

The Green Marketing at Work: The Push-Pull Effects of the Green Communication Strategies

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The constant deterioration of the environment and the bad effects on the quality of life cause many challenges for the businesses, consumers and governments. These require a new philosophy of living and new solutions which must be incorporated in the concept of sustainable development. The goal of this paper is to outline the particular effects of putting into practice a new green marketing paradigm which should incorporate the sustainable development issue. We emphasize the contribution of the push-pull strategies to the achievement of the dual role of the green company, of an organization with a social cause and as a business with a profit motive. This contribution may be identified in the push-pull effects on consumer, business, environment and sustainable development.

The analysis focuses on the push-pull green communication strategies and on the role they could play for obtaining successfully push-pull effects. These effects go beyond the essential meanings of marketing communication which are informing, convincing and deciding by educating and empowering the consumers with green solutions. All these effects can be found in the impact on the well-being of the consumers and the society, on the business, on the environment and on the sustainable development. The increase of the green purchasing and consumption, the

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well-being improvement, and a better profitability are the forms the push-pull effects could take at a micro level. At a macro level, the most significant effects are the slowing of global warming, reduced air, water and soil pollution, waste energy depletion and new sources of green energy, diminishing of deforestation, and prevention of depletion of natural resources. These effects are multiplied by a slower rhythm of energy resources consumption, the saving of the crude oil resources and other raw materials and of drinking water. The sustainable development is backed also by stopping the intense exploitation of the natural resources and energetic resources, and by more lasting products.

Keywords: green marketing, green consumer, push-pull strategy, green communication strategy, push-pull effects, quality of life improvement, environment preservation, sustainable development

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1. Introduction

The mankind has a permanent struggle for innovation and improvement as a result of his aspirations for a better life. This struggle of the humanity with its own condition had, has and will keep on with numerous and remarkable effects. But its achievements are showing their bad consequences, too because of their tremendous potential for the deterioration of the environment and the quality of life. Some recent statistics provided by many well-known organizations like World Watch Institute, UN FAO, US Energy Information Administration produce evidence about hyper consumption and environment deterioration (Bloch, 2012). As *World Watch Institute* has found, 12 per cent of the world population lives in North America and Western Europe and accounts for 60 per cent of private consumption spending, while a third of humanity who lives in South Asia and sub Saharan Africa accounts for only 3,2 per cent. The industrialized nations, representing only 20 per cent of the world's

population consume 87 per cent of the world's printing and writing paper. The pulp and paper industry is the single largest consumer water and the third industrial greenhouse gas emitter, after the chemical and steel industries, as *Co-op America* has established. *Food print* has found that for growing a pound of wheat requires around 130 gallons of virtual water. For meat, depending on the type, multiply that by five to ten times. The forests and arable land are under a constant pressure for deterioration and surface's reduction. Between 2000 and 2005 around 10 million acres of forests were lost only in South America were incorporates the mighty Amazon forest (*Choices Magazine*). The grazing occupies over a quarter of the Earth's terrestrial surface and feed crop production requires about a third of all arable land UN FAO affirms.

These examples and many others show that the consequences of the destructive efforts of the mankind must be stopped. The entropy of the planet's ecosystem has to remain constant what requires a new philosophy of living and new clever solutions, in order to preserve the environment and enhance the quality of life. Two main grounds are the basis of such manifold efforts. The first consists in the degradation of the environment due to the negative effects of the various politics, strategies and products that are not environmentally friendly. The second motive is the hyper consumption as a root cause of the environmental issues. Both main motives have bad outputs which are found in the alteration of the quality of life on Earth for people, animals and plant

