

Green Business Best Practices for Enterprises Sustainability in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study sought to ascertain the green business best practices for enterprise sustainability in South-South Nigeria.. The population for the study was 23,985 managers of registered enterprises in the six states of South-South Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was adopted in this study. Taro Yamene formula was used to determine a sample of 393 respondents; a proportionate sampling technique was used to select managers of business enterprises in the six states of South-South. A structured questionnaire with 61 items, was used for data collection.. It was found in this study that the developed green business product, promotion and distribution best practices would enhance enterprise sustainability. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended amongst others that business enterprises need to develop systems and structures within their business that satisfy the requirements of green business practices while still achieving strategic business goals.

Keywords: Green Business, Best Practices, Enterprises, and Sustainability

I. Introduction

One of the greatest impacts that business enterprises have on the environment is through the products they produce, promote and distribute to the final consumers. Consumers around the world are increasingly concerned about the environmental impacts of the products they choose. And many smart enterprises are giving attention to the growing desire for greener products, which are building an alcove that will soon become conventional. This has made customers to rely on business enterprises to research the products they market and to provide relevant and up to date information about the lifecycle of a product. Although very few products generate no negative environmental impacts throughout their lifecycle, green business practices can inform buyers about some of the environmental benefits and/or drawbacks inherent in a product. Consumers in recent years have become aware of the damage being inflicted on the environment by businesses in pursuit of the goals establishing the business. Government regulatory bodies and consumer pressure groups have aggressively lobbied for businesses to adopt green practices.

Green business as posited by Menon, Menon, Chowdhury and Jankovich (2009) refers to those policies, procedures, and practices that explicitly account for concerns about the natural environment in pursuing the goal of creating revenue and providing outcomes that satisfy organizational and individual objectives for a product or line. Čekanavičius, Bazytė and Dičmonaitė (2014) referred to green business as an organization that is committed to the principles of environmental sustainability in its operations, strives to use renewable resources, and tries to minimize the negative environmental impact of its activities. In this regard, greening of business is part of a long-term strategy of becoming sustainable, that is, being able to achieve business tasks in the way that does not develop *any* threat – economic, social or environmental – for both current and future generations. Green businesses have more sustainable business practices that help people live well today and tomorrow while making money and contributing to the economy. Green business requires a balanced commitment to profitability, sustainability and humanity. Sustainability is rooted in green business.

Sustainable enterprise according to Daft (2008) is an economic development that generates wealth and meets the needs of the current generation while saving the environment for future generations. Zhu, Geng, Fujita, and Hashimoto (2010) describe sustainability with two different sets of imperatives for business – eco-efficiency and system change. Eco-efficiency describes enterprise' acceptance of adverse impact on the environment as a result of its business activities and this has impact on competitive business environment. Sustainability of an enterprise in the market is determined by the proven ability of companies to minimize resource input, to produce green products and to reduce environmental impact of their business processes. This has demanded company innovations to produce competitively priced goods and services satisfying human needs and improving quality of life. On the other hand, the authors stated that system change imperative reflects

companies and the economic system a part of social and ecosystem. This view of sustainability focuses upon promoting compatibility of company practices with ecosystem and developing the new value system reflecting sustainable development. Both the imperatives in an integrated manner develop a better view on key issues and strategies in future, and to identify mechanisms and ways of transforming the society to a sustainable one. According to Verdiem Corporation (2008), sustainability has become a major focus for businesses, as it was discovered that sustainable practices can strengthen reputation, improve employee morale, lead to cost savings and benefit the environment. Businesses value sustainable growth either by force of regulation, economic opportunity in preventing pollution or recognizing the strategic importance of environmental issues.

The purpose of going green is to use products and methods that would not negatively impact the environment through pollution or depleting natural resources. Dallas (2008) observed that the use of natural resources will be reduced by using alternative sources. This will have positive outcomes such as keeping the environmental footprint small, reducing waste and re-using materials as much as possible. Furthermore, it will result in using scarce natural resources efficiently and effectively, while keeping the environment free from detrimental products. Green businesses should have green visions, with strategic plans based on long-term objectives rather than only short-term goals.

