

## **A GREEN MARKETING VISION OF THE ROMANIAN COMPANIES PROMOTES A BUSINESS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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*ABSTRACT: The sustainable product concept includes a variety of economic, social and environmental considerations. A sustainable product is an item or service that minimizes its impact on resource use and environment and maximizes that on society at each stage of its life cycle. The improvement of both characteristics must become the constant objective of the producers. The more they succeed to achieve these objectives, the more sustainable the products become. The end product of sustainable marketing consists in its contribution to the sustainable development by the favorable impact on its economic, social and environmental constituent parts (Yazdanifard and Mercy, 2011, p.638)*

*The introduction of the environmental protection into the marketing equation to promote the consideration of the social aspect which defends the environmental interests of the society (Hopfenbech 1994, p.300) provided a major challenge for the Romanian entrepreneurs in the business area regarding to a multidimensional transformation process.*

*This paper aims the successive steps of an organizational complete model considered by us as essential to draw the social responsible enterprise status focus to "consumer & environment" to increase their good effects upon society.*

*Key words: environmental compatibility of the firm, green marketing model, social corporate responsibility*

*JEL codes: M31; M13; O33; Q56.*

### **Introduction**

Alarmed by the well frequently adverse effects and long-term different products upon the health and the human body, more and more consumers are interested in organic and green business.

The answers and ways of manifestation of the green consumer market for products/brands and businesses are the result of the ecological selection and systematic interpretation of the information about products, processes, producers and traders. Consumers began, step by step, focus to reducing the stress on simplifying life, elimination of problems and the complexity of procedures, and the keywords have become energy and time.

The themes of the environment wins, and, more acutely, increasing the tendency of consumers to participate in community life and we are witnessing today in the process of good consumer information to offer various information, by thus determining to make good choices based on their preferences / motivations and giving at the same time, the knowledge that they have made a good choice (Palese, Crane YT, 2002, 134-138).

For the enterprises which didn't meet the promises made by the environment, the risk is high because the "green" consumers", as purchasers, are more radical in the reactions of rejection that ordinary consumers. Companies are required to comply with the regulations and laws of consumer protection in the countries with which they conducted business. Ecological motivation

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becomes the result of selection, systematic processing and interpretation of information about processes, products, organic producers and traders. The consumers are becoming more receptive at the environmental impact and this trend will accelerate during the coming years. Four of five European consumers want to buy green products if they are properly certified. Only when organizations have placed unequivocally CONSUMER/CUSTOMER into the heart, culture, assuming the risks to ensure an existence based on the values of quality and service consumer / client, we can create the climate where strategic marketing can provide their share of the market success a long-term.

The symmetrical treatment of all customers (internal and international) is essential for the firm as a discouraged client (for whatever reason) can be easily won by competition. The core competencies of the company provide access to a wide range of future cases, the multiplier effect and, although difficult to analyze and imitate (being a combination of various technologies, organization and production technologies), it can develop a commitment, conviction and perseverance, only methods to detach from its competitors. They provide the company the benefits of time, which is why top management should be aware that they are forged by collective processes and rely on basic knowledge of the entire organization (V. Danciu, 2006, p.134).

In light of its attributes and its appreciable development potential, the SME sector represent an important factor of the Romanian economy and its prospects for revitalization and modernization of its structure. The SMEs must have a conceptual framework of corporate environmentalism based on the management vision that allows the company to exceed mere compliance with existing regulations to meet the needs of the customers regarding the protection health and environment.

Without eliminating the "action dimension" still in top into many Romanian SMEs, after 2000 year, period called by Manfred Bruhn "hyper competition stage" it begins the transition to from marketing know-how to choose strategic alternatives (want do), inked in a state of mind backed by a willingness according to a strategy in the characteristics exchanges middle of the respective company (Constantinescu L.M. Chebira BA, 2008, p.158).

Nowadays may be appear multiple and diverse influences which are providing the "Pull & Push" effects related to environmental factors that outweigh the environmental risks but are at the same time opportunities to seek a managerial awareness regarding the environmental problem.

