

**ASSESSMENT OF PACKAGING PRACTICE AND ITS  
IMPLICATION ON GREEN MARKETING IN SEBETA  
AGRO-INDUSTRY (MAMA) P.L.C.**

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***Abstract***

*This paper aimed at assessing the impact of packaging on green marketing practice. The data classification was more descriptive. Data collection was made through the use of questionnaires, interview, and observation. The sampling technique employed for the customers was convenient sampling technique. A total of 250 copies of questionnaires were distributed and 202 were collected back, representing a response rate of 80.08%. The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. The results revealed that the packaging material of the products are not biodegradable, not eco-friendly, not reusable, not refilled, not recycled and cannot be reduced, but the company puts instructions on how to dispose the package on some of its products. Findings, implications and recommendations for managerial practices are discussed and put forwarded.*

**Introduction**

Change is occurring at an accelerating rate; today is not like yesterday, and tomorrow will be different from today. Continuing today's strategy is risky; so is turning to a new strategy. Therefore, the strategy employed has to do with a drive to turn a private or social need into a profitable business opportunity through marketing. Marketing management deals with managerial decisions on product lines and brands, namely, the characteristics of products, the way a company builds and manages its product mix and product lines, how a company makes better brand decisions, and how the company's packaging and labeling should be used as its marketing tools.

The company should consider basic brand decisions and key packaging and labeling issues. Three elements - product, services, and price - must be meshed into a competitively attractive offering if the company wants to perform well in the

marketplace. Marketers plan their market offering at five levels. These are: the core benefit (the fundamental service or benefit); a basic product; an expected product (a set of attributes and conditions that buyers normally expect when they buy the product); an augmented product that exceeds customer's expectations; the potential product, which encompasses all of the possible augmentations and transformations the product might undergo in the future (Kotler, 2000). Thus, the marketer or the company searches for entirely new ways to satisfy its customers and distinguish its offer. One of the ways is packaging.

Kotler (2006) states packaging has involved designing and producing the container or the wrapper for a product. Besides, it can and may include a product's primary container, secondary package that is thrown away when the product is about to be used and a shipping package which is necessary to store and to ship the product. According to him, nowadays, the function of packaging becomes broader than contain and protect the product because of increased competition and clutter on retail store shelves.

Companies should realize the power of good packaging to create instant consumer recognition in attracting attention, to describe the product, and to make the sale of the company or the brand. William et al. (2000) also note the strategic importance of packaging. According to the same authors, promoting the product and protecting the product are the two key functions of packaging. In one sense, packaging is a key element to present the product to the consumer. In another sense, it is essential to protect the product when it travels through the distribution channel until it reaches the final consumer.

Regardless of the above-stated functions, packaging provides a promotional message about the product and it is important to both sellers and customers. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the use of packaging which is broad and

diverse. However, the company should and must consider the growing environmental pollution and social concerns before making packaging decisions.

In this regard, S.M. JHA (2005) poses different questions related to environmental disaster, population explosion, socio-cultural confrontation, tension and dissension. The author asked such questions as: Do we feel that the development activities channelized during the 20<sup>th</sup> century would open doors for social interests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Do we feel that the industrial development process of today is not to engineer a sound foundation for slow murder of the coming generation? Do we feel that the planet earth would remain safe tomorrow? The answers for these questions should be positive. It is generally believed that the development programmers should not pave ways for the long-run dangers.

The concept of societal marketing gives a lot of homework for the producers on their production, distribution, and packaging activities. Kotler (2006) further elaborates societal marketing as it is all about questioning whether the pure marketing concept overlooks possible conflicts between consumer short-run wants and consumer long-run welfare or not. For Philip Kotler, marketing strategy should deliver value to customers in a way that maintains or improves both the consumer's and the society's well-being. Therefore, most of the manufacturing and service industries are directly or indirectly found engaged in the process of endangering the social interest of their consumers.

Over the years, business and industry, financial institutions and the general public have been more talked about green issues. There has been much discussion about the environment and the damaging effects produced by everyday activities. Extensive environmental damage has been caused by continuous consumption, marketing, manufacturing, processing and polluting, along with several environmental disasters. Therefore, there are various

responses to green issues that companies have adopted which include green product promotion, green marketing, environmental management and aiming for sustainability (Saha & Darnton, 2005).

Green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe (Green International Inc., 2008). Green, environmental and eco-marketing approaches are new marketing approaches which belong to the group of approaches which seek to address the lack of fit between marketing as it is currently practiced and the ecological and social realities of the wider marketing environment (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Thus, green marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, packaging changes, as well as modifying advertising.

Some scholars in the field of marketing management have attempted to study green marketing. For example, most green marketing literature is strongly based on the assumption that a consumer's environmental awareness is a pre-condition for green purchasing. While following such a behaviouristic green marketing both scholars and companies seem to have neglected that green products are bought only if customers perceive the products as superior to competitors' offerings (Meyer, 2001). Polonsky (2001) tried to re-evaluate the green marketing strategic approach. The author then argues that green marketing is a complex tool that must be integrated across all organizational areas and activities if it is to be successfully implemented and achieve long-term benefits.

For Manrai et al. (1997), green advertising is the advertising that emphasizes the environmental friendliness of the product. Attributes such as degradability, recyclability, lower pollution, etc. are considered to be environmentally friendly.

Joshu (2004) further states that the increasing environmental concerns of consumers are leading to more information about the environmental characteristics of products being made available by producers through what is called "eco-labelling". Eco-labelling has thus become the medium promoting both the production and consumption of products that are "more environment friendly" than competing products available in the market.

Green marketing is in the focus of present marketing practice due to the pressure that arise from inclined environmental awareness in the global climate change. According to Kotler (2006), environmentalists are concerned with effects of marketing on the environment and with the cost of serving consumer needs and wants. They are concerned citizens, businesses and government agencies to protect and improve people's living environment. They are not against marketing and consumption, they simply want people and organizations to operate with more care for the environment. They stress and assert that the goal of marketing should not be maximize consumption, consumer choice, or consumer satisfaction, but rather to maximize life quality. And according to them 'life quality' means not only the quantity and quality of consumer goods and services, but also the quality of the environment.

Nowadays, Philip Kotler (2000) states that more and more companies are adopting policies of environmental sustainability, which is management approach that involves developing strategies that both sustain the environment and produce profits for the company. This environmentalist movement is concerned with protecting the natural environment which is needed as an input by the marketer and that are affected by the marketing activities.

Strannengård (2000) argues in favour of the environmental strategy - phenomena in the institutional environment become internalized and matched with existing

tools and solutions which have resulted in a business-driven environmental strategy. However, the environmental strategy is not static, as the degree of business-environment integration fluctuates over time. Presently, because of different non-degradable packaging materials, the environment of our world becomes washed-out. From the student researcher's observations and the pieces of information gained from the Ethiopian Environment Protection Authority (EEPA), the level of awareness of green marketing practice on the part of the business firms is not well-known in Ethiopian context. Because of the lack of awareness of green marketing in the country, the packaging materials used by different business firms are causing severe environmental damage.

