

ATTITUDES, OPINIONS AND BEHAVIOUR OF BRAŞOV MANAGERS AS REGARDS THE APPLICATION OF ECOLOGICAL MARKETING IN THEIR BUSINESS

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Abstract: *This paper presents results of a quantitative research study which focuses on the attitudes, opinions and behaviour of Brasov managers as regards the application of ecological marketing in their business. The research method used is based on a sample survey. The research objective is to determine the extent to which Brasov managers know and apply green marketing in their business. The findings suggest that local companies' managers generally have knowledge of ecological marketing. Managers are interested in applying green marketing and believe that it is important for a company from a strategic perspective, due to the long-term benefits it brings.*

Key words: *ecological/green marketing, quantitative research, inquiry based survey, sample survey, proactive approach.*

1. Introduction

Considering the importance of the awareness of environmental issues the world faces, the problems linked to the limited non-renewable resources, it is important to study and analyse the situation in Romania regarding the awareness of Romanian companies of such problems, the adoption of green marketing by firms, and the environment law enforcement.

In the green marketing activities, as in all areas where marketing is applied, a special role in the proper operation of the firm is played by marketing research.

Many Romanian and foreign marketing specialists have been involved in studying and deepening this area - marketing research – such as Lefter (2004), Mihăiţă (1996), Malhotra (2007), Stewart (1991), Balaure (2002), Evrard, Pras and Roux (1993), Cătoiu (2002), Drăgan and

Demetrescu (1996), Lehmann (1989), Aaker and Day (1990), Constantin (2006, 2009) etc.

The main method for obtaining primary data is represented by survey-based investigations. This involves communication with subjects that are part of a representative sample of the population under consideration.

Survey-based investigations involve asking respondents. They are asked to answer a variety of questions about their behaviour, intentions, attitudes, their motivations, including demographic data on their characteristics and lifestyle.

Investigations usually follow to learn about consumer buying behaviours, opinions and attitudes, to find the values provided by buyers or consumers. Surveys offer the possibility to obtain a wide range of information about a particular population

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in a short time, with low cost and good accuracy.

Specific to this method is the use of structured questionnaires; this refers to a degree of standardization imposed by the data collection process. The questionnaire consists of questions arranged in some logical order, the answers to questions are predefined, and the respondents must choose one or several options. [9, p.183]

The main methods of communication with subjects, depending on the way data are collected are [9, p 184 -193]:

- ❖ face to face investigation;
- ❖ survey by post;
- ❖ survey by phone;
- ❖ electronic methods.

Survey face to face. Face to face interviews are methods often used in marketing research involving dialogue between operators - respondent. These interviews may take place at the respondents' residence, within business units where there is a large influx of buyers, at places where products or services are consumed, in the street, in crowded places.

2. Theoretical aspects of research on green marketing

Quantitative research seeks to deepen ecological marketing topics, analyses the importance and impact that it has or it will have on firms, the extent to which the application of green/ecological marketing by Romanian companies will bring them benefits in the short, medium and long term. [6]

In the investigated companies a large proportion is represented by SMEs. The application of ecological marketing and the use of environmental technologies in the enterprise can be facilitated by funding programs specifically designed for them. Projects will lead to the creation of new permanent jobs in the SMEs. The requirement is that the number of newly created permanent jobs (full time) for every 10,000 euro grant obtained should be greater or equal to 0.30 [11, p.290]. In this

way both companies and society will benefit, as well as the natural environment.

Also, the quantitative research aims to analyse the strategies adopted by the company, the managers' vision on the future of the firm from the green marketing perspective, openness and willingness of firms to apply the principles, methods and techniques of ecological marketing in their business, the extent to which they already apply environmental marketing in companies.

The quantitative research conducted on Romanian companies seeks to obtain information on managers' attitudes, opinions and behaviour regarding activities undertaken in relation to the application of environmental marketing, environmental compliance and conclusions reached, and actions to improve and streamline the activities of firms in the context of the current legislation. The purpose is for firms to conduct advantageous business both in terms of obtaining profit and that of protecting the environment and human health, to promote a proactive attitude, but in the spirit of achieving sustainable activities and a long-term economic development.

The theme of the quantitative research is "*Attitudes, opinions and behaviour of managers of companies from Brasov as regards the application of ecological marketing in their business*".

3. General assumptions of the quantitative research

The sample members believe that an environmentally proactive marketing approach will bring benefits for the enterprise image.

