to go green has identified regulatory compliance, competitive advantage, stakeholder pressures, ethical concerns, critical events and top management initiatives as motives for firms' environmental initiatives (Bansal & Roth, 2000; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Jiang & Bansal, 2003; Winn, 1995, Lynes & Dredge, 2006). Of those motivations, legislative or regulatory compliance, competitiveness and ethical concerns have been recognized as the three most important drivers of environmental strategy and practice (Bansal & Roth, 2000). Much of that literature has concentrated on manufacturing industries. This paper offers valuable examination of the drivers of green motivation to enhance the understanding

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of firms' green behaviour in architecture design service, as part of the service sector, in China.

Beyond the literature on firms' motivation from social and economic environment perspectives, several authors have approached the green motivation question from the perspective of the characteristics of a firm to determine what factors might be considered instrumental in inducing that firm's green initiatives. Gonzalez-Benito and Gonzalez-Benito (2006) categorized them into company features of size, internationalization, position in the value chain, managerial attitude and motivations, and strategic attitude. They identify external factors as industry sector and geographical locations. The third category they offer is stakeholder pressure, a fundamental and central one that impacts on all the others (Gonzalez-Benito & Gonzalez-Benito, 2006). Those factors provide an overview of the drivers for green initiatives within a given firm. While acknowledging the contribution of the generic drivers identified in the literature, and the shortcomings that may be encountered in drawing on them, this paper argues that they are useful in analysis of a firm's green activities to develop a clearer understanding of drivers in the building industry in China.

2.3 Approaches to Greenness

A review of literature on the environmental strategy of firms indicates that there is no consensus on approach to greenness on the basis of the characteristics of a firm's size, environmental impact, technology, international reach, position in the value chain and so on, as each of these factors varies according to the firm being considered. From a specifically green marketing focus, Menon and Menon (1997) have identified three levels of green marketing activities that could be identified in a firm, including the level of function or tactics in marketing, the level of quasi-strategic (or business-strategic) strategies in marketing, and strategic levels of marketing. Those three levels can be used to identify the amount of change a firm requires in relation to green marketing, and may reflect the degree of commitment to various environmental objectives (Polonsky & Rosenberg 2001). In similar vein, Chamorro and Banegil (2005) adopt Kotler's (1995) model on the levels of green product and distinguish three levels of green marketing approaches: in relation to basic green product, the firm only takes into account the characteristics of the product in the use or consumption and post-consumption stages; in relation to extended green product, the ecological attributes are also considered in the manufacturing process; and total green product or green offerings occur when the ecological variable has been incorporated in all the internal activities of the firm (finance, purchasing, human resources and so on), as well as the environmental behaviours of the organizations interrelated with the firm.

In general, such approaches reflect a normative approach, with Chamorro and Banegil's (2005) approach more of a business to consumer focus and Menon and Menon's (1997) approach more business management oriented. Given that empirically-based considerations of firms' green marketing approach in China are unclear in the literature representations of it, and the nature of the service sector focus of this paper, the authors have adopted Menon and Menon's (1997) three levels approach for their study.

2.4 A Stakeholder Management Approach to Green Marketing

The environmental and marketing literature recognizes the need to address the interests of a wide diversity of relevant stakeholders (Garrod, 1997; Polonsky, 1995; Rivera-Camino, 2007). Perceptions of stakeholder pressures could vary depending on management's commitment to environmental issues (Buysse & Verbeke, 2003; Henriques & Sadosky, 1999). Literature on exactly who the key stakeholders are in China that influence design firms' green initiative and motivation and their green marketing behaviour is limited and a broad assessment has yet to be appear.

3. Design/Methodology/Approach

Against this background, the authors drawing on Song-Turner's (2010) conceptualization framework (See appendix 1) have explored perceptions, attitudes and motivations for green marketing practices that determine the greening of Chinese industry in this case. We have selected this case because it stands out with unique and exemplary features as gleaned from the literature review on the characteristics of firms in inducing firm's green initiatives. Business activities based on perceptions, concepts and ideals do not readily lend themselves to quantitative study, and because of this data collection has focused on identifying influential stakeholders' motivations, and exploring the values, beliefs and attitudes of Beijing New Era Architecture Design Firm (BJNEADF) representatives about going green in the year 2011 to 2012. A secondary objective has been to examine their marketing practices to see how the firm leverages its green motivation in implementing its marketing activities (that is, from perception to motivation, to action). The research has been carried out using a mixed method approach to data collection, which has included in-depth interviews and a review of published and unpublished literature, including company, government and association reports.