The effect of green business practices requires an in-depth knowledge of customers' requirements as well as the ability to satisfy these requirements while contributing to environmental sustainability. According to Sharma, Iyer, Mehrotra, and Krishnan (2010), this is rooted in the fundamentals of what impact marketing has on society and the environment. Integrating environmental concerns and green strategies in corporate philosophy, and marketing policies and practices lead to sustainable growth. The increasing trend of adopting eco-friendly business, eco-friendly technologies and services is creating new business opportunities presenting strong potential for making profit and satisfying stakeholders who have significant influence on the availability of financial, human and other resources of companies (Biloslavo&Trnavcevic, 2009). Thus, this trend is seen as growing relationship between business and sustainability. Bized (2010) uses different classifications for the business functions as manufacturing/operations; marketing/sales; purchasing/supply chain management; distribution/logistics; finance/information technology; and general management/human. These classifications assisted the researchers in grouping green business best practices into product, promotion, and distribution best practices so as to eliminate duplication of activities, as well as to simplify the analysis of the empirical results.

In today's global business environment, businesses are facing increased competitive, regulatory and community pressures. Furthermore, there is also pressure for environmental sustainability, which requires strategies to be put in place to reduce the environmental impacts caused by the products and services offered. Clem (2008) adds that going green reflects a social consciousness around saving and advancing the Earth's natural resources, preserving and protecting them for the sake of civilisation. As customers become more aware of environmental issues, there is an increase in the demand for ecological products. This increased awareness and sensitivity towards environmental issues places certain demands on business functions to become greener. The importance of customer retention strategy and long-term customer relationship to achieve effective business performance is now recognized in green business practices (Kumar, & Ghodeswar, 2015). This has encouraged enterprises to develop unique business practices to gain competitive advantage in the market. This has also raised the need of searching for new business approaches that is broad enough to provide unique and sustained competitive advantage. Incorporating sustainability issues in marketing is one of such approaches. The present ideologies of consumption have brought concern over ecological impact of marketing under scrutiny. This has resulted in bringing what should entail green business practices into debate. Many companies in Nigeria have complained that their biggest challenges in going green are their inability to know where to start and how this can be achieved. Hence, this study sought to present the green business best practices for sustainable small enterprises in Nigeria.

II. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was conducted in the six states of South-South, Nigeria. The population for the study was 23,985 made up of 4221, 2231, 3879, 4534, 3799, and 5321 managers of registered small enterprises in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and River State of South-South Nigeria respectively. Multistage sampling technique was adopted in this study. At the first stage, the population was stratified into small and medium and big enterprises. At the second stage, Taro Yamane formula, for calculating sample size was used to determine a sample of 393 respondents; after which, a proportionate sampling technique was employed to select a total of 363 business enterprises in the six states of South-South for wider representation and to capture the key population characteristics in the study area. At the third stage, convenience sampling technique was used to select 393 respondents who supply data for the study. This technique was considered necessary because it would have been practically impossible to assemble all the

enterprise managers in the study area for any probability sampling. Therefore, the researcher sampled any enterprise manager who met the criteria of this study until they were up to 393.

A structured researcher-made instrument tagged Green Business Best Practices for Enterprise Sustainability (GBBPESQ) with 25 items, was used for data collection.. The instrument was structured on a four response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instruments were face-validated by five experts and were subjected to reliability test. Cronbach Coefficient Alpha method was used to analyze the data obtained from the instrument. The result of the reliability estimate from the pilot study yielded a coefficient of 0.88. This high reliability coefficient suggested that the items have high internal consistency in measuring the variables, hence, the instruments were deemed fit to be used for data collection in the study.

III. Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Mean was used to answer the research questions and standard deviation to determine the closeness or otherwise of the responses from the mean. In taking decisions, any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was considered accepted, while any mean score below 2.50 was taken as rejected. Analysis of Variance statics was used to test the null hypotheses. Hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted when the probability value was greater than .05, whereas, the null hypothesis was rejected when the probability value was less than .05 level of significance.

IV. Results

Research Question 1: What are the green product best practices for small enterprise sustainability in South-South Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Ratings on Green Product Best Practices for Small Enterprise Sustainability

S/no	Item statements	X	SD	Rk
1	Designed their stores from the beginning with particular environmental concerns in mind	3.27	.75	A
2	Apply standards for own-brand green products	3.25	.74	A
3	eliminate most undesirable products/feature	3.23	.82	A
4	Categorize green products into good, better, best to communicate product quality to consumers	3.13	.87	A
5	Develop a name and brand identity that reflects the environment	3.24	.84	A
6	Build business based on green products and green practices in product development and sourcing	3.22	.76	A
7	Avoid stocking products that are known to be harmful to the environment	3.21	.83	A
8	Provide transparent, relevant information about the lifecycle of a product	3.27	.82	A
9	Support suppliers in their efforts to go green by providing web-based tools and training that assist them in measuring their own progress	3.17	.84	A
10	Developed a supplier self-assessment form that allows suppliers to monitor themselves	3.20	.84	A
11	Set standards for their suppliers	3.18	.83	A
12	Have a clear procurement policy that both buyers and suppliers understand	3.17	.87	A
13	Ensure there are no toxic or dangerous materials in products	3.22	.89	A
14	Focus on profitability by using environmentally friendly operating processes.	3.21	.85	A
15	Plant indigenous trees, foliage, use rainwater or recycled grey water to reduce ecological damage.	3.20	.86	A

