

# GREEN MARKETING A CHALLENGE FOR CONSUM GENERATION

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## **Abstract:**

*Identifying how the population looks at the pro-environment marketing strategy, the weaknesses and strengths of this strategy as well as its involvement in environmental marketing, employee responsibility and the firm's efforts to pursue a continuous process of improvement are also some of the objectives targeted in this study.*

*All these objectives, as well as the environmental components of marketing, must be linked to the objectives and environmental policy of the company. The chances of success of environmental marketing depend on the extent to which it is considered the cornerstone of an integrated concept, anchored in the environmental management of the company.*

*Through this study we wanted to analyse the behavior, opinions and attitudes of the population of Suceava County regarding green marketing strategies; we also set out to know through this paper the benefits and opportunities of green marketing strategy, to study its challenges, to check the awareness of the population in this area regarding the green marketing status (Green marketing) as well as the social responsibility adopted by companies in Romania, and last but not least to identify to what extent the choice of end consumers is influenced by the approach of green marketing strategies by companies/organizations.*

*The research coordinates are spatial, the research took place in the online environment on a sample of 385 people; time, the data presented were collected through quantitative research, the questionnaire was distributed between 02.05.2020-17.05.2020 to the population of Suceava County and modal, the respondents received a message either on the phone or on social networks in the text of which was incorporated the link to the access link on the Google forms platform containing the questionnaire. Thus, e-mail was used to invite the chosen people to participate in the online questionnaire.*

**Key words:** green marketing, social responsibility, marketing strategies, consumption, environmental protection

**JEL classification:** M30, Q51, Q57, D18, I21

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Green marketing, also known as environmental marketing, environmental marketing, eco marketing, durable marketing, aims to increase the ecological awareness of consumers. Over time, researchers have used different but equivalent terms in their work to define this concept.

While there are still differences in the definition of the concept of green marketing, a growing trend in environmental concern for both companies can be observed by creating environmentally friendly products and using modern, less polluting equipment and technologies, as well as individuals who are working hard to live as healthy as possible and to reduce the harmful effects of their actions. Eco-marketing involves the following priority directions:

1. Development of products for which environmental compatibility is guaranteed. This means that products must have minimal or no impact on the environment and, at the same time, be able to meet the consumer's requirements in terms of quality, services, price and ease of use.
2. Transmission of a high-quality image including environmental sensitivity, related to product-specific attributes and the company's reputation for environmentally compatible.
3. Distribution of products in such a way that, during the logistical process, the environment is not affected.

All these objectives, as well as the environmental components of marketing, must be correlated with the objectives and environmental policy of the company. The chances of success of environmental marketing depend on the extent to which it is considered the cornerstone of an integrated concept, anchored in the environmental management of the company. If the essential requirements of the environmental concept are taken into account at the level of the management of the company, then it can be found that the protection of the environment makes it necessary to place it at the center of the managerial concerns, depending on the social and competitive relevance it has for the configuration of the new problems that lie before the management of the company, (Danciu, V., 2006).

Both the demands of the environment in general and the pressures of environmental consumers and those driven by the environmental concerns of the authorities will increasingly orient marketing towards environmental philosophies and solutions.

In the future there are needs for the development of new concepts and practical marketing with ecological substance. Firms will have to not only speak greenly, but be environmentally friendly, i.e. act in an environmentally friendly way.

Concerns and marketing practices will have to move towards "green" processes and products in an increasingly substantial proportion. To become environmentally friendly, companies need to create an eco-friendly culture. This culture must support the development of strategies to prepare them in an effective manner in order to be able to respond to market-launched provisions, ambient consumers and, at the same time, to capitalise on the environmental opportunities offered to them.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

One topic that the media, politicians, organisations and the general public have talked about over the past decade is friendship with the environment or so-called „green marketing”. Consumers are beginning to raise concerns about the environment. In fact, through a survey conducted in America (Gutfield, R., 1991) found that eight out of ten consumers claimed to be environmentalists. According to (Mainieri, T., et al., 1997) as cited in (Juwaheer, T.D., 2005). the environment has faced massive destructive changes: diminishing natural resources, damage to the ozone layer and loss of agricultural land. In recent years, due to the massive amount of environmental pollution caused by companies around the world, people have become more aware of environmental problems. As a result, thanks to the attention of society, many organisations have begun to accept their environmental responsibility (Chan, R., 2000). Similarly, (Kangun, N. et. al., 1991) have argued that firms are trying to address the growing environmental concerns of consumers by selling organic products. As a result, many organisations have started to promote themselves as environmentally friendly companies, i.e. they have started to produce and market goods or services in a way that minimises environmental damage.

