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ANALYSIS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF "GREEN MARKETING" IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON PROMOTING HEALTHY NUTRITION

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Abstract

The terms "sustainable marketing" and "green marketing" are becoming more popular in theory, as well as through their increased implementation in the business world. The paper explores these concepts through an overview of existing literature, and it explores their distinctive features. By paying attention to the long-term goals of a company, the problem of sustainability is self-inflicting and therefore many businesses, political and non-governmental organizations and civic initiatives highlight it as one of the main goals in the direction of long-term development of human and natural capital. An overview of the strengths and weaknesses of green marketing and its implementation is made, as well as the main barriers it faces. A special focus is on the so-called new consumer group called "green consumers". Primary research explores the hypothesis that green marketing could be effectively implemented in a specific economy such as the Republic of Macedonia. Through a number of different quantitative and qualitative methods, the research confirmed the general hypothesis, with Macedonian consumers having developed awareness that is favorable for the promotion of green products, where the main barrier to implementation is the price. Social networks are rated as the most suitable channel the promotion of green products and sustainable marketing.

Keywords:

Sustainable marketing, green marketing, green consumers, green products, sustainability, Republic of Macedonia

1. Introduction

Modern marketing as a product of the industrial revolution, since its earliest beginnings, has undergone through significant changes and adaptations in parallel with the development and needs of modern society. Satisfying consumer needs at the time was the ultimate excuse for any marketing activity. But this marketing concept rests on some assumptions that are no longer valid today. The assumptions that natural resources are inexhaustible, as is the capacity of nature to accumulate and assimilate wastes without consequences, where the only

disadvantage is that the labor force in today's conditions is shown to be inaccurate. In fact, the situation is reversed - the resources are limited, the waste never truly disappears and is rarely harmless, and automation and the growing population leads to an excess of labor force that is most often unemployed or inhumanly exploited. By raising awareness among consumers, corporations and producers of the state of the environment, "green marketing" and the production of "green products" are imposed as the only logical next step in the evolution of the marketing system. To be called sustainable, marketing must actively pay attention to its impact on the environment and human well-being. In this sense, sustainable or green marketing is a process of creating, communicating and delivering value to consumers in which human and natural capital is preserved or enriched.

This means that sustainable marketing has two basic aspects in terms of sustainability - environmental sustainability and social sustainability. First, sustainable marketing means marketing in a sustainable manner, ie an aspect of marketing that is directed inward so that all its processes are socially beneficial. Secondly, sustainable marketing means promoting sustainability as a concept, cultural value and set of practices - as an outward-looking aspect to help create a society where sustainability is a rule.

2. Working hypothesis - Subject of research

The subject of research in this paper is the green marketing and its application on a global scale, but more specifically its application and the state of need and demand of these new products in the Republic of Macedonia. Structurally, the analysis starts with the definition of the concepts of sustainable, and then green marketing, as well as their main components, advantages and barriers that need to be overcome. As a relatively new term in marketing theory, green marketing should be more explored in order to clarify its characteristics, advantages and barriers it faces. The process of preparing the paper itself focuses precisely on these aspects, which gives a detailed overview of green marketing and its practical use globally, but also as part of the wider area of sustainable marketing.

The primary research was carried out on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia in order to examine the readiness of the Macedonian consumers for these specific products and the situation in the industry. During the preparation of the theses, it has been shown that for the Republic of Macedonia there are no information and statistics for the implementation of green marketing by small, medium or large companies, thus the primary research that will arise from the work itself is of great importance for this region. Finally, primary research can serve as a basis for projections of future trends related to green marketing in the Republic of Macedonia.

2.1. General hypothesis

The general hypothesis of this paper is that sustainable marketing, with a particular focus on green marketing, could both be feasible strategies for implementation and functioning in a specific economy such as the Republic of Macedonia. The proving of the general hypothesis began through secondary research and collection of relevant data, and then continued with primary research, specifically aimed at companies and consumers at the level of the Republic of Macedonia. Through the research itself, the hypothesis will be proven or rejected, which is actually the primary goal of this paper. During the proving of the general hypothesis, certain specific hypotheses will appear which will also be proven or rejected through secondary research.

