

# **Attitude of Romanian Consumers and Producers toward Ecological Products**

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*Abstract:* - The study presents the foremost directions of Romanian eco-marketing. Nowadays, the market is more responsive to the impact of products upon the environment. Romania is gradually aligning to nations where the rights of the consumers are guaranteed by written laws. The new system of ecological labeling is until now to become known.

To obtain an organization position with noticeable environmental performances is generated by the transformations from all activity levels. It requires an environmental management strategy in order to obtain a real environmental quality. All these arguments represent the premises and the support for the proposed work. The work synthetically presented some of the relevant conclusions of an eco-marketing research in Romania. It is useful for producers and distributors in order to increase their market position and gain competitive advantages.

*Key-Words:* - Consumer behavior, Ecological products, Eco-marketing, Strategy, Sustainable development

## **1 Introduction**

The convenient opportunities to state civic judgments about environmental concerns increased a lot in last years in Romanian market. Nowadays, the general public has the possibility to criticize the wrong governmental and economical policies and practices through petitions, demonstrations and special legal entities as the office for consumer protection.

Citizens, as consumers, have the option to communicate their predilections in opposition or for some products independently, or in a structured method. This approach becomes visible, even though it is not up till now very common. The development and transformation of consumption characteristics introduced new and additional market forces.

There is an innovative assortment in alternative of ecological products from market, but as economic divergence is greater than ever, its result is a

diminishing number of customers who can manage to pay for these products. A number of elements of the aware purchaser approach are by now detectable. One of these cases is when the purchasing decision is linked with basic economic motivations as less energy-consuming goods, which means a reduced amount of money paid for production costs.

Presently it is not very easy to convince the public to modify its buying behavior. The potential clients are confronted constantly with an insistent and refined advertising industry. Romania is among the countries where the notion of green products started to widen. On the other hand, for them there are no obvious and established standards for product quality or environment. The consumers can find imported goods that are produced in the areas under license and which have recycling labels, but there is a total lack of recycling infrastructure in their market. (Naghy, 2006)

One of the most significant manners to increase public responsiveness is to educate them using the

school system as well as unconventional techniques. Many NGO groups are involved in educational actions and programs to establish environmental issues into the existing education system. On the other hand, there are large dissimilarities in the capacity, intensity, and measurement of these efforts within the regions. Among the foremost impediments to use this method are:

- the low intensity of consciousness and approachability, both by the public and the government;
- the lack of suitable education resources and equipments used for training;
- the limited economic resources;
- the lack of a synchronized concept for environmental education on the national level.

## 2 New directions in Romanian national environmental efforts

In Romania, the environment is judged as a priority by the government. The Romanian government established that environmental protection represents a national priority and has to be addressed by all governmental and non-governmental institutions, associations, organizations and political parties. It was given a special attention due to the fact that was neglected in the past. The sectors like heavy industry and agribusiness have been developed with regard for environmental protection.

After 1989, significant proposals in legislation in the structure of environmental protection were launched. In 1992, Romanian and World Bank specialists published a policy paper entitled "Environmental Strategy Paper".

A strategy for environment protection in Romania was proposed in 1994. For the duration of latest years, the enforcement of the set of laws in the support of environmental protection activity has been very valuable when these regulations have been applied to the institutions.

According to the system endorsed after 1989, all existing economic operator have to obtain agreement through the conduct of an EIA. Moreover, every investor who requires taking on an economic activity is obliged to obtain a permit from the appropriate environmental authorities. This permit is approved on the basis of environmental impact studies. Private investments in environmental protection are encouraged or imposed.

After 1990, ecology courses were initiated in schools and universities. The environmental engineering has been established as a new specialty.

The public participation in policy development was absolutely new idea that corresponded to an important change. The public already played a significant position for decision-makers in deciding upon ongoing or straighten out several environmentally detrimental activities. Romanian public participation is still a weak problem and needs to be undertaken. A strategy for the protection of the environment is now being revised in agreement with the concepts and ideas developed during the last five years, and taking into account the current level of economic and social development.

It is necessary to revise the main concerns and openings for a more innovation design of ecoproducts. Many products are designed for international mass markets. The producers have to ensure that the most appropriate and efficient products are available to their markets. A major goal is to improve product performance. Among the main patterns were proposed the priorities addressed to energy, waste and other eco-design aspects of products, taking into account whole-life environmental impacts. (Baker, 2005)

Another aspect is related with the concept of sustainable consumption and consumers' attitude. The paradigm of sustainable consumption entered the political arena on national and international scale. It is fundamental to be aware of the environmental impact of consumption for the implementation of this concept. According with Barrett, there are four main concerns to achieve sustainable consumption. These are the eco-home development, behavioral change mechanisms, community development and sustainable procurement. (Barrett, 2005)

By rising new businesses that have as center of attention sustainable product service systems, the organizations are capable to better serve their consumers, to hold on to clients, to decrease costs and to increase margins. The sustainable gains are a result of lower costs. (Nijs, 2005)

The measurement of the environmental influences on national consumption characteristics are frequently based on life cycle. This approach permits attributing both direct effects from consumption phase, and indirect effects from production and disposal stages to the consumer. These appraisals are irregular evaluations for two reasons.

