

The consumer and enterprise facing the ecoproduct – a brief comparative study

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to explore and expand on knowledge concerning the point of view of the consumer and the Brazilian entrepreneur regarding the ecoproduct. To this end, it presents some research done in Brazil between entrepreneurs and consumers, regarding the perception of environmental issues and in which ways this perception is related to the production and the consumption of ecoproducts. It can be concluded that the Brazilian consumer, even being informed about environmental issues, still resists a change in habits when purchasing and does not want to pay more for a product that has ecological attributes. Regarding the perception of the Brazilian entrepreneur, the results suggest that changing the productive processes aiming to minimize actions which have an impact on the environment is only considered due to the possibility of reducing expenses, having more competition in the internal and external market or regarding new legislations on environment protection.

Keywords: ecoproduct, environmental attributes, green consumer, environment labeling

1. Introduction

The green movement can be said to have originated with the first concerns for the environment that occurred in the 1950's as a consequence of serious events of environmental degradation that took place then; expanding in the 1960's with the beginning of the consciousness raising process. There was an important turning point in the 1970's due to great governmental actions, such as the conference of the United Nations for the environment in Stockholm, in 1972. During the 1980's and 1990's there were also many meetings of international organizations that corroborated the effectiveness of postures in defense of the environment as well as postures of self-sustainability. The concept of Sustainable Development originated in 1987, and was introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development meaning "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, 1987).

This ascending movement in favor of environmental protection has introduced changes in consumer behavior, as well as in company and government responses to the pressures placed by a public that felt strongly about the topic. In the two last decades, the launching of a much bigger number of ecoproducts was observed, such as ecoefficient products, green products or environmentally sustainable products. The terminology is vast, but the purpose is the same, that is, the insertion of the environmental variable in the product life cycle.

The aim of the present study is to explore and advance the knowledge about the ecoproduct from the point of view of the Brazilian consumer and entrepreneur. A review of the literature on the issues related to the theme, with a strong emphasis on researches with different approaches and in different regions in the country is offered in this paper so as to briefly point to the state of the art of environmental behavior in Brazil. The first part of this study presents the point of view of Brazilian companies facing the main stimuli for adopting the environmental variable in their universe, as well as their actions in the green marketing. The second part explores the environmental consciousness in relation to topics broadcasted by the media so as to sketch the profile of the green consumer in Brazil. The third part analyzes the behavior of the green consumer, highlighting those behaviors which differ from attitudes in their purchasing decisions. The fourth part of this study approaches the environmental labeling from the point of view of the consumers regarding their importance in the purchasing decision. The results presented in the conclusion provided important data regarding the profile of the consumer in relation to the ecoproduct and the companies concerning environmental issues and environmental attributes in products design.

2. The point of view of the company

Five decades after the first big events of environmental degradation, it is possible to notice the integration of the variable of protection of the environment in company's

routines, most of the time forced by external demands. The first actions, such as the adoption of anti-polluting equipments, aimed at correcting the environmental problem. These actions came to be known as End-of-pipe or First Generation Policies. As time and pressures increased, actions became more sophisticated and faced the core reasons of the problems, moving towards sustainable development, that is, the so-called Second Generation Policies (MANZINI & VEZZOLI, 2002). Products aiming at answering these demands and pressures saw their peak in the late 1980's and early 1990's in European countries and in the United States. In Brazil, these products are known as ecoproducts and were most popular in the 1990's.

The great challenge faced by companies was now to maintain their position in the market, increasing competitiveness, and responding to both internal and external stimuli taking into consideration the new variable of environment protection. Internal stimulus means the need to reduce expenses, to improve the product quality and employees motivation, improving and innovating the company's image through consciousness raising of sustainable development and social responsibility of the people in charge of developing the products. The external stimulus is characterized by the demand of the market, government, legislation, competitors, standardization, suppliers and the social environment. The legislations and the standardization most of the time, represent true commercial barriers, the so called green barriers. Green barriers restrict markets by requiring environmental certifications for the acceptance of the product.