Against this backdrop, there is a need for more research on the role of the natural environment in marketing strategy and business performance. However, there are no intensive and extensive studies on the practices of packaging and green marketing management as such through the consumers' perspective in the Ethiopian context, according to the best knowledge of the researcher. Therefore, this study is to assess the practice of packaging and its implication on green marketing management at Sebeta Agro-Industry (Mama Dairy) P.L.C. which is one of the pioneers in this agro- industry sector in the country.

Although the concern for packaging and green market management is growing, the empirical marketing literature has been relatively silent about the integration of environmental issues in marketing strategy and decision-making (Langerak, 1998).

There should be rational approach to and practice in packaging one's product(s) in service providing company. Marketing implies bringing together the needs and wants of the consumer with the products and services that match them. In this connection, the marketing manager should consider the marketing mix at

least in terms of the product (i.e. the item or serve the company offers); and positioning (which is brand or corporate identity of the product or service).

Product is anything that can satisfy need (which is state of deprivation of some basic satisfaction) or want (i.e. desire for specific satisfier of need). The product has such components as physical good, service and idea. Thus, the product is really a via-media for service(s). Careful management of these components is essential for the successful marketing of the product(s) in both long-term and short-term marketing strategies of the company.

At this juncture, the concept of the traditional marketing mix appears to be worth mentioning. This mix refers to those elements which the company controls and uses to satisfy or to communicate with customer(s) (Zeithamal & Bitne, 1996). The traditional marketing mix has components consisting of product, price, place, and promotion.

The product (service offerings) is anything which a company offers to customers that might satisfy a need (whether it is tangible or intangible) (Palmer & Cole, 1995). The serve offerings can be both the tangible core benefits of services and a secondary service offering that represents the tangible and augmented elements. The secondary service offerings also illustrate the additional benefits that the services offer to meet customers' additional needs, and serve to differentiate the offerings from the competitors'. With the promotion service of the traditional marketing mix, there is a greater need to emphasize the tangible elements of services like packaging, brand name, corporate image, service delivery and service employees.

In this regard, the physical evidence that is the environment in which the service provider delivers the service and where the customers and the company interact, as we call any tangible component that facilitates performance of

communication of the services. Most service companies combine the tangible dimension with one or more of the other quality dimensions to create a service strategy. Therefore, it can be argued that companies which do not incorporate the tangible dimension in their quality strategy may fail to develop a good marketing strategy.

Packaging as one of the tangible dimensions of the promotion services of the traditional marketing mix has to consider the company's immediate environment and should be eco-labelled and eco-friendly. Thus, packaging practice has implications for green marketing in any service providing firms. The packaging practice has both positive and negative consequences in the companies working environment. Hence, there is no single green marketing strategy which is right for every company. Therefore, the companies should follow one of the green marketing strategies such as "lean green," "defensive green," "shaded green," and "extreme green". The customers would prefer to choose a green product over one that is less friendly to the environment when the product's traditional attributes such as convenience, availability, price, quality and performance are fulfilled.

In order to meet the above-stated objectives of the study, the researcher raised questions such as: To what extent does the packaging of the Company perform its intended functions? To what extent does the packaging practice in the Company give due emphasis to green marketing? What are the major strategies followed by the Company to make the packaging of its products eco-labelled and eco-friendly? Therefore, in answering these questions, this study generally aimed to assess the packaging practice of Sebeta Agro-Industry (Mama Dairy) PLC and to examine its implications on green marketing. Specifically, it intended to assess the attitude of customers towards packaging materials of the Company which may have high negative impact on the green environment; and



to suggest how the Company may make the packaging materials eco-labelled and eco-friendly. Thus, the study may contribute its share for saving our country from depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation.

## **Literature Review**

Different scholars in marketing management have attempted to define the concept of packaging. According to Khanna (2002), packaging is defined as the use of containers and parts, together with the decoration and labeling of a product in order to contain, protect, and identify the merchandise and to facilitate the use of products. Packaging starts from planning of a product. It concentrates on formulating a design of the package and producing an appropriate and attractive container for a product (Sherlekar, 2004). Kotler (2006) also defines packaging as activities which involve designing and producing the container or wrapper for a product. Therefore, the container itself can act as a forceful though silent and colorful salesman or an effective advertisement encouraging buying. From these definitions of packaging, one can understand that packaging is more than simple packing and it is also a marketing necessity.

There are some attributes of packaging to perform its intended functions. Packages of products must fulfill different criteria depending on the product(s) they contain. Sherlekar (2004) points out different attributes of a good package. For him, a good package should protect the contents from breakage or spoilage, be easy to open, dispense from and close, be safe to use, keep the product from deteriorating, be of proper size and shape, be reusable, able to be recycled or biodegradable, be economical and be available in the sizes appropriate to the market segments served. As a medium of communication, a good package should also fulfill attributes like attractiveness, perfect presentation of a favourable image of the product, play the role of silent salesman, be reading

identifiable in a shopping situation, act as a unique selling proposition, should have a clearly readable description of the contents, offer information on assembly, preparation and use, communicate the benefits of the product to the targeted market segment, and not be deceptive or misleading in size, contents, etc. All these detail description of the product's packaging criteria implicitly have some sort of relationships with the issues of the product(s) being environmental - friendly or eco-friendly in the light of green marketing.

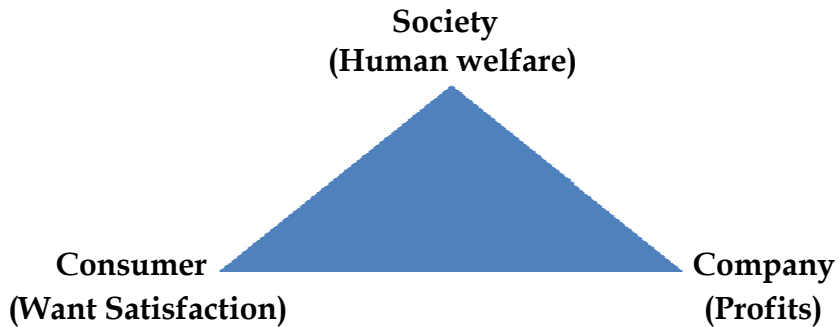
The definition of green marketing is given by different marketing and related field professionals in a way that is related to the long-run welfare of the society and environmental conservation. Berkowitz et al. (2000) defines green marketing as a marketing effort to produce, promote and reclaim environmentally sensitive products. Lindquist and Sirgy also (2003: 123) express their own views on the concept of green marketing as the development and selling of products and services that are environmentally friendly. Kyambalesa (2003), on the other hand, considers green marketing as an obligation on the part of businesses to seek socially beneficial results along with economically beneficial results in all their policies, decisions and activities. When one analyzes these three definitions given to green marketing, it can be understood that different authors use green marketing and societal marketing interchangeably.