Firstly, they do not judge the impacts in foreign countries but assume that outside impacts are similar to the national ones. Trade is not believably considered and it is not possible to relate the current consumption to any producing country. Secondly, the focus is on global issues while the elements that

affect the processes are of primary importance for some industries and goods. (Friot et al, 2005)

### 3 Attitude of Romanian Consumers

It was carried out a research regarding the attitude of Romanian consumers related to the ecological products. The investigation used the method of projective techniques. The number of consumers that participated in the study was 40. Some of the topics and the percentage of concerned answers are listed in the following:

- When I buy an ecological product I have in mind the health -29%
- Pollution is a phenomenon that affects health - 32%
- To be concerned about preserving the environment means to take care of the environment - 27%
- When I see an ecological label on a product I think that it is a good product, a clean one - 14%

Consumers are conscious about the usage of green products and its importance and favorable consequences on the environment. Still there are persons who can only think about their own health and who did not understand the real role they are playing.

It is possible to come at the conclusion that most subjects – 32%, when are thinking at ecological products, they associate them with health. Only 10% have in mind the concept of clean air 14% and 15% are thinking at green grass. The rest of the answers were different and with almost no significance.

### 4 Study on Romanian firms for the availability of introducing environmental friendly products on the market

The preliminary results obtained from a survey on Romanian ecological producers preoccupied with the introduction of such products on the market are presented in the subsequent paragraphs:

Most firms (55% from those who answered) that produce or sell ecological products have hired qualified persons in environment issues.

33% of those who answered have implemented an environment management system.

Even if the concern about the environment is frequent analyzed as concept, lately in our country, most entrepreneurs (66%) have not adopted the idea of an ecological product five years ago. At the same

time, 34% said that they have adopted the idea less than four years ago.

In adopting the idea of ecological products, most entrepreneurs have taken into account the concern about the health of the people.

- 55% mentioned the concern about consumers;
- 33% said that they have adopted the idea of ecological products due to the opportunities of export on the European market;
- 22% have taken into account the concern about the environment;
- 22% declared that they were motivated by the existence of an increasing demand and the still low offer in this domain;
- 11% because of personal motivations affirmed that the reason was „divine creation, perfection left by God”.

The main criterion in selecting suppliers of raw materials is the attestation of certification by an accredited organism. Among the producers, 33% are based on the proof of certification by the suppliers of products and raw materials. On the other hand, 23% declared that they produce their own raw materials (seeds, fertilizers etc.)

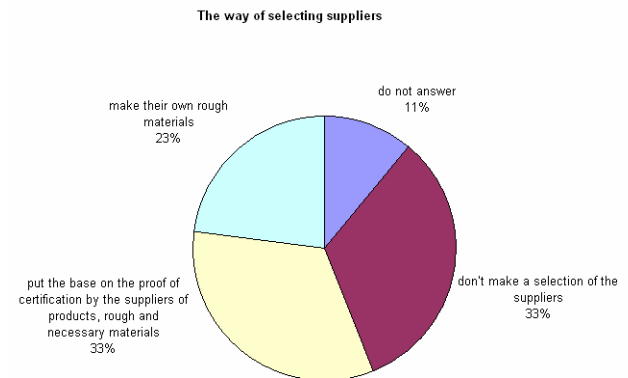


Figure 1: The way of selecting suppliers

The answers regarding the prices for ecological products are presented below:

- 22% declared that the prices of their products are more than 100% higher than the similar classical products;
- 22% stated that their prices are more expensive with percents between 20-50%;
- 45% had equal prices with those of the similar classical products;
- 11% affirmed that they sell ecological products cheaper than the similar classical products.

At the end of the ecological product's lifetime, most producers and distributors (56%) recommended and supported waste recovery.

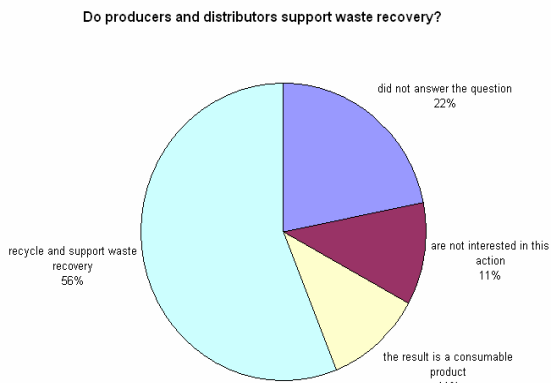


Figure 2: The mode of supporting waste recovery

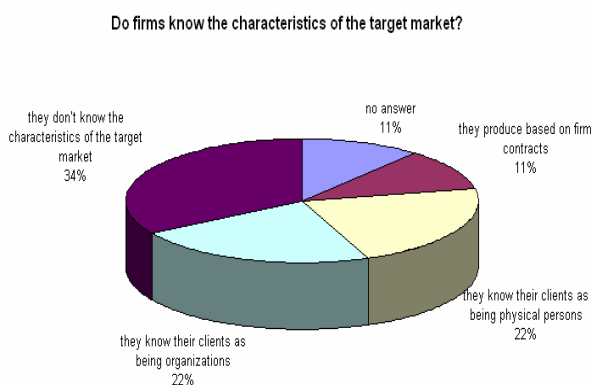


Figure 3: Knowing target market of ecological products

The above presented results came from a preliminary exploratory research. It is only a view over the field situation. For the moment, can not be done any correlations between the settled hypothesis and the variables of the firms (the organization structure, the number of employees, business figure etc.). It can not be considered an extrapolation without a more detailed and representative research but it is a good starting point for the producers and distributors of ecological products.

## 5 Conclusion

According to the studies in this domain, European companies that have green products have a significant increase in notoriety and sales, for some years now. All products that have the ecological label present a series of supplementary advantages. Those refer either to a low consumption of energy, to the lack of allergic reactions in using the product, or to the use of recyclable materials for realizing the product. The information and results of this study are a starting point for Romanian companies that activate in the market of ecological products.

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