

Green Entrepreneurship and Green Products: Consumers' Views and Attitudes in Regional Unit of Evros

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Abstract. Environmental challenges consider to be directly related with issues of economic growth and firms have to play crucial role in sustainable development. European environmental policy aims, among others, in the creation of a favorable framework for the development of green entrepreneurship. The research was carried out in Evros regional unit using questionnaire. The aim of the study is to investigate the views and attitudes of the consumers about green entrepreneurship and green products. The sample was 400 consumers. The results show that the majority of the respondents know about green entrepreneurship. The green products offer competitive advantage to the firms and more specifically organic products are the most popular among the respondents.

Keywords: green entrepreneurship, green products, consumers, environment

1 Introduction

Adopting a sustainable way of environmental management is an alternative of moderating environmental impacts caused by entrepreneurship activities (Boiral, 2006; Haden et al., 2009). Precautionary environmental management can be achieved by adopting various techniques as to create green products (Nielsen and Wenzel, 2002; Pujari et al., 2000; Fuller and Ottman, 2004), establishing clean technology (Kuehr, 2007) and using environmental management systems (Ghisellini and Thurston, 2005) aimed at environmental awareness.

Adopting practices for creating green businesses and products, besides environmental and social benefits, has in any cases benefits for businesses as many

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consumers prefer those with socially responsible name (Skordoulis et al., 2013; Ntanos et al., 2014).

The objective of this research is to investigate the views and attitudes of the consumers in Evros regional unit related to green entrepreneurship and green products.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Green Entrepreneurship and Green Products

Green entrepreneurship is defined as the effort to minimize environmental footprint, namely the total environmental and social cost resulting due to human entrepreneurship activity (Hall et al., 2010).

Green firms are aware of the cost, innovation and advantages of the marketing and seek for a social and moral change in entrepreneurial sector. There are two kinds of firms, these that produce green products and those that are using green techniques in the productive line. All the kinds of green firms contribute in a sustainable society (Guziana, 2011).

European environmental policy enhances green market development releasing suitable guidelines and directives, a framework essential for entrepreneurs that are interested in establishing green firms. Good environmental quality depends on technological innovation large industries use in order to manage environmental problems that arise by themselves and one of these is waste management. They can deal with above need by establishing a green firm (Cope, 1988).

2.2 Consumers' Attitudes for Green Products

Consumer's attitude is a combination of mental and physical activities in an effort to seek and evaluate market and use of products and services (Cole, 2007). Fiedler and Wanke (2001) recognize that net economic variables, like income, associated with consumption, while other important elements are their feelings and perceptions. (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 1999).

The environmentally friendly consuming attitudes include issues related in selecting environmentally friendly products and in avoiding non – environmentally friendly products. Hasnelly and Sari (2012) stated that consumers buy a product according to their perception about its value. The consumer group where an individual fits, according to his or her preference strongly influences the decision to buy a green product. Consumers that are likely to buy green products mostly are in the group called “Millenials”, etc. between 18 and 40 years old (Skordoulis et al., 2013; Ntanos et al., 2014).

In some cases consumers have the willingness to pay more for ecological products, recycling, green products or green package for a product (Mathur and

Mathur, 2000). In other studies consumers are willing to buy products produced through green techniques, although this situation is more likely to happen when these products are not more expensive than conventional ones (Skordoulis et al., 2013; Ntanos et al., 2014).

3 Research methodology

The research was conducted in Evros regional unit, Greece using a questionnaire. The area has some of the rarest and valuable natural resources in Greece with important development perspectives in the primary and tourism sector (Arabatzis and Grigoroudis, 2010; Grigoroudis et al. 2012).

This study is based on primary data and is developed in two levels. The first one includes the results of a quality research conducted during September to December 2013. In this period researchers approached certain consumer focus groups. The second one includes quantity research. This research conducted from January till April 2014 using a questionnaire based on the previous quality research. We collected 400 questionnaires in total.

4 Results

4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics

The sample of the research presents the following characteristics: 42.5% was men and 57.5% women. Most of the respondents were between 31-40 years old (35.5%), following by the respondents whose age was between 21-30 (32.25%). Lower percentages were ages between 61-70 (3.5%) and over 70 (2.75%). Mean average age is 37 years. As far as their marital status nearly half of them are married (49.0%) and 41% single.