A particular support for the challenges of the preservation and the improvement of the environment and the quality of life could be the green marketing, together with technical, economic and social measures (*Danciu, 2006, p. 9*). The potential contribution of the green marketing should be linked to the new eco-orientation of the business. *Cronin et al (2010)* call this new strategic concept as the triple-bottom line performance evaluation. The organizational performance is

evaluated on the basis of economic prosperity (i.e., profits), environmental quality (i.e., the planet), and social justice (i.e., people). This broad understanding of doing business provides a glaring evidence of the growing importance of going green as a viable organizational strategy with specific implications for marketing as well. The companies should commit themselves to green marketing strategies due to many reasons. First, the cost of resources such as materials and energy continue to rise. Second, the public pressure continues to increase. The third, there is a growing consumer demand for green products and services, and fourth, the consumers' antipathy to globalization is leading to strengthening NGO activity relative to green performance (Cronin et al, 2010). Such an approach suggests that the entire issue should be incorporate in the concept of sustainable development. The Earth Conference from 22-24 November 1999 having as subject "*Sustainable Consumption in the 21st Century*" considers the sustainable development " *meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs*" (White, 1999). The sustainable development embodies economic growth, and social progress in addition to the environmental protection. A sustainable development is secured only if there are sustainable production and eco-efficiency as part of the government policy and strategies, and changes in consumption patterns so that everyone can enjoy a better quality of life. These requirements are needed by the present tri- polar society made up from governments, business and civil society (White, 1999). In this tri-polar world, business does have a unique role in that is the only generator of wealth. The governments help re-distribute it. Along with roles come rights and responsibilities of these components. The business has to innovate, to market safe and sustainable products and services that meet people's needs, to adopt high ethical standards in how it operate, and provide information so the people can make appropriate choice. The literature suggests three major types of green strategies the

business could use. These strategies are the green innovation that means the development of new innovative green products, the greening of the organization which assumes a focus on the environmental aspects in the company itself and the green alliances and partnerships to enhance the green orientation. The public as individual consumers and citizens are responsible for using the information available in the market to make choices on how best to improve their sustainable quality of life. The governments have the responsibility for working with all elements in society to identify what the key priorities are and setting the market framework conditions that promote environmental, economic and sustainability (White, 1999). The government, the business and the citizens are all responsible for rising public awareness about the relationship between the sustainability and the quality of life.

2. A new green marketing paradigm

The green marketing will become the 21st century business philosophy if the focus on sustainable development, environment preservation and a fair quality of life will be maintained. This new green marketing paradigm should be considered within the evolution process of the green marketing. Bhowmick et al (2012) who quote Peattie (2001) think that *this evolution has three stages which are the ecological green marketing, the environmental green marketing and the sustainable green marketing*. The last stage came into prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000s and contains all components of the earlier two stages but has the long term issues as a new focus. This new paradigm of green marketing emphasizes the importance of social dimension within the context of the sustainable development as a prerequisite for the achievement of the company's marketing objectives (Danciu, 2006, p.25). All these are motives for a new green marketing paradigm having characteristics

and components which can harmonize the individual with the social interests according to a green philosophy (Danciu, 2006, pp. 16-17). First, the green marketing should have a balanced approach between physical, technological, and economic parts of the business and the society. In this way, the green marketing is really a subset of the societal marketing which is focused on natural environment combined with social issues (Mulcahy, 2005). Second, a new paradigm of green marketing presumes to lay stress upon meeting the real and true needs of the consumers instead stimulating the superficial wishes. Third, the green marketing should look upon the consumers as real human beings instead hypothetic economic entities. More, the green companies should recognize the green consumer which has as core belief that she or he can make a difference or impact by purchasing environmentally friendly products and this is an important prediction of green consumption (Cronin, 2010). These consumers are environmentally conscious and they have a thinking process that reflects the Environmentally Conscious Behavior (ECCB) which is “the consumer’s behavior based on the awareness of the environmental impact associated with a product or service and a desire to reduce those impacts” (Bhommwick et al, 2012, p. 11). Fourth, the company and all its activities should be considered as apart of the “consumed green product”. It has to follow an ecological consciousness in terms of societal responsibility. This approach means that the business has all its marketing and concepts focused on the reduction of the consumption, the preservation and even the improvement of the environmental conditions of the people, animals and plant (www.marketing-marktplatz.de/Grundlagen/Oekomt.html). Fifth, the concept of eco-performance should be accepted and adopted because it embodies the outputs of the business that are not meant to the market, the performance of the product during and after its utilization and the environmental impact of the companies on each component of the value chain. The eco-performance concept may include possible-