16	Produce durable products from design to disposal by decreasing ecological damage to ensure sustainable development.	3.20	.90	A
17	Find green alternatives for harmful products, at the same or improved level, at lower cost.	3.15	.89	A
18	Use eco-friendly materials, procedures and processes, and ensure optimal raw materials usage.	3.10	.85	A
19	Recycle waste products (e.g. plastic, paper, glass) to increase operating income and consider expansion of production capacity.	3.22	.80	A
20	Production methods, tools and techniques must satisfy environmental requirements and market needs.	3.19	.87	A
21	Research and development should explore new sustainable ways of extracting raw materials and new methods to minimize energy generation and waste disposal in production processes.	3.16	.82	A
22	Designed their stores from the beginning with particular environmental concerns in mind	3.23	.86	A

Key: X= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, A = Agreed, Rk = Remarks

Table 1 presents mean ratings of respondents on green product best practices for enterprise sustainability. The analysis revealed that all the items recorded mean ratings ranging from 3.10 to 3.65, which are greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 meaning that all the items listed are green product best practices for small enterprise sustainability. The study also shows that all the items recorded their standard deviation ranging from 0.64 to 0.89 which are less than 1.96 indicating that the respondents were not far from the mean. This adds some value to the reliability of the mean.

Research Question 2: What are the green promotion best practices for small enterprise sustainability in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations Ratings on Green Promotion Best Practices for Small Enterprise Sustainability

S/no	Item Statements	X	SD	Rk
23	Utilizing adverts that promote a green lifestyle by highlighting a product or service	3.28	.80	A
24	Enhance consumer environmental awareness of green products.	3.48	.74	A
25	Satisfy customer needs for green products or provide products in a green manner to ensure business credibility.	3.45	.77	A
26	Obtain a green reputation and brand image and attract a new and larger client base.	3.40	.79	A
27	Having good environmental credentials provides a competitive edge when tendering for contracts.	3.37	.70	A
28	Create a balance between higher sales and profits, and concern for the environment.	3.35	.67	A
29	Gain public approval and cut costs by using green marketing	3.30	.73	A
30	Use green issues to sell new lifestyles and ideas	3.29	.74	A
31	Use green issues to sell new lifestyles and ideas	3.27	.65	A
32	Advertise green initiatives effectively to acquire a greater market share.	3.31	.71	A
33	Include green business practices in overall corporate message to attract new customers.	3.33	.67	A
34	Choose packaging material with minimal impact on the environment.	3.38	.72	A
35	Use resource preservation and environmentally friendly strategies in all stages of the value chain.	3.45	.74	A
36	Commitment to invest in green research and development initiatives	3.40	.71	A
37	Integrate green marketing into the marketing mix with eco-friendly products	3.42	.72	A
38	Portray an environmentally friendly business image through advertising and sales promotion to all stakeholder groups	3.38	.74	A

39	Use green practices for positive positioning to project a corporate social responsibility image.	3.26	.65	A
40	Ensure customer awareness of personal health risks if not using green products	3.28	.80	A
41	Employees volunteering time or supporting charitable donations could make the general public more environmentally knowledgeable	3.33	.67	A

Table 2 presents mean ratings of respondents on green promotion best practices for

enterprise sustainability which reveals that items 23-41 recorded mean ratings ranging from 3.10 to 3.65 which are greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 meaning that all the items listed are green promotion best practices for small enterprise sustainability. The Table also shows that all the items recorded their standard deviation ranging from 0.64 to 0.89, which are less than 1.96 indicating that the respondents were not far from the mean. This adds some value to the reliability of the mean.

