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## ECO2SEIA – LOW CARBON GREEN LABEL PRODUCTS: A GREEN MARKETING “STUDY CASE”

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### SUMMARY

The importance of low carbon products has driven the Municipality of Seia, a small Portuguese town, to promote an eco-label for producers as a way to motivate this type of differentiation and as a means to distinguishing local products. Based on a literature review on sustainability, green marketing and environmental certification, this paper will address the way the community governance has designed its green strategy to launch this eco2SEIA eco-label – Low Carbon

Products and how producers and consumers reacted and accepted this challenge. Demonstrating the importance of these actions on promoting the business and region sustainability, this paper also explains that, although the corporate social responsibility is a factor to be taken into account by companies, the investment in the green label as well as the impact on consumers did not meet the expectations. So, what went wrong is a question this paper proposes to answer.

**KEYWORDS:** sustainable development, green marketing; eco-label, eco<sub>2</sub>SEIA product.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The growing concern on ecological and environmental issues in a consumer perspective has brought on a progressive business awareness as companies began to adopt environmental management and social responsibility as administration tools.

The green dynamic wave became strategic for almost every business and consequently, its impact on production or services delivery was not easy to ignore. Therefore, in a high competitive business, by betting on the environment to differentiate a market approach, the companies manage to reach a specific target – the green consumer (Esty and Winston, 2008).

Ottman (1994) states that businesses which don't address environmental issues are going to lose consumers as the environmental attributes (the green product characteristics) are determinants to the buying decision.

In this sense, green marketing is important for consumer satisfaction needs and for understanding the planet's green concerns (Souza and Benevides, 2005). According to Cardozo (2003), green marketing contributes to brand image strengthening, and, as a consequence, to consumer seduction and partnership.

This evolution has created several environmental agreements, which local governments voluntarily subscribed, as a crucial part on the diminishing climate alterations effect, with the aim of increasing energy efficiency and using alternative renewable energy resources on their territories, supporting business efforts on implementing sustainable energy policies. The Covenant of Mayors (CM) – Sustainable Energy Action Plan, launched by the European Commission, is the main European movement that involves authorities, giving them the recognition, resources and networking opportunities needed to move forward with their energy and climate commitments up to the next level. Due to the above, and as a statement on the sustainable development promotion, Seia city council decided to adopt CM, as being part of its commitment to implementing eco2SEIA project.

With this paper we aim to analyse, via a case study methodology, the impact of the eco2SEIA project through the green label "eco2SEIA Product". Green Labels are used on products with the goal of allowing consumers to more easily recognize and choose the products with less impact on the environment, helping the business takeover of new markets, increasing sales and consumer education on products production less harmful for the planet, leading them to purchase "environmentally friendly" products and services.

We will also try to understand the importance that a business has in social responsibility and if they consider the green label eco2SEIA as an asset to their activity, as we may observe on society's valorisation of the correct and healthier environmental products consumption.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Sustainable development

According to Capra (2003), the concept of sustainability was introduced in the early 1980 by Lester Brown, founder of the Worldwatch Institute, which defined sustainable community as

that is able to meet their own needs without reducing the opportunities of future generations.

From a marketing perspective, the sustainability allows companies to choose how audience targeting new market segments, especially the expanding segments of consumers, culturally active and creative collaborative. Sustainable practices earn the admiration of consumers and give rise to dialogue between consumers. With a strong reputation in the communities, organizations can improve consumer acquisition. All these benefits contribute significantly on turnover of organizations (Porter, 2011).

At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, the focus is increasingly on concern of social behaviour due to its reflection on the future quality of life of all the world's population (Paiva and Proença, 2011), although the awareness of environmental problems be still relatively shallow for the population in general, as well as in Portugal. As a rule, its purpose is restricted to the individual ambition by trying a change in behaviour at this level, involving energy saving, reducing the consumption of water in households, as well as the choice of environmentally correct products.

Nowadays sustainability is part of the strategic planning of large corporations as the concept of triple bottom line (3Ps) is spreading: people, planet and profit, developed by the English Consulting Sustainability. All these factors are intrinsically linked to sustainable development and to the dependency of the economy to the global ecosystem. Values linked to the environmental concerns, such as the eco-efficiency throughout the supply chain dissemination, the ISO 14000 certification ownership and the widespread use of environmental indicators are initiatives inherent to spoken as environmentally responsible organizations.

