

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SME MARKETING

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Abstract

On the one hand, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are certainly predominant in the Moroccan economic and productive fabric. 80% is the figure that represents the weight of SMEs / VSEs in the Moroccan economy. Of course, behind this percentage lies an incredible variety of companies. On the other hand, the behavior of companies in terms of sustainable development and marketing, materialized by the initiatives and actions of entrepreneurs, are by no means identical, particularly in a context marked by difficulties in accessing information on international standards and developments in sustainable development strategies. Indeed, between proactivity and acquiescence for some, compromise and opportunism for others and reactivity and avoidance for a third group, the range is varied. This heterogeneity is also reflected in the way, efforts and resources invested by each company to communicate its level of commitment to sustainable development. The purpose of this paper is to elaborate a critical review of the literature on the relationship between sustainable development and SME marketing that will lead to the proposal of a methodology for the conduct of an empirical study in a future research work.

Key words: *Sustainable development, SME marketing, Behavior of SMEs.*

Growing international concerns about sustainable development and climate change are leading companies to face the challenge of integrating environmental issues into their strategies and activities. In this context, the creation and successful development of products and services that respect the environment are essential to reduce the environmental impact of industrial activities and promote a cleaner production. Marketing is fundamental to achieve this goal since it deals with the development of ideas and the definition of the product concept and its characteristics.

First of all, we will discuss the relationship between sustainable development and marketing, as for the second point it will focus on the presentation of a critical review of the literature on sustainable development and marketing of SMEs in the Moroccan context.

I- Sustainable development and marketing: an approach based on taking into account the interests of stakeholders

Sustainable development fits in the frame of the precepts of stakeholder theory which considers that the company must take into account not only the interests of shareholders (monist vision of the firm) but also the interests of customers, suppliers, employees, regulators and the community at large (Freeman et al, 2007). Stakeholder marketing is part of this vision; it is considered as the set of activities and processes within a system of social institutions that facilitate and maintain value through exchange relations with different stakeholders (Hult et al., 2011). Specifically, an organization achieves market-oriented sustainability as it strategically aligns with customers' product needs and desires, as well as the interests of multiple stakeholders concerned with social responsibility issues involving economic, environmental and social dimensions (Hult and Tomas, 2010).

1. Sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development was historically coined by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development in a document entitled "Our Future for ALL". This concept advocates that development be planned to meet the needs of the present generation without harming the ability of the next generation to meet their own (Brundtland, 1987).

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The goals of sustainable development are a major focus of international efforts to promote the overall well-being of the coming decades; it is about poverty reduction, public health improvement and protection of the environment (Fiorini and Hoekman, 2018).

Sustainable development is often considered as a concept that integrates three dimensions: environmental, economic and social. Indeed, the environmental dimension focuses on the preservation of natural resources, which ensure the natural function of local ecosystems and nature in general. The social dimension is about solidarity and cooperation with other communities. As for the economic dimension, it targets the quality of life through economic self-determination and the self-development of both individuals and societies (Sinakou et al., 2018).

2. Marketing for sustainable development

The consideration of sustainable development in the company's marketing activities is reflected in the writings of researchers in different ways. Some are adopting the concept of green marketing which involves integrating strategies to promote products by taking into account environmental claims about the attributes, systems, policies and processes of companies that manufacture or sell products (Parakash, 2002). In the same vein, researchers have developed the concept of ecological marketing, which consists of a set of approaches that seek to reconcile current marketing practices with ecological and social realities (Gheorghiu et al., 2013). Others embrace the notions of societal and social marketing by considering that social marketing is the application of commercial marketing principles to help individuals adopt practices that are in their interest or in the interest of society. As for societal marketing, it aims not only to satisfy the immediate wishes of customers, but also to serve the long-term interests of society (Kotler, 1994). Some people integrate ethics into marketing by pointing out that ethical marketing is the application of ethics in the marketing process (Nguyen and Rowley, 2015). And still others who borrow the word sustainable to integrate it into marketing considering that sustainable marketing refers to a state of mind and a process that results in the integration of sustainable development into the company's strategy and which materializes through all stages of the marketing mix, from the product lifecycle analysis to its design and price setting, to its communication and distribution, while ensuring the interests of all stakeholders (Lavorata, 2012). Others talk about Islamic marketing as the process of identification and implementation of value-maximizing strategies for the well-being of stakeholders in particular and society in general by referring to the guidelines cited in the Quran and Sunnah (Sayed Ali, 2011). In other words, Islamic marketing is based on the principle of maximizing value based on fairness and justice for the overall well-being of society (Saeed et al., 2001).

Loupe (2006) considers that the concepts of sustainable development and marketing are two divergent concepts: the first seeks to prevail the interest of the company whereas the second looks for the interest of the entire community. It considers that companies adhere to sustainable development when they become aware of the increasing sensitivity of market players to the challenges of sustainable development or by strategic choice when they decide to engage their social responsibilities in all their activities. It has also tried to find a common ground and convergence between these two concepts by considering that one can integrate the objectives of sustainable development in a marketing program by: the analysis of the sensitivity of the market to the stakes of sustainable development, the diagnosis of the company and its offer in relation to the market and the targeted segment, the definition of marketing objectives and their expected impacts in terms of sustainable development, the adaptation of the marketing program to integrate objectives and impacts of sustainable development, development of a plan for valuing the efforts made and the performances obtained.