Kotler (2006) elaborates the concept of societal marketing as it questions whether or not the pure marketing concept ignores possible conflicts between consumers' short-run wants and long-run welfare. That is, is a firm that satisfies the immediate needs and wants of target markets always doing what's best for consumers in the long run? It holds that marketing strategy should deliver value to customers in a way that maintains or improves well-being both of the consumers and the society. To make his idea more concrete, Philip

Kotler further cited an example of fast foods which are high in fat and salt, which leads consumers to overeat and contributing to a national obesity epidemic and also the products are wrapped in convenient packaging, which leads to waste and pollution. In satisfying short-term consumers' wants, the highly successful fast-food chains may be harming consumers' health and causing environmental problems in the long-run.

Kotler as cited in S.M. JHA (2005), argues that organization's task in societal marketing is to determine the needs and wants of target market and to deliver the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than competitors in a way that preserves or enhances that consumer's and society's well-being. From these arguments, one can comprehend that the concept of social marketing stresses and calls upon markets to consider the societal effect of their final products and related packaging. In 2005, the same author informs that marketers are socially obliged to balance the three considerations in formulating the marketing policies, viz., company's profits, consumer's satisfaction and public interests. Having said this, S.M. JHA states that companies should consider the long-run customer's satisfaction and social interest rather than concentrating on only its profit,

In this regard, Kotler (2006) adduces that organizations should balance three considerations, namely, company's profits, satisfaction of consumer's wants, and society's interest and welfare in setting their marketing strategies.



**Figure 1. Marketing Practice in the Context of Social Marketing**

Source: Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2006). *Principle of marketing*. P. 11-13.

Kotler gave an example of Johnson and Johnson Company's experience and success regarding marketing practice in the societal marketing context. According to him, the Company's concern for social interests mainly focuses and stress on honesty, integrity and putting people before profits. Thus, the Johnson and Johnson Company would rather take or prefer a big loss than distribute a bad (hazardous) batch of its product.

In addition, S.M. JHA (2005) argues that even if an organization or a company has the right to produce, its products should not be instrumental in polluting the environment either in the short-run or in the long-run. However, automobile, leather, cement, glass, steel and many other industries have failed in assigning the weight-age to the environmental factor. According to the same author, there is an attitudinal change in recent years even if it is at its stage of infancy.

The emerging fast food industry packaging materials, which are made of plastics, also have created numerous and critical problems in the environment. Most of such business firms also use packaging as a motivational tool and they use plastic materials for packaging- it is just to add attraction. But S.M.

JHA stresses that this kind of practice is not in tune with the defined principles of social marketing.

Sherlekar (2003) similarly gives due emphasis to the concept and defines it as an intelligent and objective concern for the welfare of society that limits or prevents individual and corporate behaviour from destructive activities (e.g., monopoly power, unfair trade practices, and pollution of environment). For him, such destructive activities may result in immediate profit to the business firm(s), but the society cannot tolerate these issues.

Packaging has its own functions based on its various types. According to Berkowitz (1994), based on the benefits of packaging for the manufacturers, retailers and to the ultimate consumers, there are three kinds of function of packaging. These are: communication, functional and perceptual benefits. Communication benefit of packaging is the information on it conveyed to the consumer which is needed to satisfy legal requirements of product disclosure. The functional benefit of packaging refers to the role of packaging related to convenience, protection, and storage and shelf life. The benefit of packaging with the perception created in the consumer's mind.

Scholars in the field of study have come up with different views on functions of packaging. Sherlekar (2004, p. 238) also considers the function of packaging from the marketer's point of view as a sales tool. It identifies the maker, as well as the product and carries the brand name. Thus, it informs the buyer about inner contents and how to use them and, finally, as the biggest advertising and promotional tool.

Nowadays, Kotler (2006) stresses the function of packaging has become broader and important marketing tool. Because of the increased competition,

packages must perform many sales tasks which range from attracting attention to describing the product, and to making the sale.

Pillai and Bagevathi (2005) indicate some of the general functions of packaging as an advertising medium in order to encourage re-purchases; to facilitate retailers' functions; to create product image and individuality; to enable easy display; to protect the contents; to facilitate easy storing and transporting; to easily identify the products; to help memory and recognition; and to provide convenience, economy and adjustability.

As described in a Report prepared by the Consumer Goods Forum, even if the fundamental role of packaging is to deliver the product to the consumer in perfect condition, it serves a variety of other purposes like protecting (prevent breakage, prevent spoilage, prevent contamination, tampering and theft and increase shelf life); promotion (description of product, list of ingredients, product features and benefits, and promotional messages and branding); information (product identification, product preparation and village, nutritional and storage date, safety warnings, contract information, opening instructions and end of life management); convenience (product preparation and serving, product storage and portioning); unitization (provision of consumer units and provision of retail and transport units); and handling (transport from producer to retailer point of sale display). Therefore, packaging of one's product(s) indicates multi-dimensional functions.

Scholars in the packaging discipline argue that there are various kinds of packaging. Packaging can be primary package, secondary package and tertiary package. . Primary packaging is also consumer packaging - what consumers see upon purchase of the product. Secondary packaging refers to grouping of several consumer goods into one unit, usually a thin cardboard box or shrink wrap.

Specifically, secondary packaging refers to the following: (1) This is what the retailer sees and handles before goods are placed on shelves; and (2) In discount stores, consumers may also see the secondary packaging. Tertiary packaging or transportation packaging includes all activities to ensure safe and efficient delivery of goods. For industrial goods, tertiary packaging encompasses all packaging activities aimed at protecting goods in shipment.

According to Kotler (2006), packaging can be generally categorized into consumer packaging and industrial packaging. Consumer packaging refers to kinds of package which are often based on marketing consideration in terms of advertising or promoting the product through their attractive colors. In the world of globalization, packages are playing a very important role in getting competitive advantage in a competitive market. One may observe that firms which produce and offer the same product to the market but use effective packaging have getting competitive advantage over their rivals. Industrial packaging (protective packaging) has more protective nature than promoting the product. This kind of packaging is mostly used for those products which are highly technical and expensive so as to protect them from damages since they are very expensive to replace them.

For Pillai and Bagavathi (2005), there are around four kinds of packaging. These are consumer package, family package, re-use package and multiple packages. According to them, consumer package is a kind of package which holds the required volume of product for the household consumption. Concerning family package, when products are related in use and are of similar quality, the firm makes the packages identical for all products by using common feature on all the packages. In this type of packaging, system producer uses similarity in packages i.e. material, appearance, method, etc. Re-use package (dual package) is also a kind of package which can be re-used for other

purposes after the product has been consumed. Multiple package: is a kind of packaging practice in which several units of a given product can be packaged in one container. These kinds of packaging are considered in the study under discussion.

