

# The Responsible Consumption: Factor of the Development of Environmental Responsibility in Morocco

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**Abstract**—Nowadays, people are overwhelmingly aware of the major challenges for the planet and begin to accept and make gestures towards the environment. In Morocco, the responsible consumption is only at its beginning but a collective, progressive and growing awareness of the need to respect the environment is forging. This paper aims to analyze consumer behavior with regard to Moroccan green products as an indicator of the degree of interest and involvement regarding the environment. The Moroccan consumers seem to be aware of the challenges of sustainable development as well as the impact of their consumption on the environment but they delays integrating them into their purchasing behavior.

**Index Terms**—About environmental communication, green marketing, responsible consumption.

## I. INTRODUCTION

At a time of globalization and environmental issues of all kinds, it is time to ask more and more the question about our impacts on the natural environment, on people and our way of life. Consumption is part of life. Consumption is the use that we make of goods and services to satisfy our needs. The latter can be quite essential as well as relatively superfluous created by social pressure or by the craze that advertising creates in us.

Protecting and safeguarding the environment have also become essential principles for most companies, who now commit themselves to take them into account in all management processes. These companies are increasingly faced with the expectations of stakeholders in terms of ethics, social and environmental responsibility and more generally to mandatory sustainability.

The acts of responsible purchasing are a real economic leverage as they represent all the everyday and one-off purchases of individuals, businesses and communities.

In Morocco, environmental issues begin to attract many people, even if this notion is not yet a major topic for debate within the company, as environmental commitment is apprehended as a new phenomenon.

To illustrate the consciousness and the commitment of citizens and companies in Morocco, we led a study within a sample of consumers as well as Moroccan industrial companies. It aims to reveal the state of the practice of responsible consumption in Morocco and the role that environmental communication plays to promote it.

## II. IRRESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AT THE SERVICE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Given the abundance of supply, the profusion of labels and the sometimes biased promises, when they are not misleading, consumers have every reason to lose their heads [1].

### A. Generalisations on Responsible Consumption

A responsible consumer is the expression of a warned, responsible and committed consumer who has to encourage the good practices of consumption and denounce the bad one.

The sustainable purchasing practices should favour companies and brands that are committed to a sustainable development approach, or certifications. They also aim to purchase more ethical and environment-friendly products stemming from fair trade.

Consumption becomes a militant movement and responsible consumption consists in directing the consumer to better choose products of everyday life. It is a question of having the means to buy with full knowledge of the facts. It is the public, as consumer concerned by the environment that makes the best guarantee of the environmental cause [2].

The integration of environmental protection in consumption implies a change in behavior and daily activities. It aims, among others, to reduce pollution associated with disposal of household waste, to focus on the least polluting products in their design, production, transportation and disposal. It also consists of the rational use of raw materials, such as water and energy resources in the context of sustainable development.

Concern for the environment has two dimensions: the attitude of consumers expressing an interest in ecology and the adoption of a purchasing behavior consistent with the conservation systems [3].

### 1) The various forms of fair trade

The concept of responsible trade covers several concepts, to which consumers are, based on their profile, more or less perceptive. Sustainable trade is the most generic term, implying a trading system that does not harm the environment or deteriorate social conditions while promoting economic growth.

Three types of responsible trade (fair trade, green business and, more recently, ethical business) have developed separately from each other and were often in competition for consumers. But now, they are beginning to converge on key points [4]. Fair trade guarantees to producers a prices that allow them to live decently and gain access to development.

The term green business means the use of standards for products and manufacturing processes and measuring the environmental impact of products at the stage of production,

use or disposal, whether applied by manufacturers and producers, or required by purchasers in the supply chain. It is often associated with an "eco-label."

Ethical trade focuses on the fundamental rights of workers, respect for human rights and standards of the International Labour Organization. Its purpose is to ensure that production facilities in supply chains meet basic standards of labor law, protect the health and safety and do not use child or forced labour.

The approaches of responsible trade are different according to countries, productive sectors as well as organizations. Its viability as a commercial proposition depends largely on consumer demand.

#### *2) The consumers facing the responsible consumption*

Consumers are increasingly aware of sustainability issues. These attitudes are realized by the appearance of new consumers, known as "consume-actors" or responsible consumers who will be the source of alternative consumption trends [5].

