

GRAPPLING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF PRO-ENVIRONMENTALISTS MARKETING IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Following the “Earth Summit” in Rio De Janeiro that ushered in the “Earth Decade” in 1990, the speed and magnitude of environment despoliation of the earth, had become a resounding nightmare. Alas, Nigeria is yet to fully recognise and rise to the “Green World” campaign. This article looked at the state of our environment, and government efforts to bequeath a safe environment to this and coming generations. The effectiveness of these efforts, the militating variables in this quest, and the crucial place of firms, and especially consumers, towards this global concern, were examined, and recommendations made.

Introduction

The earth issue and quest for quality life did not start today. Conscious personal, corporate and governmental pro-environmentalists endeavours are now coming to the fore. From 1970, when the environment was universally described as the “Issue of the year”, to the great “Earth Summit” of Rio De Janeiro, the earth is, at last, gradually getting attention.

But developing countries, including Nigeria, are still far below the pro-environmentalists bottomline. This study intends to critically examine the state of the environment in Nigeria, and the extent of its “downstream” pro-environmentalism. Problem areas therein are identified, and likely solutions proffered. The concepts of downstream (or consumer - related) pro-environmentalism, and the reason for this exclusive treatment, are explained in the work. It is believed that this study will sensitize Nigerians to actively join the pro-environmentalist bandwagon, for a total quality life, globally.

Environment: An Outline

Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary defined the Environment as the aggregate of all the external conditions and influences affecting life and development of an organism. It is also seen simply as an organism’s surroundings, including other plants and animals, as well as such non-living constituents as water, air, light, soil, temperature, etc (New Standard Encyclopaedia, E. 188).

Aina (1991:17) saw an environment as the total outer physical and biological system, in which man and other organisms live. From the various views above, and for the purpose of this study, the environment refers to the natural life support surroundings of man (and other living things), as primarily constituted by land, air and water.

A brief description of these three major constituents, will make the comprehension of the environment clearer.

Air

The air, constituting the name of the earth’s atmosphere, is 5×10^{15} tonnes: about one millionth of that of the earth (Trieff, 1980:37). Most of this mass is believed to be below an attitude of 80 km. Air, though somewhat of a variable mixture, consists chiefly of about 78 percent in volume of nitrogen, and 21 percent in volume of oxygen. Carbondioxide is about 0.03 percent. (New Standard Encyclopaedia, 1991: A 190). It is believed that a typical man breathes about 14kg/air daily. In other words, over a 70-year lifespan, man requires about 360 tonnes of air.

Water

Water, weighing about 1.4×10^{18} tonnes covers approximately 70 percent of earth’s surface. About 97 percent of the water mass in man’s environment, is contained in the ocean; 2 percent in the

form of icecaps and glaciers; and less than 1 percent held as fresh surface and sub-surface water for man's direct use.

Yet, of the 9×10^{15} tones of freshwater available, man uses about 16 percent daily (Trieff, 1980:34). From this elementary calculation, and compared with air, one might expect freshwater pollution to be a more serious worldwide environmental problem.

Land

Mere, we are principally concerned with the soil as a means of growing our crops, for minerals necessary for life support, and for living in. Therefore, our interest here is on that earth's crust, extending to an average depth of 17 km. Land for crops and animal sustenance is fixed, and amounts to 40 percent of earth's total land area (Trieff, 1980:39). Of this earth's total land area, about 10.6 percent, or approximately 3.5×10^7 acres, are titled.

Having had a graphic understanding of our environment, it should be apparent now that life would be unimaginable without it. Alas, this environment is "dying", with man's fate precarious.

The environment is fast dying probably because it belongs to none as of right. Aristotle captured it aptly thus (Haefele, 1973:16).

For that which is common to the greatest number, has the least care bestowed it. We shall now consider the nature and consequence of a popular and often ignored type of environmental degradation.

Scope And Implication Of Downstream Environmental Degradation In Nigeria

In this study, we are more interested in "downstream" environmental degradation. In other words, the purchase/use actions or inaction consumers (especially the ultimate), that accentuate the already endangered environment, are the main focus, here. The importance of this selective treatment is premised on two main reasons.