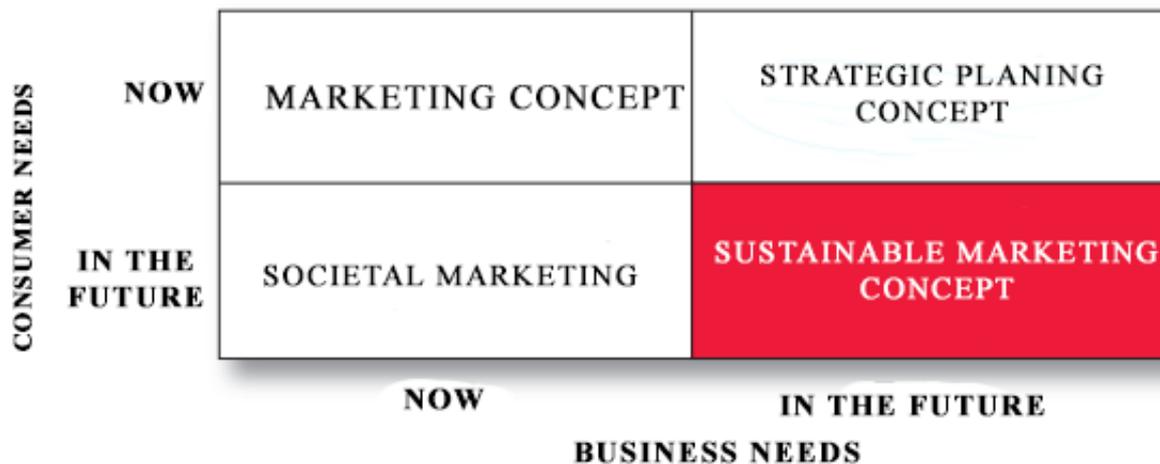
2.2. Special hypothesis

The special hypothesis has been explored throughout the whole paper, through primary and secondary data. The analysis of the hypothesis used case studies, best practices from successful companies and questionnaires. After summarizing and analyzing the obtained

data, a detailed picture of the situation on a global level was constructed, and then a comparison was made with the current situation in the Republic of Macedonia.

2.3. Defining the concept of sustainable marketing

The concept of *social marketing*, shown in Chart 1a, looks at the future well-being of consumers and the concept of strategic planning looks at the future needs of the company, the concept of sustainable marketing reviews both. Sustainable marketing calls for social and environmentally responsible activities that satisfy the immediate and future needs of customers and the company.



Graph 1. Overview of concepts

Influential economist Milton Friedman said that the only social responsibility of a business is to increase its profits, "as long as it remains within the rules of the game, which means it engages in open and free competition without any scams." (Friedman, 1970) [1]. This view, although extreme and often defamatory, sets one side (unlimited free market capitalism) from the current argument for the proper roles of business in society. In fact, social and environmental problems are becoming more prevalent in discussions about business ethics and social responsibility. A list of "major global trends and problems at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (Harris, 2007) [2] includes:

- population growth,
- Poverty and inequality,
- sanitation of the water supply,
- changes in global biogeochemical cycles,
- climate change,
- degradation of the environment,
- Destruction of habitats, and,
- loss of biodiversity.

A triple-bottomed business movement boosts social demand and leads businesses to take broader and clearer responsibilities for their environmental and human impacts (Martin & Schouten, 2011). [3]

2.4. Advantages and Weaknesses of Sustainable and Green Marketing

Sustainable marketing can bring many benefits to customers in very diverse ways. However, sustainable marketing may require major organizational change for companies, reviewing current marketing strategies, and sometimes require expensive modifications to production

processes. Thus, in order for companies to continue to implement sustainable marketing as part of an overall strategy, they must have certain benefits. [4]

Reducing costs can be one of the biggest motivators for companies. Activities undertaken by companies are usually easily achievable and feasible, but reduce costs only in the short term. The most common cost benefits are achieved through energy, material efficiency and waste efficiency. Reputation must be deserved and precisely sustainability can bring companies a good reputation. New markets can be opened through sustainable marketing. Environmental and social sustainability, as well as various sustainability issues, such as products that are not tested on animals, attract consumers' attention. In addition to acquiring new customers, the company can innovate new products and services can result in the acquisition of consumers who would otherwise not buy the company's products.