Similarly, (Pride, W.M., et. al., 1993) have notified that the term „environmental marketing” presents an organisation's efforts to design, promote, value and distribute goods that will not cause environmental damage, (Dean, T.J., 2016). Subsequently, (Polonsky, M.J., 1994) proposed a definition of environmental marketing, which has a broader focus than those of other investigators and also includes all the main elements of other definitions. Its definition is as follows: „Environmental or environmental marketing shall consist of all activities designed to generate and

facilitate any exchanges designed to meet human needs or desires, so that the satisfaction of these needs and desires takes place, with a negative impact on the natural environment”.

This definition covers all conventional components of the marketing definition, which is „all activities intended to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to meet human needs or desires” (Stanton, W.J., 1987). It also ensures that the interests of both the organisation and the customers are protected, i.e. there will be no exchanges until both the buyer and the seller benefit each other. Furthermore, this definition incorporates the protection of the natural environment, seeking to reduce the negative impact that exchange can have on the natural environment.

Our main objective was to focus on the relationship between corporate social responsibility, intellectual capital and financial and non-financial performance in Romania. The idea of renewing the business model implies for our scientific work: firstly, a better understanding of key concepts and, secondly, an excellent opportunity to find more viable solutions to the current problems based on the power provided by what these concepts really represent in our changing society. A recent review of the literature on this subject found that social responsibility can be active when individuals and entities act directly by promoting social or passive goals, when individuals and entities do not engage in actions that may harm the environment (Invernizzi, A.C. et. al., 2017). Recent evidence suggests that businesses have changed their conceptions and attitudes about their social environment. According to the American Marketing Association definition, green marketing may also describe the process to produce, promote or package products in a sustainable manner (Dean, T.J., et al., 2014). In the context of this behavior, consumers switch from a cost-oriented perspective to a more sustainable one (Narula, S.A., et al., 2016). In this context, excluding this niche of customers can damage the company’s image in the long term (Kirchoff, J.F., et. al., 2011), Papadopoulos, I. et al., 2010) “as green marketing philosophy and eco-orientation are related to competitiveness, environmental values and economic objectives” (Kumar, P., 2016), (Dabija, D.C., et. al., 2013).

### **3. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH**

#### **Purpose of the research**

Through this study we wanted to analyze the behavior, opinions and attitudes of the population of Suceava County regarding green marketing strategies, to evaluate the understanding of the concept of Green Marketing, a challenge for consumer generations as well as environmental marketing strategies; we also set out to know through this paper the benefits and opportunities of green marketing strategy, to study its challenges, to check the awareness of the population in this area regarding the green marketing status (Green marketing) as well as the social responsibility adopted by companies in Romania, and last but not least to identify to what extent the choice of end consumers is influenced by the approach of green marketing strategies by companies/organizations.

#### **Research coordinates**

The research coordinates are spatial, the research took place in the online environment on a sample of 385 people being valid only 165 questionnaires; time, the data presented were collected through quantitative research, the questionnaire was distributed between 02.04.2020-19.06.2020 to the population of Suceava County and modal, the respondents received a message either on the phone or on social networks in the text of which was incorporated the link to the access link on the Google forms platform containing the questionnaire. Thus, e-mail was used to invite the chosen people to participate in the online questionnaire. The researched community is represented by the population of Suceava County aged 18-60 years.

#### **Research tool**

To provide information on the relationship between social responsibility and green marketing as well as the attitudes, opinions and behavior of the population of Suceava County on the notion of Green Marketing we used as a research questionnaire tool. The questionnaire method has been used for the research objectives concerned so that the local community understands the importance of green and sustainable finances, that of social responsibility and the importance of

protecting the environment in which we live. The research methodology is appropriate for the research objectives and characteristics of the analyzed population. In our study, the design of the questionnaires was based on 30 closed questions with a single answer, in an unequivocal and simple manner because we considered that they were sufficient for the proposed objectives.