It is our belief that consumers, as kings in our market economy can greatly influence "upstream" pro-environmentalism much more than laws and task forces probably can. This is because consumers' purchase decisions in the market place will certainly inform a businessman's options of product's contents, design and manufacturing process. Therefore, downstream pro-environmentalism achieves a dual goal of reawakening the consciousness of consumers (as product targets) and businesses (as product sources) to the need for a healthier environment. The existing regulatory attempts so far, for safer, healthier environment in Nigeria seem to focus more on "upstream" degradation the likely or real environmentally unfriendly operations at points of manufacture, with the place of the final consumer largely overlooked.

The dimension of downstream environmental abuse is vast and startling. Therefore, one would only make an attempt at highlighting the major ones here, with particular reference to Nigeria. First, Nigeria is increasingly becoming a nation of second-hands. Arising from the general poverty level, and soaring domestic prices, most Nigerians can ill-afford most durable product brands new, today. Therefore, vehicles, refrigerators/freezers, airconditioners, tyres, to mention just the relevant few, are largely imported and, or brought second-hand. The point being made is that these products contribute immensely to endangering our environment. For instance, carbonmonoxide is a major air pollutant. It emits from engines when fuel used is not completely burnt. And this incomplete burning of fuel tends to increase with the age of the engine. This is the point: these second-hand vehicles, motorcycles and other engines were at various stages of decrepitude before being shipped down to us for repurchase. They are more guilty of carbonmonoxide-laden emissions than newer ones.

The hazardous health implication of this gas when excessively inhaled, apart, the build-up of carbonmonoxide in the atmosphere, contributes to the "Greenhouse" effect or Global warming. This is an adverse phenomenon whereby the flow of heat back to space from earth, is significantly impeded. This consequently makes the earth dangerously hotter (Encyclopaedia, 1996:A190).

Second, and a little related to the effects of carbonmonoxide, is the global issue of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC). The CFC escapes into space, attacking and decimating the vital and protective Ozone layer. This layer, some 10-50 km above the surface of the earth, shields this earth from the ultraviolet rays of the sun. A direct contact between these rays and the earth can adversely lead to reduced crop yields and increase skin cancer rates. Yet this CFC, non-toxic and non-

flammable, introduced in 1930's and largely supplied worldwide by Du Pont, is still widely used in most products and appliances (Koenig, 1991:208). Most refrigerators, airconditioners, seat cushions production, and even aerosols (perfumes, insecticides, etc) contain this useful but notorious CFC. And it is estimated that 4 percent of all CFC in refrigerators alone escape to the atmosphere through slow leaks and ruptures (Koenig, 1991:209). This percentage should certainly be higher in Nigeria given the fact that the bulk of refrigerators and freezers in our homes are retinkered and refurbished.

Third, is the sudden and shocking menace of water packaged in polythene and popularly referred to as "pure water". Owing, largely again, to the erosion of the purchasing power of Nigerians, recourse had significantly been taken to more affordable drinking water, and because they are patronised mostly by communities, the roads and parks in major towns and cities in Nigeria are the primary victims of the resultant "pure water" littering. Polythene is known for its nonbiodegradability. Unfortunately, the littering of these sachets is becoming no less pronounced even in tertiary institutions' walkways and parks. The quality of land stands threatened in Nigeria as it is learnt that these polythene sachets even when gathered by relevant authorities receive little or no predisposal treatment to enhance their degradability.

Fourth, the shocking implication of the use of leaded petrol in Nigeria and in most developing countries is yet to be grappled with, so much so that the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), is incessantly drawing global attention to the need to reduce the lead content of petrol in these third world countries. The cars and trucks used in these countries, as already explained, are second-hand, and most times, over ten years old. They were designed to run on lead petrol. The lead contents are the primary sources of environmental poisoning as their burnt particles are released into air.

Though Lead, just like the CFCs, is invaluable, especially in paints, plumbing, batteries and even consumer products packaging, the cumulative inhalation or intake of its tiny particles can result in severe effects on the central nervous system. Foetuses, infants and children are known to be particularly vulnerable to irreversible changes in neural functioning, and to more subtle effects as reduced IQ and impaired learning ability (Guardian, 1999:34).

