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## **ECOLOGICAL MARKETING –STRATEGIC OPTION FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN BUCHAREST**

**Abstract:** *Development in fields regarding economics, society and technology came along with some issues. One of the most important is the environmental pollution, which facilitated the birth of many concepts, like ecological marketing. Ecological marketing brings together a wide range of activities including modifying products, changes in production processes, changes in terms of packaging and advertising. The present paper approaches ecologic marketing in Bucharest, because the business sector needs to implement this concept, due to its continuous development and negative impact of it over the environment and over consumer's lives. The main objective of this paper is to identify the perception of Bucharest's inhabitants concerning environmental degradation and to identify the existence of ecological behavior of the citizens, seen as consumers. By identifying consumer's perception this study reveals the opportunity for businesses in Bucharest to use concepts from eco-marketing because the consumer's needs are oriented in such way. This paper is based on a survey amongst Bucharest's citizens and offers an overview on their ecologic behavior and their perception on the environment revealing important aspects for businesses to take advantage of, in order to develop the business towards satisfying consumers ecological needs and gain a new source of differentiation.*

**Keywords:** *Ecological marketing, Sustainability, Pollution, Environmental awareness, Business development.*

**JEL Classification:** M31, Q50

## 1. Introduction

Economic and social development of society brings with it a number of challenges, one of the most important in the long term being the environment. In other words, development and progress, degrades the environment and lowers the quality of life and of all other living beings on the planet, increasing the need for green industries (Zamfir, 2012). Economic development can be assured, in a sustainable manner, by not neglecting environmental issues as consumer behavior is affected by elements like globalization. Worldwide, the governments are trying to take measures for preventing the negative effects of human progress, this being a reality in Romania, too, and implicitly in Bucharest, its capital city.

As society's concern about environmental issues is increasing, businesses have begun to modify their behavior in an attempt to meet the new concerns of the society. This can be integrated in the social responsibility concept, which means creating long or medium-term positive image of the company in relation with the stakeholders (Kolk, 2016). Some of them accepted rather quickly concepts like environmental management systems and waste minimization and also have integrated the environmental issues in all organizational activities (Lukic, 2016). Marketing oriented towards ecology, basically involves changing mentalities and concepts deeply rooted in businesses cultures, as well as in their traditional marketing. Ecological marketing, unlike traditional marketing involves, first of all increasing environmental awareness of consumers, so that is the reason why it is so important. Another issue that should be taken into account is that there are some problems with the usage of green marketing and its concepts, such as high expenses and government policies, but that shouldn't stop organizations in gaining their competitive advantage by using eco-marketing and strategic management models such as those based on people and knowledge (Zamfir, 2013).

According to specialists, nowadays, environmental issues are becoming more and more important affecting all human activities as their awareness is increasingly higher, conducting to an increase in sustainability research (Balderjahn et al., 2013; Moraes et al., 2012), but, even so, only a few academic disciplines have managed to integrate environmental issues into their literature review. This has become a reality of marketing, which succeeded to tackle these issues.

Some authors say that it can't be any economic production with no pollution at all (Antweiler et al., 2001) while others support "economic regrowth" (Karna et al., 2003). Clearly, efforts must be made in order to avoid an ecological disaster, and for achieving this, marketing can be certainly used. Ecologic marketing means undergoing activities within the organizational culture like changing ways of thinking and

## **Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest**

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modifying concepts related to the traditional marketing. Environmental awareness of consumers is important and ecological marketing represents one important instrument which can be utilized to raise that awareness amongst consumer's behavior (Danciu, 2006).

As all big cities in the world, Bucharest is constantly developing and growing day by day. Its economic, social, technological and demographic development comes with a long term price, namely, environmental degradation caused mainly by congestion and pollution. For this reason, this paper tackles ecologic marketing in Bucharest. Businesses need to expand worldwide in order to stay competitive, they have a number of products that satisfy the same need (Deac et al., 2016) and they need to minimize the negative impact of their activities amongst the environment and over consumer's way of life, chasing for sustainability, which is very important as a business goal (Hart, 2007; Nidumolu et al., 2009). The subject treated in this article brings interest to the scientific literature because little research has been done and the behavior of the consumer is constantly changing becoming more and more ecological oriented.

