

Corporate Social Responsibility and Green Marketing In Nigeria: A Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on a widespread appraisal of literature about the adoption of green marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility which is fast spreading across world economies, irrespective of socio-economic disposition. This paper mirrored the two concepts and how they are playing out in the Nigerian business environment. The study examined in detail the literature surrounding CSR and argues that the global definition of Corporate Social Responsibility is based on western precedence and philosophies and as such, does not accommodate the peculiarities and challenges bedevilling the practice of green marketing in Nigeria. The paper therefore calls for the practice of Corporate Social Responsibility in a manner that reflects the Nigerian context to enhance its growth and development. Furthermore, the need to behave in a socially responsible way has received the society's high attention; hence, this concept will always be an important part of business language and operations. It is imperative for businesses to give serious consideration either voluntarily or due to legal requirements to the practice of green marketing as this provides a unique competitive advantage. Additionally, such advantages will give greater benefits to such organisations that are operating in a highly competitive environment because it helps to differentiate them from others.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility, Nigeria, Business, Environment

INTRODUCTION

Existing literature indicates that the concept and practice of green marketing amongst businesses presently occupies huge scholarly space since it first showed up in the marketing literature landscape around the 1980s [1]; [2]; [3]; [4]; [5]; [6]; [7]; [8]. Green marketing which is a recent concept in marketing is well rooted in the wider concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Even though the idea of green marketing is new, Corporate Social Responsibility is old and fully captured in the general aim of marketing function in the society [9]; [10].

In controlling the business environment, authorities formulate guidelines to protect the interest of society. Often, these guidelines threaten the core aim of business organisations which is to make profit [11]. It can also impede on the

organisation's corporate objectives, stakeholders, and the public including the protection of the ecological environmental, and most importantly, the welfare of the public [12]. The desires to gratify the public give rise to the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility [13]; [14]; [15]; [16].

Corporate Social Responsibility is often geared pragmatically towards an objective and intelligent application of wisdom by businesses or corporate entities in the provision of social welfare in such a way that the donor does not suffer so much loss in business yield that would negate the essence of the entire exercise [17]. Studies have shown that a good relationship between business aims and the envision can lead to enhanced corporate image and reputation of

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business [18]; [19], creation of business opportunities and gains [20], including saving businesses from convictions and illegalities [21].

[22] are of the opinion that the full utilization of this relationship in favour of the environment and socially responsible actions should comprise an organisation's corporate lifestyle. In western economies like the United States of America, organisations and businesses have turned from "rebellious under achievers" to "active problem solvers" in matters concerning Corporate Social Responsibility and green marketing [23] [24].

Green marketing is partly a way of tackling the problem of Corporate Social Responsibility aimed at the environment [25]. The development of green marketing has the aim of reducing the effect of marketing activities on the natural environment [26].

Green marketing revolves around the relationship that extends beyond the present needs of the consumer, while considering at the same time the social interest in shielding the environment [27]. The definition is nearly synonymous to Corporate Social Responsibility's definition of managing a relationship between the business and the environment. However, in this case, the definition points to an exchange relationship, thus, there is a transfer of something of importance between the two parties. [28] advocate sustainability in their own perception. They state that, green marketing implies a business that handled in a manner that reduces waste, is environmentally friendly, preserves energy and often encourages environmental health and sustainability of the society [29]. Accordingly, he states that green marketing are activities embarked upon by organisations that are anxious about the ecology or green problems by making provision for environmentally friendly goods or services to bring satisfaction among customers and the community. The problem of green marketing is mostly connected with product-based firms [30] owing it its high visibility in the area of manufacture, utilization and disposal of

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raw materials. Customers indicate affirmative interest to purchase goods that imbibe green practices than going for the ones that do not [31]. Presently, green marketing is a buzz word in the business area. It has made available platforms for organisations to springboard to carry out Corporate Social Responsibility [32]. In Nigeria, Corporate Social Responsibility is influenced by socio-cultural pressures [33]. The Nigerian business environment comprise of local firms that are majorly SMEs and are solely managed, family owned and operated [34] [35] and some multi-national companies. Corporate Social Responsibility is carried out by the multi-national companies in Nigeria because of their world wide visibility and reach [36]; [37]. [38] indicated three factors that determine business practice in Nigeria: religion, ethnicity and language. The principle that guides business practice in Nigeria is a communal philosophy of life which is rooted deeply in the idea of extended kinship [39].