So as to adapt to this reality companies have worked on ecological or environmental attributes in the product life cycle. The environmental impact is observed along all the product life cycle, which comprises the periods of raw material extraction until its disposal or return to the nature. The ecological or environmental attributes are attributes that make the product less harmful to the environment, considering that there is no product free of causing some environmental impact (OTTOMAN, 1994). In order to highlight this attribute in the consumer market, companies adopt environmentally appealing marketing actions, known as green marketing, according to SCHIFFMAN & KANUK (2000).

However, to which extent are the internal and the external stimuli prioritized by the Brazilian firms? Are the firms really integrating environmental attributes in the product life cycle? In order to attempt to answer these questions and contribute with insights as to the availability of the related bibliography, some data collected in researches and studies carried out in the last years, will be presented.

As pointed out by COSTA & GOUVINHAS (2003) in a study carried out in 49 small and medium-sized enterprises – SME's in the northeastern part of Brazil, where actions

to reduce the environmental impact of the product were focused, the major internal stimulus of these SME's is the reduction of its production was investigated. According to SME's studied in the southeastern part of Brazil, what comes first in importance is the opening of new market segments. As for external stimulus in the two regions studied, the pressure of the environmental legislation plays the most important role in the product development process.

In Rio Grande do Sul, where the competitiveness among producers of organic rice was analyzed, it was observed that the main external stimuli causing the rivalry between companies in this sector are the increasing demand for more natural products; the hope that the success of organic products in other countries repeats itself in Brazil; the consumption growth, or at least the growth of consumers' interest in organic products; and the creation of green barriers in different countries. Regarding the internal stimuli, the possibility of increasing prices with the achievement of more gains in added value was observed (MARTINS et al, 2002). Considering these results, it can be said that the propelling factor for enterprises which produce organic rice in the region is the possibility of greater profit and the pressure of the external market by means of demanding certifications, without which the company is excluded from the market. However, the interest in the production aiming at raising environmental protection consciousness was not observed.

Reinforcing this reality, CHAVES (2003) researching a group of 12 designers who worked for wood furniture companies in Curitiba (PR) and São Bento do Sul (SC), demonstrated that the companies adopted criteria for the processes and products which were less harmful to the environment, as long as there was reduction in price. On the other hand, the same professionals, when questioned about sustainability, did not demonstrate knowledge of the term, confirming the lack of professional background and information about the subject.

The furniture companies in Bento Gonçalves (RS) studied by VENZKE (2002) believe that they will have more expenses than benefits in the implementation of environmental programs. In this researched pool, the concepts that generate environmental benefits along the products life cycle have either not been applied in full yet or are unknown to many of these companies.

In a study carried out in three breweries in Brazil, aiming at identifying if the green marketing had affected the decisions about packaging, little impact regarding the environmental preoccupation in the consumer behavior was observed. In this case, it was evident to the companies that the Brazilian consumer is not sufficiently informed about the importance of their responsible environment behavior. Thus, the green marketing does not have much impact on the purchasing processes, nor does it affect the decisions about

packaging. On the other hand, two out of three researched breweries have an environmental management policy, and one of them mentioned in their site that the process of certification led the company to the reduction of costs, by means of programs to avoid waste, exploitation of residues, conservation of energy, and saving water (PALHARES, 2003).

According to MOTTA & ROSSI (2001), it would be premature to attribute 'green' characteristics to the products with market intent. The conservation of the environment, at least regarding the acquisition and utilization of goods, is not a need of the consumers to be satisfied. The same author states that while researching consumers in São Paulo, it became clear that the majority of the researched people, a total of 74.1% is not a target for the company's green marketing. Half of this total does not plan to include ecological attributes in their purchasing decisions (MOTTA et al., 2006), reducing even more the company's actions which can be said to be interested in serving this kind of market. Green characteristic, in this case, means a necessity related to the preservation of the environment to be satisfied by the consumer, as well as an ecological attribute.