### **2. Literature review**

Unfortunately, most people believe that ecological marketing refers only to promoting and advertising environmentally friendly products. Terms such as "recyclable" or "reusable" are often associated by costumers with ecological marketing. Of course, these terms belong to the ecological marketing concept in general, but it requires a broader apprehension which can be applied to consumer goods, industrial goods and even for services. For example, there are increasingly more and more areas that promote themselves as areas where "ecotourism" can be practiced, and those areas are specialized in providing the possibility for costumers to be part of nature or they are targeting their activity in such way that the environmental impact is as limited as possible (Polonsky, 1994).

Therefore, defining environmental marketing is a complex task. The terminology used in this area varies and includes concepts such as Green Marketing, Ecological Marketing and Environmental Marketing. While green marketing extended in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as a concept, it appeared much earlier. The American Marketing Association (AMA) hosted the first workshop entitled "Ecological Marketing" in 1975. The results of this workshop led to the first book about green marketing named "Ecological Marketing" (Henion and Kinnear, 1976). At this event, ecological marketing has been defined as "the study of positive and negative aspects of marketing with regard to pollution, waste of energy and non-energy resources" (Polonsky, 1994).

Specialists (Polonsky and Mintu-Wimsatt, 1995) defines environmental marketing as consisting in all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or desires, so that satisfaction of needs or desires to be realized, with the lowest possible impact over the environment. They also considered that marketing should be designed to minimize damages over environment, not necessarily to eliminate them permanently.

The key concept in trying to define ecological marketing refers to the way in which responsibility and ecological problems are integrated in managerial concepts of marketing and to the role that governmental regulations play (Karna et al., 2003).

Other authors defined the concept of ecological marketing as a holistic managerial process which holds responsibility for identifying, satisfying and anticipating customers and society's requirements in a profitable and sustainable manner (Karna et al., 2001). Coddington (1998) considered ecological marketing as a marketing activity which acknowledges the concern towards environment as being a responsibility for business development and a growing opportunity.

Synthetically, ecological marketing refers to promoting and advertising products with ecological characteristics. When accomplished, the specific actions carried on and pursued by environmental marketing, materialize in the emergence of biodegradable and recyclable packaging, in a more rigorous control over environmental pollution, in practicing activities with low energy consumption and in educating costumers based on sustainable development principles. So, green marketing task is to improve organizational marketing policy in its relationship with the environment, in order to meet its objectives.

In order to outline an overview of ecological marketing and to talk about it in a comprehensive way, the attention should be focused to the characteristics of the ecological marketing mix towards the traditional marketing.

First of all, the ecological marketing mix requires the existence of ecological product. The ecological product represents the total product, being pursued in its evolution from design till environment reintegration that is achieved at the end of its life cycle. The second element of the ecological marketing mix is the ecological price which reflects ecological costs and ecological price strategies. Thirdly, another component of the ecological marketing mix is green advertising where the influence of communicating ecological messages will be followed, with emphasis on the best way to communicate the message. Product labeling is the most frequently used method of promoting an organic product, and all should result in an eco-efficient communication. The last element of the ecological marketing mix is green distribution, where the attention could be focused on resource regeneration strategies (Morar, 2013).

Redirecting consumer choices towards organic products is necessary because consumers usually evaluate only the benefits a product offers on the short term. The

## Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest

reorientation process should be made simultaneously with the reorientation of the marketing mix. In order to adapt the marketing mix, systematization of traditional marketing and of ecological marketing should be achieved, as exemplified in Table 1 (Fuller, 1999).

**Table 1. Comparison between traditional and ecological marketing**

	<b>Traditional marketing</b>	<b>Ecological marketing</b>
<b>Product</b>	Concentrated on traditional benefits for the consumer.	Concentrated on traditional and also ecologic benefits.
	Designed for achieving particular traditional attributes.	Besides achieving traditional attributes, the product is designed for the environment.
<b>Price</b>	Concentrated on short term on cost/price rapport and added value.	Concentrated on long term on cost/price in the entire lifecycle and added value.
	Failure to separate costs in order to identify or budget eco-costs.	Separation of costs in order to identify ecological costs and budget them for the products responsible of producing them.
	The establishment of the price which reflects property (payment of the property title).	The establishment of the price which reflects the product as services (rental potential/leasing for transferring the title)
<b>Promotion</b>	Communication based on presenting direct functional and emotional benefits.	Besides direct benefits, it presents the indirect ecologic benefits, on long term.
	Educating consumers about products benefits.	Educating consumers about the values and ecologic benefits, providing information to determine the buyer to choose ecologic products. Stimulating participation in resource recovery programs.
<b>Distribution</b>	Concentrated on product support, the declared purpose being faster access to the product.	Concentrated towards reverse distribution as support for the resource recovery and prevention of pollution. Strategic alliances for extending product's lifecycle.
	Traditional criteria in selecting members of the distribution channel.	Adding the ecologic criteria in member's selection.