- The interviewees believe that environmental legislation enforcement is the responsibility of each business enterprise.
- Interviewees consider that the ecological marketing approach is a long-term strategy of the company.

- Members of the sample are interested in the opportunities offered by the green marketing perspective.
- Respondents believe that the biggest obstacle in applying the principles of ecological marketing in companies is the cost and lack of ecological culture and social responsibility.

4. The research objectives

The research objectives expressed in measurable terms for research purposes are listed below (Funaru, 2012):

1. To determine the extent to which managers from Brasov have ecological marketing knowledge.
2. To determine the extent to which managers from Brasov apply green marketing in their companies.
3. To measure intentions as regards green marketing implementation.
4. To identify the reasons for the application of ecological marketing as a good long-term strategy.
5. To measure perceptions on the appropriateness of applying ecological marketing.

5. Research design

A. Choosing the method of research

Type of research: *inquiry-based survey*.

B. Questionnaire design

Types of questions used: closed questions with answers such as yes or no (questions

C. Determining the sample

Studied population and its size

The population researched consists of enterprises / units / economic entities which are members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Brasov.

Determining the sample size

To determine the sample size for the random sampling, a level of error of $\pm 5\%$ was considered and a confidence level of 95%. According to the z distribution table, the value of 1.96 corresponds to these values.

Due to the lack of information about the p value, it will be considered by 50%, which

leads to the maximum standard deviation that can be obtained for percentages (binary scale). After applying the appropriate formula calculation, the size of the sample is 384 people.

Brief description of the unit of observation, of sampling and the unit of analysis

The observation unit is represented by members of the top management staff of companies.

The unit of analysis is represented by economic entities which are members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Brasov.

The sampling unit is represented by economic entities which are members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Brasov.

D. Selecting the sample

The sampling method chosen is *simple random sampling with non-return ball* or *simple random sampling without return*.

In this case, the sample changes from a drawing to another, and the probability of inclusion in the unit sample is not the same for each unit any longer. This method assumes that a sampling unit can be sampled once. In marketing research this method provides more accurate results and great advantages in operational terms [7, p.134].

6. Data analysis and processing

To analyse the data, a correct codification is required, which allows their interpretation, classification, recording and storage. The analysis requires the statistical processing of primary data. At this stage, the statistical assumptions of the research are verified, a comparison of differences between groups is carried out; the existence of links between variables is highlighted etc. [7, p.32]

The statistical analysis performed on the primary data obtained consisted of the following: *main questions statistics; estimation of population parameters for two important variables of the research (indicators of descriptive statistics and*

estimation of the population mean - for the interval scale - and indicators of descriptive statistics and estimation of the percentage - for binary scale; hypothesis testing; connection between variables.

After analysing the information obtained from statistical data processing some conclusions can be drawn and proposals made to provide the information needed for the decisions to be taken.

7. Research findings

After analysing and processing the data from the quantitative research performed, several important conclusions have been drawn.

- Regarding the question whether the concept and principles of green marketing is known, 63.3% of respondents answered “yes” and 36.7% said “no”.
- The number of companies applying green marketing mix is 138 subjects, means 35.9% of respondents, while that of firms not applying green marketing mix is 105, ie 27.3%.
- A total of 105 companies, ie 27.3% said they intend to apply in the future ecological principles and marketing strategies.
- A total of 243 companies, ie 63.3% said it is important to implement green marketing in their company.
- All subjects interviewed, ie 384, stated that they have knowledge about environmental legislation.
- Regarding the question whether environmental laws apply to their company, a percentage of 97.2% of respondents answered “yes” and 7.3% said “no”.
- A percentage of 16.1% of managers interviewed believes that the degree of implementation of ecological marketing in their company is neither high nor low, and 10.2% consider that the degree of implementation of ecological marketing in firm is small. Most responses were recorded at version "neither high nor low."
- A percentage of 28.9% (111 subjects) among managers interviewed believes that the degree of enforcement of environmental legislation in their company is neither high nor low, and 28.4% consider that the degree of enforcement of environmental low is small. Most responses were recorded at version "neither high nor low."
- When they were asked how important it is to protect the environment, to reduce resource consumption and reduce the negative impact of business activity on the environment and human health, 53.9% responded that it is "important" and 31.5% said it is "very important".
- As to the question of how well they know environmental legislation a total of 143 companies (37.2%) said "good" and a total of 96 companies (25%) said "very good."
- A percentage of 17.2% of subjects applied green product strategy "decrease negative environmental impact" and 8.3% applied strategy "ecological product innovation."
- A percentage of 21.1% of subjects applied ecological pricing strategy "tiered prices depending on demand or according to competition" and 9.1% applied strategy of "differentiation of green and non-green product prices."
- A percentage of 22.4% of subjects applies ecological distribution strategy "to minimize waste from transport" and 12.5% applied strategy "recovery products for refurbishment, recycling".
- A percentage of 13.5% of subjects applies green communication strategy "promotional mix strategy on eco product," and 10.4% applies strategy "strategy on the environmental performance of the product."
- A percentage of 22.1% of respondents believes that the main reason for the application of ecological marketing in firm is appropriate, it is "social