## 2.2 Green marketing

One could say that green marketing had its origin in the 60, when they began discussing the adjustment, or the lack of, between natural resources and the exponential growth of population (Paiva and Proença, 2011).

Although the concepts "green marketing", "environmental marketing" and "ecological marketing" are interpreted as the same, with the same meaning in current language, the truth is that, scientifically, they are different. Thus, according to Cardozo (2003), the ecological marketing contributes to the strengthening of brand image and, as a consequence, the consumer feels seduced by this image and that kind of proposal. While the environmental marketing is defined as holistic management of the processes responsible for identifying, anticipating and meeting the needs of customers and society, profitably and sustainably (Peattie and Charter, 2003). The green marketing is, according to Ottman (1993) and Polonsky (2001), represented by the efforts of organizations to meet the expectations of consumers of products that provide smaller environmental impacts throughout their life cycle-production -production, packaging, use, disposal.

## 2.3 Ecolabels

If a product has been produced in a sustainable way that fact has to be communicated on the food label. Communicate the sustainability in the food label is also known as eco labelling (Erskine and Collins, 1997, cited by Grunert, 2011).

Globally, increasing efforts are being made to harmonize the proliferation of eco-labelling programmes around the world. The most notable initiative in meeting this goal is the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN). The increasing number of labelling initiatives in the EU and around the world shows that improve information about the needs of resources involved in the production and use of various products and services is an important element of a combination of policies on the use of resources. However, enables consumers to make better-informed purchasing decisions, but there is little evidence about the effects on the whole system of labels (EIO, 2012).

The role of eco-labels of products is therefore transforming the attribute "credit" in "search" attribute so that consumers can easily compare and make more informed decisions when choosing the product. For consumers, if the value of the additional information exceeds the cost of search, they will require this information and use it in their buying decisions. Of course, consumer demand for information about the attributes "credit" is also based on the assumption that consumers know that this attribute exists and can vary depending on the product. In other words, in order to demand information, consumers need to know the value of it (Cohen and Vandenbergh, 2012).

To be successful, ecological labels not only need to make environmental claims, but also require that consumers worry about environmental issues. In 1998, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported problems of labelling, environmental policies and practices worldwide, concluded that one of the primary limitations on environmental labelling programs to date has been the lack of awareness on the part of consumers. Consumer awareness has increased with the environmental issues and the existence and purpose of environmental labelling can significantly affect the success of programs. According to Sherman (2012), national legislation for environmental claims must include a section on consumer education. If consumers do not know the problem of the environmental issues associated with consumption, it is unlikely that they assign to eco-labels much consideration, even if the labels are clear and precise. Ideally, this consumer education would teach consumers about the environmental impacts of consumption, educate consumers about the environmental terminology, and connect the eco labelling with the greatest environmental problems that if attempts to resolve.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

In this research study we used the methodology of the case study based on qualitative data, information collected through semi structured interviews and secondary sources (Yin, 2004). We were able to follow this perspective since Yin (2004) argues that the case study research enables to address important topics not able to be exposed through others methods since the case study method is pertinent when the research addresses either a descriptive question or an explanatory question, as in this case. Also this methodology is correctly used when is important to understand and clarify a particular situation, as well as in this case.

Developing theory from case study research implies following certain steps as explained by Eisenhardt (1989), as shown in Table 1.

Step	Activity	Reason
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Getting Started	Definition of research question: What was the impact of the creation of the ecolabel eco2SEIA?	Focuses efforts: Sustainable development; green marketing; ecolabel products
Selecting Case	Specific population: eco2SEIA	Seia Municipality
Entering the Field	Flexible and opportunistic data collection	Allows investigators to take advantage of methods and unique case features
Analysing Data	Within-case analysis	Gains familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation Cross-case pattern search using divergent
Shaping Hypotheses	Iterative tabulation of evidence for each sharpens construct definition, validity, and construct measurability replication, not sampling, logic across	Confirms, extends, and sharpens theory cases Search evidence for "why" behind builds internal validity relationships
Enfolding Literature	Comparison with conflicting literature Comparison with similar literature	Builds internal validity, raises theoretical level, and sharpens generalizability, improves construct definition, and raises theoretical level construct definitions
Reaching Closure	Theoretical saturation when possible	Ends process when marginal improvement becomes small

**Table 1. Process of Building Theory from Case Study**  
**Source: Eisenhardt (1989), adapted**

Semi structured interviews were used as a qualitative method since re particularly useful for getting the story behind the experience and to reach in-depth information (McNamara, 1999). All interviews were registered by the interviewer and were made to the project responsible in the Municipality, and also to a small group of local consumers to analyse the impact on the consumer behaviour, as we are able to see in table 2.

