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SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIAL MARKETING DEVELOPMENT IN GEORGIA

***Abstract.** The article offers discussion of some outcomes of work in the area of environment protection and social marketing in Georgia, against the background of Association Agreement. In the author's opinion, formation of the legal framework is the first step in this direction and it was already made, by development of the key laws. This, primarily, implies Georgian Law on Environment Protection and Wastes Management Code. Implementation of these laws, in the author's opinion, contributed to certain steps for production and sale of the safe food products. And this is the basis for improvement of human health and improvement of welfare of the entire society. The author agrees with the opinion that there is no alternative to sustainable development. In the author's opinion, together with development of the legal framework, the work for compliance improvement should be activated, quality of the imported food products should be strictly controlled and activities for improvement of the social responsibility of business sector should be intensified.*

Key Words: environment protection, social marketing, ecological marketing, social responsibility, legal framework.

Introduction. Care about ensuring welfare of the society is one of the key characteristics of social marketing, demonstrated where the enterprises and organizations not only meet the consumers' demands but also understand their social responsibility to the society [1, p. 34-35], i.e. the enterprises and organizations, in the process of actions performed within the scopes of marketing, put forward the issues of providing welfare of the society [2, p. 120-121], protection of the interests of entire society. Today, business cannot be effective without such approach. If the enterprises engaged in business desire to gain and maintain positive image, they cannot avoid the public problems. This is impossible [3, p. 166]. In the age of sustainable marketing, only those enterprises and organizations have the chance to stay at market for long time, which, together with profits generation, ensure meeting of the consumers' requirements and play certain role in ensuring welfare of the entire society.

Achievement of the society's welfare, protection of its interests is possible only with care about human health. Human health is "significant element of sustainable development and economic growth" [4, p.11]. Protection of human health is one of the key positions of the European sustainable development strategy [4, p.337].

Protection of human health is primarily provided through their supply with safe food. And only a country caring about the environment and about reduction of the negative impact on the environment in the process of food production and distribution, i.e. providing ecological marketing, is able to produce safe food. Both, in the scientific literature and practical marketing, together with the concept of ecological marketing, the concepts of "green" and human marketing are used. For us, all three concepts bear the same contents [5, p. 351].

In any country, the problems of economic and social development and environment protection should be necessarily solved jointly. This was emphasized in the Association Agreement as well. It shahs the following: "The Parties reaffirm their commitment to pursue sustainable development and recognize that economic development, social development and environmental protection are its interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" [6]. Business development, without considering that the economic, social and environmental issues are interlinked can be detrimental not only for the consumers and the society but for the business itself as well. To avoid this, it is necessary that the marketing management system duly included the conception of green marketing, primarily implying support to production of the ecologically safe food products [7, p. 62].

Results. To promote production of the ecologically pure food, the environment protection should be provided in the number of areas. Primarily, the legislator framework should be put in order. In this respect, the country has already made the first steps. Law on environment Protection is effective in Georgia [8]. The Law was adopted (1999) before the Association Agreement was made and the government of Georgia made significant amendments to it in line with the Association Agreement. Georgian Law on Environment Protection concentrates on ensuring optimal balance between the society's environmental, economic and social interests and providing their harmonic combination (Subsection d, Section 2, Article 3). According to this law, "a citizen is entitled to: a) live in the environment harmless and safe for his/her health [8, Section a, Article 6] and this is possible only in case of optimal combination of environmental, economic and social interests. Hence, the economic progress, social justice and protection of physical and natural environment should be balanced" [6].

Relations between environment protection and economic development can be made in different areas. In given case we imply production of the ecologically pure food through environment protection. This, in turn, would contribute to welfare of the society both, in current period and in the long run.

Excessive care about development economy in any country can move the principles of environment protection and sustainable development backwards. Representatives of the governmental structures and business sector, as well as the consumers should understand this. The governmental structures should develop the legal framework and control its implementations according to the regulations established by the law. Business sector should perform its activities in compliance with the laws and subordinated legislation intended for achievement of sustainable development. At the same time, attention should be focused on the ethical aspect of social responsibility of business, at all stages of the goods life cycle. Consumers can play significant role in environment protection and sustainable development. First of all, they, with their activities, should not harm and pollute the environment and second, promote development of green economy through making choice in favor of ecologically pure products.

All, the governmental structures, business sector and consumers should understand that rapid economic development can result in harm to the natural environment. There is significant difference between sustainable development and rapid development. In case of sustainable development, while the growth pace is not high, the actions are less risky and vision includes maintenance of the resources for future generations. Way of rapid development is quite risky and there is high probability that rejecting of significant issues the economic growth can be followed by significant fall [6]. At current stage, the conception of sustainable development has no any other alternative.

Business sector, understanding its social responsibility to the society, has made certain steps to fulfill, based on the normative acts adopted by the government of Georgia, the goals adopted at the Sustainable Development Summit (25-27 September 2015, New York). Naturally, it is hard to discuss the status of fulfillment of the 17 goals adopted at the Sustainable Development Summit [9]. Therefore, we shall focus on the work performed for achievement of few goals only. In particular, our discussion will deal with the goals that are directly linked with the ecological marketing and green economy formation.