Historically, the Nigerian business environment is characterized by 'banditry' a preliminary technique formulated by the colonial firms in their interaction with the Nigerian people, hence, force as a tool, is seen as a necessary and even normal procedure [40]; [41]; [42]. Nigeria with a per capita income of 2,032.86 U.S. dollars and life expectancy of 53 years does not have a conducive environment that can support the adoption, development and growth of CSR concepts and green marketing principles. Not so much emphasis is given to CSR waves such as employee relations and consumer protection in Nigeria. The reason is that the Nigerian corporate governance framework does not permit a stakeholder's perspective or socialist model [43]. The essence of CSR in developed economies is to extensively utilize the positive effect of organisations on society and reduce the negative effect of these activities on the society [44]. Again, in developed economies, the consumer and producer are mostly socially responsible compared to developing economies like Nigeria where consumers do not have the knowledge to

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make good decisions when it comes to buying, use and disposition of product [45]; [46], thus, they easily fall prey to deceit. The focus of this paper therefore, is to examine through a thematic review,

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Corporate Social Responsibility

According to [47], the term Corporate Social Responsibility is still at a “pre-paradigmatic phase” which implies disagreement amongst authors regarding the meaning of CSR and what its scope ought to contain [3]. The definition of the concept is developing [12]; [13]; [14]; [15]; [16]. The EU Green paper on CSR views it as ‘a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.’ [24] define CSR from the point of view of charity. They state that CSR are activities that appear to promote some common good beyond the interest of the organisation and that which is mandatory by law. CSR is the progressive commitment by firms to act ethically and contribute to economic development while making better the life of the work population and their families, the community and the society at large [34]. [11] adds that social responsibilities of organisations comprise the ethical, discretionary, legal and economic expectation that society has of business at a particular point in time. The four components (ethical, discretionary, legal and economic) mentioned here are in compliance with the view of [24] that identified these four expectations as the scope of CSR.

Ethical component implies that companies include strategies in their operations that would assist them in sustaining the environment [2]; [3] for future generations. This component goes beyond defined laws and relies more on the moral codes of the companies identified by the society.

Discretionary expectation/component which is also known as philanthropic component is mainly about promoting welfare of humans through an organization’s participation in humanitarian or voluntary programmes [31]. This duty is perceived

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the rate of adoption of green marketing procedures including CSR concept in Nigeria with the aim to ascertain of organisations actually embark on them or pay mere lip service to them.

as mandatory in developed countries and an expected standard in developing countries [31]. The legal component implies transacting business in conformance to rules and regulations guiding such endeavours in order to benefit society [41]; [42]; [43]. Lastly, the economic component suggests an organization’s responsibility of providing a return on investment to owners and principals of the business including providing jobs, goods and services to the community [28]. [22] further suggests that these components be used to devise the CSR pyramid for developing economies. He stated that, the components, even though they are distinct constructs, are interrelated to one another and should be seen as a unified system.

The general definition of CSR is mainly based on Anglo-American priorities, philosophies and values [40]. This has encouraged emerging literature on several definitions of CSR across various culture and national boundaries [42] [43] [44]. The literatures indicate that the practice of CSR has socio-cultural attachments. [5] nonetheless point that any definition of CSR must be built on the waves, issues and modes of CSR. The waves of CSR are society participation, socially responsible production procedures and socially responsible employee relations. These waves are singled out based on the issues they highlight which include environment, employee welfare, health, education and safety. Modes of CSR are the ways for implementation which can be through philanthropy, foundation and codes, partnership etc.