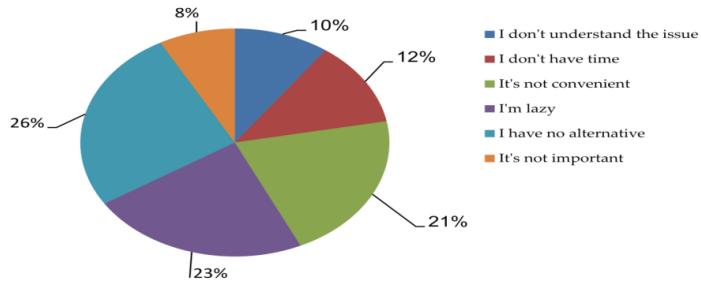
**Source: Adapted from Fuller, 1999**

Therefore, there are different marketing orientations. Green marketing is essentially a usual marketing activity, which takes into consideration the satisfaction of an extra need for a small segment of customers which is expanding continuously, and is engaged in following the same buying criteria and in understanding the influence of the product against the environment (Rosca, 2013). Green marketing involves social responsibility and takes into account on long term, the sustainability and the bigger picture. Green marketing is not just a branch of traditional marketing, but a new perspective in organizing daily activities.

In conclusion, product and production processes modifications, altering packaging and advertising are brought together by ecological marketing. There are some limitations of this kind of marketing that should be taken into account, such as bringing high expenses and being limited by government policies.

### **2.1. Relevant field studies**

Over time, many researches have been conducted on various aspects of environmental marketing. Therefore, in 1998, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted a research regarding ecological behavior of the consumers (EPA, 1998). This study revealed that consumer's commitment to environmental quality improvement was very small and they seemed to put this responsibility on industry field and on government. Ultimately, environmental marketing requires the desire of customers for a cleaner environment and also their will for paying for it, possibly through a higher price for products, a different lifestyle or even through government intervention. The study concluded that if the situation did not change, it would be very difficult for economic agents to lead an ecological marketing "revolution" by themselves. Figure 1 resumes some of the reasons induced by consumers for not protecting the environment, showing their poor commitment to this issue.



**Figure 1. Reasons for not protecting the environment**

Source: Adapted from EPA, 1998

## Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest

Another study conducted on environmental marketing issue (Ottman, 2008), revealed the need for a new approach to management of marketing in an ecological way. This was necessary in order to help businesses in their efforts to deal with green marketing challenges through changes applied to their brands (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Ecologic responsibility of the brand**

Traditional responsibility of the brand	Ecologic responsibility of the brand
Team for the brand	The team is interested in the environment
Short term	Long term
National level	Regional, global level
Brings ahead advantages of the final product	Targets the entire lifecycle of the product
The objective is selling the benefits of the product	The objective is stating the ecologic and social values.
The producers and advertising agencies take on responsibility	New integrating alliances are created

**Source: Adapted from Ottman, 2008**

In order to get a better picture of environmental marketing and what implies among economic agents, consumers and the state, the attention could be focused on a research conducted in 2010 by Grundey and Zaharia (2008). The study referred to the strategic implementation of ecological marketing principles in Lithuania and Romania. The findings of this study confirmed the findings of previous researches. Thus, this study concluded that the implementation of a sustainable and ecological philosophy in marketing practices, required manufacturers to become more sensitive to the usage of resources more efficiently for a longer period of time. People working on marketing field should be encouraged to estimate the costs of new laws and regulations, the costs of litigation for the firms they work for and the potential loss of competitive advantage. All this must be regarded as critical and must be integrated in the components of ecological approaches.

Lately, research interest regarding unsustainable production practices was attracted multidisciplinary because sustainable consumption has been promoted. Regarding environmental psychology, research results indicated that being aware of the problem, having environmental values corroborated with social and personal values towards sustainable consumption are the main characteristics of the sustainable consumer.