Observations over Georgian consumers in the recent period showed their interest towards the local food products. According to one of the studies [10, pp. 174-175], most of the interviewed (72%)

prefer local products and only 16% of them trust the quality of imported products. Number of respondents who pay no attention to the origin of the products is quite low (12%). In our opinion and based on observations, we can offer that the consumers regard Georgian products as the ones with higher quality and more ecologically pure. In addition, imported products are often of low quality. This indicates that the level of social responsibility of business sector engaged in distribution. Relevant state agencies should work more actively in this area. In our opinion, positive attitude of the consumers to Georgian food products is a significant investment for further development of the local companies producing and distributing food.

Labeling plays significant role in making buying decisions. The consumers' informing about the product composition, country of origin, energy value, and other characteristics help them to make correct buying decisions as confirmed by the research conducted by the Department of Marketing, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University [11].

Production, importing and sale of the ecologically harmful products results in the fact that in our country, there are still high morbidity indicators, as evidenced from the table below.

We can see that number of the diseases registered with primary diagnosis is increased significantly. This is the case in 2005-2010 period, as well as in 2010-2015 period as well. But in 2016, compared with the previous year, the cases of diseases registered with primary diagnosis and digestive diseases were significantly reduced while frequencies of traumas, poisoning and certain diseases resulting from external causes have increased. According to GeoStat, increase of morbidity can be explained by number of causes: improvement of registration, improvement of health insurance system [14, p. 81-82]. Situation is almost the same, with respect of morbidity of children of age from 0 to 14 years. Number of children registered with the primary diagnosis, according to GeoStat data, have increased from 258.3 thousand to 387.1 thousand, i.e. 1.5 times, in the period from 2005 to 2010, while in the period from 2010 to 2015, the increase was from 387.1 thousand to 595.7 thousand, i.e. 1.5 times. In 2005-2010, in children, cases of digestive diseases, as well as traumas and diseases caused by the external causes have increased. In this respect, growth was especially high in 2010-2015. In particular, in this period, cases of digestive diseases have tripled, while traumas and some outcomes of the external causes have almost doubled. Regarding the statistics of diseases, in our opinion, there is still much to be done in Georgia, with respect of food safety and green marketing, based on the effective legislation.

In Georgia, work on renewable resources is in progress. This is the country's obligation, according to the Association Agreement, stating that the share of renewable energy in the energy balance should be gradually increased.

Georgia has significant opportunity to actively use solar energy. With respect of solar energy, Georgian territory is indeed very favorable. 295 days per year are sunny in Tbilisi and this means that during 295 days we shall have sufficient quantity of hot water in case of use of solar energy [16].

In Georgia, certain steps were made for use of renewable and environment friendly energy sources. Private businesses consume solar energy, for example, family hotels [16]. Company "Kebuli Climats", the largest importer of heating, cooling, ventilation and water supply systems in Georgia imports and sells the solar collectors [15].

Table 1

**MORBIDITY OF GEORGIAN POPULATION
BY SOME KEY DISEASE GROUPS IN 2005-2016**

| | 2005 year | 2010 year | 2015 year | 2016 year | Growth in times 2005-2010 | Growth in times 2010-2015 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Number of diseases registered with primary diagnosis, thousand cases | 695,2 | 1170,1 | 2218,3 | 2174,9 | 1,7 | 1,9 |
| Among them: Digestive diseases | 42 | 151,8 | 376,0 | 342,8 | 3,6 | 2,5 |
| Traumas, poisoning and some outcomes of external causes | 32,0 | 47,3 | 87,1 | 100,2 | 1.5 | 1,8 |

Source: Table is based on GeoStat statistical annual data for years 2010, 2015 and 2017 [12, p. 81-82; 13, p. 83-84; 14, p. 81-82].

In environmental respect, launching of wind power plant in Gori is a significant step forward. Wind farm in Kartli would contribute to the strategy focused on low cost energy generation and meeting part of demand for energy in winter season with the wind energy [17].

In one of the largest regions of the country – Adjara, the project "Green Cities" is implemented. The project is funded by UNDP and

GEE. The project will contribute to development of sustainable transport policies at the national level and formation of the green urban development policies [18].

Georgian Law on Environment Protection provides for the principle of wastes minimization [8, Subsection g, Section 2, Article 4]. Minimization of wastes is achievable by development of the modern wastes management system. And this requires respective legal framework. Certain steps for this were already made in Georgia. Georgian law “Wastes Management Code” was adopted, that is in full compliance with the obligations under association Agreement and requirements of the European directives. The law has entered into force on 15 January 2015 [19].

To ensure green economics and sustainable development, Georgia implements the third national program of actions for environment protection. The mentioned document states that green growth requires involvement of the entire society and not only the existing group of the stakeholders [20, p. 148]. Once more, this indicates that dealing with the environmental problems and implementation of social marketing principles is possible only with joint efforts of the state, business sector and the society.

Conclusion. Incomplete list of the environment protection and social marketing measures indicates that the country has made certain steps in this respect:

- The ley legal documents were developed in accordance with the requirements of the Association Agreement;
- Practical steps were made to protect the population from unfavorable environmental impact and use of the renewable resources.

Works are implemented to improve the population’s awareness in the environmental problems, their danger and solutions. Though, in our opinion, Georgia is at the initial stage, with respect of dealing with the environmental issues and development of social marketing. We would offer the following activities to intensify activities in this area:

- Compliance with the effective legal acts dealing with environment protection in the country should be strictly controlled.
- Process of checking of quality of both, imported and domestic food products should become stricter;
- Respective governmental structures should set the priorities with respect of environment protection and green marketing activities;

Governmental structures should activate their work for improvement of the social responsibility of business sector.

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