Specifically, BJNEADF has been selected as a case study for the following reasons:

- ◇ **Size:** BJNEADF is a medium size architect design firm with 300 employees and annual turnover 1.20 billion RMB (2009-2010, data from BJNEADF website). Child and Tsai (2005) and Melnyk, Sroufe and Calantone (2003) show that firm size influences firms' environmental behaviours and that small to medium firms tend to reluctant to adopt green initiatives because of resource constraints.
- ◇ **Ownership:** It is a private firm that was established and has flourished in the last decade. A private firm may response to different stakeholders than a state-owned one.
- ◇ **Management commitment:** BJNEADF's established leadership in the area of Refinement Economical Design^R (RED) in the green building design sector.
- ◇ **Location:** BJNEADF is located in Beijing, the capital city of China, with perceived high awareness of environmental regulation and social pressure.
- ◇ **Position in the value chain:** Architectural design firms are at the start of the value chain of the building industry and far from the end consumers. Because its immediate client is the real estate developer, who has absolute power that dominates the whole value chain, the developer could easily pass the green or ecological requirements for the building to the designing firm.
- ◇ **Industry:** The building industry is a key pillar industry that contributes to GDP growth in China.

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- ◇ **Government control:** A firm with moderate government control may respond differently to government initiatives and regulations.

BJNEADF's policy to report and share open both its weaknesses and its achievements have been an important asset to this study. The general manager of BJNEADF himself is an enthusiastic green building educator. The research literature indicates that managers are the most likely targets of private and public political pressures, because of their influence on corporate strategy (Wright & Ferris, 1997), and are often faced with competing demands for time and resources from different stakeholders (Vinten, 2000). Managers may adopt corporate strategies in response to economic pressures even if those strategies may not always be in the best interests of environmental stakeholders (Carrigan, 1995). To investigate the perception and motivation of why firm go green, top management who oversaw both operations activity and marketing activities have been included for analysis in the case study. The interviews were conducted in Beijing and followed up with telephone interviews to elicit further information for clarification of issues that emerged from the transcripts. In those interviews, definitions of greenness and green marketing, motivations, and perceived stakeholders were investigated, and published and unpublished research pamphlets and manuals and decision-making process were explored.

3.1 Case Study of BJNEAD

BJNEADF was established in 1993, and is a privately-owned architect design firm with a grade A status granted by the Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China, with ISO9001 certification granted in 1997. Headquartered in Beijing with branches in major capital cities throughout China, BJNEADF has around 300 designers and accredited professionals, including national registered architects, structural engineers, building service engineers, and surveyors. They offer full architecture design services for both industrial and residential buildings. In addition to design services, they carry out research in residential refinement design and resources conservation and energy efficiency in buildings design. Their ability to quantify savings on earth digging, energy, water, waste and purchasing is critical to establishing their credibility in this industry. In the year 2009-2010, BJNEADF designed 2,000,000m² of building with 780,000m² completed and 1,120,000m² still in implementation. BJNEADF's rapid expansion has been internally funded, and the company has been debt free since 1994.

4. Results

The key focus of the interviews, as indicated earlier, has been to explore BJNEADF's definition and perception of influential stakeholders and their motivation to go green, as well as their marketing practices for their green products and services. Information was sought about their perception of green, their motivations for going green and who their relevant stakeholders and green practices/approaches were. Six primary drivers and a number of secondary motivations emerged from the interviews, drivers that can be best understood as a result of the current economic and social situation in China.