"Green consumers" should be considered the best customers of the company because these consumers are highly active educated and informed.

A study made by Roper Starch Worldwide Institute (USA) in 2005 identified 5 segments of green consumers, differentiated by their mode of action towards products, brands and companies under the influence of their environmental behavior when buying (Danciu V., 2006, p.51):

green consumers believe that they can contribute to the healing of the environmental active politically and socially;

green materialists interested in the environment but consider themselves too busy to change their lifestyles;

undecided consumers interested in recycling and they consider that this is the only way to protect the environment;

passive consumers which believe that the responsibility for environmental protection comes only to authorities and large companies;

the largest green consumer segment (e.g. in USA, they represent 35% of the population). They re directed to environmental and ecological issues but are not convinced that these problems are really important; they have an average income and the level of higher education.

Given the convergence process of the economy of the European Union (UE), Romania must support trends towards convergence, such as intensive sanitation and accelerating evolution to catch up time. The ecological imperative is always present and taken into account by a higher number of firms and the Romanian companies must be prepared to integrate the ecological imperative? If YES then WHY?

**The multidimensional process of the organizational transformation towards becoming an enterprise focused to "consumer & environment".**

The business sustainable development involves three action strategic axes focus to economic and social areas, and environmental protection also.

According the green marketing model that we shall design, the company tends to become gradually oriented consumer and the environment as following:

Attention to the effects PUSH & PULL given the behavior of green consumers

Consumers, even "green consumers" have the right to be informed to decide correctly when buying certain products; to be protected against products, processes and services that endanger the health or life; to receive an atmosphere which can improve the quality of life. Because of their long-term effects on human health, various products are excluded consumed by consumers increasingly interested in organic and green businesses.

Consumers began gradually to reduce stress to simplify his life, elimination problems and complexity of procedures and the environmental themes have increased the consumer's participation into the life of the community.

Consumer protection has become a public issue, one based on respect for a set of standards phenomenon, laws and other normative documents, but also on consumer protection programs developed by various public institutions, NGOs and also producing companies.

The resolution of the United Nation Organization (39/248/1985) established a guidelines set for the consumer protection in ensuring all members of the United Nations an adequate framework for the development and consolidation of policy and legislation for the consumer protection. For the former socialist South East European and other countries in development countries, must necessary to develop appropriate protection programs that include:

- the obligation to ensure the dominance of the consumer market, a position guaranteed by law in the respective countries, but by reconsidering the notion of consumer as "an individual to which the firm is bound by an agreement and to which it supplies various products / services to meet their needs";
- strict liability, or so-called "responsibility for the result of the supply of consumer goods;
- the requirement that goods producers deliver documents on value of the good or service provided, and that they ensure the safety of use;
- identification of specialized bodies of the state administration responsible specify how to respect consumer rights and consumer protection

The company must have the ability to create a stable value system enabling it to maintain stable relations and symmetry of the partnership. The value of the company will be even greater if this value system will reflect this principle. The harmonization of social policy with the strategic and tactical objectives of the company can be obtained by the transparency of decision-making and good communication policy which calls for a constant dialogue between consumers and producers.

Environmental motivation becomes the result of selection, systematization and interpretation of information about processes, products, producers and retailers. Consumers have become increasingly receptive to the impact of the environment, and this trend will become more intense year in the years to come. It has been shown that 80% of European consumers want to buy green products if they are properly certified. The company must look beyond simple legal regulations, to go to meet the customer expectations in terms of environmental protection and health.

There are two categories effects of these factors (Constantinescu LM Gavrilă G., Neffati M., 2010, pp 70-71):

"PUSH" *ecological* effect generates domestic and international pressure under costs related to environmental protection or constraints on technological advancements to make environmentally

friendly products and processes. The emergence of the environmental legislation, insofar as it doesn't expect the effect of these factors will reduce the operating space of the company, it may even lose jobs, important positions in the market and customer, if it is not prepared to offer products or services in accordance with international standards and details of the new regulations;

"PULL" ecological effect provides an attraction manifested when the alignment with the environmental requirements due to increased consumers & retailers demands to find the green solutions which generate greater market needs.

