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Analysis of Slovak Consumer's Perception of the Green Marketing Activities

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Abstract

Standard strategic goals of a company are related to the achievement of predefined values in the area of sales or a market share. Their achievement is conditional upon obtaining a stable consumer preferences and some competitive advantage. Applying traditional marketing activities does not have a desired effect, companies have been forced to search new ways to achieve their goals. One of these ways is to implement the concept of socially responsible behaviour with an emphasis on the application of green marketing. At the present green marketing does not represent only one of the tools of company's image building. In fact, its implementation is primarily public commitment of company's management to carry business in the way which ensures economic development and at the same time it is realizing of the responsibility for increasing of environmental and social performance. The contribution papers are focused on the efficiency of the green marketing as a tool of competitive advantage in the context of Slovak consumer's perception. The goal of the survey, whose outputs are partially presented in the article, was to identify the relationship of Slovak consumers to green marketing activities and perception of this concept in relation to its impact on the buying decision. Following achieving information there are formulated recommendations for application of green marketing as a tool of competitive advantage in the conclusion.

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1. Introduction

The Slovak professional literature has given insufficient attention to the issue of green marketing. Its processing doesn't have, in our opinion, a more complex character and predominantly consists of knowledge summarization contained in the foreign literature without taking into account the specification of the Slovak market. Neither the current situation of the usage of green marketing in Slovakia is not on a satisfactory level. In particular, large companies pay attention to green marketing, which are mainly linked with foreign countries from the point of capital and management. Domestic small and medium-sized companies green marketing, green marketing as a potential source of competitive advantage, barely has been using it.

With the concept of green marketing we could meet for the first time in the eighties of the 20th century. That time, this concept was describing the implementation of a marketing programme aimed at an environmentally conscious segment of the market. (Kicova, Kramarova, 2013) Since that time the concept of green marketing has experienced a significant progress in evolution. According to Peattie and Charter (1992), during the 1990s, the argument that greening can act as a source of competitive advantage emerged, from authors such as Elkington, Azzone and Bertele, and Porter and van der Linde. Obvious examples come from companies such as The Body Shop, who compete on the basis of strong eperformance and by tapping into customer demand for greener products. Porter and van der Linde's argument is that the search for environmentally superior solutions leads to innovation and the creation of more efficient and effective technologies. Their logic is that tough environmental legislation (often vigorously opposed by companies) sets new challenges for companies, which prompts them to be innovative and secure improvements in competitive, as well as environmental, performance. This is what Varadajan termed "enviropreneurial marketing". (Peattie, Charter, 1992) Now, with regard to marketing, which more significantly respects the environmental criteria, the professional literature has been using several terms such as "green", "organic", "environmental" or "eco-marketing", and these terms tend to be used as synonyms. (Zvarikova, 2011)

Although various definitions of green marketing vary, but the task of green marketing theory remains unchanged. It should not be just a presentation of common products as environmentally friendly, but to achieve that a customer began to perceive environmentally friendly products as a common one. This way it is possible to achieve even one of the fundamental goals of socially responsible behaviour of companies.

Grant's definition of green marketing emphasizes its basic attributes which, according to his opinion, are: intuitiveness, integrity, innovation, initiative and awareness. (Kim, Pradeep, 2012) Not every activity that meets these attributes is an activity of green marketing. Fuller states that green marketing is the process of planning, implementing and monitoring price developments, promotion and distribution of the product while simultaneously are fulfilled all criteria of satisfying the needs of the customer, achieving goals of a company and compatibility of the whole process with the ecosystem. (Misankova, Chlebikova, 2013) Even though we consider this definition as the one of the most comprehensive, the author does not include the aspect of a back taking-off and recycling of the product, which are essential to achieve compatibility with the ecosystem. This deficiency is partially eliminated by Dalhstrom. According to him we can define the green marketing as the study of all efforts to consume, produce, distribute, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns. (Nadanyiova, 2014)

So, for modern company, the importance of green marketing is indisputable. It is not only the way how to create the competitive advantage but also the company's social commitment. But the practical applicability of this marketing concept is often challenging. Referred also applies to the Slovak Republic, where the problem is not only in the lax approach of domestic companies. As the main reason, we consider the specifics of Slovak consumers in relation to their green purchasing behavior. But this issue is also problem in the global context.

According to Peattie and Charter (1992), many factors have been proposed as influences on green consumer behaviour such as changing consumer values, demographic factors, knowledge of environmental problems and alternative products, perceived personal relevance, and the ability of the individual to make an effective contribution.

But when discussing the specifics of Slovak consumer, we do not refer to the research of Kardash. According to his theory, the difficulties in isolating green consumer behaviour reflect several factors (Musova, 2010):

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