4.1 Perceptions and Definition of Green

The interviewee, also one of stakeholders of BJNEADF, served as BJNEADF's general manager, having joined BJNEADF in 1992 by moving from China Architecture Design and Research Group, a top state-owned architect design firm in China. Since

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marketing as a mainstream function of architecture is relatively new to the profession, he states he has not heard of green marketing. Nonetheless, his description of his concept of green building in China is insightful:

Green building should consist of three components: green in architect design; green in the development and maintenance of building; and green after demolition. Green in architect design is being economical; green in development and maintenance of building is being energy efficient and resource conservative; green in building demolition is producing less garbage and waste (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

4.2 Stakeholders and Drivers of Going Green

In this case, the direct stakeholders are real estate developers, industry or government regulation authorities, professional rating systems and firm employees. While the management team of BJNEADF has the initiative to design green, the direct stakeholders also exert pressures to some extent on the firm's green initiative. Ultimately it is the real estate developers that will determine whether there will be business or not. The interviewee stated the plight of green marketing in China:

If the developers have the environment awareness, it is much easier to get them to buy into our designing concepts and ideas. But frankly, these kinds of developers are very few from my own experience (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

Industry and government regulations and those professional rating systems, on the other hand, can regulate and influence the specifics of the design and have the potential to encourage and motivate firms like BJNEADF to be greener. Their influence seems not as strong as it could be in China at present. Firm employees can influence the quality and execution of a firm's green design but are not the decisive forces for a firm's green initiatives. A noticeable stakeholder pressure in this case is the power of the social media. It is of interest to note BJNEADF's use of personal and corporate blogs to communicate with the public and gain their support.

4.2.1 Top Management's Personal Knowledge, Value and Commitment to Economical and Sustainable Design

Top management's personal knowledge, values and commitment to economical and sustainable design are considered essential for BJNEADF's green initiatives. The interviewee, who is the chief architect, designer, and general manager, is a philosophically-inclined architect who suggests that he has been deeply influenced by the traditional Chinese philosophy of living harmoniously with the environment. Rooted in his design philosophy is the Chinese 'fit' concept, which encourages the reduction of waste and visual impact, conservation of resources, and the valued mother earth which translates to 'green' in relation to architect design in his own creative and practical way. His personal design values and managerial attitude have penetrated all aspects of design areas and enabled him to form a strong and united set of working teams and firm culture at BJNEADF. Refinement Economical Design^R (RED), which is designed to reduce or eliminate waste, is more of a personal aspiration rather than a response to direct pressures from clients or public consumers. He expresses the importance of being a responsible architect in the community and his firm:

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Architectural design is not just for contemporary short term money making, but carries benefits for the occupants who live in the community and environment as well as for future generations (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

Graduation to being a qualified architect should occur only when you put your heart into closely observing life and practices, to identify problems and diligently work on them with the concept of being environmental friendly, greening, energy and material saving in your design. (General Manager, June 24th, 2010)

...to me, establishing a set of high benchmarking architect standards and a team who are able to maintain the standard is the ultimate goal as an architect (General Manager, June 14th, 2010).

The interviewee and his associates see Refinement Economical Design^R (RED) as more than simply a business name; it is an expression of their belief that the design of buildings is not just for comfort, but also to impact positively on the people, the environment, and the communities they serve.

4.2.2 Financial Cost-Benefits and Savings to the Developers/Occupants

It is safe to say the top triggers for BJNEADF to design green for building green are still motivated by financial cost benefit. Even so, in this case the motivation of BJNEADF in designing green buildings is being driven more by the savings (through its RED) that it can bring to the developers and occupants, to gain for them a competitive advantage in obtaining business. BJNEADF advocates that all the stakeholders in the value chain of the building industry—from the design planning to construction, equipment and material supply, interior decoration and industry standard—review and question existing design and construction practices and standards in China.

4.2.3 Compliance with Updated National Building Standards

Clearly the national regulatory setting has a direct and authoritative influence on BJNEADF's design service. The interviewee identifies regulations and national standards as being an essential part of pushing green design. Regulations are respected, at least in documentation, are somewhat unquestioningly accepted in Chinese culture, and become embedded values in the industry and in firm culture as well:

Over my past 20 years of designing, the national standard on energy saving and material has changed so rapidly...that to maintain compliance with the updated standards, you need to incorporate new technology and new material into your design. This is great thing for the building industry (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

In addition to compliance with national standards, there are also sub-drivers such as conforming to the new energy and water efficiency code as reflected in the national energy plan focus (FYP, 2006-2011), as well as the anticipation of future stringent legislation, which suggests that an early mover could gain the competitive advantage.