Thus, aligned with the presented data in these seven studies, the main stimuli pressing Brazilian companies to invest in ecoproducts are the reduction of costs, the possibility of greater profit, the pressure of environmental legislation and the pressure exerted by external markets by means of demanding environmental certifications. Regarding the perception of companies concerning the role represented by the consumer, we have a growing market in one hand, while on the other hand this same consumer is still poorly informed about the factors involved in environmental protection. The result is that the presence of needs that involve the preservation of the environment is not yet consolidated in their purchasing decisions. This lack of information of the consumer and the lack of technical qualifications, specifically on environmental problems inside the companies, have proved to be an obstacle for the companies to develop strategies for the insertion of environmental attributes in their products. As highlighted by PEATTIE & CRANE (2005), "the green marketing has created its own mythology". Inside the companies, there are many stories about the difficulties posed by customers, colleagues, and corporate cultures when trying to develop greener strategies. Nevertheless, MANZINI & VEZZOLI (2002) suggest that the companies also have an important role in the promotion of their transformation to sustainability, as long as there is a normative, economic, socio-cultural, and technological context favoring the convergence to the competitiveness. On the other hand, the theoretical evolution of sustainable development has been pointing to a behavior of consumption decrease, as well as to the sharing of use, the maintenance, the disposal and the

return of the product to its origins. This behavior becomes paradoxical for a market that usually focuses its actions on consumer behavior, regarding the purchase of the product and its consumption.

Thus, it is clear that companies are trying to adjust to the environmental imperative, pressured by different forces. Some of them observe in this demand, an opportunity for business, trying to know better this consumer, who, in turn, is also part of this group of forces.

3. Environmental consciousness and the green consumer profile

The terms green or conscious consumer came with the term ecoproduct. Green consumers are individuals that consume only products that cause less - or no - harm to the environment (OTTMAN, 1994). Regarding the profile of the green consumer in Brazil, two studies were carried out by the Ministry of Environment (MINISTÉRIO DO MEIO AMBIENTE - MMA), one in 1997 and another in 2001, entitled "What Brazilian people think about environment and sustainable consumption" (BRASIL, 2001). Results showed that there was an increase in the number of people who knew about this topic (15% in 4 years), that is, more than half of the investigated population "has already heard of it".

In 1999, a similar study was also carried out in Porto Alegre (RS) by DINATO et al. (1999). In this research, 82% of the interviewed people answered correctly to the question on "greenhouse effect", showing that in Porto Alegre the citizens are better informed about environmental issues than the Brazilian average. The single factor that may contribute to this difference is that 40% of the interviewed people had a monthly income of 10 minimum wages, whereas the average of the interviewed people in the other regions in Brazil was 9%. Regarding education, in Brazil 10% of the population completed their undergraduate courses while in Porto Alegre this number is 24, 4%.

Also in Rio Grande do Sul, in a study about the ecological rice consumer, the authors concluded that the majority of the interviewees were women between 36 and 55 years, with an average monthly income superior to R\$1,400,00 who may have completed or not their undergraduate and graduate studies (MARTINS et al, 2002).

A study carried out in Santa Catarina interviewed 200 consumers in two supermarkets. The purpose was to identify and characterize the relationship between consumers of organic food items of supermarkets and environmental labels, and also to find a similar profile. The majority of the consumers were women, married (67%), between 36 and 50 years (KOHLRAUSCH, 2003). Regarding education, 55% had completed their undergraduate studies, showing a good access to information. Regarding family income, it was observed that the consumers of organic products

comprise a good part of the population, independently of the purchasing power. This result demystifies the belief that only the people with high incomes consume organic products, since these products are usually more expensive. Regarding the frequency, 53,5% of the interviewed people always buy organic products and 46,5% buy them sometimes, which is also a significant percentage, justified by the higher cost and by the fact that the majority of the interviewees has a family. Nonetheless, for the consumers that always buy organic products, the average income is high, representing 35% with more than 12 minimum wages. This conclusion was obtained after cross analyzing the frequency of consumption and the family income graphs. As it was expected, most people are familiar with the concept of organic product (94,5%), which is a reflection of the high level of education and access to information.

Corroborating these data, OTTMAN (1994) found the same characteristics, that is, the citizen in tune with environmental issues has a good purchasing power, is a woman most of the time and is well educated. Mirroring examples in Brazil, DAVIES et al. (1995), after three studies carried out in Northern Ireland, between 1989 and 1993, with 2.185 interviewees, also concluded that the profile of buyers was mainly composed by women, with a higher level of purchasing power, with the presence of children and ages ranging from 30 to 45 years. The presence of children at home would be a key factor influencing positively the green activity (DAVIES et al., 1995).