Research hypotheses:

1. The level of education influences concern for environmental issues. People with higher education tend to be more concerned with protecting the environment and thus more sensitive to green/environmental marketing;
2. The level of income influences concern for environmental issues. People with higher incomes tend to be more concerned with protecting the environment and thus more sensitive to green/environmental marketing;
3. Larger enterprises tend to implement more environmental social responsibility projects compared to smaller enterprises.

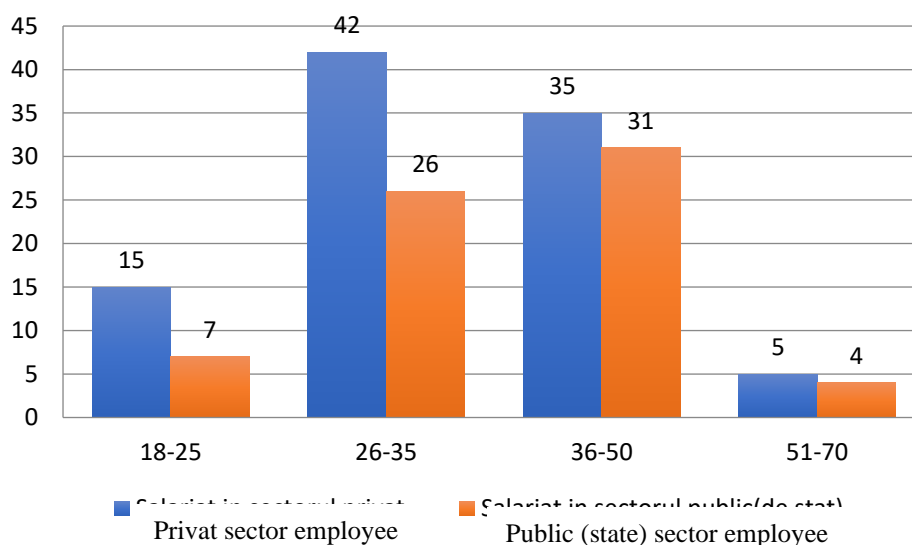
The first part of the survey consisted of 8 "identification (or classification) questions, which serve to analyze, interpret and correlate the questionnaire answers" which require a single answer, focusing on determining the age of the respondents, gender, level of education, occupation, type of organization (private or state), size of the organization, net monthly income and environment from which it comes (rural or urban).

The second part of the survey had 22 questions. Of these questions, 6 gave respondents the opportunity to tick off a single answer from several variants, and for 16 questions, respondents were asked to mention the degree of importance for certain specific concepts, criteria or definitions, using the following scale: 1-to a very small extent, 2- to a small extent, 3 - in a medium, 4 - large, 5 - to a large extent.

In the rows below we will describe the results we obtained in the first part of the survey. In response to question number 1, "How old are you?" most of those surveyed (41.21%) between 26-35 years and 40% have respondents between 36-50 years of age. On the other hand, 13.33% of respondents are 18-25 years old, while 5.45% are between 51-70 years old. Of the population studied 138 (83.64%) subjects are female while the rest are male (16.36%).

According to the variable studies, according the statistical community is divided as follows: 55.76% have university studies 20.61% have postgraduate studies, followed by a percentage of 16.97% for subjects with high school education while 6.06% have post-secondary studies and only one respondent with secondary education.

The largest percentage are for people holding positions requiring higher education, 32%, then 31% are officials in organizations, 24% are service/trade operatives, 15% are students and the lowest percentages are for those who are teachers, skilled workers and unemployed.