Reduced risk is another benefit of sustainable marketing. Some natural resources will become scarce in the future and as a result their prices will skyrocket and the supply will become uncertain. This can limit the production of the company and lead to a rise in product prices. Proactive companies mitigate these problems and gain a competitive advantage, switching to alternative energy sources, thus becoming effective in using resources or in seeking alternative resources. Attracting and retaining employees can be easier for a company that practices sustainability. One study found that graduates believe that a company is responsible for its impact on society and the environment and that even half of the respondents would accept lower wages in a sustainable company. Leadership can be gained or sustained through sustainable marketing. By implementing sustained solutions today, companies can fully overcome competition, because in the future it would take much more time to reach the reputation that would be built.

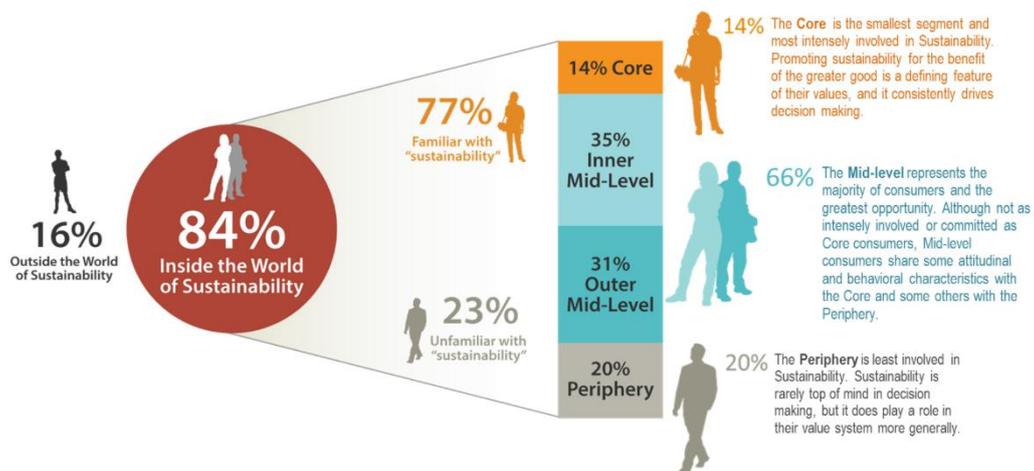
But besides all these advantages, sustainable marketing has its drawbacks. Businesses need to be realistic and consider in detail all aspects and attitudes before fully implementing sustainable marketing. [5] Conversion costs can be huge especially for a company that initially decides on sustainable marketing. For example, the transition to solar energy will create the need for installing solar panels in business facilities. Savings from reduced electricity costs are not always sufficient to neutralize pre-initial conversion costs. In some cases, the transition to the use of green materials can lead to more expensive products for consumers. Lack of support is another potential drawback from applying sustainable marketing. According to Andrew Georgiadis, a green development expert from Florida, there is a real possibility of "built-in bias" against companies wanting to become "green" as evidenced by some laws and regulations. For some companies, minimizing or eliminating the use of paper is another way of turning to green marketing. This can cause several disadvantages for the company. For example, if employees experience theft of laptops or computers, the sensitive information that is usually stored in a locked paper file may fall into the wrong hands. If companies do not make a correct backup of their files, crashing the whole system or losing it can cause catastrophic consequences. Consumer reactions can make the business much and completely destroy their credibility, especially if they find out that companies are making false claims about their products, a process known as "green wash." Increased ozone. It does not mean that if companies have a green product it is completely harmless. An example of this is green cars that are becoming much more popular in recent years. Green cars use other types of fuel to reduce the harmful chemicals released into the atmosphere. This is certainly a good thing, but the same green cars powered by green fuel E85 produce more ozone than conventional fuel. [6]

2.5. Green consumers as a new paradigm

The term green market is commonly used to distinguish sustainably oriented consumers and the companies they serve. One of the most powerful cultural trends in branding today is the global change in consumer attitudes towards environmental sustainability. Hartman Group is a research company that tracks the sustainability trends that consumers are following. Their 2008 report noted that:

- Most consumers (93%) say they want to participate in sustainability, but do not know how.
- Only half (54%) understand the term. 12% can name a sustainable product, and only 5% can name a sustainable company.
- Consumers have great expectations and companies and brands are looking for directions. They want to comply with companies that share their core values and do it in an authentic, transparent way.
- Sustainability starts on a personal level. Consumers want to save themselves before they save the planet. Hence, food and drink, health and well-being, as well as key life experiences (for example, having children) are key starting points.
- When reviewing environmental values, recycling and plastic packaging are fundamental. However, social values (for example, programs that treat well the employees and serve communities) often overshadow programs for environmental protection.
- Optimism, connection, care and responsibility are important communication values.
- Most consumers (81%) are willing to pay 10% more for the material benefit of sustainability.