From these data, it is possible to conclude that there has been a significant increase in the Brazilian population who has access to information about aspects related to environmental degradation. This tendency can cause the broadening of the female public with ages ranging from 30 to 55 years. Thus, the more the consumer is informed about the impacting factors on the environment, the more he/she will be sensitized during purchase to ecological attributes aggregated to the product, making them a potential green consumer.

4. The green consumer behavior

This section starts with a clarification concerning the confusing terms of consumer attitudes and behaviors. The first confusion stems from the fact that the term attitude is not a synonym of behavior; the second resides in the fact that not always an attitude generates an expected behavior. Attitudes are learned, are formed from direct experience with the product, with information from third parties and/or from the exposition to the advertisement and to the direct marketing (SCHIFFMAN & KANUK, 2000). The aforementioned authors also state that attitudes are a reflex of values, life styles and of perspectives of the consumer and, in spite of presenting coherence, they are not permanent. Many factors can cause a change to happen

such as differences in prices, convenience while shopping, or personal preferences in specific situations. As illustrated by ENGEL et al. (2000), “attitude can be defined as simply a general evaluation”. Attitudes are linked to the knowledge that consumers have about the product or a store, and they are strictly linked to beliefs and feelings.

Consumer behavior involves their decision concerning what type of product to buy, why buy it, when and where. It also involves the frequency with which they buy and the frequency with which they use what they buy (SCHIFFMAN & KANUK, 2000). Regarding the analysis of green consumer behavior, the phases of product search, its use, its evaluation and its disposal, must be included since these are products with specific attributes.

Making a review of the literature in this respect, it is possible to observe that few studies confirm the concern with the environmental impact on the productive processes intervening in the habits of consumption of the Brazilian consumer. MOTTA & ROSSI (2001) are also resentful because of the lack of bibliography and studies correlating the ecological factor to the consumer purchasing process. So as to fill in this gap, studies carried out in different regions in Brazil will be presented next, which will result in a brief overview of the situation.

In 1998, the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE OPINIÃO PÚBLICA E ESTATÍSTICA – IBOPE) verified that 68% of Brazilian consumers were willing to pay more for a product that does not pollute the environment. The research involved 2.000 participants, electors above 16 years, distributed geographically among the five regions, with a concentration of 44% in the Southeast region. The question, for which the result was obtained, was: “Are you willing to pay more for a product that does not pollute the environment?” (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE OPINIÃO PÚBLICA E ESTATÍSTICA, 1998). In this case, the methodology used was a check of expression of intent and attitude and not of actual consumer behavior. The decision at purchase involves other arguments that can lead to a contradiction, such as the price of the product. On the other hand, this research involved a group which, in spite of influencing the purchasing decisions, as will be demonstrated later in this item, is not the same as the ones who actually buy.

In São Paulo (SP), 615 consumers were interviewed in different places, so as to draw a profile regarding the attitudes and behaviors related to the environment (MOTTA et al., 2006). This research showed the existence of seven types of consumers, divided into clusters, namely: “Non Responsibility Non Green”, “Money Semi-Green”, “Legislation Semi-Green”, “Contradictory Semi-Green”, “Convenience Non-Green”, “Responsible Green” and “Value Green”. The result was that a great deal of the interviewees belonged to the cluster “Non Responsibility

Non Green”, characterized by not having a favorable attitude towards the preservation of the environment, because they don’t value or because they think that nobody does anything to preserve it, or because they think that companies are more responsible than they are for the environmental degradation. Because of these reasons, they do not notice the differences between an ecologically correct product and another without this attribute. The “Money Semi-Green”, the second most representative group, values the environment by contributing with donations in money, participating in organizations and protesting to the politicians and companies. However, they do not observe significant differences between ecologically correct products and the ones that are not. The “Legislation Semi-Green” look for products with ecological characteristics (refill, recyclable packages, etc), although they understand that the greatest responsibility for the preservation belongs to the government. The “Contradictory Semi-Green” separate the garbage to recycle, but, contradictorily, throw away used batteries that harm the environment ignoring the negative repercussion of this action. The “Convenience Non-Green” also constitute a contradictory group, because they support the environment defense as long as they do not have to change their life styles or stop making use of technology. The “Responsible Green” constitute a group of attitudes that are more favorable to the purchasing and use of ecologically correct products. They read the labels attentively, they sympathize with environmental responsibility and engage in the struggle for environmental preservation. The “Value Green” during purchasing decisions they worry about the environment, they are the ones who really value “green” products and pay more for them (MOTTA et al., 2006).

