

The role of marketing in environmental protection

MARKETING AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

In our days environmentalism and ecologically consciousness are considerable issues because of the threatening ecological problems: greenhouse effect, waste problems, scant drinking water resources, endangered species, etc. The governments, the different international organizations, the civil organizations continuously look for the possibilities of solution. The different sciences also are interested in these efforts: physicists, chemists, biologists, geologists, engineers, lawyers, sociologists, psychologists, economists and their joint groups research the chances of creating a more liveable world. I think marketing also can contribute to these efforts.

The science of marketing belongs to a bigger unit, the sciences of economics. Unfortunately, the traditional point of view of economics – especially the neoclassical school's growth oriented approach – is totally inconsistent with the requirements of environmental protection. According to this approach resources are free of charge and the main goal and criterion of development is the unlimited growth (Tóth 1995). Economists, economic executives and specialist have to learn thinking on an environmentally conscious way. Nowadays a new discipline, the ecological economics shapes, which is a trans-discipliner approach. The aim of ecological economics is to understand the relationships between ecology and economics on behalf of achieving the sustainable growth (Buzás, et al 2004). Economists examine important contexts in connection with environmental pollution and protection, such as positive and negative, reversible and irreversible externalities; the optimal level of environmental pollution; the “commons tragedy”, etc. (Kerekes and Szlávik 1996).

Among green spheres of economics we can find the marketing, too. Achieving sustainable development is unimaginable only with the contribution of international organisations, governments, civil and business organizations; to solve ecological problems require individuals' efforts too. The unsustainable buyer, consumer and user patterns have to be changed; environmentally friendly activities and way of thinking have to be promoted.

Marketing has the most extensive theoretical and practical knowledge in connection with consumption, consumer behaviour and promoting new things. Thus, making radical changes in existing consumer patterns needs at least the below mentioned three marketing tasks:

- We have to define the environmentally conscious consuming precisely, and try to enhance the attraction of it.
- We need to define the present known environmentally conscious

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Marketing has the most extensive theoretical and practical knowledge in connection with consumption, consumer behaviour and promoting new things. Thus, making radical changes in existing consumer patterns needs some important marketing tasks. For example, we have to define the environmentally conscious consumer segments; we need to disclose the influencing factors of environmentally friendly activities for the sake of a more successful promotion of any manifestation of environmental consciousness.

Keywords: green marketing, ethical marketing

consumer segments; we need to disclose their demographic, psychographic and personal factors; and we also have to search new potential segments.

- We must reveal the most efficient methods of the environmentally conscious consuming patterns' promotion.

But complaints on marketing's role in environmental pollution are numerous. Marketing is accused of several things. Quite a lot of people, either professionals or not think that marketing with the exaggerated promotion of consumption gave a great contribution to ecological damages and problems caused by the industrial society (Tóth 1995, Sükösd 2004). Marketing is accused of the excessive advertisement-dumping; because the greatest quantity of the ads promotes unnecessary consumption. Even, several people question the morality of marketing profession, and suggest the responsibility of marketing professionals in connection with environmental and health damages (Sükösd 2004).

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GREEN MARKETING: TENDENCY INSTEAD OF A FASHION

However, ethical and especially environmental issues appear increasingly in marketing, too. The environment and its marketing relations got in the focus of scientific researches in the beginning of the 1970's. Since then marketing has become more and more green. Several things sign that this is more than simply a fashion; it is a long term tendency. I have three arguments for this statement.

Firstly, the Earth's environmental problems are serious, their effect are perceptible day by day. Caring with the environmental problems and damages are already come up on every stage: the governments, the civil organizations, the business entities, the scientific organizations and also the individuals are engaged in the possibilities of solution. These efforts can not be simply ephemeral, fashionable things. These efforts can not be forgotten and instead of, changed with a new, fashionable thing. Marketing fits in, even has to fit in this process.

Secondly, if we focus on consumer needs (that is the main task of marketing) we also meet a similar tendency. As Rekettye (2004) pointed out that a new marketing era appeared in the 21st century. This is the era of value-orientation; where the customer value, which is the key of a company's success, is in the centre.

