

Full Length Research Paper

A synthesis of green marketing concept as a recipe for healthy environment in Nigeria

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Environmental issues influence virtually all human endeavours consequent upon which green issues are incorporated into marketing literature. As a society becomes more concerned with the natural environment, marketers start to modify their behaviour as a response to address the new concerns. In Nigeria, because of consistent failure of governments to provide portable water, there is proliferation of bottled/sachet water outfits. This led to increased consumption of the product and throwing the nylon empties all over the place thereby causing environmental pollution. The paper examines green marketing using personal observations, interviews and library research with a view to finding out whether its principles can be applied as a solution to the problem. The paper establishes that green marketing if properly exploited can serve as a solution to the vulnerable and volatile environmental situation we are in. The paper therefore recommends that government should provide the enabling environment and structure for eco-friendly bottled/sachet water production in Nigeria. Governments should also be mounting seminars and workshops to reorient the citizenry on the importance of proper refuse disposal and the implications of littering of our environment with disposable nylon containers.

Key words: Green consumers, green products, environment, friendly products, eco-products, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing, like a few other academic disciplines, has integrated green issues into its literature because environmental issues influence all human activities. It is therefore a fascinating and important area of research as perhaps one of the significant and controversial aspects of the contemporary debate surrounding this area. As a society becomes more concerned with the natural environment, businesses have begun to modify their behaviour as a response to address society's new concerns. Some businesses have been quick to accept concepts like environmental management systems and waste minimisation and have integrated environmental issues into all organisational activities.

The environment is no doubt an important and interesting case to follow because it brings up quite specific and pronounced moral issues like environmental solution. Also it is currently a high profile business issue and is regarded by many as a critical social problem. Moreover, various criticisms are put forward concerning

the superficiality of the existing green business literature and associated empirical work. Consequent upon this, some consumers are no longer interested in consuming products only but also care for the environment due to the awareness of protecting the natural environment. In other words, they want to consume products that have less negative effect on the environment they live. Businesses in the past pursue the goal of profit maximisation with virtually no consideration to environmental concerns (Menon and Menon, 1997; Charter and Polonsky, 1999).

There are some common terms used in green marketing related to its consumers and this include green consumers, that is, those that support and purchase eco-friendly products (Lee, 2008). This also means that green products are preferred to products that are expected to endanger the health of the people. Consumers act responsibly by showing concern about the environmental consequences and for that purpose they wish to bring a

change by purchasing products that are eco-friendly.

The problem

The provision of portable drinking water in both urban and rural areas with a view to satisfying the thirst and other needs of the citizenry is supposed to be one of the primary responsibilities of governments at all levels. But due to the failure of the governments in providing this essential need, we often hear of outbreaks of water-borne diseases like diarrhea and cholera in most developing countries.

Portable drinking water is also a scarce commodity in Nigeria. However, some businessmen are making efforts to manufacture drinkable water through the establishment of bottled/sachet water business. Bottled/sachet water production is one of the business opportunities in Nigeria that has high return on investment if well managed. According to the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS, 2011) bottled/sachet water production companies in Nigeria have provided job opportunities for about 800,000 people in Nigeria.

Nonetheless, the manufacture of bottled/sachet water in Nigeria is a big challenge to the environment because the disposable plastic containers are thrown everywhere and anyhow. It is so unregulated to the point that it constitutes a threat to the environment. When we throw these plastics away, they can often build up and cause some harmful effects. Most negative effects associated with plastic wastes come from chemicals that leach from the plastic into the environment. Thus, the objective of this paper is to appraise green marketing with a view to finding out whether or not its principles can be applied as a solution to the problem.

METHODOLOGY

This paper stems from personal observation on how empty plastic bottles/sachets are thrown anyhow by consumers of bottled/sachet water in Nigeria. After critical analysis of the devastating effects of this act, the author thought of proffering solution to the menace as a result of which some interviews were conducted with some producers and consumers of bottled/sachet water and some environmentalists. The author uses these in addition to desk research to develop the paper. Effort was made to come up with workable recommendations that can save the precarious situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It should be noted from the onset that green marketing has no universally accepted definition. This is a major problem; how can an issue be evaluated if all researchers have a different perception of what they are researching. Majority of people unfortunately believe that green marketing refers solely to promotion or advertising of

products with environmental characteristics. But it is a much broader concept, one that can be applied to consumer products, industrial products and even services. For example, around the world there are resorts that are beginning to promote themselves as "ecotourist" facilities, that is, facilities that "specialise" in experiencing nature or operating in a fashion that minimises their environmental impact (Ingram and Durst, 1989; May, 1991; Troumbis, 1991).