Research Question 3: What are the green distribution best practices for small enterprise sustainability in South Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviations of the Responses on the Green Distribution Best Practices for Small Enterprise Sustainability

S/no	Item Statements	X	SD	Rk
42	Develop a green transportation plan	3.26	.75	A
43	Encourage carpooling and other alternative modes of green transportation	3.19	.72	A
44	Analyze logistics to find the best mode, improve efficiency and get the most out of each trip	3.15	.74	A
45	ensure good public transportation and non vehicular access to their stores	3.11	.88	A
46	Where product cannot be transported without a vehicle, delivery service is offered	3.10	.87	A
47	Provide home delivery service and offset the emissions using a reforestation program	3.02	.70	A
48	Combination of green product deliveries with customer visits promote consumers sustainability	2.92	.79	A
49	Consolidated green product deliveries encourages consumers sustainability	2.92	.79	A
50	The use of couriers for local product delivery leads to consumers sustainability	3.03	.78	A
51	Utilization of eco-friendly courier's packaging/shipping materials that include post-consumer waste recycled materials improves consumers	2.99	.80	A
52	Consumers sustainability is achieved when packaging and shipping materials are reused until they eventually get recycled	3.04	.74	A
53	Establishment of a sustainability plan that minimizes the need for shipping promote	3.05	.76	A
54	Limit distances travelled for raw materials and finished products	3.06	.77	A
55	Have a green or sustainable building (e.g. multi-level warehouse) using healthier and more resource efficient construction materials.	3.10	.77	A
56	Save warehouse space by cutting transport costs and number of trips. Establish suppliers' partnership to share warehouses and fleets.	3.15	.75	A
57	Identify shortest distance between warehouse and customers to save fuel costs.	3.16	.74	A
58	Limit carbon emissions linked to the packaging and movement of goods used for distribution	2.97	.72	A
59	Use biofuels as fuel alternative and greener technologies.	2.96	.78	A
60	Centralize distribution (e.g. in-transit packaging)	2.92	.84	A
61	Use new directions in product distribution (e.g. running retro-distribution systems).	2.91	.84	A

Table 3, which presented the result of the mean ratings of respondents on the green distribution best practices for enterprise sustainability reveals that items 42-61 had mean ratings ranging from 2.91 to 3.26 which were above the benchmark of 2.50. Also, with the standard deviation ranging from 0.65-0.88, the result indicates that the respondents were not far from the mean and were close to one another in their responses.

Hypotheses 1: Size of an enterprise does not significantly influence green product best practices for small enterprise sustainability.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance Tests for Comparing Responses of Managers of Small, Medium and Big Enterprises on Green Product Best Practices for Enterprise Sustainability

Source of difference	Sum of Square	df	Mean of Square	F-Value	P-value (sig)	Rmk.
Between groups	.215	4	0.07	.34	.79	NS
Within groups	81.62	387	0.21			
Total	81.83	391				

Table 4 reveals an F-value of .34 and a P-value of 0.79 at 392 degree of freedom was greater than .05 indicating that managers of small, medium and big enterprises do not significantly differ on green product best practices for enterprise sustainability, the null hypothesis of no significance difference was upheld.

Hypothesis 2: Managers of small enterprises in the six States of South-South, Nigeria do not significantly differ in their responses on green promotion best practices for business sustainability.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance for Comparing Responses of Managers of Small Enterprises in the Six States of South-South, Nigeria on Green Promotion Best Practices for Business Sustainability

Source of diff	Sum of square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Rmk.
Between groups	.120	4	.40	0.19	0.91	NS
Within groups	82.43	387	.21			
Total	82.55	391				

The summary of Analysis of Variance in Table 5 shows an F-value of 0.19 and a P-value as 0.91 at 387 degree of freedom greater than .05 indicating that managers of small enterprises in the six States of South-South, Nigeria do not significantly differ in their responses on green promotion best practices for business sustainability. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers of small enterprises in the six States of South-South, Nigeria on the green distribution best practices for business sustainability.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance Test for Comparing Responses of Managers of Enterprises in the Six States of South-South, Nigeria on the Green Distribution Best Practices for Business Sustainability

Source of square	Sum of square	Df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value	Rmk
Between groups	.182	4	061	.36	.78	NS
Within groups	65.68	387	.170			
Total	65.86	391				

Table 6 presents the summary of Analysis of Variance test of the responses of managers of enterprises in the six States of South-South, Nigeria on the green distribution best practices for business sustainability. The Table revealed an F-value of 0.36 with a P-value of 0.78 at 387 degree of freedom was greater than .05 indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers of small enterprises in the six States of South-South, Nigeria on the green distribution best practices for business sustainability, hence upholding the hypothesis.

V. Discussion of Findings

Findings on the product best practices revealed that focusing on profitability by using environmentally friendly operating processes; using foliage, rainwater or recycled grey water to reduce ecological damage; producing durable products from design to disposal by decreasing ecological damage to ensure sustainable development; finding green alternatives for harmful products, at the same or improved level, at lower cost; use eco-friendly materials, procedures and processes, and ensure optimal raw materials usage; recycle waste products to increase operating income and consider expansion of production capacity are green business best product practices for enterprise sustainability. The study further showed that using production methods, tools and techniques that satisfy environmental requirements and market needs; and conducting research and development to explore new sustainable ways of extracting raw materials and new methods to minimize energy generation and waste disposal in production processes are green product best practices for enterprise sustainability. These findings support the positions of Chan (2013), Ottman (2011), Danjelico and Pujari (2010), who opined that products devoid of environmental hazard are necessary practices that should be at the fore front of any business enterprise willing to become green. Neglecting these green best practices demand that the old conventional practice of environmental unsustainability is encouraged.