environmental added effects and the technical-economic value. Last but not least, the new green marketing paradigm has to follow a holistic approach, in order to have a sensitive impact on the ecosystem. Belongs to the business to shape individual systems which are in a permanent interaction with the environment ,and knowing the market conditions, in order to adapt and grow in harmony with them, and innovating to generate new spaces of the relationships with suppliers and customers (*Llena Navarro,2012*). These three processes which are the individual life, the ecological succession and the evolution can be integrated only if the individual, the mechanism, and the organization as a whole build up a collective group whom members are sharing objectives, principles and positioning for the environment with they interact.

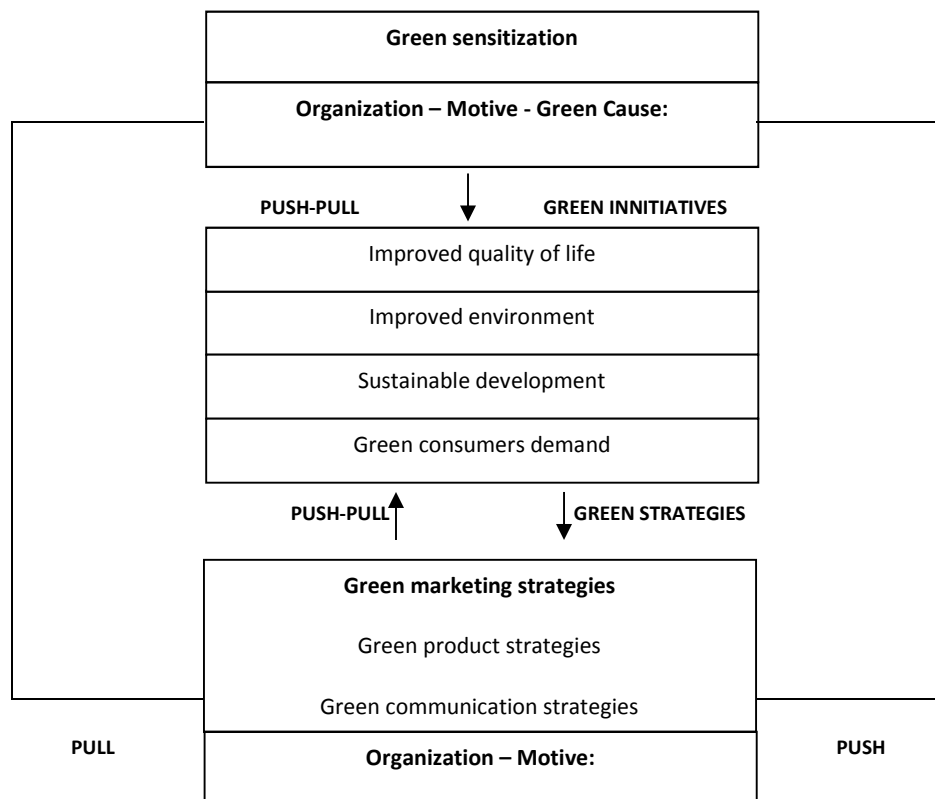
3. The concept of push-pull effects

3.1. The push-pull effects as output of the green strategies

Every company must perform a dual role, of an organization with a social cause on one hand and as a business with a profit motive thinks *Jitendra (2002, p. 9)*. These two objectives, social and profit, are antagonistic and for the business would be difficult to project it as doing both. In order to succeed, the company should take the role of a promoter of a specific cause with the objective of education and sensitizing the consumer about the specific issue and identifying the needs of consumers. Both objectives are valid for the green companies, too. A green company should be a promoter of the green cause and identify the exigencies of already and potential green consumers. This approach could be called *the green push –pull initiative* and it can provide critical input to the company with the profit motive. The motive becomes a support for the development of the green marketing that best match the green consumers' expectations and it could be called *the green push- pull strategy*. The figure 1 indicates how a green sustainable objective and a profit objective impact the green