Based on their connection to responsible consumption, consumers can be classified into several categories according to their profiles, more or less sensitive to responsible consumption. Each individual struggles internally between being the citizen, in favour of protecting his planet, and the customer hooked by price tags and eager to find products closer to home without much change to his habits [6].

Responsible consumers must inquire about the origin of what they consume. They must have access to sufficiently neutral information, not guided by economic interests, which allows maintaining a critical mind and making an informed decision.

This environmental awareness can be integrated into the marketing strategy of the company and is reflected in particular by the appearance of environmental marketing and different forms of environmental communication.

#### *B. Environmental Communication-A Lever of Responsible Consumption*

Reference [7] highlights the double benefit of environmental communication, considering that on the one hand, it informs consumers about the virtues of a product and, on the other, it helps build the social legitimacy of business.

The company must thus be permanently capable of answering for its acts and their impacts, not only with its shareholders, but also with all the public who are concerned one way or the other by its activity in particular the consumers.

The stakeholder theory provides a fruitful theoretical framework for understanding the scope of research on environmental communication. The basic idea is that the company cannot ignore its influential stakeholders who can quickly emerge as actors capable of influencing the performance of the company [8]. It must always justify the usefulness of its activities and the consequences. The role of communication is therefore essential to create an image that is conducive to the future of the company allowing it to create a climate of trust with stakeholders [9].

#### *1) The environment as a communication space*

ISO 14063 requires that environmental communication is

a process of information sharing to build trust, credibility and partnership and build awareness used in decision-making. Companies need to integrate environmental communication to their marketing approach in order to develop a competitive advantage by communicating their environmental performance to the market, the recipients are mainly customers [10], and to improve the corporate image by associating its image or that of one of its products to that of an ecological trend [11], recipients are mainly the public, people living near factories or employees.

Marketing is at the heart of the emerging issues of sustainable development [12]. There is a multitude of definitions of a marketing that is more environmentally friendly, the common denominator being the business response to the growing consumer trends that reflect the environment.

Many names have been attributed to current marketing interested in consumer-related environment: ecological marketing [13]-[15], green marketing [16]-[19], environmental marketing [20] and eco-marketing or Green-marketing [21]-[22].

Reference [23] notes that these notions are not equivalent. She highlights the fact that environmental marketing should not be dependent on consumer demand but rather come from the willingness of producers to engage in environmentally friendly production.

#### *2) The means of the environmental communication*

Environmental communication cannot be limited to only traditional tools of communication. The response of business has thus manifested by an extension of these tools and the emergence of a range of specific communication channels to enable it to develop its environmental commitment and gain some social dimension. The choice of these distinguished channels depends on the objective, the message conveyed and the target group the communication is addressed to.

The various documents, the reports and the publications stating commitments and environmental results of the company are the environment plan, the environmental report, the environment charter and the sustainable development report. All these publications serve as a platform for an environmental communication adapted to a target public that is always seeking information on the environmental performances of companies. These publications will also find in the environmental sponsorship and the public relations a subject which will strengthen the credibility of the speech held by the company.

### **III. PERCEPTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITY IN MOROCCO**

In developing countries, the consumer is much more enticed by the value for money than by the conditions in which the product was realized.

In conditions of very keen competition of the current world economy, assure an environmental reputation is of a crucial importance for the commercial success of any company. In this sense, several companies in Morocco opted for the environmental communication to inform about their behavior and commitments towards the environment. These practices

were imposed by the multinational companies which operate in Morocco in a specific institutional, legal, social and economic context.

#### *A. The Culture of Environmental Responsibility in Morocco*

Since the Conference of Rio in 1993, Morocco strengthened its commitment in favour of the sustainable development. It is due to the rationalization of the use of natural resources and to the pursuit in the continuous improvement of the quality of life of the citizens. Morocco is signatory to international conventions on desertification, protection of endangered species, pollution, protection of the ozone layer and maritime pollutions.

At the summit of sustainable development in Johannesburg in September 2002, the participation of Morocco marked its will to contribute to the integration of the environmental standards in the definition of the objectives of the growth.

The year 2006 also brought profound changes in the adoption of the Decree on waste water discharge. Several meetings were held with the associations and federations of the different sectors to educate the industry about it [24].