The study further found that enhancing consumer environmental awareness of green products; satisfying customer needs for green products or providing products in a green manner to ensure business credibility; obtaining a green reputation and brand image and attracting a new and larger client base are green promotional practices that sustain an enterprise. The revelation of this study was in line with the findings of Cobb (2009); Greenwood (2008); Janowski (2008) who stated that having good environmental credentials provides a competitive edge when tendering for contracts; creating a balance between higher sales and profits, and concern for the environment; and gaining public approval and cutting costs by using green marketing; eliminate pollution and reduce green gas emission to open new markets constitute green best promotional practice for small enterprises. The implications of this finding is that commitment to investing in green research and development initiatives; integrating green marketing into the marketing mix with eco-friendly products; portraying an environmentally friendly business image through advertising and sales promotion to all stakeholder groups; using green practices for positive positioning to project a corporate social responsibility image; ensuring customer awareness of personal health risks if not using green products; and employees volunteering time or supporting charitable donations could make the general public more environmentally knowledgeable.

It was also found that providing home delivery service and offsetting the emissions using a reforestation program; locating stores near transit centres and offering shuttle services to customers; and combination of green product deliveries with customer visits promote consumers sustainability. Also, it was found that consolidating green product deliveries; using couriers for local product delivery; and utilizing eco-friendly courier's packaging/shipping materials that include post-consumer waste recycled materials are some of the green distribution practices in green business that sustains small enterprises. The findings further supported the assertions of Negi, and Anand (2014), Larkin (2008) and Wankel (2008) who in their separate studies enumerated the following activities as best distribution practices necessary for enterprises adopting green business to succeed in Nigeria: limit distances travelled for raw materials and finished products; have a green or sustainable building (e.g. multi-level warehouse) using healthier and more resource efficient construction materials; save warehouse space by cutting transport costs and number of trips; establish suppliers' partnerships to share warehouses and fleets; identify shortest distance between warehouse and customers to save fuel costs; limit carbon emissions (according to legislation) linked to the movement of goods, transit packaging used for distribution, the operation of distribution facilities, and damage or wastage; use bio-fuels as fuel alternative and greener technologies; and Centralize distribution (in-transit packaging). Thus, analyzing logistics to find the best mode; improving efficiency and getting the most out of each trip are key strategies that virtually all enterprises are monitoring. Many small enterprises are itemizing and prioritizing the best distribution strategies and communicating these throughout the organization. Ensuring good public transportation and non-vehicular access to stores or where product cannot be transported without a vehicle, delivery service is offered; these green business best practices of product distribution promotes small enterprises green business sustainability in Nigeria.

VI. Conclusion

This study was carried out to ascertain the green business best practices for enterprise sustainability. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded the application of product, promotion and distribution best practices would ensure green enterprise sustainability in South-South Nigeria.

Recommendations:-

The following recommendations were provided based on the findings of the study:

1. Managers need to develop systems and structures within their business that satisfy the requirements of green business practices while still achieving strategic business goals.
2. Business enterprises should apply green principles by using their resources more efficiently. This can be done by creating by-products to eliminate waste, and intensifying production processes to reduce environmental impacts, while lowering the cost of inputs and waste disposal.
3. Businesses enterprises should avoid actions that can cause changes to the climate, water infrastructure and forestry, and rather make use of alternative energy sources.
4. Businesses enterprises should have a recycling, re-use and waste policy. Using green technology and reducing the impact of facility construction and operation could increase productivity and ensure that a business remains competitive.
5. Businesses enterprises should promote only green products and use only green packaging for products. This type of approach would show that a business is environmentally friendly and could lead to new market opportunities, as well as developing a reputation for supplying green products.
6. Business enterprises should continually advertise green products to increase customer awareness of the impact and benefits thereof.
7. Businesses should purchase from suppliers selling environmentally friendly products and ensure that all businesses in the supply chain meet environmental certification standards.
8. Business enterprises should use space-saving warehousing or storage facilities that cut costs and reduce the impact on the environment.
9. Business enterprises should make use of bio-fuels for their transportation fleet to reduce carbon emissions, which are harmful to the environment.

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