responsibility is a necessity", and 20.8% believes that the reason is "brings market benefit to the company."

- A percentage of 21.9% of respondents believes that the main reason for the application of ecological marketing in firm is a long-term strategy, is to bring "long term benefits", and 18.8% believes that the reason is "to improve the company's image."
- A percentage of 12% of respondents believes that the main reason for not applying the environmental marketing in firm is "additional costs" and 9.9% think the reason is "short-term benefit."
- A percentage of 43 % of respondents believes that the main reason for applying environmental legislation is "legal constraints ", while 37.2 % considers that "is a necessity."

In conclusion, a small percentage of respondents have green marketing knowledge, but they admit they apply ecological marketing in their companies to a very limited extent. Most respondents do not apply it, although all agree that ecological marketing is a good strategy for the company, and that environmental protection is a must.

The main reason for not applying environmental marketing is additional costs.

Environmental strategies are most often applied to reduce the impact of the environment, reduce energy consumption and recycle products and packaging.

The general conclusion that emerges is that managers are aware of the importance of environmental issues; they agree that steps should be taken in this respect, they consider environmental marketing an important long term strategy, but very few are the ones who apply ecological principles of marketing in their companies.

8. Limits of quantitative research

Although quantitative research produces a lot of information and allows generalization of the results to the entire

population, there are some limitations in terms of their usefulness (Funaru, 2012).

➤ *Providing erroneous data.*

Respondents may be influenced by characteristics of interviewers and provide erroneous data.

Also, because the subject is not anonymous in personal interviews, the respondent may have a number of reservations or may not respond correctly.

This can happen because of the sensitive nature of some questions that involve answers with ethical, moral nature, desirable by society.

Errors can occur as a result of the misinterpretation of some fixed categories by interviews operators, and due to the possibility they cheat by helping the subject to respond, filling in answers to questions they do not ask them, or even complete the entire questionnaire.

➤ *Few data that can be obtained.*

The quantitative research is based on a more rigid structure and a limited number of questions to answer. This feature is a potential limitation in terms of complexity and level of detail of recorded responses.

➤ *The duration of time of research is very high.*

The time of conduct of an interview is high going up to 1:00 to 1:30 hours. The number of interviews per day is limited. All this brings about a long time for completing all questionnaires, up to several weeks.

The research subjects, being part of companies' management are very busy people, so their willingness to participate in the interview is lower.

That's why researchers attempted to make appointments in free intervals for them, which were extremely limited in number, a fact that hampered the timing of data collection; we should also add here the frequent disruptions caused by different problems to be solved. In many cases it was requested that these be self-administered questionnaires because of the subjects' lack of availability.

➤ *Costs of interviews are very high.*

Costs refer to both the research staff to be

paid, motivated, prepared and supervised, and the costs of obtaining information about the companies that were the subject of research, which are extremely high.

This is a very important reason for the present research that led to the choice of a smaller sample of research population, namely, the managers of local companies included on the list of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Brasov, leaving a large number of Brasov firms (thousands of companies) out, as they have not been investigated and the information not introduced in the present study.

9. Conclusions

In the context of the increase in environmental degradation, it is important for society to admit existing and future threats to human health and the environment, the very life and future evolution of mankind due to pollution and excessive consumption of resources.

In these circumstances, it is important to study and analyse the situation in Romania regarding the awareness of Romanian companies of such problems, and the steps that they have taken until now to reduce consumption energy, non-renewable resources, protecting against environmental degradation.

It is important and necessary to know and analyse the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of leaders of Romanian companies on these issues, the measures they have effectively taken in this respect, their vision.

Thus, our marketing research may provide important information about this and about the future possibilities of development for companies in the context of the ecological trend manifested on the market, for consumers, environmental organizations, governors, increasing environmental awareness and social responsibility of Romanian companies.

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