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4.2.4 Pressure from Provincial/Local Regulatory Bodies and Building Association

Interviewees from BJNEADF acknowledge that levels of control by governments of different levels have different impacts on firms' green responses. It is no surprise that some provincial and local regulatory bodies have more coercive power and more incentives than land developers. In order to obtain permission, licences or certification from those regulatory bodies, it is imperative to abide by their local or specific technical and planning requirements. Some developers set conditional acceptance of BJNEADF innovative design based upon approval from the regulatory authorities. Further, the development of LEED certification and the Three Star System in China have convinced some leading green developers from the high end market (such as the Pearl River Tower, the Vanke Center, the Linked Hybrid and so on) to the lower end markets to expand their reach further, which tends not only to provide pressures but also opportunities for firms like BJNEADF. BJNEADF began to apply for various national and international certifications soon after NEADF was established, obtaining ISO9001-2000 certification and GB/T19001-2000 (Chinese building design standard) in 1993.

At the same time, BJNEADF seeks to work closely with these provincial and local regulatory bodies and building associations, and sees its credibility in RED design and other green design capability as being important to such relationships. The firm's image and its design capacity as well as its internal management policy and word-of-mouth reputation in this sector have been important in establishing this credibility, and thus, a voice with some power when dealing with regulatory bodies.

4.2.5 Bridging the gap Between the Design and Construction Discrepancies

A representative of BJNEADF indicates that bridging the gap between the design and construction discrepancies is a direct response for the firms' RED design. He explains the current situation in China regarding green building:

Currently, in China, green building is mainly determined by the developer/owner and in the construction and maintenance stage. As the developer/owner they could request the design of the building one way and convince the authorities in favour of acceptance. At the construction stage, the developer then has an incentive to cut corners in order to maximize profits...minimize garbage production after demolition—this may be the case overseas, but in most cases in China, this is beyond the consideration of both developers and authorities. ...whereas in China, most architects are submissive to the developers... this leads overall to a lack of monitoring, assessment and intervention in the project with the existing system. Furthermore, the overall professional quality of the construction workers is poor and the industry level is not high, which causes unnecessary waste because of reworking, rewiring or redesigning during the translation of architectural drawings to the real building (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

A report from the press briefing on China's Energy-efficient building and green building initiative (Qiu, 2008) confirms that all urban new buildings across the country are to conform with energy saving standards, which is 97 percent for the design stage and only 71 percent for the construction stage. The lack of contractors, sub-contractors, engineers and supervisors who understand the concept of green buildings and an absence of a reliable supply chain of green material is also an obstacle China needs to overcome (Chhabara, 2009).

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4.3 Approach to Greenness (Marketing position/Strategy)

BJNEADF has translated its green motivation through its corporate culture. The scope of architect design involves various aspects and talents from the main design area, such as architectural design, structural design, equipment and electrical design, as well as complementary design such as interior and decoration design, and so on. The general manager has understood from his previous experiences that careful and sensitive management of his employees had often been a key feature to pursue and maintain his firm's architect design value. What makes BJNEADF distinctive from other firms is their personal training and personal professional development in the firm to share the vision of design of high-performing, healthy buildings that positively impact the people, environment, and communities they serve. To achieve this, they have proposed the RED concept and encouraged employees in each area to be innovative and detail oriented. They are encouraged to represent all the savings from each area in figures, which fosters motivation and a sense of pride for everyone involved in the project.

A comment from one of employees' blog is consistent with this idea: "We are a group of people who like and respect each other immensely and enjoy collaborating on great work".

Another important practice BJNEADF has adopted to embed their design philosophy in the firm's culture is knowledge sharing and internal and external professional training:

One key aspect of knowledge management is capturing the lessons learned from each project, whether or not the owner or client decided to pursue green and set up their own database with the firm...Continue improvement and learning is made possible within the firm (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

Every year BJNEADF sends its employees to Japan, Europe and the USA to observe sustainable design, with a mandate to report back on their return. The processes of internationalization have enlightened and influenced the managerial and strategic directions of BJNEADF's further development:

Compared with overseas firms, we still have a long way to go, particularly in the design stage. However, the cost caused by rework (rebuilding) because of poor building quality is still the main reason for the overall waste in the Chinese building industry. Refinement of economical design is one of our approaches towards reducing those wastes (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

Through those various measures, the RED design permeates virtually all of the function areas of the firm. Given its focus and activities over the last several years, BJNEADF's development and marketing strategy has been aimed at finding, winning and keeping clients with an additional focus on maintaining relationships with clients and building their own brand through RED and eventually become a recognized expert in this area.