There is a close relationship between packaging and green marketing. Sherlekar (2004) confirms that the value of packaging will be based on the contribution it gives to different aspects of the society under consideration. Therefore, these contributions are measured based on the condition of products on the receipt by the customer, the promotional and informative value of the package, the role of package in physical distribution at all points in the marketing channel, and environmental and ecological aspects of packaging. Thus, marketing management should not only concentrate on package attractiveness, simplicity to produce, easiness to store and to handle but should also give due emphasis on environmental and ecological aspects of packaging.

Therefore, it can be argued that there is also a relation between marketing activity and society in which it is being carried out. For Pillai and Bagevathi (2005), modern business must demonstrate social awareness or sensitivity and social performance. Social responsibility means an intelligent and objective concern for the welfare of society that limits or prevents corporate behaviour from destructive activities. Society is concerned with the ecology and the need for preserving the environment from further human pollution. Business and industry are leading contributors to environmental pollution and thus packaging is a pollutant feature of marketing. In order to differentiate the brands and buyer preferences, marketers use packaging for butter, cream, cheese etc. In addition, disposable products due to marketing operations have their own contribution to environmental pollution.



There are different strategies of making packaging of products eco-friendly. mentioned by a package, to be good must protect the contents, look attractive, establish identity, have less cost, develop the interest to possess, arouse the people to re-purchase, enhance the image of the brand, occupy less space, give out a brief idea of the product , build confidence, have a clean look, look like and asset, possess a status to display, minimize the saver's job, resist soiling, have trade characters, have label-pasted, have eye-catching look, be simple in design, be convenient to handle and look like a fast seller (Pillai & Bagavathi, 2005).

### **Research Design and Methodology**

The study used both quantitative and qualitative research designs to generate quantitative and qualitative data from primary, as well as secondary sources. Quantitatively, the student researcher employed descriptive sample survey research method. It describes how various factors of the problem influence other and shows the relationship/association/correlation between various quantities. Descriptive survey research method is also a useful approach for conceptualizing and describing the characteristic elements of any model and their relationship to one another who, what, when and how). In addition, it is useful to describe the characteristics of the study subjects and to estimate the proportions of the population that have particular characteristics under investigation.

The researcher, on the other hand, used qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews with key informants, observations of the overall activities of the Industry. Besides, the author engaged in intensive documentary analyses of relevant published and unpublished documents, including web-based files.

As the study was carried out in Sebeta town of the Central Ethiopia where the Agro-Industry Company is situated and the target population is relatively large, the researcher decided the sample size to be 200 subjects based on available resources, as well as accessibility of the study area. However, the researcher prepared and distributed a total of 250 structured questionnaires to the sample respondents to manage wastage of the research tool successfully as per the reference of Malhotera (2007, p. 339). The sampling techniques used in the study were simple random sampling of the probability sampling technique to select customers of the Industry or the users of its products because the student researcher had no data on the exact size of them; and volunteer sampling technique of non-probability sampling technique to identify potential informants among the employees in the production divisions and the managers of the Company.

Before the researcher continued to analyze the quantitative data collected, the response rate had been calculated. First, a total of 250 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the consumers and respondents of those products of the Company and they were given five days to answer the questionnaire items. All in all, a total of 202 questionnaires were collected back from the respondents, representing a response rate of 80.08%. However, two of them were found to lack adequate data. As a total of 200 questionnaires were enough to represent the target population of the study, only this size of the tool was finally used in the actual data analysis.

In the study, the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. The quantitative data were first checked and verified for completeness and then they were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software Version 20 of descriptive statistical techniques

such as using frequency distribution consisting of frequencies, and percentages; measures of central tendency and dispersion; measures of association and relationship; and others. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis after they had been checked for their completeness. Finally, the outputs of the quantitative data analyses together with themes identified in qualitative data analyses were drawn and used while writing up the final version of the research report.

## **Results and Discussion**

This part of the paper is organized into 10 sections based on the specific objectives. The results of the study focused on general socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the respondents, most frequently used products of the Company and purchasing frequency; and issues related to general packaging functions. In addition, the findings of the study deal with correlation and reliability test, green marketing related topics; the respondents' knowledge of packaging practice and green marketing; relationship between age and being informed about eco-friendly and bio-degradability; educational status and being informed about eco-friendly packaging; and correlation between biodegradability and eco-friendly of packaging materials.

### **General Characteristics of the Respondents**

The respondents in the study were found to be male, young adult dominated with high degree of variability in the distribution of their age. The findings of the study presented in Table 1 revealed that more than half of respondents (53%) were found to be males, while the females accounted for 47% of the study subjects. More than half of the sampled customers of the Company (54%) were found to be in the age bracket of 33-55 years, followed by the age group 26-32 (22%). The 200 sampled customers of the Company were found

to have a mean age of 37.31 years and a median age of 35 years. For the age variable, the standard deviation value shows that its average deviation (dispersion) from the mean was about 12 years. In the study, it was found that the subjects had a minimum age 19 and the maximum of 72 years. Therefore, the Company's customers are significantly male adults, but there is some sort of variability among them which may make the customers a bit heterogeneous in terms of their characteristics under consideration.

As shown in the first table below, out of the total sample respondents included in the analysis, the significant majority of them were found in the wedlock situation. A total of 151 subjects claimed married (75.5%) and were found to have family size which ranged from 3 to 4 persons in the household in the study (44%) and co-habited with one or two children (44%) under one roof. These show that most of the respondents included in the study are building block of the society and reflect the nature households in modern cities where one may find nuclear family consisting of married couple and their one or two children.

All of the participants in the survey are literate people who have already achieved different levels of education. Sixty-one percent of the respondents graduated from a university or college constituting of 75(38%) already earned undergraduate diplomas or degrees, while the remaining 45(23%) received post-graduate degrees. However, only thirty-nine percent of them were found to attend their schooling from primary education to preparatory education levels of the current Ethiopian education system. Based on these findings of the study, one can deduce that the Company's customers are well-educated who are believed to be responsible for and have a responsibility to know about and practice all issues related to social responsibility and green marketing.