In conclusion, the literature review presents the meaning of ecological marketing and who are the actors involved in its creation and usage, from companies to consumers and the state. These issues are not different for environmental marketing in Bucharest. The problem of ecologic marketing in Bucharest is real, taking into account the development of the city and the rhythm in which the city grows. The paper will analyze if among the citizens of Bucharest, consumers for businesses, there are practices and knowledge about ecological marketing or if it is a new or unknown concept.

## ***2.2. Research methodology***

This research was intended to analyze the ecological behavior of the citizens in Bucharest. The primary objective of this paper is to find out if consumers, citizens of Bucharest, are concerned about the environmental problems and therefore they manifest ecological behavior. This study sheds light among the opportunity for companies to take advantage of the ecologic awareness and behavior of consumers in Bucharest.

The research is based on two hypotheses:

- H1: The citizens of Bucharest consider that they live in a city with a degraded environment.
- H2: If the citizens of Bucharest declare themselves as being ecologists, then they will have an actual ecological behavior.

For this research a survey was conducted using a questionnaire as research instrument. The questionnaire was applied online in October-December 2016 via e-mail, to a number of 200 respondents. The answer rate was 84%. The obtained data was processed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Also for data processing, two attitude scaling methods were used, namely Likert Scale and semantic differential (Osgood Scale).

The Osgood Scale allows a simultaneous analysis with the help of some characteristics of the researched element, like attitude of the respondents towards products, brands, concepts, institutions and others (Osgood et al., 1957). In this research the scale was utilized using a power dimension measuring the attitude of respondents on a scale from 1 to 5: 1. Very weak, 2. Weak, 3. Medium, 4. High, 5. Very high.

Regarding Likert Scale, its positions indicate the level of agreement or disagreement, approval or disapproval of the respondents towards the content of a statement presented as positive or negative phrase. Usually, the scale contains five positions with five category values respectively five numeric values. The respondent expresses his option by marking one of these positions and the intensity of the option

## Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest

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(agreement/disagreement) will be estimated by dividing the responses scores to the number of respondents. Numeric values can be either positive or negative indicating that a high score will mean a favorable attitude and a low score will indicate the opposite (Allen and Seaman, 2007). In this paper, values from 1 to 5 were used to scale.

Using the applied questionnaire, the research aimed to obtain data about the ecologic behavior of citizens in Bucharest and also the grade of interest that they manifest towards ecological issues in the city. This part of my research proposes to confirm/deny the hypothesis on which the research is based on.

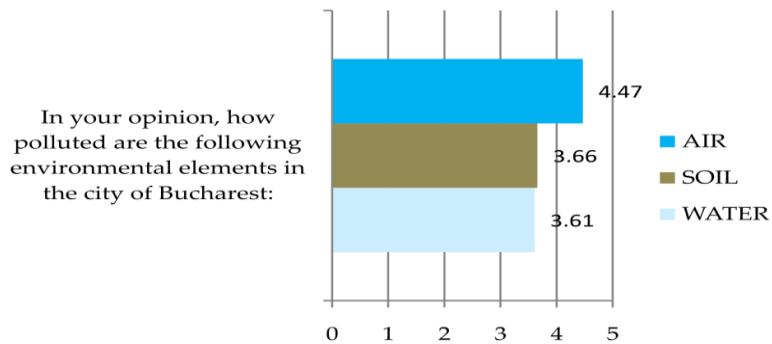
The sample includes individuals which are citizens of Bucharest, with ages between 18-49. From the respondents 22.62% were aged 18-20, 39.28%, between 21-23, 27.38% between 24-29 and 10.72% between 30-49%. The sampling method used was simple random sampling.