In contrast to Loupe's (2006) vision, by referring to the concept of stakeholder marketing, the concepts of marketing and sustainable development converge by taking into account the interests of all stakeholders.

II- Sustainable development and marketing of SMEs in the Moroccan context

1. Sustainable development in the Moroccan context

The launch by King Mohamed VI of the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) in 2005 is the starting point for the consideration of sustainable development by institutions and public as well as private companies in Morocco. The objective of this initiative is the fight against poverty, exclusion and precariousness¹. The field of sustainable development was later expanded to cover other areas. Indeed, article 21 of the framework law n ° 99-12 bearing national charter of the environment and sustainable development (BO n ° 6240 of the 18 jourmada I 1435 - March 20, 2014) stipulates that the public establishments and State companies, in particular those engaged in an industrial and commercial activity, and private companies commit themselves to respect the principles and the objectives provided by this law namely:

- Adopt responsible modes and methods of supply, exploitation, production and responsible management that meet the requirements of sustainable development;
- Periodically evaluate the impact of their activities on the environment;
- Reduce to a minimum the negative effects of their activities on the environments and ecosystems in which they are located;
- Contribute to the dissemination of the values of sustainable development by requiring their partners, including their suppliers, to respect the environment and those values;
- Adopt a transparent communication on their environmental management.

To achieve these goals, a number of funds and mechanisms have been created, including the National Environment and Sustainable Development Fund, the Industrial Pollution Control Fund and the Clean Development Mechanism. The purpose of these funds and mechanisms is to finance and support actions and initiatives that promote sustainable development.

In line with this framework law, a legislative framework concerning the regulatory standards has been elaborated, it is the law n ° 11-03 relative to the protection and the development of the environment, of the law n ° 10-95 on water, the law n ° 13-03 on the fight against the pollution of the atmosphere, the law 28-00 on the management of the household waste, of the law n ° 22-10 relating to the use of degradable or biodegradable plastic bags and bags and Law No. 08-01 on quarrying.

A legislative framework for voluntary standards has been developed as well.

We notice the inadequacy of the legal framework governing sustainable development in companies in Morocco given the lack of legislation that contribute to the adoption of modes and methods of supply, exploitation, production and responsible management, responding to the requirements of sustainable development.

Like the legislative framework, the CGEM launched in 2007 a process of labeling companies with the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) label. So far, the number of certified companies has reached 92 companies, of which 32% are SME². The aim of this label is to make socially responsible companies known so as to value them with their partners. It is granted by the

CGEM, for a renewable period of three years, to companies that respect a number of conditions namely: respect for human rights, continuous improvement of working conditions and professional relationships, protection of the environment, prevention of corruption,

¹ Report of the Economic and Social Council, 2017.

² CGEM Moral Report (2018).

respect of the rules of healthy competition, strengthening of the transparency of corporate governance rules, respect for the interests of customers and consumers, promotion of the social responsibility of suppliers and subcontractors and the development of societal commitment¹.

In 2017, the CGEM created an observatory of corporate social responsibility in Morocco (ORSEM) with the aim of promoting, exchanging and highlighting CSR practices in Morocco.

2. Taking sustainable development into account in SME marketing

In Morocco, SMEs account for nearly 95% of the country's productive fabric, contribute to 40% of private investment and 30% of exports (Bentaleb and Louitri, 2011). There are three types of studies in Morocco that have focused on marketing and / or sustainable development in SMEs. The first type focused on the study of the marketing function in SMEs. Indeed, in the majority of the 25 SMEs surveyed in the region of Meknes, it was noted the lack of marketing research and strategic marketing, and that marketing is reduced to its operational dimension at the expense of its strategic dimension (Ailli, 2011). In the same vein, Mekkaoui and AitHeda (2006), in their study conducted in 13 SME exporters of fruits and vegetables, note the centralization of marketing decisions at the level of the general manager, the absence of qualified marketing executives, and the lack of financial means to implement marketing techniques.

The second type of study focuses on sustainable development in SMEs, specifically, Hattabou and Louitri (2011) in their study on the relationship between sustainable development and SME management show that at the strategic level, due to the inadequacy of the means necessary for the SME, the adoption and the implementation of a sustainable development approach, could put the SME in difficulty. In the same vision, Oubihi and Elouidani (2017), in their study of 42 SMEs in the agrifood industry, show that the high cost and lack of financial resources are the main bottlenecks in the engagement of SMEs in actions to protect the environment. They also underline the lack of knowledge of SMEs of the pollution abatement fund set up by the Ministry of the Environment to help polluting industries adopt healthier environmental practices.