Nowadays may appear multiple and diverse influences, with effects "Pull & Push" related to environmental factors that outweigh the environmental risks but are at the same time opportunities to seek a managerial awareness regarding the environmental problem.

### **Information about the green consumer behavior**

The "Green consumers" are highly active, educated and informed (Danciu V., 2006, p.51). the various studies in this field show that the women are leaders of the battle for the environment, for reasons having to do with their function key buyers and their influence on the purchasing decisions of the whole society and the future generations. In addition, women more than men, tend to accept environmental solutions and don't forget that women represent 53% of the Romanian population (Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2008).

The evaluation of purchasing alternatives reflects the combination of the ecological criteria for the enterprise reputation and the accessibility and personal consumer information. Behavior after sales is the result of the satisfaction/dissatisfaction provided by the organic product, but depends on the degree to which the product attributes - value for money and environmental benefits are at the customer's expectations.

### **Request to solve environmental problems, while respecting the consumer rights**

Information about customers, combined with innovation & creativity can lead to a maximum value offered to consumers. At the same time, the opportunities for the company to develop and deliver internationally, are based on standardized products or adjusted according to the taste of customers, while the competition is constantly changing (specialists appreciate that firms entering an era hyper-competition). Proactive behavior in organizations can ensure a good place in the market and can also transmit to investors that the company complies with the standards adopted internationally. Thus, proactive behavior offers opportunities in the sense of access to new markets, but also brings new competitive advantages.

For exsocialists countries that joined at EU we are required to adopt standards/documents, the strategies according to the sustainable development principles. From Stockholm to Johannesburg through Rio, the local pollution has put on the table the issue of the environment. But the environment was also placed under the sign of doubt the lifestyle of the countries that claim to be developed and has influenced the content of the development itself.

The rapid development of the "green consumption" becomes a question of the environment in a competitiveness issue for many companies in the business sector in Romania.

The company's actions require to obtain environmental compatibility and customer satisfaction The harmonization of social policy with the strategic and tactical goals of the company can be obtained through transparency in decision-making and good communication policy, which requires a constant dialogue between producers and consumers.

Green marketing is strategic because its provocations require substantial effort on the part of the company for a long time. For strategic product decisions "Friends of the Environment" environmental compatibility is made a strategic product.

Green marketing is strategic both in terms of its nature and its contents, because its levels are numerous and it looks all important segments of society. The sources which can produce the environmental benefits are encountered in the marketing mix of eco-business: eco-product; eco-

label; eco-label of the European Union (EU flower); eco-distribution; eco-money and eco-communication.

Green marketing can be a strategic option for the organization, following the implementation at the firm of ecological philosophy on the various components, structures and activities, from the management of the firm. So, an happens incremental transformation of the concept of marketing, including its variant its international strategic, specifically one that makes for a better positioning of the firm in the value chain. The target of these changes in the marketing vision of the firm is to allow it to provide more and more value added to customers.

Sources which can be achieved environmental benefits are met at the marketing mix of the firm (Constantinescu L.M., 2010, p.179):

- ecological product - ecological quality, superior performance in protecting the environment and quality of life;
- brand of environmentally friendly product and its role in strengthening communication;
- ecological distribution - logistics that does not affect or too little affects the environment; safe delivery, an ecological service, a retro distribution system (reverse logistics) by which producers assume the obligation to recover the old product (car, refrigerator, computer, etc.) in order to buy another one, nine;
- ecological price - this is the variable mix of marketing in which we get the harder a source of ecological advantage because sometimes it can benefit a product at a higher price, if the "ecological value /" is very good;
- eco friendly communication which provides better visibility at the highest green products, image and personality by the ecological component.