In a 2009 report [7], the Hartman Group presented a new psychographic scheme for segmentation of the green market. Hartman described four segments of The World of Sustainability, which differ on the basis of their levels of concern about social and environmental issues and the frequency and intensity of their pro-viable behavior. The "basic" consumer segment displays the highest levels of involvement and implementation of a sustainable lifestyle, including behaviors such as buying environmentally friendly products and strict adherence and advocacy for sustainability attitudes. The "Intermediate Level" and "External Intermediate Level" segments demonstrate a progressively lower commitment to sustainability and less related behaviors. This segment is called "Periphery" by Hartman, because of its minimal concern for social and environmental sustainability. Twelve percent of consumers living outside of The World of Sustainability of Hartman say they rarely factor in the social or environmental aspects of their purchasing decisions.



Graph 2 A world of sustainability

3. Practical application of "Green Marketing"

3.1 Defining sustainable and green products

According to writer Susan Stranhan, we may already be "drinking water with small amounts of drugs, including antibiotics, steroids, antidepressants and hormones." In 2008, Associated Press conducted an investigation into drinking water in 24 major US metropolitan areas and found measurable amounts of drugs. The study found that "medicines enter the water supply system through several routes: some people wash unnecessary drugs in the toilets; other drugs get into the water supply after people consume it, part of it absorbs, and the rest is ejected through urine or feces. Some of the drugs remain in the water even after cleaning in treatment plants." (Doheny, 2008). [8]

3.2 The emergence of the so-called. "Green market" and green products

The term green market is commonly used to differentiate consumers oriented to sustainability as well as such businesses. One of the most powerful cultural trends in today's branding area is the worldwide change in consumer attitudes towards environmental sustainability. This change is accurate, true and almost applied throughout the whole world.

Green marketing is usually practiced by companies that are committed to sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. Businesses increasingly discover that demonstrating a high level of social responsibility can increase brand loyalty among socially conscious consumers. Ethical source has become important for companies and consumers - Are consumers willing to pay more for green products?

The obvious assumption of green marketing is that potential consumers will look at the "green" of the product or service as a benefit and will properly base their buying decision. The not so obvious assumption is that consumers will be willing to pay more for green products than for a less green comparable alternative product. Nielsen The Global Corporate Social Responsibility survey in 2014 examines 30,000 consumers from 60 countries to compile statistics on consumer demand for sustainable purchasing and found that:

- 55% of consumers are willing to pay extra for products and services from companies dedicated to positive social and environmental impact (from 45% in 2011);
- 52% have made at least one purchase in the last six months of at least one socially responsible company;
- 52% check the packaging of the product to ensure it is sustainable;

Interestingly, consumers in the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America and the Middle East / Africa showed higher preferences (64%, 63%, 63%) for extra payment for a sustainable product, while preferences in North America and Europe were lower (42 % and 40%). The Nielsen survey also referred to retail purchase statistics, and according to sales brands that advertised packaging sustainability, there was a 2% annual increase in sales from 2011 to 2014, compared with 1% for those who did not make an increase.

4. Analysis of the state of green marketing in the Republic of Macedonia

The last chapter of the paper focuses on the presence of green marketing in the Republic of Macedonia, through primary and secondary research. Primary research serves as a basis for obtaining a clearer picture of the state of sustainable marketing and green marketing, which is then complemented with secondary research data that is publicly available, and a conceptual framework for promoting green products.

4.1. Research Methodology

Three main methods were used in the process of preparation of the research on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia in order to obtain detailed data collection and analysis:

- **The historical method** - which is implemented through the analysis of secondary data sources for the territory of the Republic of Macedonia
- **The empirical method** - implemented through a primary survey (survey questionnaire) conducted on consumers in the Republic of Macedonia.
- **The statistical method** - that is implemented in data processing, combining and grouping
- **The method of analysis and synthesis and the comparative method** - that are implemented in transforming the data into information that is useful for achieving the purpose of the research, comparing it to the world trends, and designing a concept framework for green products.

4.2. Problem description

During the preparation of the scientific paper, it was concluded that there are no publicly available secondary data on the readiness of consumers in the Republic of Macedonia for products related to green marketing. The only data that exists and is analyzed are the initiatives for healthy food by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and individual companies, but they do not indicate any of the relevant aspects necessary for the given research.