### **3. Empirical results**

#### *3.1. Analysis*

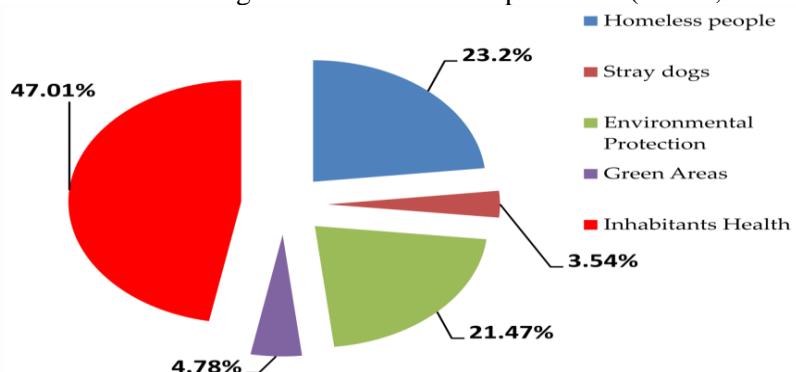
The first question in the questionnaire examined the perception of residents of Bucharest about the level of environmental degradation as is shown in Figure 2. For this, a series of three environmental components with particular importance for the city and citizens were selected, namely: air, water and soil. The collected answers were analyzed using a scaling method named semantic differential. It could be noticed that Bucharest citizens considered all three elements mentioned as being polluted because the scores are high which indicates they are in favor of considering those elements as being polluted.

The highest score was obtained for the air element, with a value of 4.47, which was a very close value to the maximum set by 5. From these scores it can be concluded that the inhabitants of Bucharest considered that they were living in a polluted city in terms of water and soil, but especially air. It seemed that air was perceived as having the poorest quality, perhaps because it was easier for respondents to appreciate its quality. These scores reflected very well the perception that Bucharest inhabitants had about environment that could be summed up in words like: "we live in a polluted city".



**Figure 2. Perception about pollution level**  
Source: Authors, based on the survey

Another problem approached in this questionnaire was the respondent's opinion about social problems of their city (see Figure 3). We wanted to see which problems they consider to be the most important, in order to prioritize them and see what place does environment protection occupies. This is relevant for the study because environment protection could be considered a component of ecological behavior of citizens. The highest number of respondents considered population health as being the most important social problem of the city (47.01%). Unfortunately, environmental protection ranked on the third position with a percentage of 21.47% of the responses, being surpassed by homeless people problem which scored 23.2%. Green spaces and stray dogs obtained the lower scores, proof that Bucharest residents were not considering those relevant social problems. (4.78%, 3.54%).

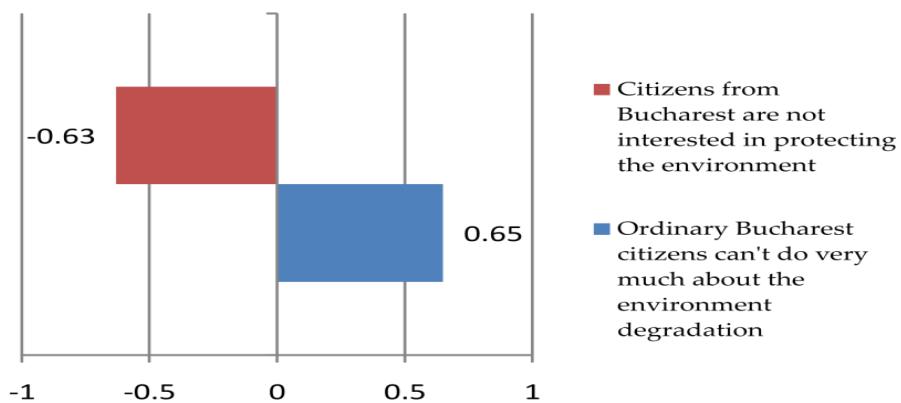


**Figure 3. Social problems considered important**  
Source: Authors, based on the survey

## Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest

It could be concluded that Bucharest residents are aware about the fact they are living in a city with a high level of pollution and simultaneously consider issue environmental protection a quite important problem. It could be possible that the citizens are becoming more aware about the fact that environment protection is extremely necessary because when a clean and healthy environment exists, the health condition of the inhabitants improve and as could be seen health is considered the most important social problem for Bucharest.