Several associations were created whose mission is the promotion of the sustainable development and the practices of responsible business in Morocco. Several events were so organized with the aim of making sensitive the national and international opinions in the current environmental and human stakes as well as in the sustainable development, promoting the ecology and the sustainable development to create and develop a Moroccan eco-public-spirited feeling, create synergies at every level and favor the emergence of innovative solutions for the future and finally, make benefit Morocco from innovations and foreign ecological headways.

The Mohamed VI foundation for the environment concluded a convention with the General Confederacy of the Companies of Morocco so that all the participants in the act of production make a civic commitment to actions through the whole national territory.

All these programs will be accompanied by awareness campaigns and education of the youngsters so that they integrate sustainable development into their daily behaviour following the example of the program "Eco-Schools", led in partnership with the economic operators, whose purpose is the promotion of environmental consciousness in children.

#### *B. The Emergence of Responsible Consumption*

In Morocco, it is important to make the protection of the environment through an orientation towards consumer products and services related to the concept of sustainable development. Numerous activities were organized with the cooperation of the federation of associations of consumers in Morocco the purpose of which is to highlight the role that the consumer can play as actor in the sustainable development.

On the occasion of the world day of the rights of the consumer, the accent was put on the right of consumer to a healthy environment from which the protection requires an improvement of the modes of production as well as a change of the modes of consumption.

The debates also focused on the requirements of the

culture of responsible consumption as key element in the process of sustainable development and the environmental protection and the role of information, education and communication in raising sensitivity and broadcasting of the concept " responsible consumption " on an individual and collective scale.

To allow Morocco to answer to the requirements of the international community in this domain, several scientific meetings were organized the last few years in several cities of the kingdom, mainly in Rabat. They come as part of a project financed by the Foundation Anna Lindh, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNESCO and The European Union (EU) and which brings together several partners: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Spain. Several interactive training workshops were supervised by foreign consultants for the benefit of over a hundred teachers, NGO representatives and students.

The organization of these events aims to raise awareness within public opinion on this concept and also participate in the emergence of a new generation of responsible consumers. Several national initiatives have been taken in order to link the fundamentals and requirements of sustainable modes of consumption and responsible production, especially the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) and the national charter for the environment and development [25].

### **IV. EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION IN THE EMERGENCE OF RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION IN MOROCCO**

To improve our knowledge of the current state of responsible consumption in Morocco, we conducted a survey of a sample of firms from different industries whose officials involved are seeking to join an approach to environmental responsibility and communicate it.

In parallel, we surveyed a sample of consumers composed mainly of students of higher education, managers and executives. This is justified by the fact that the concept of development and responsible consumption is still in its early days in Morocco and the means used up to now are not accessible to all socio-professional categories.

#### *A. Research Methodology*

Our methodology is based on a review of the literature supplemented by observations made in the field. Data was collected during 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with the sample consisting, depending on the company, of Marketing officials or also Communication Environment officials, the aim being to approach environmental communication, internally and through the people involved, to everyday environmental management.

A questionnaire was also administered on face to face to 200 people. The respondents are mainly composed of executives, managers and of students of higher education.

##### *1) Choice of the field of study*

According to [26], the factors of age, income and education level affect the transactional and social sensitivity of consumers. A TNS Sofres study conducted in 2004 also found that the palatability facing sustainable consumption

depends essentially on the level of income and education level. People who buy at least once a month a fair trade product are in an urban group, executives, with a high income and graduates of higher education.

The choice of the sample studied cared to represent the interests of real issues in relation to the subject studied. It was also made in relation to an opportunity to access the data. The question of purchasing power is predominant as the responsible trade products are relatively more expensive.

## *2) Data analysis*

Our analysis does not rest on a representative statistical sample, but more on what [27] call a "theoretical sample".

The transcription of interviews is an indispensable stage for the continuation of the process. The operated analysis of contents was manually made. It materialized through a thematic analysis through sorting, classification and categorization of the identified themes.

For the questionnaire, we sifted through the data collected by means of the software of statistical treatment "SPHINX", which allowed us significant results in the form of single and multiple inputs.