Therefore, green marketing encompasses a broad range of activities, which include product modification, changes to the production process, changes in packaging, modification to advertising, and so on. Terminologies like environmental marketing and ecological marketing are used to refer to green marketing. Ecological marketing was defined at the American Marketing Association (AMA) (1975) workshop as the study of the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities on pollution, energy depletion and non-energy resource depletion, (Henion and Kinnear, 1976b). This definition is a subset of the overall marketing activity; it examines both the positive and negative activities; and also analyses a narrow range of environmental issues. This definition is a useful starting point, but for green marketing to be comprehensive, it needs to be more broadly defined.

Polonsky (1994b) is of the opinion that 'green marketing' consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment. This definition ensures that the interests of the organization and that of its consumers are protected, as voluntary exchange will not take place unless both the buyer and seller mutually benefit. It also includes the protection of the natural environment, by attempting to minimize the detrimental impact this exchange has on the environment. Hence, green marketing should look at minimizing environmental harm, not necessarily eliminating it (Stanton and Futrell, 1987; Menon and Menon, 1997).

In a more concise definition, Pride and Ferrell (1993) posit that green marketing alternatively known as environmental marketing and sustainable marketing refers to an organisation's efforts at designing, promoting, pricing and distributing products that will not harm the environment.

From the foregoing, defining green marketing is not a simple task because several meanings intersect and contradict each other; an example of this is the existence of varying social, environmental and retail definitions attached to this term. Green, environmental and eco-marketing are part of the new marketing approaches which do not just refocus, adjust or enhance existing marketing thinking and practice, but seek to challenge those approaches and provide a substantially different perspective. Environmental and eco-marketing belong to

the group of approaches which seek to address the lack of fit between marketing as it is currently practiced and the ecological and social realities of the wider marketing environment (AMA, 1975; May 1991).

Green marketing development challenges

Consideration of environmental concerns in marketing arguably only permeated mainstream marketing consciousness to any significant degree in the past decade even though it was first initiated in the early 1970s (Menon and Menon 1997; Hanas, 2007). At present, the green marketing literature is still fairly limited, both in terms of scope and depth of analysis. The AMA held the first workshop on "Ecological Marketing" in 1975. The proceedings of this workshop resulted in one of the first books on green marketing entitled "Ecological Marketing" (Henion and Kinnear, 1976a). The term Green Marketing came into prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

According to Ottman and Terry (1998), from an organizational standpoint, environmental considerations should be integrated into all aspects of marketing; new product development, communications and all points in between. The holistic nature of green marketing also suggests that besides suppliers and retailers, new stakeholders be enlisted, and this includes members of the community, regulators, and NGOs. Another important challenge facing marketers is to identify which consumers are willing to pay extra for ecological products. It is obvious that an enhanced knowledge of the profile of this segment of consumers is extremely useful. 'Environmental issues' should be attuned with primary customer needs.

Lack of standards or public consensus about what constitutes "green" is a challenge too. This lack of consensus by marketers, activists, regulators, influential people and consumers has slowed the growth of green products because companies are often reluctant to promote their green attributes, and consumers are often skeptical about claims (Nevon and Harte 1997). In essence, there is no definition of "how good is good enough" when it comes to a product or company making green marketing claims. One of the biggest challenges with the green marketing area is that there has been little attempt to academically examine environmental or green marketing. While some literature does exist, it comes from divergent perspectives (Carlson et al., 1993; Davis, 1993).

Despite these challenges, green marketing has continued to gain adherents, particularly in the light of growing global concern about climate change. This concern has led more companies to advertise their commitment to reduce their climate impacts, and the effect this is having on their products and services. Green marketing is growing rapidly and becoming a more established part of the marketing discipline (Friedman,

2002; McTaggart et al., 2010).

Significance of green marketing

Polonsky (1994) in his analysis of the increased significance of green marketing, elies on the basic definition given by McTaggart et al. (2010) which says Economics is the study of how people use their limited resources to try to satisfy unlimited wants. Therefore, it is an established fact that mankind has limited resources on the earth, with which efforts are made to provide for the world's unlimited wants.

Individuals and organizations in market societies where there is freedom of choice are generally accepted that they have the right to attempt to have their wants satisfied. As organizations face limited natural resources, they must develop new or alternative ways of satisfying these unlimited wants. Eventually green marketing considers how marketing activities utilize these limited resources, while satisfying individual and industrial consumers' wants, as well as achieving the selling organization's objectives without causing any harm to the environment (Coddington 1993; Orange 2010).