The marketing approach of BJNEADF did not explicitly claim green in their initial selling practices. Instead they discussed how much savings they could bring to the developer as a common ground to explain their design value and concepts. Drawing on years of experience, BJNEADF are able to give accurate budget evaluations for the whole project and the amount of saving they could manage for the developer, which

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they have found to be a very effective tool to sell their services. This does not always work on all occasions:

You do not always get the contract even if you have a design which can save thousands of dollars. Often if you do not know the decision maker(s) of the developer, or if you do not have the Guanxi (connection), you will end up losing the contract (General Manager, June 24, 2010).

This highlights the importance of Guanxi—personal network—in China. With the right Guanxi, the competition field can be tilted in one's favour. Or, it could fail one, even if one comes with an excellent product or service.

4.3.1 Marketing Practices

Product

BJNEADF's product strategy is to emphasize the premium value that it provides to the clients. RED incorporates humanity, economic and environmental friendliness in the design, with attention to detail and convenience of build, as well as its ability to quantify the savings related to decisions about earth digging, energy, water, waste, purchasing and so on, which is critical to building their brand credibility. In recent years, they have also extended offers of research and consultation to interested clients

Price

BJNEADF sets a premium price for its design service, based on the savings that they can achieve for clients. They have the ability to quantify the various attributes related to water, waste, purchasing and so on, which is critical to establishing their brand image and reputation. In some cases, they would add excessive design load rather than lower the prices in order to win the business. For existing clients, they tend to use incremental pricing strategy, that is, a percentage of cost saving realized through further design improvement based on the existing design. This pricing strategy is a popular practice for its existing clients.

Distribution

The early stage of BJNEADF's distribution practice was based on personal contacts and often as a subcontractor for bigger design firms and small real estate developers. As their expertise in RED became more mature and experienced, BJNEADF reached out to organizations, including the government, universities, and real estate associations through seminars, conferences, and other kinds of activities. Tendering bids is one of the most often used practices. Some benefits stemmed from the bidding process:

Tendering bids provides us with a direct way to sell our concepts and designs to potential clients. This is an effective way to reduce if not overcome Guanxi's influence in obtaining business in this circle. Secondly the decision panels of those clients are well connected. Even if we are not successful, they may recommend us to someone else who is interested in our design. (General Manager, June 24th, 2010).

Promotion

Marketing for service firms is very different from marketing products, because of the amount of client trust and professional competency involved. Every business negotiation sealed by BJNEADF is a result of a persuasive and educational pitch, because the sales of RED design relate to a number of factors, such as the national design code, the quality of the construction team, the equipment and material

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suppliers, the preferences of the real estate developers, and so on. Compared with the normal so-called 'brown design', RED designs were much more difficult. To increase the visibility of its RED brand, BJNEADF uses a combination of social and media networks to advertise its services. Word-of-mouth is particularly important in this industry, and BJNEADF follows up every project they have implemented, establishing a database for future improvement and research. They have also used other ways to promote their services such as their firm website, personal blog, show case, and so on. In terms of public relations, BJNEADF also actively participates in public education programs, the general manager often being invited to attend architect design forums, university seminars, TV programs for public education and so on.

5. Discussion and Implication

While the above six factors have clearly emerged as motivation forces for BJNEADF go greening, there have been two issues that interviewees indicate have not been important. Firstly, BJNEADF has not perceived those pressures from the public consumers as a factor influencing their design and service. The general manager of BJNEADF states that consumers are currently generally more interested in price and location of the building rather than the green design or energy efficiency rating, despite the rising awareness of environmental issues in China. Secondly, BJNEADF's green initiatives have not emerged out of copying successful competitors, nor from legislation pressures, but from a desire to demonstrate environmental design leadership in China from a strategic point of view.

Also noteworthy in this case is the location of the firm, headquartered in Beijing, where environmental regulations are forcefully implemented and where social pressure is perceived to have had a positive impact on the development of BJNEADF. While the geographical location of the BJNEADF clearly helps its operation and marketing efforts, a world-wide known international event seems able to speed its growth. As one interviewee states, the calls from new or unexpected large developers enquiring after their RED have increased since the 2008 Olympic Games. An international event like the 2008 Olympic Games has been credited by the firm as having acted as a catalyst for spreading green building interest in Beijing.