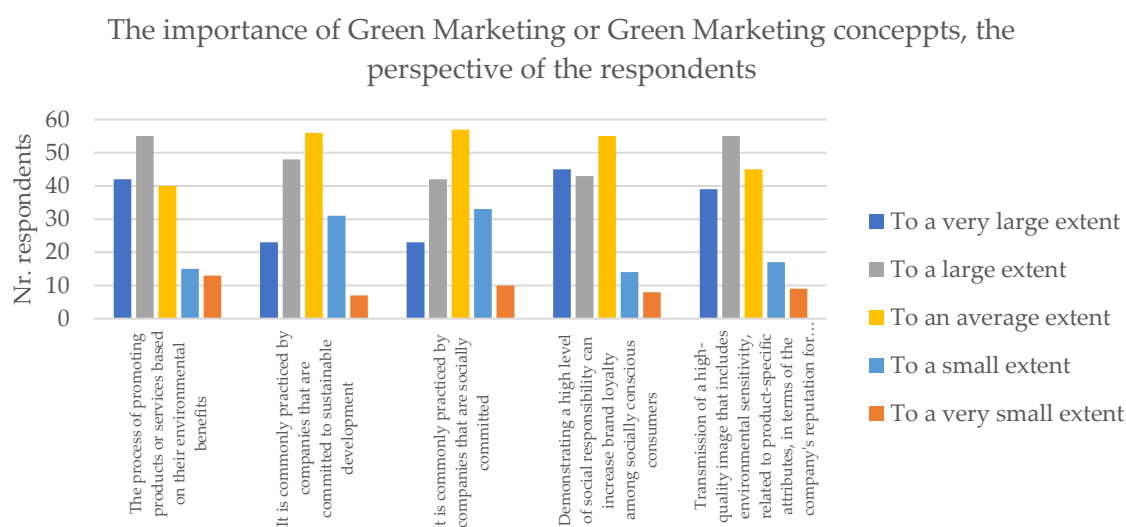
**Figure no. 1 Distribution of respondents by age variable and employment category**

Source: author elaboration

According to schedule no. 1 we conclude that respondents aged 18-25 are active in the private sector. From the general analysis we state that private sector employment dominates all 4 age groups mentioned over their employability in the public/state domain.

After drawing up the respondent's profile we will analyze the second part of the questionnaire, specifically we try to emphasize some opinions on social responsibility towards the environment, the perception of the subjects on the notion of green marketing as well as what are the strategies and marketing elements that strengthen the image of companies in the minds of the population.

Question Do you consider the problem of environmental pollution important? I think it's a filter question, out of 165 respondents 164 answered yes and were subsequently included in the processing.



**Figure no. 2 Importance of Green Marketing or Green Marketing Concepts from respondents' perspective**

Source: author elaboration

Most respondents attach great importance to the concepts of:

- The process of promoting products or services based on their environmental benefits
- Demonstration of a high level of social responsibility can increase brand loyalty among socially aware consumers
- Transmission of a high quality image that includes environmental sensitivity, relating to product-specific attributes, in terms of the company's reputation for being environmentally compatible.

How important is it to you that companies generally become more and more socially responsible? On a scale of 1 to 5. Of the respondents, about 92% opted for variant 5 and 4 respectively, which indicates that social responsibility in general and environmental responsibility in particular become very important tools in promoting and positioning the market.

We can see, according to Table no. 1, the fact that small enterprises (micro and small) generally do not get involved in projects promoting ecological marketing, a possible cause being also that they tend to have smaller budgets, while in larger enterprises we find a roughly balanced distribution, about half involved in such projects.