**Table1. Descriptive Statistics of Socio-demographic and Economic Characteristics of the Respondents (n=200)**

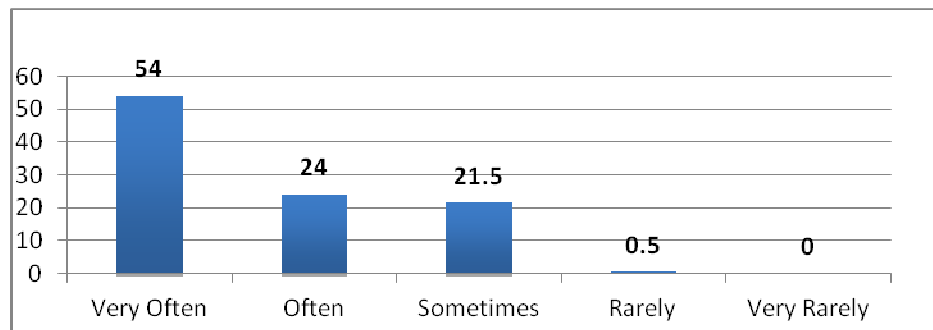
<b>Variables</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	105	53.0
Female	95	47.0
<b>Age category</b>		
19 - 25	34	17.0
26 - 32	44	22.0
33 - 55	108	54.0
56+	14	7.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	41	20.5
Married	151	75.5
Separated	2	1.0
Widowed	6	3.0
<b>Family size</b>		
< 2	52	26.0
3 - 4	88	44.0
5 - 6	41	20.5
7 - 10	19	9.5
<b>Number of Children in Household</b>		
0	49	24.5
1 - 2	88	44.0
3 - 5	52	26.0
6+	11	5.5
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Primary education (grade 1-8)	15	7.0
Secondary first cycle education (grades 9-10)	35	17.0
Preparatory education (grades 11-12)	30	15.0
University or college graduates		
. <i>Undergraduate degrees</i>	75	38.0
. <i>Postgraduate degrees</i>	45	23.0

**SOURCE:** Own survey results, 2012

The customers of the Sebeta Agro-Industry PLC have very greatly varied monthly household incomes. They earned monthly income which ranged from Eth. Birr 1,000.00 to Eth. Birr 25,000. As their monthly earnings vary greatly, on average, the respondents in the survey were found to earn an amount of Eth. Birr 4,691.29. These show that majority of the respondents are in a better position to buy the Company's various kinds of products as they are not in short of hand than other sections of the local community.

### Product and Purchasing Frequency

The significant majority of the respondents (78%) very often or often purchase and consume the Mama Company's products. Eighty-seven percent of the Company's customers constituted as the category of those customers who had been using Mama Milk more frequently than that of Mama fruit juice which accounted for only 13%. As indicated below in Figure 1, one can observe that most of the customers have had very frequent purchasing behaviour. Thus, purchasing behaviour and frequency of those customers of the Sebeta Agro-Industry Company indicate that they have shown frequent preference for Mama Milk product to other products of the Company.



**Figure1. Purchasing Frequency of the Respondents**

**SOURCE:** Outputs of own data analysis, 2012

## **General Packaging, Green marketing and Customers Awareness**

In order to perform its intended functions, the Sebeta Agro-Industry Company's packages must fulfill such attributes as protecting the contents from breakage or spoilage, be safe to use and keep the product from deteriorating (Sherlekar, 2004). When the sample respondents were presented with general questions examining their attitude towards the packaging practice, as well as the materials used to pack its products in relation to its operational environment, this study presents its findings in Table 2. As illustrated in Table 2, the respondents' attitude towards the general packaging practice as well as its functions in relation to the environment were assessed and measured using seven survey items. The distribution of responses to these items reveals that the customers sampled expressed.

In three of the seven items, a considerable proportion of the customers disagreed ("slightly disagree" through "disagree") that the Company had been responsible for packaging practice which considered green marketing issues (28.0%) and (45.5%) of the respondents showed "slightly disagree" and "disagree" attitude towards to the general packaging practice as well as the materials used for the purpose, respectively. This is so because the sampled customers stated that the package could well protect the products against all adverse influences and physical damage, had believed the packaging materials could not protect the products against all adverse influences and physical damage, and were found to agree on the proposition that the trustworthiness of the products' packaging was safe to protect the product from any type of biological contamination.

**Table 2. General Packaging Functions Related Issues**

Functions of Packaging		%						
		SD	D	SLD	N	SLA	A	SA
The package can well protect product against all adverse influences.		5.5	25.0	28.0	20.0	6.0	13.0	2.5
The package can protect the product from biological contamination.		-	0.5	5.0	23.5	23.0	31.0	17.0
The package can protect the product against physical damage		14.5	45.5	21.5	5.0	3.5	7.0	3.0
The package carries correct information about the product		-	-	0.5	23.5	12.0	21.5	42.5
The package carries enough information about the product.		1.0	13.5	18.5	21.5	3.0	15.0	27.5
The packaging materials are attractive		0.5	12.0	32.5	31.0	1.0	18.0	50
The packaging materials are suitable for transportation		-	-	-	-	0.5	28.5	71.0
SD= Strongly Disagree	SLD= Slightly Disagree	SLA= Slightly Agree		SA= Strongly Agree				
D= Disagree	N= Neutral (neither disagree nor agree)	A= Agree						

**SOURCE:** The author's own survey results, 2012

In the same framework, marketing professionals argue that labeling has been giving information about the product(s) and what the product(s) will do for the buyer (Sherlekar, 2004). Concerning the customers' confidence for contents of the labeled information, less than half of the respondents but reasonable proportion (about 43%) agreed on the inclusiveness of adequate and correct pieces of information on the package about the product.





**Figure 2. Mama Milk Packaging**

SOURCE: Prepared by the author, 2012



**Figure 3. Mama Juice Packaging**

SOURCE: Prepared by the author, 2012

Moreover, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, the packaging material of Mama Milk and Mama Juice gives enough information about the product, its content and volume, who and where the product is produced and also how to use it safely in both Amharic and English respectively. The packaging material, on the other hand, connotes product quality and well designed and attractive packages are an ever-present self salesman for retailers and consumers, but poorly designed packages can cause headaches for consumers and lose sales for the company (Berkowitz, et al., 1986; Kotler, 2006; Pillai & Bagavathi, 2005).

Exactly half of the sampled customers strongly agreed on the attractiveness of the packaging material, followed by the respondents' neutral attitude (31.0%) and slight disagreement (32.5%) on the attractiveness of the package. Therefore, the customers of the Company have mixed attitude towards the package materials of those products, but their attitude partly gets skewed to get convinced by their attractiveness.

As many available pieces of literature indicated, one of the features and functions of package is to be used as a tool for physical distribution or transportation (Sherlekar, 2004) and to make the product accessible for the targeted market. With regard to transportation related functions of the packaging used, almost all of the respondents (about 99.5%) agreed on the easy transportation of the products from one place to another. A significant majority of the customers (71.0%) strongly agreed on the suitability of the package for transportation.

It can therefore be deduced that the functions of general package practice by the Company are perceived as practices which cannot protect its products against all adverse influences and physical damage. However, the two products of the Company have reliable and safe packages so that the milk and juice cannot get contaminated from any types of biological agent. These packages are also informative in terms of the product types and what the products will do for the buying customers. The Company's customers, in contrast, show mixed but positive attitude towards the package materials and practices of both Mama Milk and Mama Juice products.