Interviewees	Type of interview	Questions
Project responsible in the Municipality	Face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe the eco2SEIA label project, its goals and strategy?</li> <li>• Did many producers joined the project?</li> <li>• What is the expected impact in the market?</li> <li>• In your opinion what went well and wrong?</li> </ul>
Local Consumers – 20 different individuals	Face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know or have heard of the label "eco2SEIA Product"?</li> <li>• Do you consider important to the association of this label to the product?</li> <li>• Did you already purchased any products with the label "eco2SEIA Product"?</li> <li>• Do you understand the benefit that this ecolabel adds to the product?</li> <li>• Is the information perceptive in the label?</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Interviewees and interview guide**

A set of questions initiated the conversation and then the interviewees could had additional information during interviews to clarify and/or further expand certain issues. This type of interviews have some advantages has its possible to access richer information (in the words of the interviewees), it is possible for the researcher to clarify some aspects following the interview that structured interview or questionnaire does not allow, and is possible to collect important data that can generate quantitative and qualitative information.

## 4 CASE STUDY

### 4.1 Overview of Seia Municipality

Situated on the western slope of the Serra da Estrela Mountain, Seia municipality is composed of 29 townships (115 localities) and occupies an area of 436 km<sup>2</sup>. It belongs administratively to Guarda district and, according to the 2011 Census, it has a population of 24,641. Elevated to the category of town on July 3 of 1986, Seia is today a booming city with a strong cultural and tourist development in the region (see figure 1 – Map of Portugal (Continental) featuring Seia).

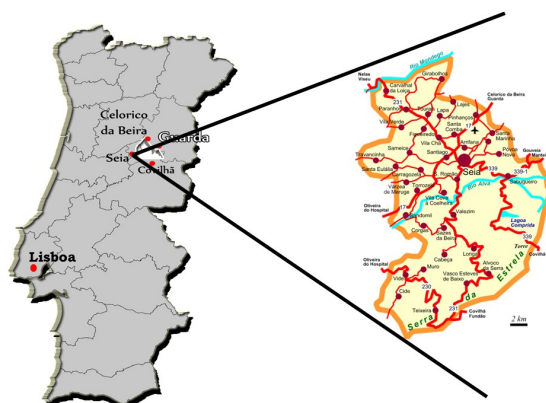


Figure 1 - Map of Portugal (Continental) featuring Seia

Seia has a privileged location on Serra da Estrela's western slope, being therefore a remarkable tourist centre, visited annually by thousands of tourists. It has modern hotel facilities, catering establishments and shopping malls. Currently the industrial park of Vila Chã is expanding, which will encourage the economic growth in the region.

### 4.2 Eco2SEIA project development

In October of 2010, Seia Municipality, according to its commitment to the CM, began to implement the eco2SEIA project within the local 21 Agenda process (final document of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Brazil, 1992).

Energy efficiency is an important part of the eco2SEIA project, which aims to identify Seia as an environmental reference region. In this context, economic development, investment attraction, employment creation, energy efficiency and environmental protection all come together as one goal, shared by everyone. Eco2SEIA aims to help Seia to become a low carbon city, in which the energy will be consumed in a more efficient way, taking advantage of all

renewable energy resources' opportunities and where natural heritage shall be respected and greenhouse gases avoided.

In May 2011, to initiate the process of the eco2SEIA product eco-label (see Figure 2: Eco2SEIA Product - Eco-Label) implementation and accreditation, Seia municipality had several meetings with the main manufacturers and traditional producers so that it was possible to better understand their production process, necessary to define a low carbon policy. This label will be the region's differentiating factor within a national context and it might be strengthened by partnerships with the main regional producers, taking Seia's brand through their distribution and commercialization national network and locally to the small regional stores.