4.3. Goals of the research

The primary research was carried out on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia in order to analyze the readiness of Macedonian consumers for the "green" products, as well as examine the current situation in the industry. By collecting primary data from the survey, a detailed analysis of the presence and readiness for green marketing in the Republic of Macedonia can be made, to produce statistics that would be publicly available, to compare them with global data and, finally, to serve them as basis for designing a concept framework for the promotion of green products in the country. The special focus elaborated in the introductory part of the paper is:

- Establishment of statistics on the level of use of green marketing by companies in the Republic of Macedonia
- Analysis of the awareness and readiness of the Macedonian consumers for green marketing and green products
- Through the analysis of the Macedonian market and consumers, a framework for implementation of this type of marketing and products can be established

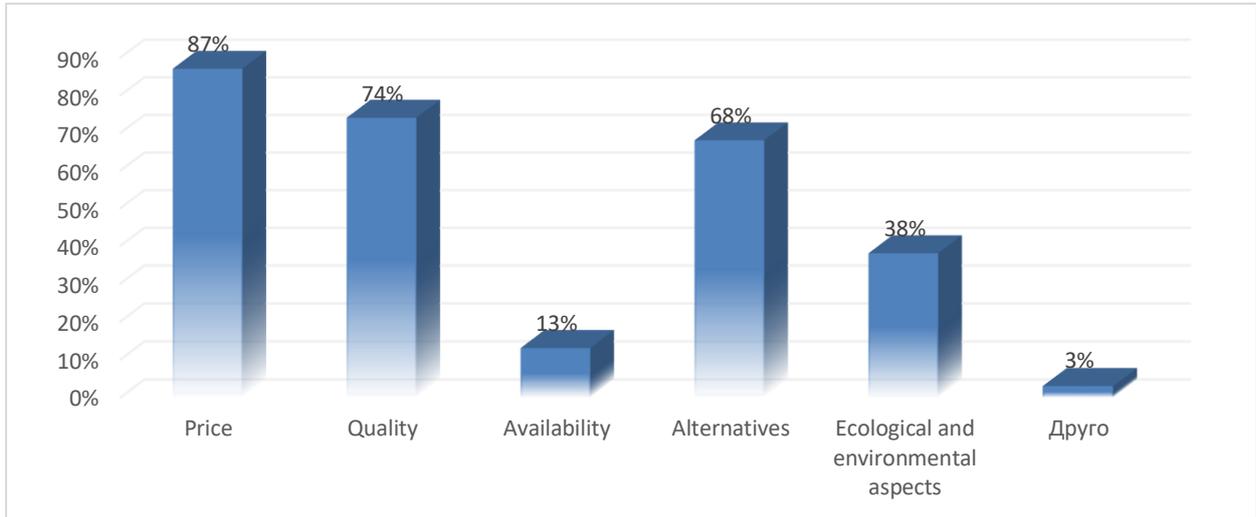
4.4 Instruments of the research

In order to achieve the goals of the primary research, a questionnaire was used, implemented on consumers from the Republic of Macedonia. The questionnaire contains 14 questions from open and closed nature, more precisely 4 of open type and 10 of the closed type. The questionnaire was implemented entirely electronically, using the Google Forms tool, with the same tool used for generating statistics, with the help of Microsoft Excel.

The sample of research is all consumers who live in the Republic of Macedonia at the moment, that is, no further specification of the sample by sex, age or other demographic characteristics was made, since the purpose of the research is to provide statistics that would be relevant for the whole country. This was also the main reason why the questionnaire was conducted electronically, in order to find the easiest way for respondents from other cities and towns in the Republic of Macedonia. The questionnaire was conducted in the period from 15.08.2017 until 15.12.2018, during which 520 valid responses and 48 invalid answers were registered, which were not taken into account when forming the statistics because they did not contain