The interactive communication mutually benefits the consumers as well as the products, brands or the companies. In this communication partnership, the cocreation of information provides value to customers about the product, the brand or the company and provides the products, the brands or companies with information about the customers. The customers have an expectation to participate in communication exchanges with products, brands or companies in the same way they are participating in the co-creation with products, brands or companies. The digital media present the customers with opportunities to interact with marketing communication through user generated content which may take the form of text comments or multi-media content hosted on platforms like video sites, blogs or forums. Furthermore, the digital media allows for the cost efficient distribution of the customized communication that can be personalized to suit the individual customer, possibly by using database information. One key of the marketer success could be picking the right ways to interact with online customers, manage the interactions appropriately and make the best use of digital consumer data. The success depends on the enhanced transparency and more collaborative interactions with the customers (V. Danciu, 2013, p.44). The solutions must be smart solutions based on use of intelligent technologies, solution facilitating, educating and emotionally connecting with customers. The same goals could be helped by creating and use the interactive platforms of communication.

### **The rising importance of the social and sustainable marketing practices**

The sustainable marketing must be an appropriate response that supports and encourages the reduction of the direct environmental burden of producing, trading, using and disposing goods and services, consuming goods and services that contribute positively to the health and well-being, increasing the development and the adoption of energy and water efficient appliances and transport, the production and the sale of new goods and services adapted to the global environmental and resources constraints, the life-styles that place greater value on the social cohesion, the local traditions, and the non-material values (Rettekye, Hetesi, 2010, p. 182).

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) is an example that was calculated by researchers from Yale and Columbia Universities, World Economic Forum, Geneva, and Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Ispra, Italy (EPI, 2012, p. 12). EPI 2012 shows that the rank of different countries depends little on their development level. Latvia, Slovakia, Azerbaijan, Albania, Egypt, Romania and Thailand are included in Top 10 trends of EPI performers in the future. They could out space the future environmental performances of many developed countries as Norway, France, Austria, United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany, New Zealand, Japan or United States. Other countries can not improve their environmental performances. The lowest decliners in the future will probably be Estonia, Bolivia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Kuwait (<http://wbc-inco.net/object/document/7519>).

The social marketing issues to influence the consumption and to promote a change for sustainability providing to the new marketing paradigm gets a sustainable dimension. That could act as a driver for reducing consumption and supporting the sustainable development. That's the future way of the marketing that should play more attention to the researches of sustainable consumption and the researchers could show the current situation and suggest future actions for social and sustainable marketing. The benefactors of the sustainable marketing are the consumers which benefit from the knowledge that helps to lower the climate change and the use of non-renewable resources, the products that will get characteristics having a positive impact on the climate change, the air, water and soil conservation and the resources conservation. All these improve the environmental quality and increase the customer satisfaction.

Many companies will shift development priorities overseas to take advantage of the rapid and significant growth of emerging markets middle class. Those companies will therefore need to adapt and develop new products and services to fit lifestyles and consumer's expectations and preferences. The consumers in emerging markets will therefore drive the changes in global consumption and product innovation. The consumers need to be helped making sustainable choices, no matter the market. The companies have a crucial and central role to play in proactively influencing the customers to lead more sustainable life styles and choose sustainable goods and services.

They must assist consumers, make the purchase as convenient as possible and make green and sustainable products that cost no more than conventional ones (Nassar, 2012).

These issues could have serious impact on the social and sustainable marketing practices at company level. In the next decades, every business succeeds practicing successful marketing if it's able to harmonize, co-ordinate and give proper responses to apparently divergent requirements. The businesses must have the marketing that helps not only maximizing the revenues but also minimizing its impact on the world (Nassar, 2012).

A better marketing could be obtained also by encouraging and incorporating meaningfully values as social responsibility, sustainability and ethics. Last but not least, is important that the businesses keep in mind that the markets make empathic exchanges that shape the future business and product development opportunities.