At the same time, producers who are interested in having the eco-label as an enhancing characteristic of their products, will undertake this commitment with environmental promotion, important and recognized by the markets, the urban market in particular, throughout the region.



**Figure 2: Eco2SEIA Product - Eco-Label**

**Source: Seia Municipality**

The producers that are part of this case study are manufacturers who are suffering a continuous process of growing industrialization of the manufacturing production and bet on product diversification and brand image, showing a continuous concern on adapting their offer to the market needs.

So, the study began firstly by making a small analysis of the methods and of the productive structures, the brands and materials, the supply network, the values associated to the commercialized products, the marketing and communication activities, the wanted and granted certifications, the best environmental practices implemented and the energy resources used.

The purpose of the visits was also to identify a set of identical product characteristics that allowed their alignment with the purpose of eco2SEIA, particularly in the concerns related with the emissions of greenhouse gases and energy efficiency.

Then the producers' interest in associating their brands to environmental values was measured, enhanced by the strong association of Seia's region to those values.

We have to emphasize the fact that the main traditional products' brands have a direct connection with Seia municipality, being an important part of the raw materials being purchased to national suppliers and that all businesses make a residues selection to be recollected in order to be recycled. In a general way, producers are registering a growing tendency in terms of production levels, aiming at a future internationalization, especially focused in the Spanish market.

The study also revealed the marketing and communication actions, despite the fact that in some cases there is some dynamic, namely in written communication supports, in the



permanent and differentiating sales structures in the biggest retail stores and in some media campaigns. As far as product packaging is concerned, producers gave it particular attention, not only adapting it to the specific needs of their clients – commercial areas, but also giving them an improved aesthetic level. We can observe that the language used tries to transmit values associated to products, market recognition, i.e. tradition, quality and rusticity. About the certifications assumed by each business, with the exception of work hygiene and security, the producers did not follow or seem to want any other type, but showed some interest in adopting the eco2SEIA eco-label as a consequence of their concern and interest for the environment.

Each product - bread, pastries, cheese, sausages, honey - is strongly related to Seia region and the Serra da Estrela Mountain, and some of them are even considered as "ambassadors" of the County. As it was mentioned before, all are associated with values such as tradition and identity, giving priority whenever possible to national and local raw materials. With regard to growth and diversification strategies, it was possible to envisage some regional dynamism, especially in the companies with greater productive capacity, particularly in relation to the growth and diversification of its product's portfolio objectives. The majority of the producers showed openness to the diversification of their products, adapting them to markets, and an ambition to grow, although in a controlled manner, in order to maintain their quality level. Real experiences and proposals have been identified, which materialize the strategy of differentiation, through the existence of products aimed at the "Wellness" and "Gourmet" segments.

The concern about branding dimension overall issues is present in all producers. It should be noted that, due to the strong relationship that exists with the major brands' distribution, the producers have developed a marketing and communication strategy, where several actions are described, such as the existence of a website, written communication supports, with emphasis on brochures, television and radio advertising, albeit with less representation due to the high price. Within the energy's efficiency framework, it's possible to observe that producers have begun to implement production process improvements, such as the change of the cooled water lagoon for a shaded area and the receptivity to some alternatives like a tri-generation equipment installation, as well as the installation of solar thermal equipment.

Due to the above mentioned, we may say that Seia's traditional products are an asset for the region, both in the economic dimension, as a contribution to their development, and in the social dimension, or even, as agents of promotion and communication. It is, however, necessary to bear in mind that the products covered by the study are not exclusive. Paradoxically, Portugal is globally associated with the quality of its local products, such as the Alentejo region because of its sausages and cheeses, and the sausages from the North region.

The municipality of Seia is undoubtedly associated with the cheese and cheese curd, products that have a strong reputation in the domestic market. The strategy of branding Seia as "Low carbon" County, through the eco2SEIA eco-label, has as one of its main goals, in addition to the promotion of good environmental practices, the promotion and positioning of Seia's municipality, for which the contribution of these products is key, especially by the presence in the major national commercial networks.

After the visits to the manufacturing businesses, we may conclude that it is true that Seia has a set of products with a strong association to the region and that they promote "Seia" in both national and international markets, with less intensity in the latter.