In a comparative study between Morocco and Tunisia on the national and international institutional framework of CSR, Labaronne and Gana-Oueslati (2011) underline that Moroccan SMEs adopt CSR to retain stakeholders, improve brand image and economic performance, respect applicable legislation and ethics. Like these favorable factors, there are obstacles to the implementation of CSR in Moroccan SMEs that are manifested in the lack of financial, human, informational, and the doubt on the economic opportunity of this approach. They also underline that for Maghreb SMEs the social responsibility of the company appears as a necessary condition for gaining international market share, their exports depend in part on managers' commitment to CSR.

These results are similar to the results of some researchers in the context of French SMEs. Indeed, Bazillier et al. (2011), in their study of SME practices in the area of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, show that SMEs are unaware of usable tools, existing support and institutional partnerships and focus their actions in areas where legal obligations are strong.

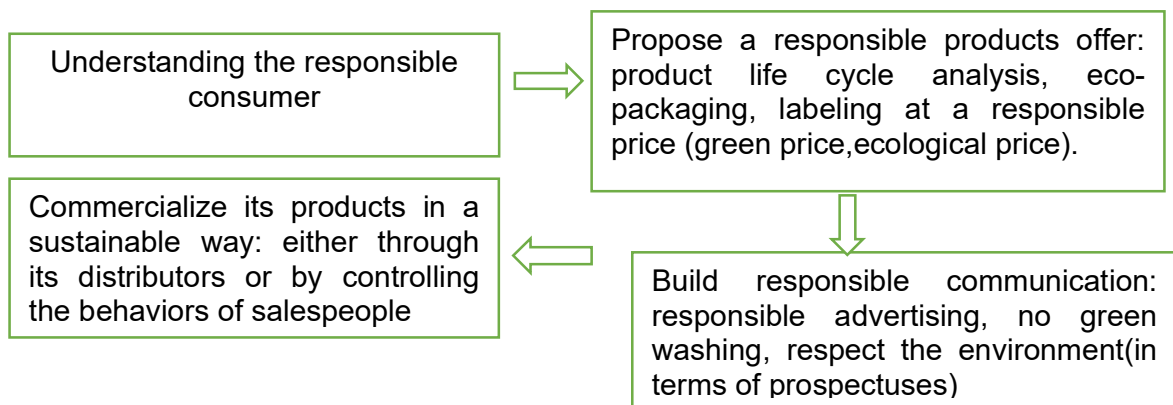
For their part, Temri and Fort (2009) state that the personal characteristics of the owner-manager influence the commitment of SMEs to sustainable development. Small businesses suffer from the lack of power, know-how, financial, temporal and human resources to engage

¹ CGEM Guide (2008), "Presentation and rules for the attribution of the CGEM label for the social responsibility of the company".

in sustainable development actions. They consider these actions as heavy costs, difficult to pass on to consumers.

Unlike the results that were presented, Bocquet (2015) shows in the case study of the SME Biolait that sustainable strategies are not reserved only for global multinationals and that competitiveness issues are insufficient to justify the choice. a sustainable strategy; it is the issues of corporate responsibility and beliefs that play a vital role.

The third type of study focuses on the study of the relationship of marketing with sustainable development in SMEs. Studies in this field are very rare in Morocco. As an example, the study conducted by Benabboud and Mekkaoui (2014) in the Souss-Massa-Draa region which has resulted in the proposal to SMEs producing local products a sustainable marketing mix to counter increasing competition and promote these products to customers. However, this proposal lacks operationality compared to another study that was conducted by Lavorata (2012), after which he proposed a methodology for the adoption of sustainable marketing in SMEs. The following figure shows the components of this methodology.



The methodology for building sustainable marketing (Source: Lavorata, 2012)

In the same vein, Marso (2013) suggests a marketing approach to promote sustainable development in Moroccan tourism businesses in general. However, this approach did not take into account the specificities of Moroccan SMEs operating in the tourism sector.

Conclusion:

Sustainable development and marketing are two interrelated concepts. Preserving the interests and well-being of the customer and other stakeholders of the company is part of the missions assigned to marketing (stakeholder marketing) and sustainable development. In the Moroccan context, efforts have been made since 2005 by the State and the private sector to promote sustainable development and CSR in public institutions and public and private enterprises. To do this, a legal arsenal has been developed, funds have been created, a CSR labeling has been put in place. These efforts remain insufficient to implement CSR and sustainable marketing in Moroccan SMEs. We deplore the lack of legislation to contribute to the adoption of methods and methods of supply, exploitation, production and responsible management, meeting the requirements of sustainable marketing. We also regret the lack of know-how and financial resources available to SMEs, the lack of awareness of incentives for SMEs to implement CSR.

At the same time, there is a scarcity of research in Morocco that has examined the relationship between marketing and sustainable development in SMEs. Existing studies focus mainly on the proposal to SMEs of a sustainable marketing approach that lacks operationality. In this context, a number of questions arise:

- To what extent does the marketing of CSR-labeled SMEs contribute to promoting sustainable development in these SMEs?
- Can we talk about sustainable marketing in SMEs without a CSR label?
- Do Moroccan SMEs commit to sustainable development within the limits of respect for the legislative framework?
- Do Moroccan SMEs engage in sustainable marketing for reasons of competitiveness or reasons related to their social responsibilities and beliefs?
- Is the behavior of SMEs in terms of sustainable marketing heterogeneous?