The groups called “Responsible Green”, “Contradictory Semi-Green”, “Value Green” and “Legislation Semi-Green” are the groups with the most responsible behaviors and attitudes in relation to the environment. In this sample they represent only 25, 9% of the population. It is worth highlighting that this research tackled a population with a significant level of access to the information, since the metropolitan region of São Paulo is responsible for one of the highest Brazilian averages of time spent at school for 15-year old or older people (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA, 2006), representing, as a consequence, a good level of education and access to information. Thus, one of the main barriers of the consumption of products with ecological attributes, which is the lack of information, does not present a significant variable in this region. Nevertheless, only access to information is not enough to sensitize the population in a more consistent way, since 25, 9% is still an incipient rate.

Also in São Paulo, in 1999, another study was carried out with consumers of convenience goods to investigate whether consumers buy (or have ever bought) convenience goods,

considering the ecological factor totally or partially (MOTTA & ROSSI, 2001). It must be clarified that convenience goods are the ones that are bought quickly and frequently, available in many purchasing places, presenting few differences in quality. The conclusion in the investigated group is that the environment is not a factor taken into consideration in the planning of purchases, especially because the consumers do not have enough information about this. However, an item that drew attention in this study was the prompt recognition of the attribute of the biodegradability of detergents, which is related to the environment. This prompt recognition, as a result of the vast diffusion of the concept by the time of its launching, is an example of how information is essential for making purchasing decisions (MOTTA & ROSSI, 2001; OTTMAN, 1994).

In MARTINS et al. (2002) study in Rio Grande do Sul, consumers of organic rice are more concerned with health and environment, whereas the non consumer is more worried about price. For the interviewees that do not consume the product, the market appeals or the labeling related to the environmental impact in the production, are still not enough to sensitize them when purchasing. Consumers are more flexible regarding price. Nonetheless, despite claiming that the price of the purchased products is not the most important factor in the purchasing decision, they only admitted paying more than 25% for the organic product representing only 40% of the interviewees in both groups.

In KOHLRAUSCH’s (2003) study in Santa Catarina, the factor that influences the most in the option for organic products is the preoccupation with health (69,5%) to the detriment of the respect to the environment, price and environmental label (with 0,50% for each one of these items). This result suggests that personal matters influence much more the process of choosing and purchasing than global environmental issues.

Three studies carried out in Northern Ireland, between 1989 and 1993, with 2,185 interviewees, concluded that the three main reasons for purchasing organic food were: health, environment and taste respectively. This profile of consumer was considered the most actively engaged among the green consumers (DAVIES et al., 1995). The preoccupation with health in the decisions of purchasing in this population also coincides with the Brazilian researched population. This study was characterized by focusing on the actual consumer behavior instead of in its expression of intention or attitude when purchasing. Thus, younger people are more engaged with the environment, for example. However, they do not have enough purchasing power to pay more for organic products. Despite this fact, the presence of adolescents up to 20 years of age influences the decision of purchasing of their parents. That is why DAVIES et al. (1995), conclude that “those who claim to be concerned with the environment

and those who take positive action by purchasing organic food are not necessarily the same”.

KAPLAN (2000), while studying the environmentally responsible behavior, verified that the altruism-centered approach is not necessarily the most correct. This approach considers that “Good reasons generate good behavior” and that “there appears to be an assumption that there should be symmetry between the moral value of the motive and the moral value of the action” (KAPLAN, 2000). The consequences of adopting this approach, concludes the author, are the contribution to the increase of feeling of helplessness reinforcing sacrifice rather than quality-of-life-enhancing solutions. Thus, issues such as the increase of the greenhouse effect caused by the hole in the ozone layer would provoke a feeling of helplessness, since its solution would be very far from the day-by-day of the citizen. On the other hand, there is a strong investment in government and marketing campaigns, informing the citizen about actions such as diminishing the emissions of CO₂, diminishing the exposition to the sun, using sunscreen lotion everyday and so on. They are actions that involve firstly, a behavior change, with some doses of sacrifice to many people. Another example is that many organic food products, despite being declared healthier, have a different taste, and they do not always please all consumers. By adding to this equation a higher price, we have a formula that is not very favorable to the panorama of ecoproduct.