### **The socially oriented companies**

In 2006, the European Commission issued a new policy, the centerpiece of which was the strong support for an initiative under the auspices of called "European Alliance for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)" companies. CSR is in line with the objectives of the strategy "Europe 2020" strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, notably to achieve an employment rate of 75%, De George R. (1999) considers that responsibility social can be a positive factor for the company and may even help to increase profitability (Nash, 1995 p.37). The company can select the social problems that need to support them with a choice that will promote social protection or not a prerequisite to increase profitability (Lazăr I. and al, 2006, p. 224).

Pricewaterhouse Coopers makes into account social responsibility includes creating a balance between profit maximization and stakeholder needs, in time, the World Bank this as an additional responsibility of companies to support the development of the poor countries.

After Campbell (1998) cited by Foryt (2002, p.152) can be a direction different from social entrepreneurship. This approach social entrepreneurship as the final stage of the corporate social responsibility, social participation of companies to respond in the complex form (Blowfield, Murray, 2008, p. 63). In this context, social innovation is seen as a business opportunity exploited by profit of the company, developing a new market with a focus on social objectives. These companies, from a consolidated corporate social responsibility policy can have a significant social impact can be stimuli triggers the process of social entrepreneurship (Boschee, 2003 cited by Austin and al, 2007, p.45).

Social enterprise must be constantly subjected to a process of growth and development as a business, because in this way innovation, which is important in the process of social entrepreneurship, promote new way to create value for those who can't do it alone.

The European Excellence Model helps companies find solutions for continuous improvement of their performance in the business field. However, we must remember that the companies concerned to meet the expectations of customers are those who promote the idea of social ownership.

A Quality Management System and also the Environment Management System as proposed in the European Union by the community management system and audit can ensure a smooth compatibility with ISO standard 9000: 2000 and ISO 14000 by the coordination of activities supposed to ensure quality with those related to environmental management.

An integrated environmental management and a quality management system, customer driven vision that incorporates a green marketing into the management process of the company to promote a proactive attitude regarding the opportunities and threats of mid-market firm.

The rapid pace of development in the field of "green consumption" makes the environment in the situation has become a competitiveness problem for a growing number of business sectors and SMEs are present. Positioning based on ecological arguments as attack strategy can substantially appreciate the intensity of competition in a market / sector, especially when clients and procurers of distribution do not accept such segmentation (e.g. Green products and products that do not meet the requirements of environmental protection).

## **Conclusions**

The World Commission on the Environment and Development called Brundtland Commission (1987), coined the term "*sustainable development*" to illustrate the links among the economic, social and environmental objectives of development. Societies are developing so fast that up to 137 species go extinct daily in the tropical forests alone. The social aspects have appeared as a result of disparities in economic and political power. Most people around the world have seen major improvement in their lives over the past 40 years. But there are major constraints on the ability to sustain such evolutions. This ability depends on the freedom of choice and equity by protecting the availability and diversity of natural resources that are not in place today.

Green marketing can be a strategic option for the organization following the implementation at the firm of ecological philosophy on various components, structures and activity, from the management of the firm. Occurs and an incremental transformation of the concept of marketing, including its international strategic variant, specifically the one that goes to a better positioning of the firm in the value chain. The target of these changes in the marketing vision of the firm is to enable it to provide more added value to its customers.

The economic, social and cultural diversity requires focus on the different important factors which greatly influence the thinking of the customers. Every business should learn that it must adapt to the key trends that are shaping tomorrow and find the appropriate marketing solutions.

First of all, that means better understanding tomorrow's people and create marketing strategies that can fulfill the needs of all categories of customers. The marketing should be customized every time and every market if needed. The customization could require two different approaches: first, a multi-segment marketing that means diversification and then a multi-segment marketing focused on niche strategy.