## Reliability Test and Correlation

### Reliability Test of Items

After the researcher has analyzed those items in the factor analysis, the outputs are presented in Table 3 below. The values in the column labelled *Corrected Item-total Correction* were found to be greater than .3. This indicates good internal consistency and identifies item 6 as a potential problem because its value was found to be a bit higher than the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . Here, the values in the column labeled Cronbach's *alpha if Item is Deleted* also indicate that none of the items would increase the reliability if they were deleted because almost all values in this column are less than the overall reliability of .891.

**Table 3. Item-Total Statistics**

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	<i>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</i>	Squared Multiple Correlation	<i>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</i>
<b>1</b>	20.09	49.630	.829	.960	.859
<b>2</b>	19.89	47.827	.801	.928	.864
<b>3</b>	21.58	61.280	.629	.723	.883
<b>4</b>	21.81	63.934	.596	.700	.889
<b>5</b>	20.11	52.175	.784	.941	.865
<b>6</b>	20.93	54.160	.548	.373	.894
<b>7</b>	20.80	55.749	.671	.877	.876
<b>8</b>	20.98	59.336	.664	.880	.879
1=Informed eco-friendly Packaging 2= Informed Biodegradable Packaging 3= Size Packaging		4= Waste Packaging 5= High Negative Impact 6= Prefer Eco friendly Products		7= Disposal As per Instruction 8= Company awareness creation	

**SOURCE:** Outputs of own data analysis, 2012

The last column presents the value that Cronbach's  $\alpha$  would be improved if that particular item was deleted from the scale. One can deduce that the

removal of any item except item 6 would result in a lower Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . Therefore, almost all items are retained since such efforts will not increase the reliability of the items. Thus, it is not advisable to remove those items in the questionnaire. However, the removal of item 6 may lead to a small improvement in Cronbach's  $\alpha$  – because the value of this item in this column is less than the overall reliability of .891. These values lead us to deduce that even if one gets a small improvement in the value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  by removing item 6, it will not be advisable to discard the item because of the moderate and positive correlation with other variables. Generally, almost all items in the questionnaire have high reliabilities.

Table 4 below shows data related to reliability or internal consistency between those subscales designed to evaluate the respondents' personal know how about green marketing and packaging practice of the Company if one of the subscales was deleted in order to improve their reliability.. As one can see in Table 4 for the eight (8) subscales indicated below and those subscales in the questionnaire which were designed to measure the reliability of those scales on the personal know how about green marketing and packaging practice, the overall value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$ = .891. This value indicates a high level of internal consistency between the subscales (factors). Thus, all those subscales had high reliabilities.

**Table 4. Reliability Statistics**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.891	8

**SOURCE:** Own survey output, 2012

## Correlation

Table 5 depicts the correlation between those variables designed to evaluate the respondents' personal know how about marketing and packaging green practice of the Company.

As we can see from Table 5, there was a positive and strong relationship between being informed about eco-friendly packaging and biodegradable packaging ( $r = .961$ ;  $P = .01$ ), between being informed about eco-friendly packaging and being aware of those packages which had had high negative impact on the green environment ( $r = .966$ ;  $P = 0.01$ ) between being informed about bio-degradable packaging practice and knowing those packages which had had high negative impact on the green environment ( $r = .941$ ,  $P = .01$ ) between being worried about the size of waste material of packaging when buying the products, and being worried about the waste of packaging material when buying the products ( $r = .813$ ,  $P = .01$ ), between awareness creation which could have protected the environment from degradation and the respondents' preference to buy products which had had eco-friendly label(s) and language indicating that the packaging material was found to be environment friendly ( $r = .930$ ;  $P = .01$ ).

Furthermore, as one can observe from the Table 5, all variables were found to have a positive and greater than .3 correlation coefficients. Thus, this correlation coefficient indicates that there are positive and moderate relationships between those variables on personal knowledge of green marketing and those of packaging practice. These correlation coefficient values show that if one is well-informed about eco-friendly packaging materials, he/she will have positive and strong chance to know about biodegradable packaging materials, and also he/she will give more attention

to the size and waste material on the package, its negative impact and will know how to dispose the wastage of the package than the previous times. In addition, if the Company engages in creating awareness to its actual customers of those issues, environmental degradation may be reduced to some extent.

**Table 5. Personal Knowledge of Green Marketing and Packaging Practice**

<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1							
2	.961**	1						
3	.470**	.463**	1					
4	.474**	.466**	.813**	1				
5	.966**	.941**	.410**	.401**	1			
6	.410**	.399**	.449**	.447**	.387**	1		
7	.485**	.471**	.523**	.399**	.434**	.532**	1	
8	.439**	.412**	.561**	.419**	.392**	.543**	.930**	1

**\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

1=Informed eco-friendly packaging      3= Size Packaging      6= Prefer Eco friendly Products  
2= Informed Biodegradable Packaging    4= Waste Packaging      7= Disposal As per Instruction  
5= High Negative Impact      8= Company awareness creation

**SOURCE:** Own study findings, 2012

### **Green Marketing Related Issues**

Table 6 below reveals respondents' answers to question which intends to examine whether the packaging practice and material of the case company consider and takes into account the green marketing and societal responsibility related issues.

Since a number of scholars like Pillai and Bagevathi (2005, pp.387-390), Sherlekar (2003, p. 552), S.M. JHA (2005, pp. 9-14) and Kotler (2006, pp. 11-13) have articulated that every company as it has the right to produce the product, they should give more emphasis for societal interest and for not polluting the green environment. Besides, these scholars argue, some of the characteristics of eco-friendly packaging are to be reusable, refillable, recyclable and biodegradable.

From the quantitative data gathered and summarized in Table 6 above, about half of the respondents thought that the packaging material of the products had been neither biodegradable (49.0%) nor eco-friendly (49.5%), nor reusable (100.0%), nor refilled (100.0%), nor recycled (54.0%). Moreover, those packaging materials could not be reduced (100.0%), but the majority of them (73.5%) agreed that the Company had already put clear instructions on how to dispose the package materials. From these empirical pieces of evidence, one may deduce that although the packaging materials used were not found to be biodegradable and eco-friendly, the MAMA Company had tried its best to overcome these drawbacks by putting instructions on how to dispose the package materials as shown in figures 2 and 3.

Therefore, the consumers of those products are somehow aware of those instructions written on the packaging material. The physical observations of some products' labels also confirmed this fact. When one sees the package of the juices, it says that the product is eco-friendly. However, the label of the milk packaging was found to lack such a kind of symbol. From this empirical evidence, one can argue that the packaging material of milk product by its nature is not eco-friendly and biodegradable. In addition, consumers didn't think that the juice packaging material had not been eco-friendly and

biodegradable even if the Company tagged a symbol for an eco-friendly and a biodegradable product.