It is then observed that in Brazil, consumer behavior in purchasing decisions is oriented firstly by health, more specifically in relation to food products. Environmental issues maintain a secondary role, partly because they represent the company’s and/or government’s responsibility for many people. The lack of information about the impacting effects on the environment of the product’s life cycle also prevents the increase of this population of consumers. The same happens with the price of the ecoproduct, in general higher than the others. The frequent consumption is still restricted to the population of high purchasing power that is also the most informed and looks for environmental attributes presented by means of green and environmental labels.

5. Labeling as a means of selling

The main support for environmental labeling is packaging. It is considered the main interface between the consumer and the environmental issue, because of the relation between its disposal and the generation of solid waste. Thus, it is natural that companies use it to inform potential consumers of its environmental advantages, by means of labeling and green labels, characterizing the ecoproduct.

Internationally, the series ISO14000 has the purpose of standardizing the environmental management systems.

Regarding the environmental labeling, the ISO 14020 aims at informing the consumer if the labeled product responds to the criteria of environmental impact during its life cycle. These labels are divided into labels of First and Third Part. The ones of First Part are based in self declarations, produced by the manufacturer. The ones of the Third Part come from certifications of independent entities and aim at evaluating the product in all its life cycle, from its conception to its return to the nature (INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION, 1997).

In Brazil, the actions which are closer to an environmental labeling come from the Ministry of Environment (MMA) together with the Brazilian Standards Association (ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE NORMAS TÉCNICAS - ABNT), in the implantation of the Brazilian Environmental Label Program (PROGRAMA BRASILEIRO DE ROTULAGEM AMBIENTAL). The environmental labeling aims at communicating information regarding the environmental aspects of the product or service. The primary intention is the protection of the environment, encouraging environmentally healthy innovations in the industry and the development of environmental awareness in consumers (BRASIL, 2002). As defined by ABNT, the Certificate of the Ecological Label - Environmental quality, “is the certification of the adequacy of products to the use that present less impact to the environment in relation to similar products available in the market” (ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE NORMAS TÉCNICAS, 2002).

Thus, an analysis of consumer behavior and attitude towards ecological attributes present in environmental certifications is offered in this article. Women, according to results of KOHLRAUSCH’s (2003) study, have a greater identification with the environmental label whereas men have greater knowledge about the phases of the productive process of the organic products. As predicted, having in mind the high level of education mentioned, most of the interviewees read almost all labels. The predominance of women again is explained by, their presence in most of the shopping.

For ENGEL et al. (2000), the habit of reading labels is also close to the average found in this research. That is, near 80% of consumers report always or sometimes reading labels before buying food items. Women are more inclined to reading labels than men, just as senior citizens in relation to younger ones. Still in accordance with the authors, in average, more than 1/3 of consumers always read the information about the ingredients or nutritional data, and 1/3 of consumers regularly check environmental information in labels .

Most ecoproduct consumers have a higher level of education, since they are better informed about the environmental impact in the product life cycle, as it was shown in items 3 and 4. Thus it becomes easy to agree

that this consumer is selective and tries to assure the truthfulness of the information contained in the labels and in the advertisement with ecological appeal. A fact that contributes to the mistrust of consumers is that many companies use partially ecological arguments. For example, the use of alternative raw material to produce a wooden piece of furniture does not necessarily mean that the firm is considering ecology, because this is only one phase in the beginning of the manufacturing process. Or still, the use of recyclable materials does not mean that the entire process does not cause harm to the environment (CHAVES, 2003).