Going through the literature, one finds that firms are increasingly using green marketing. Scholars have attributed reasons for this. For example, Keller (1987) and Shearer (1990) are of the opinion that organizations perceive green marketing to be an opportunity that can be used to achieve its objectives hence increase in patronage. Some organizations believe they have a moral obligation to be more socially responsible and they find green marketing handy, (McIntosh, 1990; Freeman and Liedtka, 1991; Davis, 1992).

Furthermore, competitors' environmental activities mount pressure on firms to change their environmental marketing activities to green marketing and governmental bodies are forcing firms to become more responsible. Cost factors associated with waste disposal or reductions in material usage forces firms to modify their behaviour (Azzone and Manzini, 1994).

Green marketing mix

Scholars are in agreement that green marketing mix model contains all the 4 main marketing mix elements proposed by Cullinton (1948) and developed by Borden (1975), namely, product, price, place and promotion (Polonsky and Rosenberger III, 2001; Friedman, 2007; Montoro-Rios et al., 2008; Orange, 2010). Besides the traditional attributes of products under green marketing, products should protect the environment and must not contaminate it and should even liquidate existing environmental damages. However, prices for such products may be a little higher than conventional alternatives; but target groups generally are willing to pay extra for green products.

A distribution logistics is of crucial importance; main

SUBSTANTIALITY OF GREEN MARKET SEGMENTS	High	DEFENSIVE GREEN	EXTREME GREEN
	Low	LEAN GREEN	SHADED GREEN
		Low	High
		DIFFERENTIABILITY ON GREENNESS	

Figure 1. Green marketing strategy matrix.

focus is on ecological packaging. Marketing local and seasonal products, for example, vegetables from regional farms is easier to be marketed “green” than products imported. On promotion, a communication with the market should put emphasis on environmental aspects. This may be publicised to improve a firm’s image. Furthermore, the fact that a company expends on environmental protection should be advertised. Ecological products will probably require special sales promotions (May, 1991; Ottman and Terry, 1998).

Henion and Kinnear (1976a) and Orange (2010) opine that there are additional Social Marketing “P’s” that are used in this process and it includes “publics”. “Public” is the internal and external groups involved in the programme. Internal publics are those who are involved in some way with either approval or implementation of the programme. On the other hand, external public includes the target audience, other audiences, policymakers, and gatekeepers. The effective Social Marketing knows its audience, and can appeal to multiple groups of people.

Partnership is part of the additional social change issues, including green initiatives, are too complex for one person or group to handle. Associating with other groups and initiatives to team up strengthens the chance of efficacy. Policy social marketing programmes can do well in motivating individual behavior change, but that is difficult to sustain unless the environment they are in supports that change for the long run. Often, policy change is needed, and media advocacy programmes can be an effective complement to a social marketing programme. The green marketing mix elements have fully encapsulated the environmental issues (Smith, 2000 D’Souza 2006; Lee, 2008).

The green marketing strategy matrix

Before choosing one of the strategies in the matrix, manufacturers should consider the likely size of the green market in their industry as well as their ability to differentiate their products on “greenness” from those of competitors (Figure 1).

Manufacturers should consider, among other things, how substantial the green consumer segment is for the company; likely revenues increase by improving on greenness as perceived; and possibility of suffering from financial loss if consumers judged the company to be inadequately green. In addition, whether the company has the resources and there are many consumers who are indifferent to the issue that the company can serve profitably, the internal commitment at the highest management levels to be green; capacity to beat competitors on this dimension, or are some so entrenched in the green space that competing with them on environmental issues would be very expensive and frustrating (McDaniel and Rylander, 2011; Smith, 2000; Grundey and Zaharia, 2008).

It should be noted that irrespective of the strategy a manufacturer adopts, what must always be kept in mind is that consumers are unlikely to compromise traditional product attributes such as quality, availability, convenience, price, and performance. In other words, green products too must possess those attributes in order to earn consideration from majority of consumers. However, it is fundamental to realize that there is no single green marketing strategy that is right for every company.

Appropriate strategy

The strategies that should work best under different market and competitive conditions range from the relatively passive and silent “lean green” approach to the more aggressive and visible “extreme green” approach with “defensive green” and “shaded green” in-between. Managers who understand these strategies and the underlying reasoning behind them will be better prepared to help their companies benefit from an environmentally friendly approach to marketing.