In summary, the extent of downstream environmental degradation and devastation in Nigeria is, in fact, better imagined than expressed. Haphazard cigarette smoking is still rampant, in spite of the anti-smoking law made in 1991 by the erstwhile Burhara-Idiagbon regime. "Total fishing", which virtually sweeps the seas and rivers of living creatures, remains unabated with our fisher-men who use chemicals as Gamalin- 20, and even dynamites. Fertilizers, weed killers, etc though useful in the short-run, may evolve a disturbing environmental phenomenon in years to come. And developing countries, including Nigeria, are the popular users or abusers of these products/devices.

Government And Pro-Environmentalism In Nigeria.

There had been both institutional arrangements, and laws in Nigeria to safeguard and promote healthy environment. We shall only attempt to chronologically explore the former, first. The laws will be looked at later. However, these arrangements and laws have various degrees of implementation and effectiveness. Pro-environmentalism actually became an issue in Nigeria only recently. Before independence, manufacturing activities were low, and infrastructural development was mainly geared to the exportation of cash crops, such as cocoa, bating, and soap making.

After independence, and the introduction of development plans from 1962, emphasis was laid on industrialisation. Following Nigeria's oil boom of the '70's, infrastructure were significantly developed. This consequently facilitated own industrial and consumption revolution. Alas, experience with the developed countries confirmed itself in Nigeria; that industrialization and environmental despoliation go together, as the maze of machines and technology translated into increased amounts of gaseous, solid and liquid wastes into the environment.

It was not surprising therefore, from the foregoing that no tangible institutional arrangement for the environment was made in the 1960's. In fact, the first two national development plans - (1962- 1968) and (1970-1974) treated the Nigerian environment as a non-issue. The third plan (1975-1980) merely called for efforts to grapple effectively with the growing environmental problem in the country and to enhance the quality of life for all (Aina and Ededupe, 1991:18).

In 1972, Nigeria was among the eight nations that participated in the Stockholm Conference on Problems of the Human Environment" organised by the United Nations. In 1975, the Federal

Government took a major pro-environmentalist step, when a division of Urban Development and Environment was created as part of the then Federal Ministry of Economic Development, to handle pollution and related environmental matters (Aina, 1991:17). In 1979, Nigeria was a part to the Rabat Conference of Ministers, and Assembly of Heads of State of the OAU, with particular consideration of the environmental dimensions of development within the framework of the international strategy for the Third Development Decade (The African Region).

In 1980, a one-percent Ecological Fund was set up. This Fund established that a percent of the Federation Account should be used for the protection of the nation's environment.

1981-1985 marked a period for a crucial fourth National Development plan. Crucial, because it heralded a turning point in development plans with respect to the environment. This plan pointed out that with increasing population growth and urbanisation, "the resources of our natural environment- land, water and air, run greater risk of being increasingly abused". Consequently, the plan articulated policies and objectives in the areas of environmental assessment, environmental protection, and environmental education.

April, 1982, Nigeria hosted the 69th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Springs Meetings. The meeting adopted a draft resolution on "the state of the world environment, ten years after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment at Stockholm, and steps to be taken". May, 1982 was actively celebrated for the 10th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference, and the commitment to the protection and enhancement of quality environment reaffirmed. 1985 saw the commencement of the monthly nation-wide Environmental Sanitation as introduced by the erstwhile Buhari-Iidiagbon regime. In 1988, Nigeria organised her first ever-environmental seminar. This seminar articulated policies that formed the backbone of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, institutionalised by Decree 58, of December 30, 1988. And following the "Koko" saga - the sudden discovery of chemical waste dumps in Koko, (Delta State)-environmental monitoring had been intensified with Environmental Planning Protection elevated to a divisions (as against departmental status) of Ministry of Work, in August 1988. (Imevbore and Okorodudu-Fubara, 1991:63). In 1992 and following the thrusts of the 4th National Development Plan, Decree 86 required all projects, both private and public, to contain Environmental Impact Assessment.

The foregoing institutional arrangement aside, Nigeria has some laws, and rules meant to protect and project her environment, in spite of the fact that the 1979 constitution was entirely silent on the environment. Only the 1999 constitution, section 20, cap 2, made a clear case for environment outlined some of these laws and rules as they relate to the land, sea and air (Fubara, 1991:35-40, Imevbore and Okorodudu).