Defining CSR in the Nigerian perspective is associated with the socio-cultural heritage of local firms in Nigeria [23]. Nigeria economy is mainly controlled by what is termed ‘the household economy’ [19]. In this narrative, the ‘kinship-network-based’ mode of business implies that in Nigeria, businesses first take care of the interest of the family network

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members. Philanthropy, which is the way CSR is viewed amongst businesses in Nigeria, goodness and charity are perceived within the moral economy of kin-based solidarity and reciprocity. Apart from the socio-cultural heritage of business in Nigeria, the market and regulatory agents in Nigeria are terminally weak and this would eventually slow the growth of CSR. There is equally a low stress on waves of CSR such as socially responsible employee relations. In developed economies, there are strong markets and regulatory frameworks that enhances the growth of CSR. Nigeria further faces diverse socio-economic problems such as poverty, poor infrastructural development, poor health care facilities, and poor quality of education. It is based on this, that [47] suggests that CSR in Nigeria be directed towards addressing the peculiarity of the socio-economic development challenges facing her (for instance, education, poverty eradication, healthcare provision, infrastructural development etc) and be influenced by socio-economic factors (like charity and communication). these may not necessarily mirror the western standard of CSR (like consumer protection, green marketing, fair trade) however, it portrays local realities and patterns of need.

Concept of Green Marketing

Green marketing has been defined as “the way to conceive exchange relationships that goes beyond the current needs of the consumers, considering at the same time the social interest in protecting the natural environment” [13]. Likewise, [16] defined green marketing as actions carried out by organisations that are apprehensive about the ecology or green problems by providing the environmentally friendly goods or services to bring satisfaction among customers and the community. Referring to another definition given by [3], green marketing means a business that is operated in a way that decreases waste, environmentally friendly, saves energy and mostly encourages environmental health and sustainability of the society. Green marketing is the brainchild to the vital issues of environment, which held

Okonkwo *et al* the business world to ransom in the 1990s. During that time, popularly referred to as the ‘Earth decade,’ [41], matters of environmental protection and preservation began to gain recognition in the business landscapes. Environmental matters are not new, however, the concept of green marketing is new. In the 1970s, matters concerning placing the customer’s need and satisfaction (market concept) over the improve effect of such placement on the environment were brought to the fore [2] [3]. Societal marketing concept was then put forward by [32] to make certain that organisations are socially responsible and then consumer wants and satisfaction was then expanded to accommodate ‘consumer interest’, ‘company requirement’ and ‘societal welfare.’ In developed economies, particularly in the USA, environmental issues that threaten societal wellbeing include ozone layer depletion, landfills, depletion of green house effect [30]. Here in Nigeria, environmental matters that threaten societal wellbeing are desertification, global warming, flooding, environmental pollution, use of non-biodegradable packages, deforestation, waste from product or product packages [41]. To guarantee success, firms must integrate green marketing into the tactical marketing plan of the corporation [33]. It equally affords the company the chance to co-brand their products into different lines to show-case their eco-friendliness [37]. In the midst of these advantages of green marketing, in emerging economies, there still exist, a wide gap between understanding and implementation.

Evolution of Green Marketing

Green marketing evolved prior to its popularity in the 1980s and early 1990s in the past decade of the 1970s when the issue of the function of organisations in the society emerged in the marketing landscape. Nevertheless, its emergence occurred in three phases [15]. The first phase was tagged “ecological green marketing,” during this period, all marketing activities were channelled towards tackling environmental problems and providing solutions also [23]. Although, the report of the environmental

problem resulted in the production of numerous green products, it never translated to positive consumer response in the increase of goodwill or market share of the business [8]. Market outcome dropped below the company's expectations [11]. The ecstasy that revolved around the idea of green marketing during that period varnished suddenly [6], and then marketers came to the realization that consumers concerns for the environment and longing for green market did not translate to buying behaviour [27]. The number two phase referred to as 'environmental green marketing' focused on 'clean technology.' This comprised the 'designing of innovative new products that take care of pollution and waste.' "Sustainable green marketing" was the third and present phase of green marketing. Here, the concept is aimed at 'sustainability' and is defined as marketing the needs of the present consumers without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs [23]. Green marketing is a fundamental condition for the reconciliation of human needs and nature. This, however, has not been fully comprehended by businesses [34]. Nevertheless, [32] makes available a good starting point by delineating some of the features of green marketing. These features comprise a holistic and systematic perception, and open-ended time frame, a world-wide view that focuses on ecological sustainability instead of economic efficiency and lastly, recognition of the intrinsic value of nature.