Lean greens are hesitant to promote their green product attributes for fear of raising the hope of their potential customers and not always being able to live up to it. This means marketing their green activities is not in their view but make effort to be good corporate citizens. Lean greens are interested in improving efficiencies and reducing costs through pro-environmental activities thereby creating competitive advantage. They usually want to comply with regulations. For example, because of the concern Coca-Cola Co. has for environment and it is investing heavily in various recycling activities which in most cases are not publicised, it can be considered as a Lean Green Company.

Defensive Greens use green marketing as a precautionary measure usually, a response to a crisis or a response to activist criticism. They pursue actions such as sponsoring smaller environmentally friendly events and programs. And they will certainly defend their environmental records with public relations and advertising efforts if they are attacked by activists, regulators or competitors. But unless they discover that

they can obtain a sustainable competitive advantage on the basis of greenness, they will not launch significant green campaign.

Shaded Greens invest in long-term, system wide, environmentally friendly processes that require a substantial financial and nonfinancial commitment. These companies view green as an opportunity to innovate needs-satisfying products that result in a competitive advantage. They have the capability to truly differentiate themselves on greenness, but they choose not to do so because they can perform better by stressing other attributes. Shaded Greens chiefly promote tangible benefits provided to the customer and sell their products through normal channels. They promote environmental benefits as a secondary factor.

Environmental issues are fully integrated into the business and product life cycle process of extreme green companies. From the inception of the company, greenness has been a major driving force behind it. Extreme greens often serve niche markets and sell their products or services through boutique stores or specialty channels. Social responsibility is embedded in the identity and purpose of extreme greens from manufacturing to marketing. The value of their products and services is based on authenticity, integrity and purity. It should be noted that it is the circumstance of a manufacturer that determines the appropriate strategy to be used (Makower, 2002; Curtin, 2006; Dodds, 2007; Onam, 2011).

PRODUCTION OF BOTTLED/SACHET WATER IN NIGERIA

The urge for a safe drinking water in Nigeria was necessitated by consistent failure to get taps running in most parts of the country. Thus, the need for safe drinking water in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized due to the flagrant refusal of governments to provide adequate pipe-borne water to the chunk of the populace. Consequently, the production of bottled/sachet water has the main objective of satisfying the increasing demand by Nigerians for water that is safe for human consumption. Udolor (2009) asserts that one interesting thing about the production of bottled/sachet water in Nigeria is that the major raw material required is 95% locally sourced with only 5% imported. It is expected that with the operations of petrochemical industries in Nigeria, the imported materials will become available locally.

Bottled/sachet water has become indispensable in the lives of many Nigerians. According to New York Times, August 1, 2010 editorial, the informal bottled/sachet water industry has grown so quickly in Nigeria that bottled/sachet water companies now present about 10-15% of the total manufacturing output from the country's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The article blamed government's inability to provide potable water to Nigerians as the springboard for the thriving water

business. Industry reports echoed this position and showed that bottled/sachet water sales have grown by 90% since 2003 and are projected to grow by another 43% by 2013 (<http://www.googlesearch>, 2011).

Water has been found to be the fastest selling commodity in Nigeria today (Anaekwe, 2008). The production of packaged water has been a profitable business in which individuals would be interested to invest and institute proper management. According to Troumbis (1991), since the introduction of bottled/sachet water in Nigeria, cholera disease has reduced by 70% in the country with healthy and good atmosphere. It has been hypothesised that out of every one hundred Nigerians, 70 people drink bottled/sachet water.

The rapid expansion of this sector has left the regulatory body, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), unable to monitor the safety of the products, as there is no available record of the total number of registered bottled/sachet water producers in the country. The bottled/sachet water that is filling the gap in the public system remains unregulated and potentially unsafe for consumption. The number of plastic bottles/sachets produced by the industry and subsequently discarded by consumers has only exacerbated this problem.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Fact Book (2009) on Solid Waste, plastics account for 12% of all municipal wastes. Plastic wastes can break down and release toxins that harm the environment, animals and general public. Empties of plastic containers are used to package many things in Nigeria, water inclusive, and they play ubiquitous role in the lives of many consumers along with other plastic products. Being aware of the process behind the production of plastics can encourage consumers to think more carefully about how they use and dispose such plastics (www.yahoo.search.com, 2012).

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, 2011) reports that roughly 1.5 million tons of plastic are expended in the bottling of 89 billion liters of water each year. Besides the sheer number of plastic bottles produced each year, the energy required to manufacture and transport these bottles to markets severely drains limited fossil fuels. Bottled/sachet water companies, due to their unregulated use of valuable resources and their production of billions of plastic bottles/sachets have presented a significant strain on the environment (www.googlesearch.com).