In the case of BJNEADF, the interviews suggest that the commitment to go green is a direct result of top management's leadership, knowledge and vision. To achieve the vision, they proposed the RED concept in the Chinese context and employees at BJNEADF are similarly putting emphasis on this concept through personal training and professional development within and outside the firm to share and enhance the firm's architectural design value. Design championship in waste reduction and economical design are important not only within the architectural design field but also among the building industry in general. Firms that lead the way in going green can act as role models for other firms in the industry.

Looking at the critical role played by BJNEADF top management team in influencing the firm's green initiatives, their green development is not a stand-alone case. The iconic green marketing brands (Ben & Jerry's, Tom's Maine, Bodyshop, Ecover, LL Bean, and Patagonia) were the result of internally-oriented, value-driven strategy, usually from entrepreneurs with a vision and an idea rather than specific stakeholder pressure (Rivera-Camino, 2007).

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BJNEADF's strategic development has been based on a clear awareness of the realities of the Chinese building industry. Considering the general low level of skill in construction teams, as identified by the interviewees, the firm has taken the position that it is important to bridge the gap between the design and the construction processes of a building to bring the cost of construction down not only so that the developers will accept the green design but also so that a competitive advantage for BJNEADF is created. The development of BJNEADF is a success story of finding a common ground for developers to make money by building green. One of the perceived barriers for building green is the perceived high cost of this. In light of the current state of the market in China, building owners' and developers' requirements for more independent costing and performance evaluations of green buildings are critical for building credibility and overcoming perceived barriers. As this study suggests, in the early adoption period occasionally there will be cases of consumers specifying certain green building products/ and projects; this case shows both firms and the clients they serve as tending towards Return on Investment (ROI) related decision making.

Another important feature used by BJNEADF for its marketing communication is green awareness through public education. Even though the General Manager states his belief that public education should be shouldered more by the government. BJNEADF also contributes to the education of the public in their own way, such as through blogs and guest speaking at universities. Their efforts are not to be understated in relation to boosting BJNEADF's development. Being experienced practitioners in the architecture industry, their persuasive and influential power has a measure of effectiveness in convincing potential practitioners in this industry. Gladwell (2007) suggests that green building will spread most rapidly when knowledge about this approach is spread by well-connected individuals (typically senior partners at design and construction firms and leading authorities in the field); through people who widely and openly share their knowledge with others through publishing and speaking (that is, experts whose judgement is acknowledged and trusted) and through what he calls "persuaders" who have the ability to tell compelling stories to others about the benefits of sustainable design. Although the General Manager interviewed in this study may not be aware of the extent of his contribution as a green building marketer, what he has actually done is exactly what an ideal green building marketer might be expected to do.

6. Conclusions

This paper has sought to identify and investigate factors that motivate an architect design firm's going green and how it implements green marketing of its green initiatives in the Chinese context. Set against the literature on firms' motivation to go green and stakeholder theory, the BJNEADF case study has investigated whether all or some of these motivations are relevant to the development of green commitment, and to key stakeholders in related decision making. The case study indicates that although motivations identified in the literature contribute to BJNEADF's commitment of going green, it is the top management's knowledge, leadership and vision which is the first element in catalysing the firm's going green. With clear and decisive leadership, an intensive commitment to their brand, RED practice is emphasized at all levels of communications and design stages both internally and externally to clients. Such strategic attitudes and willingness to embrace environmental behaviours have created a strong internal environmental culture, which typifies Polonsky and Rosenburger's (2001) view that real, lasting, eco-strategic changes happen from within. The case of BJNEADF also makes visible traditional Chinese culture, especially

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the philosophical heritage of living harmoniously with nature, as playing an influential role in the value BJNEADF puts on environment at a strategic level. The results of this study are consistent with previous work (Song-Turner, 2010), which suggests that environmental attitudes, expectations and the motivation of managers in China constitute an important factor in explaining firms' green strategies.

At the same time, legislation or regulation, although not the most obvious motivation for BJNEADF's design, is another important supportive dimension of BJNEADF's going green. Given the general poor compliance with energy codes and the high degree of flouting between design and building compliance regulations in China, findings from BJNEADF's case suggests that forceful mandatory compliance is still an important mechanism in driving firms go green. Among the identified stakeholders, pressures from real estate developers and owners, regulatory government and professional rating associations are most influential, while responding to the direct pressure from the public, customers, employees or even competitor appears to be relatively unimportant at this stage.