Challenges that hamper the Adoption of Green Marketing

Green marketing has grown tremendously in developed economies beginning from the year 2000 [43]. Also, this development is being inculcated emerging markets in Asia and South America [35] [36]. "Going green" is a development that has gained widespread adoption throughout the world. In Africa and Nigeria specifically, the idea of green marketing is still undergoing transformations. There are a lot of challenges bedevilling the implementation of green marketing in Nigeria, viz:

- a. Lack of Infrastructural Support: In Nigeria, only very few organizations are aware of government support in the provision of laws and subsidies that encourage the implementation of CSR [7] [8].
- b. New Initiative: The idea of green marketing still appears novel to the masses [16]. Consumers need to be enlightened and educated on the threat that some of their actions and inactions constitute to the sustainability of the earth. This venture is typically time-consuming and most businesses avoid such responsibility.
- c. Regulatory Mechanisms: This is one of the components of CSR and it is one of the reasons why organisations cling to green marketing [34], firms are by law expected to be legally 'upright' and it is such a firm that is in a better position to invest in new technologies that can facilitate green marketing. But, an organisation that cannot keep up with the regulatory frameworks invariably goes under [40].
- d. Need for Standardization: [43] writes that only 5% of marketing messages from businesses are actually true. Hence, there is need to set up a standard control board that would be in charge of certifying claims of the organic nature of products that attains the going green demands.
- e. Avoiding Green Myopia: oftentimes, organizations side-line their major aim in business which is customer satisfaction in pursuit of the noble goal of green marketing. If a product is green and does not meet the requirements of customers, it is yet to be a product. Again, another obstacle to green marketing is the adoption of consumer scepticism about green product claims, companies' intentions and practice distortion is the main reason behind its failure [21]; [22]; [23]. [24] outlined five marketing

practices that could lead to the non-success of green marketing. They include:

- i. Entrepreneur Marketing: This is the production of 'innovative' green products without the requisite understanding of customer's needs.
- ii. Compliance Marketing: This happens when organizations promote their green credentials by keeping to the expected environmental laws without taking initiative to go beyond responding to regulations.
- iii. Green Spinning: This is an approach to green marketing

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

[18] in their study on "Corporate Social Responsibility in Nigeria -Western Mimicry or Indigenous Practice" observed that indigenous firms in Nigeria view and carry out CSR as corporate philanthropy directed at tackling socio-economic development challenges in Nigeria. it adds that CSR is a 'localized' and socially embedded construct. Similarly, in their study on "Relevance of Green Marketing in Environmental Degradation: An Empirical Study of Consumers of Green Products in Benin City, Nigeria," [5] examined the effect of green marketing on degradation and discovered that green marketing is yet to be popular among consumers. They stated that the proper strategies for effective implementation are lacking. [31] in their work on green marketing amongst hotels in Malaysia, opine that green marketing as a tool is used by hotels to carry out CSR while it provides competitive advantage for hotels in achieving balance, environmental sustainability and development. On the other hand, [25] observed that CSR in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria was poor owing to government unwillingness to sacrifice expected high returns on petroleum exploration for the betterment of the area. The study suggested a joint action plan implementation between all participants and stakeholders in the oil business of the Niger Delta region. Concerning the main factors that influence green marketing behaviour amongst adolescence in [6] in a multiple

whereby organisations uses public relations to deny or discredit public criticism against its activities.

- iv. Green Selling: This is an opportunistic approach that adds some green claims to existing products with the sole intention of promoting sales.
- v. Green Harvesting: This happens when as a company becomes passionate about the environment only when 'greening' would result in cost savings.

regression analysis on selected adolescents, discovered that social influence is a top predictor of green purchasing behaviour of the Hong Kong adolescent.

Green Marketing versus Corporate Social Responsibilities School of Thoughts

There are different perceptions regarding the issue of CSR. These perceptions can be classified into two schools of thoughts: The first suggests 'economic performance' while the second is embedded on the organisation's moral obligation. The number one school of thought suggests that economic performance through the provision of value to society and maximization of organization's output (profit) [39] is the organization's key social responsibility. The inability to deliver this main obligation of the business will put the business in a position where she cannot satisfy, which could have led to growth and development in the society. Anchored on the utilitarian theory, this school of thought maintains that organisation is a part of the economic system and a need for CSR is a need for economic responsibility [7] [8]. This school views CSR as a form of rules and regulations which are designed to allay the feelings of the society. In the long run, it is believed that such regulations as CSR will threaten profit maximization and stakeholders welfare [11]. They opine that CSR is a facade directed towards pre-empting