In addition, the County has agents who can act as an example, characterized by perseverance and willingness to develop their business activity openly dedicated to traditional products, now in a more industrialized way without, however, losing what differentiates them in the market: tradition, quality and rusticity. The analysis highlighted several strengths, such as:

- Quality of the products developed in this region;
- Main use of local or national raw materials;
- Commercial instincts of their agents;
- Sensitivity and readiness for new products development;
- Sensitivity towards energy and environmental issues;
- The youth of decision-makers.

Also, the main weaknesses that could be pointed:

- Lack of local raw materials;
- Strong dependence of large distribution network;
- Lack of integrated branding policies;
- Lack of cooperation between players;
- Lack of certifications, namely the environmental certification;
- Shortage of local manpower.

At the same time, it is an opportunity moment for the municipality of Seia and its agents, particularly with regard to environmental sustainability and social responsibility. There is a growth, in national and international markets, in the demand for products that have a local base, a fact that differentiates them in the context of global competition. There is no doubt that because Seia is a countryside region, according to the urban imagination, that is an opportunity for the county to position its agents, its business and its products.

The eco2SEIA label is the materialization of this opportunity, both for the county, and for its most private and business dimension. If the accreditation process is to be believed, its objectives and commitments, by the community in general, and if a municipal plan is to be assumed, conditions are being created for Seia as a region, to position itself in a distinctive way, assuming the leadership of this transformation. This vision will be materialized if the majority of the county believes in it, i.e., institutions, business people and population.

In this sense, the opportunity presented to the local producers and entrepreneurs to accept this label, in order to join a new regional strategy, comes as a natural consequence of the mentioned vision, not only as business asset, but mainly to be able to differentiate them in the market, whether they are final or intermediary clients.

## **5 PROJECT IMPACT ANALYSIS**

### **5.1 Overall Impact**

In January 2012, the implementation of the “eco2SEIA Product” certification system conquered five producers, and, so far, three new producers have joined the system. In this study it’s possible to observe that, at the time, this project implementation had a good acceptance by the producers, who considered their membership important, adding value to the product.

However, after signing the commitment, aimed at the eco-labels' placing, it is noted that none of the producers has fulfilled that commitment.

Contacted to evaluate the cause of the answer obtained, the problem was that placing the eco-label on the products carries an expense, in terms of product packaging alteration, that they don't want to endure. It turns out that only three producers, who later joined the certification system, are currently using the seal, having justified their use as an added value with regard to the product sale in the market. Note that two of these three are small producers who sell honey and sausages, and that the others are responsible for mass production of products that are then sold in hypermarkets, such as the *Continente* and *Pingo Doce* stores.

Another factor of non-compliance with the certification process was the non-annual delivery to Seia municipality, by the majority of the producers, of a form with the information about their production levels, energy consumption, emissions of greenhouse gases and the use of renewable energies. However, two small producers who have joined the project later mentioned that they delivered this documentation. The non-delivery of the form prevents the careful management review that producers should undertake, with regard to the energy consumption and the adoption opportunities renewable energies options, in order to produce a green environmentally friendly product.

There was no registration, in the meantime, of any interest by other businesses in the municipality to join the certification system.

In view of the above, it can be said that the concept was initially well accepted by producers, although it didn't create the desired impact and did not worked as intended. Failure to using the eco-label leads to a failure of complying with the stipulated in the system, which, therefore, didn't allow it to expand. The goal of adding value to the traditional municipality products, which would, as a consequence, take the name of Seia to the green consumers, has not been achieved. The idea was a strong participation and involvement of all stakeholders, with a view to define the direction of the "eco2SEIA Product" label, which did not happen and consequently, the certification system didn't obtain the desired results. At the time, the launching of this project created a very positive impact in the media, since the project promotion was made in several written media and a national TV news report (RTP) recognized the initiative of the producers that joined the certification system and the eco-label designed to differentiate the local products in a resources management efficiency perspective. Later, other TV program (Biosfera) made a whole show dedicated to the "eco2SEIA Product" label. The producers' participation in this program gave them a product promotion boost, but still, it wasn't possible to achieve a more registered intention to use the eco-label and make their products environmentally friendly.