Both approaches affect the global marketing strategy, plan and action which incorporate some of local touch or local factors in order to create a local feel. If the business takes into account these factors it must create relevant products offering for customers. At the same time, the best solutions must be found for offering, preparing, and delivering. These solutions must be smart solutions based on use of intelligent technologies, solution facilitating, educating and emotionally connecting with customers. The same goals could be helped by creating and use the interactive platforms of communication. A better marketing could be obtained also by encouraging and incorporating meaningfully values as social responsibility, sustainability and ethics. Last but not least, is important that the businesses keep in mind that the markets make empathic exchanges that shape the future business and product development opportunities.

For the Romanian companies focus to customers and environment are many items based on the strategic competitive advantage sources. A systematic vision, we must first include the sources with relevance to international competitiveness in its strategic dimension and green marketing. The interdependence between technological innovations and organizational changes is obvious, although it is difficult to disentangle the influence of organizational innovations of the company. The organizational and technological innovations are part of this "heavy" and evolution are to varying degrees, depending on the company, the adaptation and evolution of these business processes (V. Danciu, 2013, p. 39).

As example, many companies of the Romanian SME sector are engaged in a process of certification and standardization, which has led them to formalize their knowledge and expertise and to streamline their production process. These changes have caused a number of organizational changes for, shall we say, a more "interactive" business model by facilitating the transfer of information and knowledge internally and learning new rules of organization (setting up groups of problem solving, building new indicators, increased staff accountability ...).

In some way, it can be concluded that those organizational innovations have helped develop other "habits" which work routines and formalizing new rules for resolving problems that foster the emergence of innovations. The innovents SMEs generally sequentially, that is to say, they innovate is at the organizational level or at technological level of function they define priorities and only a small number of SMEs are able to conduct two abreast.

Corporate Social Responsibility is seen as the company beyond legal obligations or restrictions imposed by economics, to pursue long-term goals to owners (shareholders), customers, suppliers, employees, government agencies, lenders, community local public opinion.

Existing research in this area has shown that social organizations can differentiate the company in dealing with key social issues, economic issues, but the social oriented commercial firms can reveal a different direction of social entrepreneurship.

The social entrepreneurship approach as the final stage of the corporate social responsibility, social participation of companies to respond in the complex form (Blowfield and Murray, 2008, p.63). In this context, social innovation is seen as an opportunity for profit business operated by the company, the development of a new market with a focus on social objectives. These companies, from a consolidated corporate social responsibility policy can have a significant social impact can be stimuli triggers the process of social entrepreneurship.

The social enterprise must be constantly subjected to a process of growth and development as a business, because in this way innovation, which is important in the process of social entrepreneurship, promote new way to create value for those that can't do it alone.

This meaning of sustainable development emphasizes the interdependence of economic, social and environmental constituent parts. If sustainable development is judged as a system, it has three interlinked systems that are the sustainable economic system, the sustainable social system and the sustainable environmental system (Saxena and Pradeep, 2010, p.59; Belz and Karstens, 2010, p. 4). The environmental elements of sustainability require humanity to find a balance of protecting the physical environment and preserving its resources, and using these in a way that allows the Earth to continue supporting a fair quality of life for all beings.

Two points are essential to sustainable development (V. Danciu):

- firstly, the economic growth alone isn't enough to solve the world's problems and the economic, social and environmental aspects of any action are interconnected;
- secondly, the interconnected nature of sustainable development calls for going beyond borders whether they.

Sustainable marketing provides "a management conception which attends to the environmental and social demands and eventually turns them into competitive advantages by delivering customers value and satisfaction" (Belz and Karstens, 2010, p. 3).

In the vision of three bottom lines sustainability ( ) sustainable marketing may be defined as building and maintaining sustainable and profitable relationships with the customers, the social environment and the natural environment.

Last but not least, a wide vision on sustainable marketing considers it as being the adoption of sustainable business practices that create better businesses, better relationships and a better world (V. Danciu, 2012, p.387).

All these points of view suggest that sustainable marketing is more than green marketing because it embodies the guiding principle of sustainability. The ability of businesses to successfully use sustainable marketing as support of their strategy for gaining sustainability depends on their social and environmental sensitivity.

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