About their educational level the majority of the respondents has finished secondary education (36.5%) and 29.5% has finished tertiary education. Only 3.5% has not graduated primary school while 9.3% has graduate primary school and finally the rest of the respondents have finished technical secondary education. Nearly 60% of the respondents (59.9%) are wage earners (civil servants, private employees, workers, retired), 21.8% are depended economically by others (unemployed, housekeepers), 12.3% are free lancers and 6.3% are students. The fact that most of the respondents are civil servants highlights their willingness to buy things and their attitude towards green markets and green products.

Finally, about their monthly income most of the respondents earn from less than 600.00 € to 1,000.00 € (66.8% in total), 21.5% earn 1,001.00 to 1,500.00 €, 5.8% have an income that is averaged from 1,501.00 to 2,000.00 €. Only 2.5% have an

income that is between 2,000.00 € and 2,500.00 € and 2.8% an income over 2,500.00.

4.2 Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Green Entrepreneurship

In the question concerning the knowledge respondents have about green entrepreneurship, the majority of them (66.8%) stated familiar about it.

The most significant types of green entrepreneurship are “production and selling of organic farming products” (32.75%) and “production and selling of protected areas certified products” (22.5%).

Table 1 shows various environmental management systems that most of the firms have to apply in their production process. Respondents believe that a “national or local environmental management system” (36.8%) is, by far, the most appropriate in order to buy similar products.

Table 1. Main environmental management systems

Environmental Management Systems	Frequency	(%)
National or local management system	147	36.8
ISO 14001	59	14.8
ISO 16000	62	15.5
EMAS	59	14.8
ISO 14064	48	12.0
Other	25	6.3

4.3 Barriers and Incentives for Green Entrepreneurship

Green entrepreneurship considers being a form of social return as respondents consider that this kind of entrepreneurship aims in maximizing social benefit (38.3%). Approximately one fourth of the respondents consider the above statement as “very much” (24.8%) and another 25.5% as “moderate”.

Additionally, respondents tend to believe that a friendly environmental behavior by a firm could improve its image to the other people.

As far as green techniques consider a source of innovation or are directly related with it, 21.3% stated as “very likely”, while 44.3% “likely”.

Respondents consider the “development of competitive advantage” as the main motive of a firm to offer green products (21.0%).

4.4 Consumer Attitudes Towards Green Products

Significant percentage of the respondents (33.75%) stated that they buy “sometimes” green products, when they go shopping, 29.25% answered “rarely”,

about 22.5% buys green products “frequently”, 11.5% “never” buys green products and only 3.25% stated that buys “always”.

About their willingness to pay for green products, a large percentage of the respondents (61.5%) stated that they are not willing to pay more in order to buy a green product. The reason lies in the current financial situation of the households where most of them are not in place to spend more money as they would like to do.

People distinguish main elements that differentiate green products from others in their mind. The first of all is the “quality” of a green product (49.0%) following by its price in the market (30.3%). These two characteristics shows that our sample is not differentiate compared to other similar studies, as the relation between quality and price was always determinant in purchasing products. Other factors that characterize green products in a lower degree are its “label” (13.0%), its color (3.5%), brand name (3.0%) and the “design” of the package in which merchants offer the product (1.3%).

5 Conclusions

According to the results of the research we conclude that most of the respondents are familiar with the concept of “green entrepreneurship”. Also they consider that firms producing green products, in order to reduce their expenses and to use natural resources in a sustainable way, must adopt techniques of saving energy use. Respondents consider the “production and offering organic products” as the most common type of green entrepreneurship.

The participants in the research consider that green entrepreneurship aims “very much” in maximizing social benefits, while the adoption of green techniques in production line can enhance the firm’s image. “Competitive advantage” is the most significant reason of a firm to produce and offer green products to the market.

In the context of Evros regional unit it is obvious that local authorities and central government must provide additional motives in developing green entrepreneurship in the area as there are many natural resources not exploited yet. Green entrepreneurship, especially in remote and less developed areas like Evros can play crucial role in vitalizing local economy.

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