According to New York Times of April 2005 report, 43 billion gallons of bottled water were sold worldwide and in 2006, the sales increased to 47 billion gallons. Every year about 118,000 tons of plastic water bottles are manufactured, a number that is projected to increase by about 10% each year (www.ehow.com/html). The increase in bottled/sachet water production and consumption has had an immense impact on our landfills. Eight out of ten bottles end up in our landfills or the incinerator, which suggests only two bottles out of every

10 purchased are recycled. Plastic water bottles/sachets which find their way to the land will take an average of 1,000 years to biodegrade in a landfill. Some of the major environmental concerns include soil pollution and air pollution.

GREEN MARKETING CONCERNS

Using green marketing goes with some critical issues that must be addressed. These include the issue of uprightness. Producers using green marketing must ensure that their activities are not misleading to consumers or industry. Again, such activities should not breach any of the laws or regulations dealing with green marketing. For example, the USA has a set of criteria which include stating environmental characteristics, whether there are any environmental benefits achievable by going green, and how such benefits are achieved.

Increased consumer concerns due to wrong perception of products often make marketers modify their products. In so doing, they leave the environmentally friendly and pursue environmentally harmful options by yielding to the customers' incorrectly perceived urge. In addition, socially responsible action today may be found to be harmful in the future. A marketer may not be certain they have taken the right environmental decision because of inadequate scientific knowledge at any point in time. This may explain why some marketers are socially responsible without publicising it, Coca-Cola for example.

Establishing policies on environmental issues by government provide consumers with opportunity to make better decisions or to motivate them to be more environmentally responsible. There are, however, challenges in coming up policies that will take care of all environmental issues. Therefore, governmental attempts to protect the environment may result in a proliferation of uncontrolled policies and guidelines.

The goal to increase profits or reduce costs may not allow marketers to see the need to address the critical issue of environmental degradation. Eventually waste produced will enter the waste stream mostly. To be environmentally responsible, therefore, marketers should minimise their waste, rather than find appropriate uses for it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is apparent that the failure of successive governments at all levels (Local, State, and Federal) in Nigeria to provide water that is safe for human use and the necessity to use water for drinking and domestic purposes promoted the production of bottled/sachet water. This is in spite of the attendant consequence of throwing away the disposable plastic containers all over the place which can break down and release toxins that harm the general public, animals, and the environment. Unless the government becomes responsive to the yearnings of the teeming population, the problem will

escalate.

Provision of pipe-borne water

It is obvious that improper depositing of empty bottled/sachet water containers is a potential menace and can cause havoc to the individuals, and society at large. Governments should as a matter of responsibility provide adequate pipe-borne water to reduce the incidence of wrongful disposing of empty nylon containers. Proper care and due diligence have to be observed to free the society from falling victim of environmental degradation.

Safety of the product

The unprecedented expansion of bottled/sachet water sector has incapacitated NAFDAC to effectively monitor the safety of the product. Government should, as a matter of urgency, ensure safety of the product by empowering the regulatory body, NAFDAC, to effectively monitor activities of the manufacturers.

Policies on environmental issues

Government should be all out to protect the environment by making policies on environmental issues as it will motivate consumers to make better decisions or become more environmentally responsible. It should put the appropriate structures in place to ensure strict compliance by all those concerned.

Seminars and workshops

Government should host workshops and seminars so as to educate customers on environmental protection and environmental-friendly products. This will go a long way in tackling the issue of indiscriminate disposal of nylon containers. Considering the rich principles upon which the green marketing is based, one cannot run away from suggesting its propagation in Nigeria to make the environment better and safer for all of us.

Uprightness

Using green marketing goes with some potential problems that must be overcome. These include the issue of uprightness and straightforwardness. Manufacturers employing green marketing should be conscious of their behaviours and act within the realm of morality so that they do not mislead individual/industrial consumers. Again, such activities should not breach any of the laws or regulations dealing with green environment.

Apply green marketing strategies

The author strongly recommends to manufacturers to employ green marketing strategies because it work under different competitive situations from the relatively silent

lean green strategy to the more aggressive extreme green strategy with defensive green and shaded green in-between. It equips them with strategy to utilize the limited resources to satisfy both individual and industrial consumers' wants without causing any harm to the environment. Moreover, their objective of being in the business is not sacrificed. Marketing managers who are conversant with these strategies are better prepared to assist their companies to benefit from an environmentally friendly strategy to marketing.

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