consumers in generating and meeting the demand for green products. As a result, the company can understand better the consumers and thus provide critical new products marketing strategy development input to the profit of the organization.

Figure 1
The green marketing transformation and the push-pull effects



Source: *Design adapted by the author according to Jitendra, 2002, p.10*

The green marketing strategy means taking the green product to consumer. This strategy type refers to the work a producer or a marketer needs to perform for getting the product to the customers. It's a proactive proceeding which involves setting up distribution channels and persuading the distributors to stock the product. Such a push technique can work particularly well for lower value items such as fast moving consumer goods when customers are standing at the self ready to drop an item into their baskets and are ready to make decisions on the spot. The new businesses often adopt a push strategy for their products in order to generate exposure and a retail channel (Currie,2012;www.marketing-made-simple.com/articles/push-pull_strategy.html). Once a brand has been established, this can be integrated with a *pull green marketing strategy*. That means getting the consumer to come to the product. As the green consumers are proactive, informed, eco-educated, liberal, and have a green consciousness and they actively seek out the product, the pull strategy seems more appropriate. A pull marketing strategy requires a highly visible and trusted brand which can be developed trough mass media advertising or similar techniques. If the customers want a product, the members of the distribution channel will order it. That means the demand and supply in its purest form and this is the basis of a pull green marketing strategy. The push-pull green marketing strategies are the source if the push-pull effects on consumers, business, environment, and sustainable development. The push effects are the outcome of the push grebe strategies the company carries out. The benefits if the green marketing strategies used by the company as a reaction to the increasing exigencies, requests or doubts of the green consumers and marketers are called the pull effects.

3.2. The requirements for advantageous push-pull effects

The growing number of green consumers is accompanied by a progressive stronger green consciousness that embodies a social

dimension. Therefore, the companies assume by their own will responsibilities that are associated with the green social corporative responsibility. But only a trusted commitment can convince the green consumers. More and more buyers are interested in companies' commitment into different green and social sustainable projects. That's why many producers and marketers have such initiatives and reactions. Some are developing marketing true green products, but other make only minor changes and are pushing them forward as being important. The deceiving marketing is known as "green washing" that adds a new contribution of lack of trust felt by the consumers to the green companies (Cronin et al, 2010; Fiedler, 2.06.2012; Cash investigation, 28.04.2012). This green marketing is not convincing and has no chance on the long-term. New drugs and packages having nothing new for the environment and the quality of life protection are useful for the producers and marketers interests to the detriment of the consumers. In addition, the consumers' criticism and confusion are issues associated with green marketing strategies. Therefore, the strategies aimed at the "reluctant consumer" are critical if the business seeks to advance and reap the benefits of the green marketing strategies (Cronin et al, 2010).

All strategic efforts are taking as true to the same extent they succeed. The green strategies are successful if they show a constant and strong commitment for the creative replacement of classic solutions with better green alternatives. A modeling of successful green strategies must be worked out according to the 4C concept that is Competency, Credibility, Commitment, and Cooperation. Any green strategy has more chances for good push-pull effects if all competent, suited actors work together for the same objectives.

4. The leading part of the green communication strategies for best push-pull effects

4.1. Two main balancing roles of the green communication

The green marketing communication has a strong promotional substance. This means that the green promotion media, supports and messages must convince the consumers and public to accept and to buy the green products. Therefore, it stimulates the demand for green products. Moreover, the goal of the promotional communication is to create and to improve the green image of the business and its offer. In order to achieve these important goals, the green communication plays a prominent part in correcting the trust deficit of the green marketing and the green information asymmetries.