## *B. Main Results*

The survey invokes a progressive awareness which has developed to promote a new conception of consumption and production, based on the principles of durability. It has also highlighted the necessity of strengthening the information of consumers about present and future risks, connected to products and services of their choice, and the health benefits of ecological consumption and production method. Many organizations do not communicate information or communicate it little in environmental management. The leaders are implicated in this informative deficiency.

In the speech of the questioned consumers, we have been able to discern a big interest for the proposal of integrating the concepts of sustainable development and environmental protection in school curriculums, training courses and activities of raising awareness for the benefit of the schooled people. The concept of consumption and sustainable development will thus have to occupy a prominent place in curriculums.

The interviewees notice that the advertising has certainly a role to play in raising awareness to sustainable development. Indeed, advertising as a tool of persuasion encouraging the purchase of products should encourage choice and consumption behavior consistent with the objectives of sustainable development. The advertising campaigns led to encourage more sustainable choices of consumption often lack professionalism and means.

Moroccans are increasingly likely to move towards responsible consumption. This increase in consumption is explained by a responsible awareness of the Moroccan consumer not to mention the increasing demands of enterprises and the specific communication about products involved.

For the most part of the interviewees, consume in a responsible way is consume less in general. Some people occasionally purchase fair trade products but they still are not totally converted to responsible consumption.

The Moroccan consumers are not all perceptible to the

same arguments. The big cause which is mostly quoted is global warming.

Consumers are increasingly skeptical about the ability of firms to consider sustainable development. They believe that companies putting forward civic and ethical arguments do it above all for commercial reasons. For companies reporting to have adopted a policy of environmental communication, the main objective is to create a brand and look to gain some legitimacy from the various public monitoring the improvement of performance and economy of energy and finally the search for regulatory compliance. The actions completed or under construction concern the information on the website, event communication and participation in the development of the region of implantation.

The quasi-totality of the questioned companies uses their web sites as main support of their communication on their actions in favour of environmental protection under a section entitled for most cases "sustainable development".

## *V. SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

For the Moroccan consumers, the origin of the product, its composition and its price are among the most important criteria for deciding to purchase.

The price of the responsible products, with an image of high quality, slows shopping for sustainable development. It is therefore interesting to identify the barriers and obstacles to responsible consumption among which prices, lack of information and the difficulty reaching the products. Many products are imported and consumers consider that they further damage the environment mainly because of the environmental impact of transport.

Consumers do not always have the time or the necessary information to make reasonable choices. Responsible consumption will grow thanks to responsible consumers who refuse the unbearable margin products, made in appalling conditions and not within the logic of reduced destructive impact on the environment and social ties.

The wide divergence of different definitions of environmental communication made by the leaders brings out the fact that the apprehension of this concept in the organization seems to be still in a preliminary phase.

A campaign of training, information and awareness should also be organized for decision makers and technical managers of different industrial sectors. They should focus on sustainable development, rational management of natural resources, national and international issues of environmental protection and reforms implemented or planned in Morocco. Companies are also called to promote sustainable consumption, giving information on their goods and proposing friendly environment products.

## *VI. CONCLUSION*

In Morocco, the notion of ecology in the marketing and communication strategies is being developed; it is just beginning to take off in the world of Moroccan advertising. Groups of associations of environmental protection are militating in this direction and the Moroccans are beginning

to understand and respect the concept of environment and sustainable development. Responsible consumption is still marginal, however, but growing rapidly.

Sustainable development passes inevitably by the adoption by every consumer of a practice of responsible consumption. The promotion of this practice requires the implication of all the actors: states, administrations, citizens, associations and companies.

The knowledge and techniques of marketing can help to better position sustainable products and contribute to bring forwards choices of consumption compatible with a sustainable development.

Consumption behaviors meet a complex dynamic the advertising of which is a factor of influence among others. It is therefore possible to use advertising to promote good practice, provided that the means available to do so are devoted to integrated campaigns on different complementary media. The reflection must be upstream of the advertising industry; the product must comply with the principles of sustainable development.

The needs in environment are still immense, and although the will to overcome the environmental problems is displayed by the various stakeholders in this field, the pace of investment is still slow in the opinion of many actors in the sector.

Consumers have a role to play in changing consumption patterns in the evolution of the application to change the offer and in the requirements for an adequate legislative framework.

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