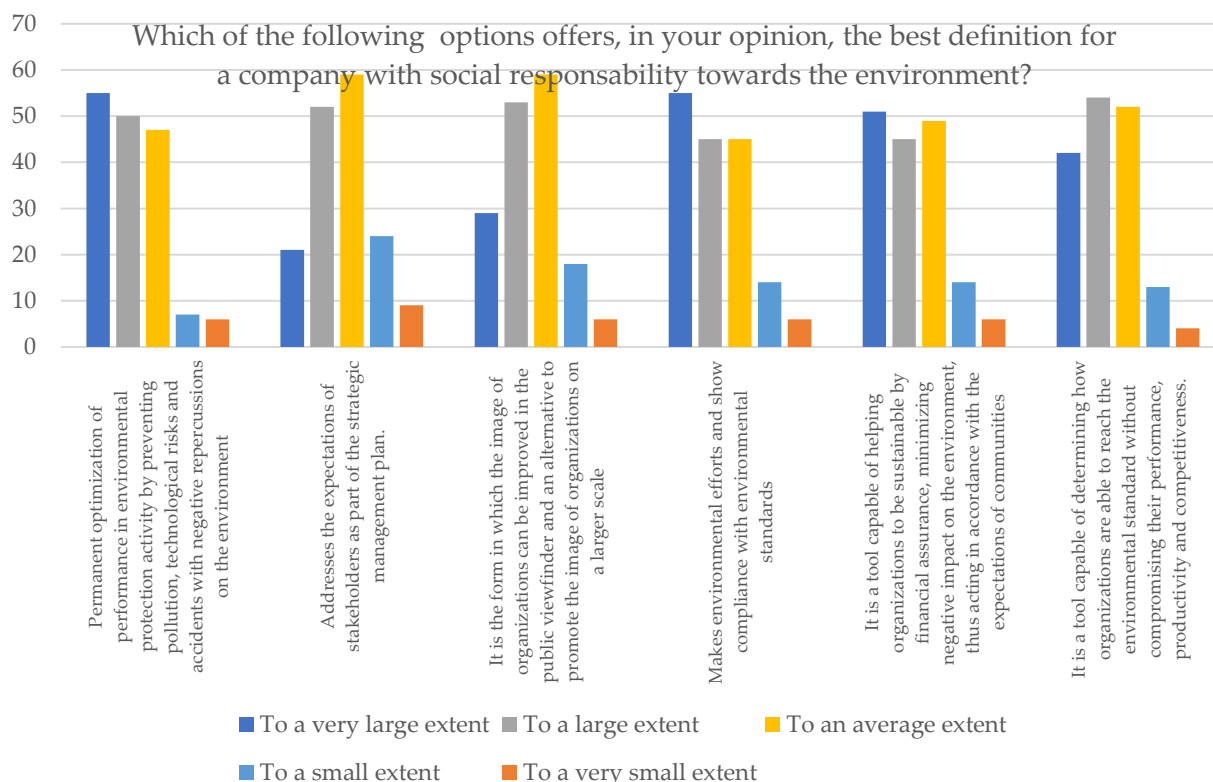
**Table No. 1 Financing and promoting green marketing**

Size of enterprise	Has the organization you work in ever funded or supported projects that promote green marketing?		Total
	Yes	No	
Large (over 250 employees)	32	35	67
Average (50-249)	16	24	40

Small (10-49 employees)	7	17	24
Micro (under 10 employees)	4	30	34
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>165</b>

Source: author elaboration

We can see that in general small enterprises (micro and small) do not really get involved in projects promoting ecological marking, a possible cause being also that they tend to have smaller budgets, while in larger enterprises we find a roughly balanced distribution, about half involved in such projects.



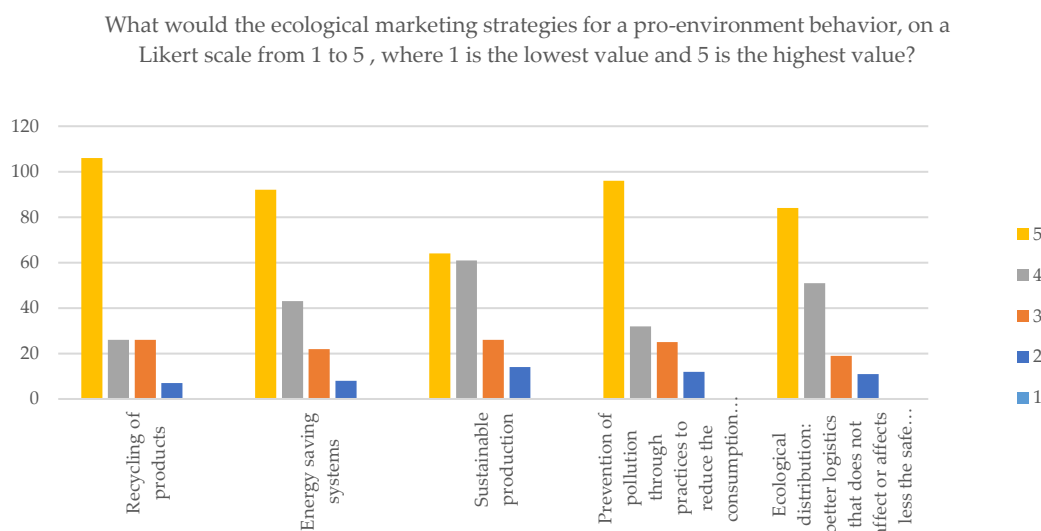
**Figure no. 3 Definition variants for companies with social responsibility to the Environment**

Source: author elaboration

Of the variants shown in Figure 3, most of the respondents opted for the definitions:

- Permanent optimization of performance in environmental protection work, by preventing pollution, technological risks and accidents with negative environmental repercussions
- Make environmental efforts and show compliance with environmental standards
- It is a tool capable of helping organizations to be sustainable, by financial assurance, minimizing negative impact on the environment, thus acting in accordance with community expectations

A company with social responsibility to the environment is one that copes with efforts to protect the environment, shows compliance with environmental standards and has as its main target the efficient optimization of performance in environmental protection activity, by preventing pollution, technological risks and accidents with negative repercussions on the environment.