Considering the research questions that induced this case study, we can say that, although the environmental issue is increasingly required by the companies' agendas theme, this is due, in large part, to the fact that they intend to follow the growth of environmental demands created by the legislation in force. Tachizawa (2004) states that the expansion of collective consciousness in relation to the environment and the complexity of today's social and environmental requirements lead entrepreneurs and executives to a new positioning. Adverse and intense climatic phenomena intensified the concern with environmental preservation,

encouraging businesses to look for ways to minimize their impacts on the environment via, for example, new production forms for their products.

Currently, environmental management is regarded as a requirement and a market differentiation factor. So, companies began to apply and create actions based on this new strategic management element. Being environmentally responsible is, today, a differentiation strategy that allows companies to stand out in the market and gain reputation, hence the producers' initial interest in adhering to the eco-label. However, it is essential that organizations incorporate the environmental variable, complying with the corresponding responsible posture. Nevertheless, it appears that the legislation requirements are forcing organizations to adopt environmental policies, being rare those that act by free choice and pure environmental awareness, with some of them taking advantage of the concern with the environment as a marketing tool or way of competing in the market.

So, we can see that business management is encouraged by regulatory pressure, in search of better reputation, and by consumer and competition pressure. Corporate accountability, as far as the environment is concerned, exists due to the Environmental Management Systems creation, that generated a way to check and communicate which companies actually feature an environmentally correct posture, by establishing environmental performance evaluation systems, with standardized criteria and standards for the whole world. Thus, obtaining such certification allows companies to advertise credibly that their processes and products do not cause environmental damage, which leads to a greater market trust.

The use of eco-labels is intended not only to inform and guide consumers in choosing green eco-friendly products, but also to work as an environmental policy instrument. Producers who adhere to the eco-label aim to increase the sales of their product and profits, betting on marketing strategies, oriented to the green consumer in order to achieve this. Consumer awareness towards environmental problems gave these labels more reason to exist, compensated by the growth of responsible and sustainable consumption, based not only on price, but also on the product life cycle and its effects on environment and society.

## 5.2 Project impact in the consumer perspective

A consumer sample was defined in order to access their opinion and their perception of the use of the "eco2SEIA Product" label. The questioning was completely random and was made through personal interviews with a structured guide.

The main findings were that the majority of the consumers interviewed didn't know the label "eco2SEIA Product". The responses of those who knew the label says that these respondents have purchased at least one product with the eco-label and consider the product's association to the label to be something positive and differentiating. Most of them also said that they understand the product's benefits as well its information.

We may point out that the lack of knowledge of the majority of respondents, the little promotion made to date, associated with the fact that many of the businessmen who signed the commitment aren't using the eco-label, might justify the lack of knowledge and recognition that consumers demonstrated about the label.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Eco-labelling was initially created to promote a more sustainable consumption, encouraging consumers to consider the environmental impacts of consumption and inspiring producers to improve their environmental practices. Like any tool, the eco-labelling policy is imperfect (Sherman, 2012). The green economy has become an irresistible trend in the field of environmental and global development. The green label certification is regarded as one of the major approaches to guide social sustainable consumption and promote economic development. Considering the attempt to place the green label "eco2SEIA Product" on the market, which, at the same time, would add value to the products and promote the name of the county, referring to it as a "low-carbon County", we can say that the strategy used to implement the label "eco2SEIA Product" was not the most correct.

The eco-innovation policy covers the municipality at European Union level. Governance is a great challenge, but also an opportunity for Governments to add a direction and a greater social and environmental value to its policies and long-term visions. There is growing evidence that the eco innovation in business leads to cost reduction, improves the ability to capture new growth opportunities, as well as strengthens the company's image in the eyes of the customers.

Although the purpose of the label "eco2SEIA Product" was to give producers access opportunity to a label and therefore become committed to introduce improvements on their production process energy efficiency and consequently contribute to help the environment and to reach a different market niche from their usual target, we may observe that producers don't have the predisposition to take advantage of the added value of the "eco2SEIA Product" certification system and label. Thus, it can be assumed that they do not give the eco-label its real value and market potential.