The public and the consumers are often skeptical about the green initiatives and strategies of the business. Thus, seems that not the technical, economic issues, saving or obstacles for having green products but rather the business' ability to convince the price sensitive customers to choose green products has more meaning for them. Another motive that urges good green communication is the green communication asymmetries. The business has to understand that the consumers and the public are partners and beneficiaries and meeting their green exigencies is the most important goal and the source of the business survival. This calls for an interactive green communication and for financial, human and managerial efforts. Considering the unbalanced distribution and access to information between consumers, public and business is the task of the latest to convince the consumers that its green efforts are real. These efforts are aimed at a more balanced flow of information and a correction of the asymmetries in green communication between the market's actors and their behavior (*Danciu, 2006, pp.178-179*). A good outcome of the green communication encourages the green consumers and business.

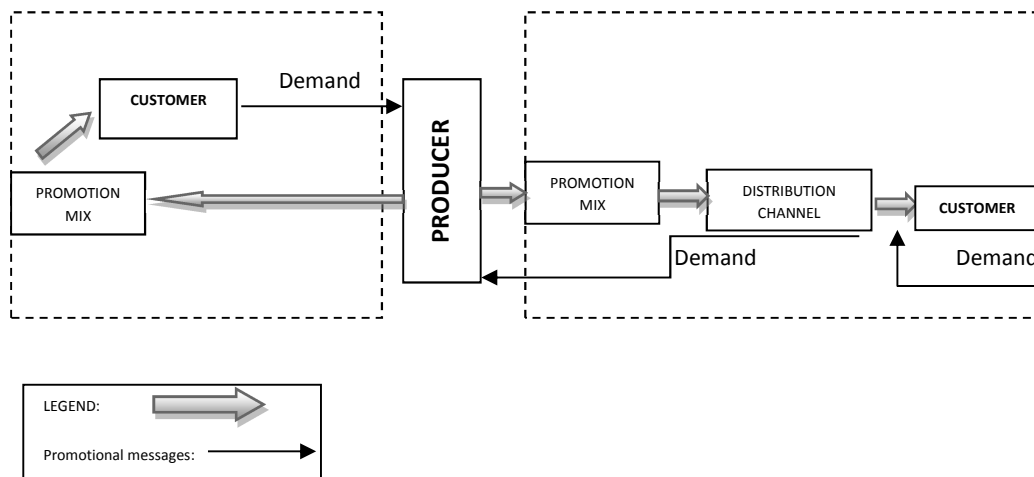
4.2. The green push-pull communication strategies

The effectiveness of the strategy impacts on the conviction power of the green communication. In the green marketing literature the following three green communication strategies: educate consumer, empowered consumer and convince consumer (*Ottman, 2011; Kinotti, 2011; Danciu, 2006*). The educate consumer strategy means educative efforts on environmental and life problems a green solve as a response to the pressures of the consumers or as a result of the business initiative by providing the needed information. The particular goal of educative messages is the increasing of buying intent. The strategy of empowering consumer with green solutions consists in demonstrating to the consumers how environmentally healthy products and services can help them protect life and preserve the environment for the future generations. Thus, this communication strategy supports the sustainable character of the green marketing. The strategy for convincing consumer has at least two directions. The first part of the communication strategy has providing the performance reassurance of the green products as a goal, in order to persuade the consumers that these products are good or even better than the brown existing ones. The second strategic direction appeals to the consumer self-interest by bringing out the benefits of the green products to both actual and potential consumers. The consumers quickly like better many green products when they are linking the green solutions to their personal well-being.

The above mentioned communication strategies have a push or a pull orientation. A conceptual model of the push-pull communication strategies as those presented in Figure 2 can help a better understanding of these directions.