**Figure no. 4 Marketing Strategies for Pro-Environment Behavior**

Source: author elaboration

From the perspective of respondents, the greatest efforts should be undertaken towards product recycling, pollution prevention through practices to reduce the consumption of materials, water and energy, energy saving systems, green distribution and last place in the respondents' ranking of sustainable production.

Of these cases, "Lack of education" was invoked by 63% and "Recklessness" by 36%. Only 1% of respondents cited "Financial causes" as reasons for not sufficiently protecting the environment.

If we were to discuss what the benefits would be, the positive results in addressing environmental strategies for a green society, respondents listed: reducing long-term spending, growing the business by creating new product/service variants to complement the existing line and strengthening the leadership position. Also the elements of ecological marketing that strengthen the company's image in the vision of the population are: the design and development of ecological services with superior characteristics, respectively improved compared to the conventional variants existing on the market; creating interesting, exciting and educational web pages about the value expected by consumers from environmental benefits; promoting and presenting characteristics and adding the value of ecological values to the representative target segments and adapting them to the needs, expectations and preferences of individuals; obtaining 'green' recommendations and certifications representative of environmental benefits issued by recognised authorities in the field and educating consumers to search for and recognise these signs; educating consumers through appropriate marketing messages and highlighting the intrinsic benefits of environmental benefits, such as: "no pesticides", "healthier", "effective" and "which support the realising of financial savings", 'natural', 'adapted for human consumption', " which protects nature". There is a growing interest among consumers in the protection of the natural environment and they are changing their purchasing behaviour. People want to live a clean environment. As a result, many firms need to devote themselves to green marketing in order to minimise waste and, at the same time, to act in response to the growing demand for environmentally friendly products and services.

### Correlation tests

The Spearman correlation coefficient was used to test the links between variables. The main reason we chose this coefficient is that the vast majority of the variables analysed are measured using ordinal scales. The coefficient takes values from the range [-1;1], when the value tends towards [-1] it indicates a strong inverse correlation, when the coefficient tends towards 0 indicates the absence of a correlation, and when it tends towards 1 indicates the presence of a strong direct correlation.

In this section we want to see to what extent the level of income and the level of education influences the concern for the environment, one hypothesis would be that a higher income level or a higher level of education would lead to a higher concern for environmental problems.

**Table no. 2 The link between the level of education and social responsibility**

Correlations				
			3. Specify what studies you have (last educational institution graduated).	7. What is the time frame for your family's net monthly income?
Spearman's rho	20. Do you consider that companies' approach to green marketing strategies and demonstrating a high level of social responsibility can increase brand loyalty among socially aware consumers?	Correlation Coefficient	-0,083	-0,120
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,288	0,146
		N	165	148

Source: own elaboration

We find that we do not obtain representative correlations from a statistic point of view (Sig. >0.05). The value of the coefficient tends towards 0.

**Table no. 3 The link between salary level and environmental responsibility**

Correlations				
			3. Specify what studies you have (last educational institution graduated).	7. What is the time frame for your family's net monthly income?
Spearman's rho	21. Do you prefer to buy/use products/services of companies that you consider to demonstrate a high level of social responsibility? Such as: product which does not contain toxic materials or substances affecting ozone, produced from material	Correlation Coefficient	0,011	-0,066
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,888	0,424
		N	165	148

Source: own elaboration

Nor in the case of question No. 21 we do not obtain representative correlations from a statistic point of view (Sig. >0.05). The value of the coefficient tends towards 0.