Therefore, a brand must be created, and not only an eco-label, eco2SEIA, so that's it's capable of attracting all the activities, all the benefits, recipients and objectives. It is also necessary to develop a "low carbon" marketing strategy for Seia municipality as it helps to achieve the objectives proposed, working as guidance to attract business in order to strengthen the market positioning. Eco-labelling can be an excellent way for producers and consumers to benefit from each other, reducing their environmental impacts (Sherman, 2012).

In this sense, initially, the marketing objectives must be defined, which must go through the return on investment and increase in sales volume, as well as the consumer perceived brand image, customer satisfaction and conquering new customers.

Then it is fundamental to set the positioning of the "eco2SEIA Product". The positioning is a group of characteristics that may be enhanced and are distinctive features that enable consumers to identify the product in the group of similar products and distinguish it from the others (Kotler, 2009). Thus, the positioning is the image that consumers associate the business or product with and, if credible, sustainable and consistent with the overall strategy, recognized as an important asset. The eco2SEIA product must enable market target to distinguish it from their competing products, enhancing its differentiation from others and, at the same time, satisfy the same consumer needs.

The package and its components should also contribute to express and communicate to consumers the positioning chosen by the brand. So, the eco-label adds value to the product,

transforming itself into an asset, the role of marketing strategy being fundamental to make it reach the consumer. Marketing strategy also attempts to demonstrate the value creation to the consumer, in addition to creating value for the company (Kotler 2009). Given that the marketing-mix is an integrated system that addresses the relationship of marketing elements with the environment, which are known as the 4 P's (product, price, promotion and placement) the integration of the eco-label as part of the product policy is essential, so that it can generate results. For marketing, the product must be designed according to the client, therefore product policy is extremely important since it is very difficult to promote a product that does not match the consumers' expectations (Kotler, 2009).

Product policy is an element of operational marketing, referring to the characteristics of a product, service or brand. The product is something created for the purpose of a transaction, satisfying the needs and the desires of consumers and providing sales with revenue. Product policy should define the inherent characteristics of the product, describe the package and create the brand concept, and after-sales services (Kotler, 2009). In this case study situation, since the products have their place in the market, it would be necessary to define a product integration strategy which should now be associated with a new characteristic, to be a green product, that is, an environmentally friendly product. A trustworthy policy happens when control tools are subsequently defined, in a daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly basis, assessing the strategy implementation.

Any business initiative for the preservation of the environment is seen as positive, because it benefits society as a whole. Accordingly, legitimate producers should work for the green economy, as an innovation and economic development strategy, and an environmental protection pillar in support of sustainable development.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

With the completion of this study we found that the market paradigm has changed in recent years: businesses and consumers are facing a new reality, based on environmental values and quality of life, towards sustainability. The green marketing emergence has also given rise to the green consumer and companies have to adapt their products to these requirements. The consumer is an informed individual who values this new culture, brought by green marketing, which raises the concept of quality and adds value to the product, allowing a strategic differentiation. This differentiation is present in the literature review: companies have environmental concerns and make them a priority.

This case study analysis indicates that the business interest for green marketing, associated with environmentally adapted production methods, complemented by the use of the green label, if effectively communicated, will enable them to get a new positioning on the market and consequently gain new consumers. In the specific case of eco-label under study, we realize that, even though it has been created to benefit the product and conquer new markets, this has not happened, probably because brand concept associated to the eco-label was not created. Every consumer needs to identify himself with the brand of the products they purchase, so he becomes emotionally connected to the product, since the consumer acceptance of the label is guaranteed for the trust placed in it. However, it turns out that the joint companies do not use



the appropriate marketing plan, developing and communicating a strategy, therefore not having benefits and being recognized by the use of the eco-label.

Thus, it can be said that the label did not achieve the defined goals, because, in addition to not having worked as a marketing tool, it didn't increase sales or added value to the product image. That is, its concept was well-founded but not promoted, therefore unable to contribute to an increase in consumer awareness, or consolidate the companies' market position, motivated possibly by poor choice in the communication. By not working in an eco-label brand perspective, with an underlying concept and designed communication of the target values and brand positioning, it is difficult to get impact, in a poorly informed and uninterested target. Although the social responsibility has been assumed by the companies as a way to commit to the future of a healthier society, considering such as an asset, the message didn't reach the consumer and led to a reduced use impact of the eco2SEIA.

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