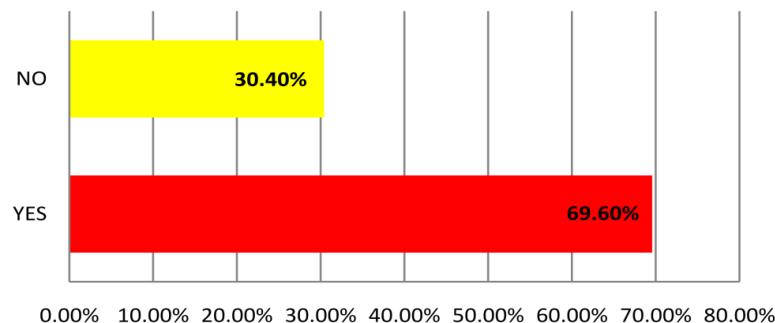
The following two statements were aimed to identify the respondent's perceptions about the power of ordinary people to action in order to reduce environmental degradation, namely their interest to protect the environment. The results showed that environment protection still represent an interest for the citizens. For a better highlighting of the data collected through the two questions the Likert scale was used and the results are shown in Figure 4. Thus, the score for the first statement was -0.63 which means that respondents disagree with the statement that the citizens from Bucharest are not interested in protecting the environment. The second statement obtained a 0.65 score which showed that the respondents agreed with the affirmation that the ordinary Bucharest citizens can't do very much about the environment degradation. It could be concluded that respondents believe that all residents could action for the environment and its protection, but they cannot do very much about it. It is interesting that in previous answers can be deduced that respondents are interested in environmental protection to some extent; they believe they do not have the power to do something about this, although they are interested in this aspect.



**Figure 4. Perception about inhabitant-environment relationship**

Source: Authors, based on the survey

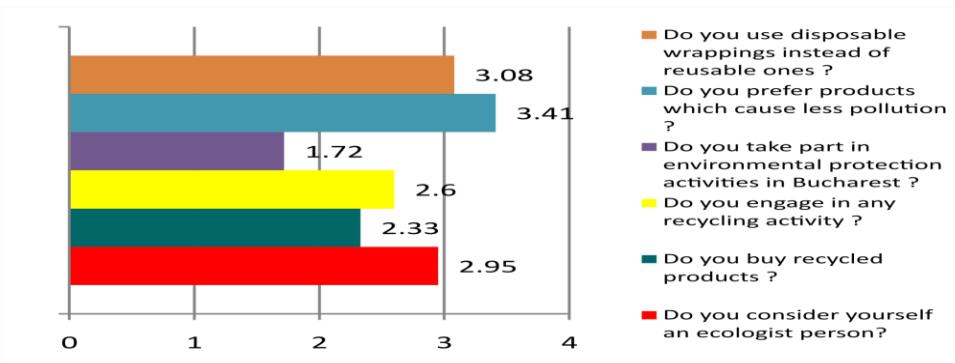
When respondents were asked if they brought their own contribution to stopping the environmental degradation phenomenon in Bucharest, most respondents (69.6%) answered yes and 30.4% gave a negative answer (see Figure 5). So, at least declaratory, Bucharest citizens were concerned about environmental protection and had ecological behavior.



**Figure 5. Own contribution to environment protection**

Source: Authors, based on the survey

The previous questions were addressed in order to analyze if respondents really behaved in an ecological way. Figure 6 shows the scores obtained for each question. These results were calculated using semantic differential method. Even though the preference for ecological products obtained an appreciative score (3.41), the answers for the other questions were in majority, negative.



**Figure 6. Actual ecologic behavior**

Source: Authors, based on the survey

## Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest

So, respondents used often disposable packaging to the detriment of the reusable one's, fact showed by the score obtained at this question (3.08). Likewise, the majority of respondents do not recycle, do not buy recyclable products, do not take part at environment protection activities and do not consider themselves as being ecologists.

As previous question results showed, at least declaratory, the majority of respondents considered that they took part at stopping the environmental degradation in Bucharest. After analyzing the previous questions, it could be concluded that the respondents do not actually act for lowering or stopping the environmental degradation process. The studied sample affirmed that they would prefer product which polluted less, but as it can be seen, that it is not enough.

### 3.2. Correlation

In order to achieve a better data analysis Pearson's correlation has been used (see table 3), which is a quantitative research method. Using this method, the data can reveal if there are any kind of relationships between variables.

**Table 3. Correlation of certain variables**

	Q5	Q6	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13
Q5	1							
Q6	0.172774	1						
Q8	0.069027	-0.02324	1					
Q9	0.065208	0.009923	0.33983	1				
Q10	0.024492	-0.00668	0.490302	0.452487	1			
Q11	-0.02228	0.096141	0.265048	0.265248	0.304617	1		
Q12	-0.0918	-0.10707	0.429957	0.296641	0.408369	0.239708	1	
Q13	-0.10944	0.021074	0.055737	0.07686	0.096191	0.082189	0.133467	1

For the statistic population of the research, critic R in Pearson's table was equal to 0.159. The correlation will exist only if the value gained by a variable is greater or equal with 0.159, no matter if positive or negative because it can be either.