Therefore, it is important for the label to be known nationally, because if the consumer notices that the product with ecological arguments exhibits only a “green make up”, not being reliable regarding the procedures taken, the intention of buying disappears and the mistrust regarding the brand increases. The identification with the environmental labeling is an important factor during purchase, because it will help the decision of purchasing. As KOHLRAUSCH (2003) pointed out, even when the consumer does not understand exactly what the environmental label means, or if they cannot identify it in the product, this contributes to aggregating true and reliable information, especially when it deals with Third Party certifications. However, it is noteworthy to observe that, the fact that the consumer may be familiarized with environmental issues does not make him/her necessarily a green consumer. This reality can be confirmed in a study carried out by PEREIRA (2003), in which a specific number of interviewees were submitted to two identical products, with packages differentiated by a green label, aiming at measuring the effect of the presence of an ecological argument on the attitudes related to the packaging, brand, and intention of purchasing. The result indicated that the subjects that were exposed to the ecological argument demonstrated to be more identified with the brand. Regarding the intention of buying and the packaging, the results were not relevant. That is, there is certain sympathy of the consumer in potential with the company that demonstrates environmentally friendliness, but this factor is not sufficient to make a purchase decision.

In PALHARES's (2003) study, the values that were most dealt with in the researched companies were: status, success, well being, convenience and price. The preoccupation with the environment does not appear in the positioning of the brands. The companies believe that the consumer is not sufficiently informed or does not consider the environmental attribute as a decisive factor when purchasing.

From these results, the first observation is that the green consumer in Brazil, women prevailing, looks for information about the environmental attributes present in the labeling. Green consumers show sympathy towards these attributes. However, when purchasing, these attributes are relegated to

a second plan. In the first place are attributes such as fidelity to the brand, price, or personal preoccupation, as observed also in item 4. In spite of this, the presence of environmental attributes by means of certifications contributes to the increase of trust of the consumer in relation to the brand.

6. Final comments

Greenhouse effect, biodegradability and recycling, are ample topics that are present in a relatively consistent form in most part of the Brazilian consumers' lives. However, there still exist few studies regarding the behavior of the consumer and companies in relation to the ecoproduct.

The accessed studies enable us to conclude that it is necessary to increase the basis of information regarding the advantages of incrementing the environmental variable, together with the products price reduction in all the cycle between production and sale. The most difficult thing to do seems to be the price reduction, together with the reduction of costs, a factor that is a key for companies. The main factors affecting the option for the ecoproduct for the companies are the environmental legislation and the green barriers, represented by environmental certifications. These two factors demand more and more engagement with the environment, present in both the internal market in Brazil and the international market because of exports. The certifications allow the access to new markets characterized by strong green barriers, such as the European markets and they also allow a differentiation between products. The absence of certifications means product discontinuity in these markets.

At the end of this study, it was possible to notice that the green consumer is still the one with higher purchasing power, with more access to information. When face to face with the ecoproduct identified by labels or environmental certificates, they understand the meaning, because they are relatively informed about the problem, although the ecological argument may not be strong enough to change behavior when purchasing. Price still exerts great influence, because there is no intention of paying much more for the ecoproduct. Other attributes such as health and fidelity to the brand also exert great influence in many cases. The data show that not always the ones who call themselves green consumers are the ones who buy green products, confirming that their attitudes do not always correspond to their effective behavior when purchasing.

The lack of information about the effects that impact on the environment in the product life cycle, impede the increase in the consumer population and was also found among professionals dealing with product projects in companies. Thus, Brazilian companies do not see themselves as pressured by the consumer, nor by internal stimulus represented by skilled professionals in the sense

of developing strategies for the insertion of environmental attributes in their product.

So as to complement the current scenario, studies involving more professionals in the area of design and studies observing the rhythm launchings of ecoproducts in the internal and external markets are called for. From the data obtained in these studies, it would be able to anticipate new ways of working with the subject, and making the environmental variable as important as the others considered in the project of the product. Regarding the launching rhythm of ecoproducts, if the same performance of some European countries is observed in Brazil, where there will be a decrease in new launching strategies, moreover, companies may adopt educational and marketing campaigns. These strategies can involve, for example, the personal feeling that small attitudes make a difference in the preservation of the planet for future generations. Small attitudes can be more efficient, especially when they comprise a smaller universe, more concrete for a determined social group and that reinforce the sense of participation in the movement of environmental protection.

7. References

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