Land

Relevant laws here include the Forest Act, 1958 (which regulates the felling of trees), land use Decree (for development of Environmental landscape from the ecological and aesthetic perspectives); quarries Decree, 1969; Petroleum Decree, 1969; Antiquities Act, 1958 (with section 3 establishing the Antiquities Commission to inspect monuments, museums, archaeological excavations etc); Psytosanitary Convention for Africa, south of the Sahara, 1954, but acceded to, on November 8, 1961; African Convention on the conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1969, acceded to. May 7, 1974; Convention on International Trade in Endangered species of Fauna and Flora, 1973, acceded to July 1, 1975; convention for the protection of the world Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972, acceded to, December 17, 1975; etc.

Sea

Relevant protective laws here include the Territorial Water Decree, 1967; Oil in Navigable waters Decree, 1968; Petroleum Decree, 1969; Quarries Decree, 1969; Sea Fisheries Decree 1971: River Basin Development Authority Decree, 1976; Convention for the Prevention of pollution of the sea by oil, 1954 (acceded to on April 22, 1968); Convention on the Continental Shelf, 1958 (acceded to September 30, 1962). Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Treats under water, 1963 (accede to on February 17, 1967); Agreement concerning the River Niger Niger Commission, 1964 (accede to on, April 12, 1966); convention on the prevention of marine pollution by Dumping, 1972 (ratified April 18, 1972; united Nations Convention on the law of the sea, 1982, etc.

Air/Atmosphere

Few relevant one here include the Nigerian Criminal Code, especially section 247; petroleum Decree, 1969 especially section 8 (1) (b) (iii); Treaty for the Banning Nuclear Weapons tests, ratified March 26, 1975.

Setbacks To Pro-Environmentalism In Nigeria

Nigeria, as in most African Countries, is facing, alas unconsciously, a man-induced environmental disaster. The problems still hibernating this sad situation include:

- (i) Poverty: Most Nigerians live below the poverty line, and therefore are mainly faced with the pre-existing struggle to meet the basic needs of life. The Stockholm conference on human environment also attested to this point; that in abject poverty, everything else, including proenvironmentalist living, is secondary. It also leads to the purchase of second-hand cars, refrigerators etc. these contain enemies of Ozone: the CFC.
- (ii) Illiteracy and unenlightenment: Most Nigerians still believe that the environment is limitless and God-given, and therefore can never be endangered by mortal man.
- (iii) Coastlines: Business firms see environmental friendly activities more as increased cost than as enhanced marketing power.
- (iv) Population Explosion: population exerts untold strain on the environment both in commercial and personal activities. With Nigerian being the most populous Black Nation (over 100 million), this strain is better imagined than described.
- (v) Governmental inertia: In spite of the intimidating array of laws, regulations and protocols enacted or ratified by government, one is yet to see or hear of any polluter brought to book. May be there are no polluters yet.

Recommendations And Conclusion

Pro-environmentalist consciousness and lifestyle require a holistic action. Government should awake and be an active watchdog against environmental abuse in personal and corporate lives. Business firms in particular, should "think Environment". Recyclable or easily biodegradable products should be considered more. Marketing has a major task here, of encouraging consumers to insist on "green product". The disruptions, dislocations and costs of environmentally friendly products and packs are appreciated, but firms can still create a powerful market constituency by being known as the "Green Company". It works in other countries.

Consumers arguably have the most potent weapon to fight environmental mess. This weapon is their patronage. They should collectively deny products and patronage of companies that are not environmentally friendly. Because of consumer sovereignty in a competitive economy consumers have been seen as more fruitful than regulation, in fighting environmental abuses. Falomo (1997:114) was right in writing that if we are to effectively protect our environment, majority of Nigerians would have been reeducated to change their misconception that the rest of the world outside their home or ear is a universal garbage dump.

The International Community could also come in handy here too. Nigerian may not have human and material resources required to effectively check environmental decay. This call is necessary, realising that an environmental neglect anywhere in the world portends danger for environmental soundness everywhere in the world.

One cannot but conclude this write-up in concise words of Boulding (1980:32).

"The infinity is ended, and mankind is in a box. The era of expanding man is running out. A self-sustaining spaceship Earth is in the offing, and man must be its crew or else the box will be his coffin".

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