**Table No. 4 The link between the size of the organisation and social responsibility**

Correlations					
			3. Specify what studies you have (last educational institution graduated).	7. What is the time frame for your family's net monthly income?	6. Size of the organization
Spearman's rho	30. On a scale of 1 to 5, must environmental organisations' responsibility be compulsory, regulated by normative acts?	Correlation Coefficient	-0,014	-0,009	-0,174*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,855	0,912	0,025
		N	165	148	165

Source: own elaboration

Based on the correlation tests carried out, we can conclude that assumptions No.1 and 2 that people with higher incomes or higher levels of education tend to be more concerned about



environmental problems is disproved. We have not identified any statically representative correlation between income or education levels and opinions related to the surrounding environment. This is gratifying as it demonstrates that concern for the environment has become a general concern of the entire civil society.

The only representative correlation (Sig.  $<0.05$ ) identified is that between the size of the enterprise in which the respondents carry out their activity and their opinion regarding the introduction by normative acts of the obligation of responsibility towards the environment. It is a reverse correlation, i.e. those in smaller enterprises stronger support the idea of mandatory introduction of these environmental rules, while respondents in larger enterprises do not so strongly support the need for these normative acts. This is also in line with the idea that smaller enterprises tend not to implement as many environmental responsibility projections as larger enterprises, which may be an explanation for this correlation. The intensity of the correlation is relatively low, which indicates that there are other factors that influence the opinion of the respondents.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, environmental degradation has increased as industry develops. Thus, with the industrial era it was seen as a priority issue by people who no longer wanted an increasingly technologically evolved lifestyle, but a healthy one. As there are changes in people's mentality and implicitly in people's lifestyle, the concept of marketing has been taken to another level, encompassing this ecological side. As time goes on, evolution and the planet's level of pollution, the definition of green marketing has become increasingly complex.

We wanted this study to establish how the local community understands social responsibility for the environment in which we live.

Also, in this study, our objective was to seek/understand the social responsibilities of businesses assumed by the local community.

Finally, one of the main objectives of this project was to highlight how social responsibility as well as the use of different green marketing strategies will enhance the financial performance of Romanian organisations and how this is viewed by the local community.

A positive conclusion that has come out of our work is that Romanian employees are extremely concerned about issues such as sustainable development and growth, social responsibility and environmental protection, an idea that also emerges from the fact that a very large percentage of respondents responded that protecting the environment is a necessity (94.55%) and not a trend. Thus, they are eager to look for jobs in organisations that recognise the importance and effects of being pro-social and pro-environmental responsible. Another major finding resulting from this study is that, depending on the population studied, the most important criterion for drafting social responsibility is participation in environmental protection and the promotion of biodiversity as well as care for improving quality control systems. However, it seems encouraging to find that Romanian consumers pay great attention to the social responsibility policy of an organization and are, in most cases, aware of their intention to purchase products from a socially responsible organisation, although according to the study, only 38.18% of respondents purchased products from companies that know they are socially responsible, here we will take into account the fact that most of them answered the following question where they bought products, which made it difficult for them to complete the questionnaire. We have achieved comprehensive results on the question of choosing the most relevant definition of social responsibility. Thus we have highlighted that social responsibility in general is an appropriate tool to determine how organisations are able to achieve social and environmental standards without compromising their performance, productivity and competitiveness. Next, for other respondents, social responsibility is a tool to help organisations minimise negative environmental impacts and act in line with community expectations. According to our data, respondents highlighted numerous components that they recognized as being related to corporate social responsibility, including: sustainable productivity, environmental protection,

sustainable performance, eco-efficiency, responsible production, environment and social performance and stakeholder involvement and shareholder involvement.

The generalization of these results is subject to certain limitations. Although the sample population was chosen in an appropriate manner, the number of respondents is quite small. It is therefore recommended that future research pains be carried out on more varied communities from a more varied demographic point of view, on enterprises at national level involving all stakeholders and environmental experts at the same time.

However, although this request is based on a small sample of participants, the results suggest the importance of individuals and organisations in socially responsible action, especially in current times, which are predominantly uncertain both economically and socially.

It is time to protect the environment that should be transformed into a fresh environment for the next generation and, similarly, Romania can establish environmental marketing problems for the consumer and organisations that believe that green marketing can improve accessibility, product performance, protect environmental danger, protect health hazard, damage quality and represent a powerful new source of innovation. In this way, organisations can achieve a good green customer education.

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