### **Personal know how about Green Marketing and Packaging**

Table 7 illustrates the sampled respondents' responses to a question designed to examine whether or not the respondents have know how about issues related to green marketing and packaging. As illustrated in Table 7, about half of the respondents (49.5%) were found not to be well-informed about eco-friendly packaging. However, only ten percent of the respondents were strongly agree on their strong knowledge about bio-degradable packaging materials. Therefore, the majority of them were not well-informed about bio-degradable packaging materials as it was found that only 2.5% of the respondents had disposed those packages which have high negative impact on the green environment as per the instructions on the package.

In the same framework, almost all of the sampled respondents (96.0%) were not worried about the size and waste of packaging material when buying those products. In addition, they adduced that they had no ideas on whether or not those packages have high negative impact on the green environment. Thus, these customers of the Company failed to give due emphasis to buy products which have eco-friendly labeled in a language which expressed that the product is environmentally friendly. The same respondents argued that the Company had not work to create awareness of such hot issues which, in turn, may contribute to a certain extent in the local community's efforts to protect their environment from being degraded.



**Table 6. Green Marketing Related Issues**

Items	%						
	SD	D	SLD	N	SLA	A	SA
Packages of the Company are <b>biodegradable</b>	5.0	27.5	16.5	15.0	10.5	15.5	10.0
Packaging material of the Company are <b>eco-friendly</b>	5.5	27.0	17.0	19.5	13.5	13.5	4.0
Company puts instructions on how to dispose the package	0.0	5.0	7.0	14.5	24.5	35.0	14.0
Packages of the Company are <b>Reusable</b> for other purpose	95.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Packages of the Company can be <b>Refilled</b> again.	99.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Packages of the Company can be <b>Recycled</b> .	9.0	9.5	35.5	32.0	14.0	0.0	0.0
The packages material of the Company can be <b>Reduced</b> in size from the existing one without affecting the product.	70.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>SD</b> = Strongly Disagree <b>D</b> = Disagree	<b>SLD</b> = Slightly Disagree <b>N</b> = Neutral		<b>SLA</b> = Slightly Agree <b>A</b> = Agree		<b>SA</b> = Strongly Agree		

**SOURCE:** Own survey results, 2012

Three survey items were used to measure customers' knowledge of being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging of the Company under investigation. As shown in Table 8, the distribution of responses to these items reveals that the customers sampled expressed their awareness of being informed about informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging.

**Table 7. Personal know how about Green Marketing and Packaging**

Items	%						
	SD	D	SLD	N	SLA	A	SA
Well informed about eco-friendly packaging	5.5	27.0	17.0	19.5	13.5	13.5	4.0
Well informed about bio-degradable packaging	5.0	27.5	16.5	15.0	10.5	15.5	10.0
Worried about the size of packaging material waste when buying the products	23.5	50.0	14.0	12.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
Worried about the waste of packaging material when buying the products.	26.0	59.0	11.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Know those packages which have high negative impact on the green environment.	0.5	32.5	17.5	19.0	15.0	14.0	1.5
Dispose of those packages which have high negative impact on the green environment as per the instruction on the package.	10.0	41.5	11.0	24.5	10.5	0.0	2.5
Prefer to buy products which have eco-friendly label and language indicating that it is environments friendly.	8.5	48.0	12.5	25.5	5.5	0.0	0.0
The company creates awareness which can protect the environment form degradation.	10.0	41.5	11.0	37.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>SD</b> = Strongly Disagree <b>D</b> = Disagree	<b>SLD</b> = Slightly Disagree <b>N</b> = Neutral	<b>SLA</b> =Slightly Agree <b>A</b> = Agree			<b>SA</b> = Strongly Agree		

**SOURCE:** Own survey findings, 2012

**Table 8. Correlations between Age and being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging**

		1	2	3
<b>1</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.326**	.338**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
<b>2</b>	Pearson Correlation	.326**	1	.961**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
<b>3</b>	Pearson Correlation	.338**	.961**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
<p><b>**.</b> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).            1= Age of the respondents            2= being informed about eco-friendly packaging            3= being informed about biodegradable packaging</p>				

**Source:** Own survey results, 2012

Therefore, as the correlations coefficient<sup>1</sup> between age and being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging were found to be 0.326 and 0.338 at 0.01 significant level respectively. The responses that the researcher would get from the respondents through the use of the questionnaire may be believed to be good enough to generalize or infer to the total population. Age of the customers was found to be positively related to being informed about eco-friendly packaging with a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r = .326$  and the significance value was less than .01 (.01 as indicated by the double asterisk after the coefficient). This significance value tells us that the probability of getting a correlation coefficient this big in a sample of 200 people if the null hypothesis were true (there was no relationship between these variables) is, in fact, very low (close to zero). Hence, one can gain

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<sup>1</sup>  $0 < |r| < .3$  weak correlation  
 $0.3 < |r| < .7$  moderate correlation  
 $|r| > 0.7$  strong correlation

confidence that there is a genuine relationship between age and being informed about eco-friendly packaging.

The criterion for significance is usually set at 05. The correlation matrix output also shows that age was found to be positively correlated to the probability of the respondent being informed about biodegradable packaging with the Pearson's correlation coefficient of  $r = .338$ , which is also significant at  $p < .01$ . Finally, being informed about eco-friendly packaging appears to have strong positive relationship to being informed about biodegradable packaging,  $r = .961$ ,  $p < .01$ . In general, all of the findings mean that as the respondent's age increases, one's chance of being informed about eco-friendly packaging and about biodegradable packaging increases. In conclusion, as age increases, the sampled customer's probability of being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging increases. Therefore, there are complex interrelationships among those three variables.

### **Educational level and being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging**

Table 9 presents data related to correlation between educational level of the respondents' and being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging materials. The results are presented as below.

As shown in the table below, there is a strong positive relationship between educational level of the respondents and their being informed about eco-friendly packaging ( $r = .798$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and being informed about biodegradable packaging ( $r = 0.797$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). This shows that the sample respondent's knowledge about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging materials have strong and positive correlation with his/her educational level achievement.

**Table 9. Correlation between Educational Level and being Informed about Eco-friendly and Biodegradable Packaging**

Pearson Correlation	Education	Informed eco-friendly Packaging	Informed Biodegradable Packaging
Education	1		
Informed eco-friendly Packaging	.798**	1	
Informed Biodegradable Packaging	.797**	.961**	1
<b>** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)</b>			

**SOURCE:** Own study findings, 2012

For curiosity purpose, it is worth considering whether or not there is correlation between being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging material used by the Company through responses generated from the sample respondents. The findings of the study are illustrated in a table as shown below.