Figure 2

The 'push-pull' promotion strategic model



Source: *Designed by the author*

The push communication strategies have the information flow from the producers to the successive links of the distribution channel until the message reaches the consumer and she or he demand the green product as Figure 2 shows. The explicit and implicit messages reach the consumers via push and pull promotional mixes. The green promotion mix with effects could have different combinations between the direct selling to consumers in show rooms or face to face, the negotiation with retailers to stock the company's product, the utilization of efficient supply chains allowing retailers effective supply, the trade show promotions to encourage the purchase and the point of sales displays.

The pull green communication strategies have the initiative on the consumers which actively seek the product of the company as a support. The communication messages are feeding the market and the creation of demand almost looks after itself. Some pull promotional

combinations could be built up from the advertising and mass media, the word of mouth referrals, the customer relationship management and sales promotions and discounts. The business must have a strong brand, in order to obtain good push-pull effects of its green marketing strategies.

5. The push-pull effects of the green communication strategies

5.1. The push-pull effects on the consumers

The green communication strategies have numerous and various effects. All three green communication strategies are aiming not only at the performance of the essential roles of the marketing promotion which are informing, convincing and deciding. They go beyond that by educating and empowering the consumer with green solutions. One push-pull effect the communication strategies have is the increasing of the green purchasing and consumption. The analyses work out by Kelto. co. uk, TNS, IPSOS, and quoted by authors like *Cooney(2012)* and *Murray(2011)* or Internet sites as *www. ecopreneur. co. za* concluded that the market for green products is set to gather pace in the next years, doubling the value of the market from EUR 56 billion in 2009 to EUR 114 billion by 2015. At the same time, the green retail prices are expected to drop over next years, reducing the overall “green premium” to an average of 40, 5 per cent that is expected to driven by the rise in demand for green products (*Murray, 2011*). At a country level, a study conducted by IPSOS over US, UK, Germany, France, Spain, Mexico, Brazil, India, and China shows that 79 per cent of the consumers rather buy from companies doing their best to reduce the impact on environment. At a first glance, this feeling is surprisingly most marked in China and Brazil, but least in the United Kingdom and United States (*www. ecopreneur .co. za*). The green communication strategies have no impact of all these trends, but they play an important role. The green communication strategies that have in view

the education of the consumers could have particular good effects making easier for them to choose free.

5.2. The push-pull effects on the quality of life

The quality of life is a term used to evaluate the general well-being of the individuals and societies. In a broad understanding, the quality of life is "a multidimensional construct including physical, emotional, mental, social, and behavioral components" (Janse (2004, p. 654) quoted on www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/1311743/11). A similar approach has WHOQOL Group (1995) enlarges the concept of quality of life as "a broad-ranging concept incorporating in a complex way the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs, and their relationships to salient features of the environment". The authors Brown, Bowling and Flynn (2004, p. 6) have found in literature (Rosenberg, 1992; Bowling, 1995, 1996; Windsor 2001) that all components of the quality of life could be systematized in two groups that is macro (societal) and micro (individual, subjective) terms.

The communication strategies have an impact on the physical and psychological well-being of the consumers and the society. The green communication media, supports and messages have push-pull effects on the individual and societal well-being by better information using more substantiated argumentation that is convincing the consumers to purchase green products and the business to make green investments. These effects take shape if the existing and new green brands are emphasized, the contributions of the marketing practices to lowering the pollution, preserving fauna and flora, improving the housing, the longevity and the health are outlined.