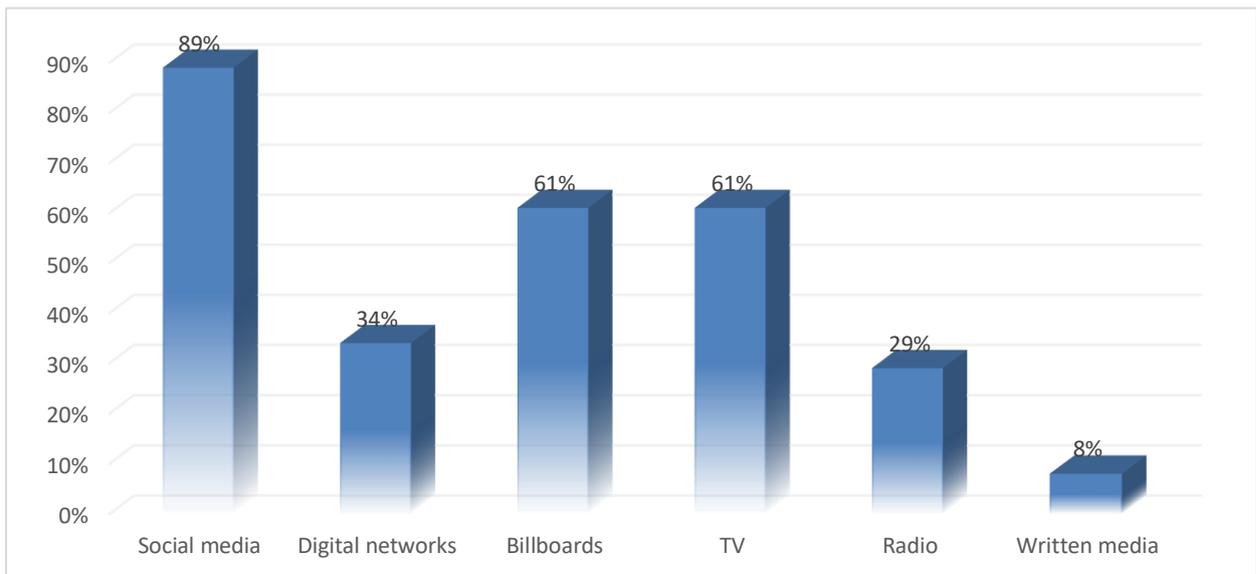
valid answers to all set questions. The full survey questionnaire in its original form can be found in the annex to this paper.

Graph 3 on the next page analyzes the impact of certain aspects of a product or service on the final selection of it. The question was with multiple choice, so each response is seen as a percentage of the maximum amount (100%). Respondents put most emphasis on the price with 87%, in second place they chose the quality with 74% and in the third place the available alternatives with 68%. Environmental aspects of the product are on the fourth place.



Graph 3 Importance of product / service aspects

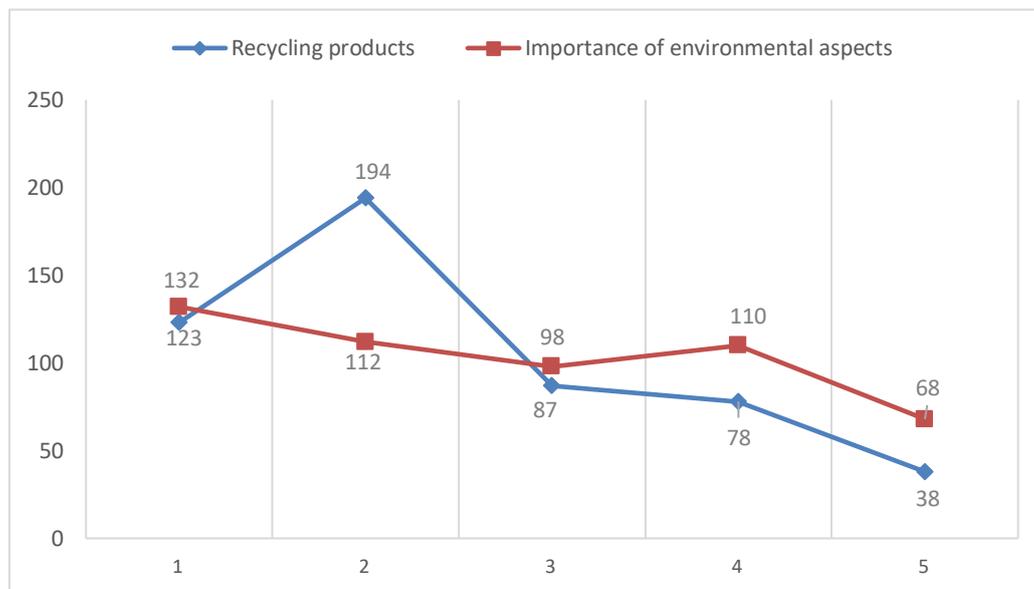
Although 38% represent a relatively high level of awareness of the environmental aspects of products, however, most consumers still take it into significance only after evaluation of price, quality and available alternatives. Graph 4 completes the general analysis of the product selection process among the respondents, through evaluation of the channels they use to gather information.