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Fortunately, nowadays there are more and more effort on the part of consumers, according to results of consumer researches ecological consciousness of consumers is ascendant over the world. The ecologically conscious consumer segment persistently rises, from the 1980s the number of consumers rises who appreciate the environmental efforts of companies and reject ones who make environmentally harmful activities (Menon and Menon 1997). Trend researchers examined and identified a new trend group, the group of environmental and health conscious consumers (LOHAS - Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability). The size of the LOHAS group in the USA is approximately 30 percent according to certain research results (Cortese 2003), and their percentage is considerable also in west Europe. Their health and environmental consciousness can be shown in many areas: they rest in bio hotels, buy fair trade products, etc. From the former eco sense, from the preferring of bio foods a new, mainstream system of habits evolves. The difference is that these people do not give up the hedonism, the enjoy finding, they are quite aware of the necessity of mass production's goods; but they take into account the environmental and health issues extensively (Töröcsik 2007).

As the consumer segment that needs environmentally friendly products, requires responsible business entities raises, environmentally conscious operating and green marketing at a company enhance customer value. The customer need towards green companies and green marketing practice rises. This can not be a simply ephemeral fashion, because the environmental problems influence our life continuously, so they can not be forgettable.

Thirdly, marketing studies in connection with green marketing, environmentally consciousness of companies and consumers also sign the green tendency.

The situation is still very contradictory. Because, on the one hand, marketing wants to sell more and more products to consumers, and these products are often unnecessary and even harmful to the health and/or the environment. Therefore, changes have started, marketing becomes more and more green, and scientists study the possibilities of enhancing environmentally consciousness of consumers.

Answering the challenges, new concepts and special marketing areas appeared. These are in connection with the ethical relations of marketing, and also in the relationship with environmental protection and sustainable development. These are for example: green marketing, social and societal marketing, health marketing, etc. Among these concepts, I focus on green marketing, because this is in the tightest connection with my topic. In the marketing literature there are several green marketing definition, I emphasize four ones now. According to them, green marketing is:

- ... the appearance of environmental dimension in marketing (Crane 2000).
- ... such a marketing adoption, which signs enhanced responsibility for the global environment and the living world (including human beings) (Peattie 1992).
- ... featured by a holistic and systematic view, open ended time period and global approach. There is ecological sustainability

instead of economic efficiency on the focus, and green marketing is able to recognise the nature's inner values (Peattie 1994).

- ... a strategic orientation, refers to product development and promotion to accelerate universal adoption of environmentally appropriate and sustainable technology (Fisk 1998).

All over the world more and more green marketing studies are published. The topics of them are various: green strategies, environmentally friendly product development, environmental pricing, green communication, company image, and obviously environmentally consciousness of consumers (especially activities and influencing variables). It is extremely important to identify, characterize and address the consumers who are sensitive to green arguments; and identify such arguments that are able to effect more and more people.

SUMMARY

Marketing is widely accused of the exaggerated promotion of consumption and its remarkable role in

“Answering the challenges, new concepts and special marketing areas appeared. These are in connection with the ethical relations of marketing, and also in the relationship with environmental protection and sustainable development.”

PAPER FROM INCODE 2008

An international conference on co-operation development in innovation (InCoDe 2008) was held on 16-18 October, 2008 at the University of Pécs, sponsored by National Office for Research and Technology of Hungary. The conference was attended by nearly a hundred and fifty registered participants including both academic researchers and practitioners from 14 countries like Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Israel, Italy, UK, and US. After welcome speeches Professor Gábor Rekettye, Chair of the InCoDe 2008, in his opening address told among others that “InCoDe has grown out of thought that Europe, especially CEE are in need to increase their share in R&D, in successful innovation. ... I am convinced that the success of innovation is not only the question of money we spend, it is also directly related to the effort expended to align R&D with marketing knowledge and to manage the entire process of co-operation and development with discipline and mutual understanding.”

Dr. K. Dudás discussed the role of marketing in environmental protection. Marketing has the most extensive theoretical and practical knowledge in connection with consumption, consumer behaviour and promoting new things. Thus, making radical changes in existing consumer patterns needs some important marketing efforts. It would be told as a conclusion that marketing has the possibility to use its theoretical and empirical knowledge to study consumer behaviour (equally the negative and positive patterns) and promote the favourable changes effectively.

environmental problems. However, a new marketing approach expands that takes environmental considerations into account, too. Marketing becomes green and it seems to be a long-term tendency because of several causes. I suggest that the most important cause is the change in consumers' requirements, needs, attitudes and behaviour. According to this consideration, marketing can contribute to environmental problems' solution. Marketing has the possibility to use its theoretical and empirical knowledge to study consumer behaviour (equally the negative and positive patterns) and promote the favourable changes effectively.

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