4.3. The push-pull effects on the business

The green strategies have many benefits for the business with green marketing practices (Kinotti, 2011). First of all, these strategies make easier a better profitability because the green products create less waste, use fewer raw materials, save energy. Then, the green products are higher in quality in terms of energy saving, performance, convenience or safety. The organic products offer safety and a better taste, the recycled paper or plastic save money while the solar-power cell phones have an extended use and waste reduction. A quiet ride, fewer fill-ups, reduced pollution and status are some benefits of the hybrid cars. The green communication should focus on such effects and stress them in the promotional messages, in order to contribute to better effects on the green objectives of the business. The third, the companies which are first to deliver their green innovations to the market enjoy competitive advantages and increased market share, at a certain extent. But increasing the market share is the attribute of a better brand loyalty. The consumers view the company's record on the environment as an important determinant of their purchase decision. The green communication has a particular role in informing the consumers on the true character of the company and its brand.

4.4. The push-pull effects on the environment

The environment derives many benefits from the green marketing strategies, the communication strategy included. A well-coordinated green communication strategy could contribute to a better physical environment. The advantageous effects are a slowing global warming, reduced air, water and soil pollution, waste energy depletion and new sources of green energy, reduced deforestation, depletion of natural resources, and a better landfills rate. To all those benefits could be added a slower rhythm of energy and resources consumption, saving the resources of oil and other raw materials, drinking water, extinction

of endangered species and they must be used in the argumentation of the communication tactics.

4.5. The push-pull effects on the sustainable development

If the new green marketing paradigm is incorporated into the concept of sustainable development, the outcome of the green communication strategies and practices could contribute to the meeting of the present and without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The good effects show themselves both at the micro level and at the macro level of the sustainable development.

The green product is a subject of meeting the objective related to the contribution to the sustainable development. The sustainable product strategy has an impact on stopping the intensive exploitation of the natural resources and the energetic resources. The perishable raw materials could be replaced by more lasting others, on one hand. On the other hand, the renewable resources can be more used as is the case of the replacement of crude oil with solar or wind sources for generating electric energy. All green products are more sustainable if they are more lasting. The durability becomes a source of added value, an indicator for quality and conduces to a diminished consumption of raw materials.

5. Conclusions

The disorder of the Earth's ecosystem as a result of the mankind unfortunate actions requires strong and intelligent steps to fight back for maintaining its entropy. The green marketing can develop a number of strategies which help the efforts for the environment preservation and the improvement of the quality of life. In order to get the best results, a new green marketing paradigm which embodies many areas of actions such as its contribution on environment protection and sustainable development in addition to the efforts for consumers and companies.

The successful implementation of this particular approach should contain the issue of the push-pull effects. They are the outputs of the green strategies execution which have a push-pull character. A push green strategy means taking the product to the consumer while a pull strategy is getting the consumer come to the product. The push-pull communication strategies are a part of the green strategies that support the effort to acquire the best push-pull effects. These effects are distributed among consumers, business, environment, and sustainable development. As the business is the key part of the green efforts, its push-pull green strategies and effects depend on how they comply with all requirements and concepts of the new green marketing paradigm. *Ottman (2012)* suggests that the business has to accomplish several conditions, in order to get the best push-pull effects. First, the business has to understand the deeply held environmental and social beliefs and values of its consumers. Second, the business must create new marketing strategies which could balance the consumers' desires for green quality, convenience and affordability with minimal environmental and maximal social and sustainable impact over the quality of life. The third, the business must be able to develop brands that offer practical benefits while empowering and engaging the consumers in meaningful ways about the significant green issues. Fourth, the business needs to establish credibility for its efforts by communicating its corporate commitment and striving for complete transparency. Fifth, the business has to think holistically, that is it must underscore community with the broad array of corporate environmental and societal stakeholders. Sixth, the business is obliged to be proactive and must go beyond what is expected from stakeholders. Finally, the business should not giving up and must promote responsible the green product use and disposal practices and continuously striving for "zero" impact.

The contribution of the business, the push-pull effects of its green communication strategies included, in meeting all requirements and

achieving its dual role, of an organization with a social cause and as a business with a profit motive, is carried out only if the green strategies are worked out and implemented in a professional manner and with goodwill.

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