**Table 10. Correlation between Biodegradability and Eco-friendly of the Packaging Material**

		Biodegradable	Eco-friendly
<b>Biodegradable</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.535**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
<b>Eco-friendly</b>	Pearson Correlation	.535**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
<b>** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)</b>			

**SOURCE:** Own study, 2012

As illustrated in Table 10, the Pearson correlation coefficient for those questions related to biodegradability and eco-friendly of the packaging material was found to be .535 at a significant level of .001. Therefore, based on these findings, one can deduce that there is a moderate positive relationship between being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging material. Thus, if the Company or any other the responsible body for awareness creation in the Company works towards producing eco-friendly and biodegradable packaged products, it can indirectly reduce the negative effects of the packages on the green environment.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

This study has presented assessment of packaging practice and its implication on green marketing at Sebeta Agro-Industry (Mama) Private Limited Company in Oromia Region of the South-West section of Ethiopia. Cross-sectional quantitative and qualitative data on packaging practice and on other aspects of green marketing such as knowledge of packaging practice, frequently used products produced by the Company, issues related to general packaging functions, to eco-friendly, bio-degradability, and to packaging material(s) were used as inputs. The findings of the study show there are heterogeneous customers composed of wed-locked, moderate family size, young adult dominance with high degree of variability among the customers in different wealth-ranks, educational achievements and capabilities of buying the MAMA's products that, in turn, show some level of social responsibility and concern for green environment.

These customers of the Company very often purchase and consume different types of its products. However, the same customers show their disagreement

with the general packaging practice and the materials being used for the packaging purpose. The Company, in contrast, uses informative packaging materials regarding the products, their ingredients, volume, producer, place of its production, and how to use it safely in both Amharic and English.

There is mixed attitude towards the general quality and attractiveness of the packaging materials. These attitudes vary from strongly agree (50.0%) to slightly disagree (32.5%) on the attractiveness of the package.

The Company's packed products are suitable and easy for transportation. However, the functions of the Company's general packaging practice are perceived by its customers as practices which cannot protect them against all adverse influences and physical damage, except the milk and the juice products. The packages are also informative in terms of the product types and what these items will do for the buying customers of the Company. The Company's customers, on the contrary, show mixed but positive attitude towards the packaging practices and materials of those packed fluid products.

Those reliability test items, in this study, have good internal consistency. Nevertheless, the removal of any items in the scale used to measure the issues under investigation but items 6 do not increase their reliability. Thus, it is not advisable to remove those items except item 6 in order to bring a small improvement in Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . There is a high level of internal consistency between the subscales (factors) considered in the study.

Those customers who are well-informed and become aware of the importance of eco-friendly packaging and biodegradability packaging may develop concerns for green environment and act accordingly in their daily routines of using and disposing of the products. In addition, such a level of

awareness together with the Company's effort of creating awareness may lend their helping hands in reducing the extent of environmental degradation.

There is no significant evidence on whether or not the packaging materials for the Company's products are biodegradable, eco-friendly, reusable, refilled and recycled. Moreover, the packaging materials cannot be reduced into any form albeit there are well-engraved instructions on how to dispose the packaging materials employed are not biodegradable and eco-friendly, the Company has tried its best to overcome these drawbacks by putting vivid instructions on how to properly dispose the packaging materials. This holds true for packaging materials of the milk and juice products.

Nowadays, the local people have been engaged in protecting their environment and natural resources. These locality specific efforts may be encroached upon and become endangered from the failure of the Company's customers to buy eco-friendly labeled products and also from lack of attempt to create awareness of them about environmental degradation on the part of the producing Company.

Older customers, among the Company's customers, do have higher level of awareness and are found to be being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging than their counterparties. Thus, as the customers' age increases, these customers may get the probability of being informed about the practice of eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging increases.

In this empirical study, there is strong positive relationship between the educational achievements of the Company's clients and their chance of being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging of different types of its products. Those customers who have secured graduate level degrees



are more informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging than those who are bachelor's degree and diploma holders.

Therefore, any effort(s) towards raising awareness of the Company's responsible body or customers about the paramount importance of being informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging materials and practice, packed products would indirectly reduce the negative effects of the package on the green environment in the Company's operating areas.

This study has been arguing, by way of conclusion, that the packaging practice of the Company has multi-dimensional implications which have touched upon issues related to packaging practice and green marketing management such as socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the customers (particularly their age and educational level achievements), and their frequent purchasing capacity, the most frequently bought and used products of the Company, general packaging functions, the customers' knowledge of the relationship between packaging practice in the light of being well-informed about eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging material(s) and proper disposal practice through proper awareness creation endeavours on a continuous basis.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended, based on those major findings and the conclusions drawn, that the Company develops an official marketing policy and strategy regarding the use of its products in different contexts and their disposal practice in South-East Addis Ababa. The policy and strategy should clearly recommend the following:

- Since the packaging material connotes a product quality and a well-designed and attractive package is an ever-present self salesman for retailer and consumers (Berkowitz et al, 1986: 340; Pillai & Bagavathi, 2005: 161-163) and poorly designed packages can cause headaches for consumers and lost sales for the company (Kotler, 2006: 244), the Company should work hard on making the packaging material and its design more attractive.
- According to Sherlekar (2004: 242), labeling gives information about the product and what the product will do for the buyer. Thus, the Company should work with high concentration on all issues related labeling of the packaging material.
- In order to perform its intended function, packages of the products must fulfill such attributes as protecting the contents from breakage or spoilage, be safe to use and keep the product from deteriorating (Sherlekar, 2004: 238) so that the Company can design the package in such a way that it can protect the product against all adverse influences, physical damage and biological contamination.
- As many pieces of literature point out, one of the features and functions of package is to be used as a tool for physical distribution/transportation (Sherlekar, 2004: 237-241) and to make the product accessible for the targeted market. As a result, the Company should design its package to be more suitable for transportation and handling by its customers from all walks of life in the local communities.
- Since a number of scholars (e.g. Pillai & Bagevathi, 2005: 387-390); Sherlekar, 2003: 552; JHA, 2005: 9-14; Kotler, 2006:11-13), have articulated, every company as it has the right to produce the product; the company should give more emphasis for societal interest and for not polluting the green environment. As some of the characteristics of eco-

friendly packaging are to be reusable, refillable, recyclable and biodegradable, the Company should make its packaging material which, in turn, constitutes these characteristics. And the same Company should indicate how to dispose the packaging material in different contexts.

- Because there is a positive and strong relationship between awareness creation (which can protect the environment from degradation and preference to buy products which have eco-friendly label and language indicating that it is environmentally friendly), the MAMA Company should also work on issues directly related to awareness creation in close collaboration with other concerned bodies such as offices at district and sub city levels in Addis Ababa.
- Finally, the MAMA Company should create enabling environment and develop plausible as well as viable mechanisms for monitoring proper implementation of the policy and strategy recommended in partnership with Addis Beauty and Greening Environment at different levels in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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