Graph 4 Information media for products and services

The data suggest that social media represent the most relevant promotional channel with 89%, while billboards and TV ads that are equated with 61% among the respondents. This mix of digital and traditional media for promotion has the greatest impact on the process of informing and purchasing new products, which are of particular importance in the creation of the concept framework for the promotion of green products. Additional analysis of data by age groups show that among the youngest respondents (13-24), social networks dominate with 100%, while in the age group of 45-54 billboard is the targets channel with 80%. With the oldest group of over 65 years, TV ads are the most common with 76%.

Graph 5 incorporates the seventh and eighth question and displays an average estimate of the likert scale set at levels from 1 (I do not agree) to 5 (I fully agree).

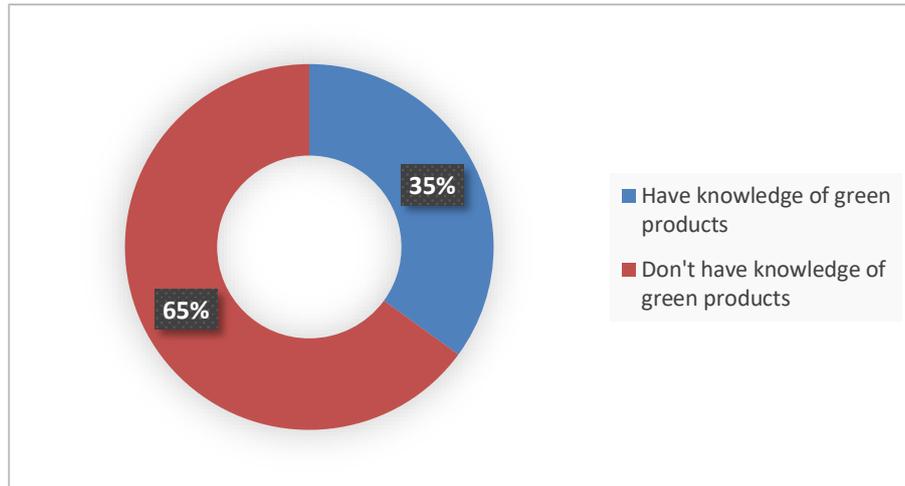


Graph 5 Degree of care for environment and green products

Regarding the recycling of products, the average score is 2.45 summarized by all responses. The majority of respondents (37%) responded with grade 2 (partially disagree), followed by 23% of respondents who answered grade 1 (completely disagree). This suggests that the awareness of product recycling in the Republic of Macedonia is low and there is enormous potential for improvement through the promotion of green marketing and green products.

Focusing on the importance of the environmental aspects of product selection, the average score is 2.75, which is a slightly higher than recycling. Again in first place are respondents with grade 1 (I completely disagree) with 25%, but responses with grade 4 (partially agree) are also high with 21%. As can be seen in Chart 5, the downward trend of responses with grades 4 and 5 is with a lesser tendency than the previous recycling issue analyzed. There is a general match of percentages with Graph 4, where 38% of the respondents chose the environmental aspects of the products as significant in the decision to select a particular product or service.

The last question from the general part focused on the listing of companies that, according to the respondents, take care of the environment and consumers. 88% of respondents cited at least one company, which is an indicator that social responsibility and concern for sustainability among companies is an important aspect for consumers. Graph 6 focuses on the knowledge of green products by the respondents.



Graph 6 Knowledge of green products

The analysis demonstrates that 35% of the respondents answered affirmatively, meaning they have knowledge of green products and services. The other respondents who responded with NO were redirected to the last page of the questionnaire, as the last two questions relate directly to green products. For the verification of the answer to the knowledge of green products, the following open question was asked, where the respondents were asked to give a brief description of green products and services. Comparing their answers, all the respondents who answered affirmatively to the previous question, gave an answer that is completely or partially compatible with the general aspects of green products.

Graph 7 demonstrates the average grades of the various claims that were part of the 13th question from the survey.