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government role as watchdogs and could likely make businesses to lose focus of their basic economic role. The principle of corporate governance is the ground on which the proponents of the second school of thoughts are based. The principle guiding this school of thought is that organizations may take into account ethical considerations that are logically seen as appropriate to the responsible conduct of business [23], as ethical actions are not considered optional but mandatory [31]. It further argues that firms are natural members of the community and as such are expected by obligation to responsibly partake in the environmental growth as well as development programmes that would sustain the earth [6]. Anchored on instrumental theory, which views social activities as instruments for marketing to attain economic goals, the theory upholds the engagement of firms in voluntary programmes so that the organization would be seen by society as being socially responsible and being preferred as such [16]; [17]; [18]. [23] found out that there is a positive relationship between environmental performance and company's profitability. In another study, [11] notes that it is relatively unfit to initiate CSR as one of increasing an organizations's performance. [34] supports this statement that several companies in Western Europe and Japan do not carry out CSR for economic responsibility (profit maximisation), but perceive ethical and social responsibility as reasons to carry out CSR. This thought is given a backing by [3]. [8] asserts that the state of green marketing in the business world involve firms partaking in green marketing as commendable activities which are mainly managerial strategies and are not directed toward environmental sustainability. It is proposed that green marketing activities do not meet expectation since it involves

This study examined the adoption of CSR and green marketing in Nigeria. Findings show that the practice generally and green marketing in Nigeria is still at its infant stage. Literature also revealed that CSR is

Okonkwo *et al* the greening of the different aspect of traditional marketing. [14] explained the difference between green with a little 'g' and green with the large 'G.' He said little 'g' indicates managerial approaches while the large 'G' is associated with issues of sustainability.

Approaches to Green Marketing

[13] identified two approaches by which an organisation can adopt in green. It is either a defensive/reactionary approach or assertive/aggressive approach.

i. Assertive/Aggressive

Strategy/Approach: This approach indicates a response to the demands of the market rather than regulations [25]. Organisations that use this approach are regarded as consumer oriented and profit driven [28]. The organization in this approach initiates the 'first move' in the market and enjoys the 'first move advantage' in solving environmental issues. As opposed to the bandwagon approach of defensive approach, assertive strategy provides the best opportunity for sustainable competitive advantage to the firm. The image would be that of a sincere environmental activist [45] which is the ground for sustainable competitive advantage.

ii. Defensive Strategy: This entails organisations doing the minimal in order to avoid negative consequence of total avoidance. Here, organisations do a lot of manoeuvre in a bid to escape government tax or penalties. [32] referred to this as smoke and mirrors while [27] tagged it 'green marketing.' Organisations that practice this strategy are known to have declining market share [11] and experience no significant increase in market acceptance [49].

CONCLUSION

defined along the lines of peculiar challenges facing the country. Presently, Nigeria is confronted by a multitude of socio-economic challenges that are based on the basic needs of the citizenry. The concept of

green marketing is still new because an average Nigerian consumer is concerned about how to meet physiological needs like feeding, clothing and shelter, hence, safety needs such as environmental sustainability is least on the list of an average Nigerian. The indigenous

Okonkwo *et al* companies in Nigeria are therefore likely to adopt defensive approach to green marketing by engaging in minimal efforts to stay a step ahead of government regulations. Also, the practice of green marketing in Nigeria is largely unknown, hence the need for increase awareness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. There is need for increased creation of awareness on the need for green marketing as a way of managing environmental challenge which continues to ravage most parts of Nigeria.
- ii. The need to behave in a socially responsible way has received the society's high attention; hence, this concept will always be an important part of business language and operations. It is imperative for businesses to give serious consideration either voluntarily or due to legal requirements to the practice of green marketing as this provides a unique competitive advantage.

Additionally, such advantages will give greater benefits to such organisations that are operating in a highly competitive environment because it helps to differentiate them from others.

- iii. Lastly, green based practices constitute an added advantage to an organization because this implies superior financial and market performance. More so, in ensuring a balance between development and environmental sustainability, an organization places itself in a good stead within the public eye. Organisations must therefore take advantage of this concept.

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