Findings from this case study also suggest that architects and engineers are to be selective about which clients give consideration to green building, and how to approach and market to them. Current early adoption of green building in China, where the building developers or owners rather than green consumers dominate the market, suggest that transparency and value that is quantifiable and easy to understand are attractive to owner/builders regarding green buildings.

The green building industry is in its infancy in China, but advocates remain optimistic that the green building market will continue to grow in China (Nelson, 2012). The authors would argue that lessons learned from China are not just for China, but in relation to that country, more empirical studies are needed to identify and explore further how firms with different characteristics market green building, how to market beyond the early adaption period, and what roles government and firms in China could play to facilitate green building in the mainstream.

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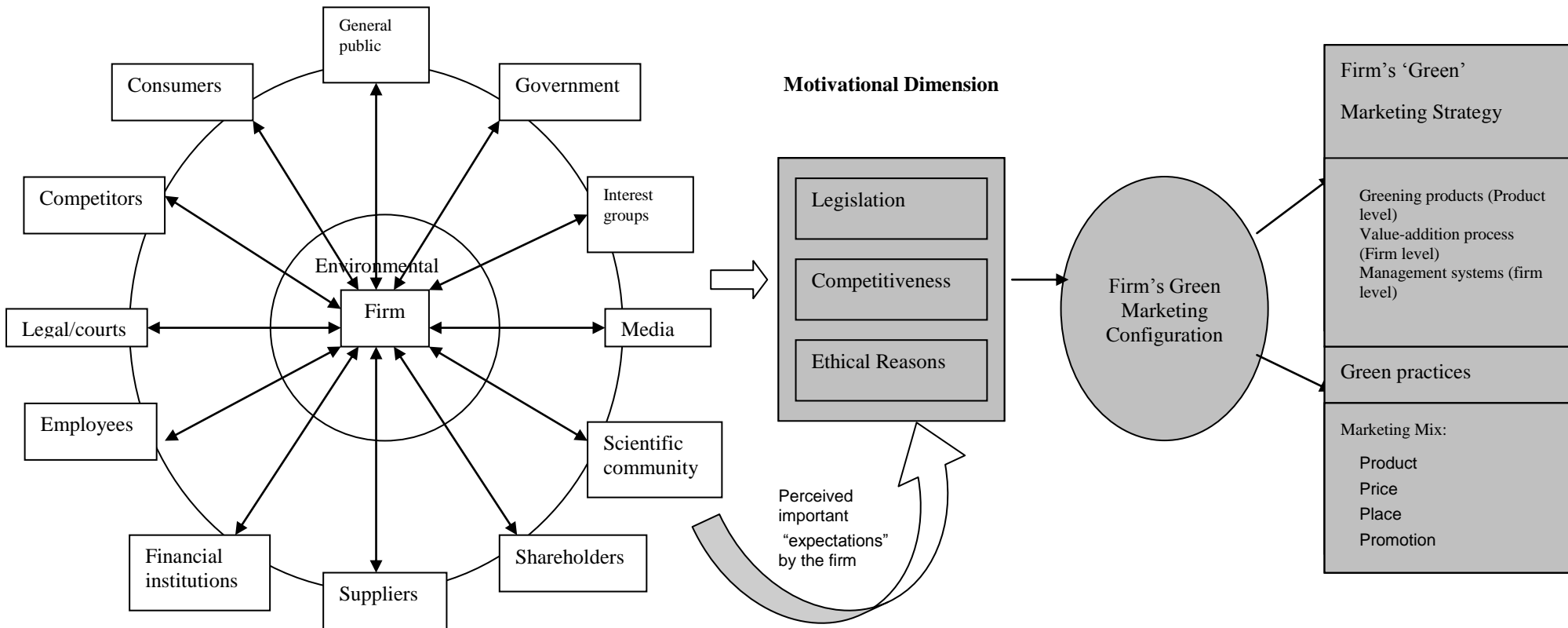
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Appendix 1- Conceptual Framework of Firm's Motivation to Go Green and Marketing Practices in China

Figure 1: A Model of Firms' Motivation to Go Green and Marketing Practices in China⁴

Major Environmental Stakeholders Firm's Perception of Green Motivation Firm's Green Marketing Strategy and Practices



⁴ Green marketing in China. © Helen Song-Turner 2008