Graph 7 Claims for green marketing and products

Unlike the average grades of the previous graphs which were low, because only the respondents who are aware of green products participate in the survey, the average grades of the last question are relatively high. Respondents are confident that green products are good for health and the environment (both claims received an average score of 4.7), and the majority of them consider that they know the green product identifiers with an average score of 4.3. Consumers are aware of the brands that offer green products (3.8), but still many of them would not pay more for a green product, a claim that received the lowest average score of 2.4.

5. Conclusion

This scientific paper focuses on the significance of the concepts of sustainable and green marketing in a modern enterprise. By analyzing and synthesizing primary and secondary data, we can understand the different types of implications, other than economic ones that affect companies in today's business world when making strategic decisions. The paper makes a clear distinction between the two concepts of sustainable marketing and green marketing, through analyzing and linking the three dimensions of sustainability with them. Green marketing is only a part of sustainable marketing, which in theory could be applied to any enterprise, regardless of size, country or industry in which it operates. If companies know about the potential advantage of gaining green customers, or their greater lifetime value versus the average consumer, then they could apply green marketing strategies that only meet certain minimum criteria required for advertising as a company that applies this kind of marketing.

Primary and secondary research on the level of green marketing in the Republic of Macedonia reveals the real situation and shows the first detailed information on the application of this concept in our country. The available data for the Republic of Macedonia are at a minimal level, making the contribution of this paper important in improving the overall picture, which can be used as a basis for future research and comparison with other foreign countries. Through the primary research, the goals of the labor are fulfilled, ie the statistics on the level of use of green marketing by the companies in the Republic of Macedonia are made, a detailed analysis of the awareness of the Macedonian consumers for green marketing is made, and then as a result of the research, framework for the implementation of green marketing products and services

The primary research on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia revealed several aspects for green marketing:

- Communication channels vary among age groups, with the younger generations being the most widespread social networks, and with the rise of age there is a change from digital to traditional media. Companies could use these data for detailed targeting of consumers, ie connecting with different segments based on age limits. Advertising materials must also be prepared appropriately according the channel they utilize, primarily because social networks as the latest promotional channel differ significantly from other traditional channels such as television or radio.
- The quality of the products is the second most important element in the decision to choose between the alternatives with 74%, immediately behind the price that is in first place. This result is expected for the Republic of Macedonia, which is still a developing country with low purchasing power among citizens. The price is still a dominant element in the decision to purchase a new product or service, especially for market societies of countries in transition. The survey demonstrates that even respondents who are aware of green products in most cases would not pay a premium price for a green product or service. Again, advertising materials need to be appropriately selected in order not to create the wrong image for the company or products and services.
- The degree of care for the environment through recycling and the significance of the environmental aspects of products are low, with average marks of 2.45 and 2.75 respectively. This indicator can be seen from two aspects - the first aspect is negative, ie the indicator indicates the low interest of Macedonian consumers for environmental principles, which are an important part of green and sustainable marketing. The second aspect is positive, that is, the low indicators can be seen as a potential advantage for the companies and the government of the Republic of Macedonia, which through proper and educational advertising content could raise awareness among them, thereby creating a better position for introducing more green products and services.

- Consumer awareness of green and sustainable products is increasing, but it is still low with 35% of the total number of respondents. This is related to the previous point, ie the investment in increasing the awareness among Macedonian consumers could have great benefits for the society itself, and further for the companies by opening the possibility for introducing new green products and services. The general rule of the first market entrants also holds true in this case, that is, companies that first present green products and mass-level services could be related as carriers of this concept, so that any further efforts in this direction are directly or indirectly linked with them.
- The most influential medium for the respondents are the social networks, which could be used as a primary channel for raising awareness about the advantages of green products.
- When it comes to green products and services, most of the respondents think that green products are good for health and are good for the environment. Many of them think they are aware of brands that offer green products and services. As a continuation of awareness about certain brands and products, a high level of respondents consider that they know the identities of green products and services, which are explored in detail in this paper. This data needs to be further verified in more detailed research that would focus on the specific knowledge of Macedonian consumers for green products and services, as well as their identifiers.

Based on the research of primary and secondary data, the main barriers to the implementation of green marketing on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia are the internal environmental barriers, the attitudes and perceptions of the consumers, the great impact of the price in the purchasing process, the lack of expertise and insufficient government support . These are generally low barriers that could be overcome by creating the right advertising materials and targeted promotion through the respective channels to the consumers. The paper explores a relatively new area, especially for the Republic of Macedonia, which is the basis for future research in this direction.

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