The table resulted was indicating only positive correlations, as following:

- A very weak correlation, negligible;
- No strong or very strong correlation;
- Six weak correlations;

- Four moderate correlations.

After analyzing the correlations, it was identified the fact that only a small part of respondents which considered themselves ecologists, had the tendency to engage in recycling activities and to manifest preferences for products which are causing less pollution by having an ecologic behavior. This fact and also the data analyzed from the questionnaire tend not to confirm the hypothesis which states that if citizens in Bucharest consider themselves ecologists, then they will have an ecologic behavior.

Also, respondents who engage in recycling activities tend to be the individuals that acquire recycled products. Also, those who had a preference towards products which cause less pollution were those who practice recycling activities. It was observed that only a small part of respondents which declared an ecologic behavior, had an actual ecologic behavior.

#### 4. Discussion

The fundamental contribution of this paper refers to analyzing ecologic behavior of inhabitants in Bucharest in order to see if ecological marketing represents an opportunity for business development in Bucharest.

The research indicates the fact that citizens in Bucharest consider that they live in a polluted city, with a degraded environment considering air, water and soil in the city to be in an advanced degradation state which indicates their level of awareness regarding the environment and also can explain why more and more city inhabitants declare themselves as being ecologists. Another important aspect which this paper brought to light is the fact that the data indicated that respondents only declared themselves as being ecologists, but in reality just a small part of them had the tendency to show a true ecologic behavior. In other words, the level of individuals with ecological behavior is still low, showing that ecological marketing is not making itself present just yet. Also, the research revealed the following aspects about Bucharest's inhabitants:

- They are aware about the environmental problems of the city;
- They think that they can't make a change, but they are interested and consider themselves ecologists;
- They consider that they are bringing their contribution to stopping negative environmental phenomenon, but they do not have an actual ecologic behavior regarding the phenomenon.

Table 4 expresses briefly the validity of the hypothesis.

## Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest

**Table 4. Validity of the hypothesis**

The citizens of Bucharest consider that they live in a city with a degraded environment.	Validated
If the citizens of Bucharest declare themselves as being ecologists, then they will have an actual ecological behavior.	Not validated

As the data shows, among the citizens of Bucharest, consumers for businesses, there are practices and knowledge about ecological marketing, but in an infant level, more at declaratory level than in an active way.

Our vision started from the conviction that this city will enhance its environmental conditions while continuing to be the biggest center of attraction for companies in Romania, as until today. Ecological marketing is slowly beginning to make itself present in the organizational cultures of companies active in Bucharest, as their social responsibility. Also, a fairly good part of the capital's inhabitants seems to be aware of the environmental problems that the city is undertaking these days, and they are more or less trying to contribute in protecting the environment by having more of an ecologic behavior.

In a highly competitive business environment this research can be taken into account as revealing an opportunity in developing ecological marketing for a number of reasons. By declaring themselves ecologists, the citizens, also consumers reveal their own perception about themselves and they are showing preferences to buy ecologic products. If they have this kind of perception then they can react very well to eco products, services etc. Companies, as social responsible, should take advantage of this opportunity and integrate or develop their ecological marketing in order to be more competitive, even to differentiate themselves and create an image as being social responsible.

Ecological marketing is not making itself very present in Bucharest because the inhabitants are not determined to have ecologic behavior even though they want it. Concerted efforts of the companies present in the city and also their clients are needed in order to develop ecological marketing. At the moment, we find ourselves in infancy, but Bucharest always proved that everything has a start. Finally, let's not forget, as should be a constant reminder for companies, that by having an ecologic product, service etc. you are not only satisfying the need of the consumer, but you satisfy also the need of Planet Earth for sustainable development.

This research is limited because it focuses only on citizens using ecological marketing elements. Of course it represents an opportunity for businesses in the city to develop their ecological marketing skills in order to be more competitive, but for a

Ruxandra-Irina Popescu, Răzvan-Andrei Corbos, Mihaela Comănescu, Ovidiu Bunea

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better understanding of the situation in Bucharest, a research may be conducted inside the businesses, organizations, or NGO's in order to see how they are influencing ecologic behavior of citizens using ecological marketing techniques.

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## Ecological Marketing –Strategic Option for Business Development in Bucharest

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