

Research Paper

Appropriate strategies to strengthen green ethics in the consumption behavior of rural households: A case study of the central district in Khaf County

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide optimal strategies to strengthen green ethics in relation to the consumption behavior of rural families. The research is an applied type, and its method is descriptive-analytic. The subjects of analysis are the rural households in the central area of *Khaf* County. A documentary method was used, and the field data collection tool was a questionnaire. In this study, the tools that strategic planning and management benefited from were SWOT and QSPM. Based on the field studies and the documents, 18 advantages and 12 weaknesses were identified as opportunities and threats facing the green ethics in rural households in relation to their consumption behavior. According to the final scores in the evaluation matrix, the internal and external factors were $2.64 = IFE$ $2.86 = EFE$ respectively. These scores were used to boost the green ethics and the corresponding optimal aggressive strategies. Then, the desirable strategies were prioritized by means of the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM). The strategy of "massive financial and technical support of indigenous knowledge in the field of green ethics" scored 1.045 and was, therefore, determined as the most important strategy. Since human behavior is involved in any environmental issue, it is necessary for managers to correct human relationships with the environment based on the patterns consistent with green ethics.

Key words:

Green ethics, Consumer behavior, Rural households, *Khaf* County, SWOT-QSPM

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Population growth, globalization of markets, sophisticated competition, and increasing pace of technological changes have caused many changes in human lifestyle, and consumers are looking for new value systems aligned with those changes. High con-

sumption of modern man is depleting the resources that belong to all generations. In recent years, Iran, like other developing countries, has been beset by problems such as the mass production of garbage and household wastage. This is mostly due to the change of behavioral patterns of consumers. In rural areas, the negative effects of this phenomenon are more intense. Because rural settlements are close to nature, any abnormal consumption behavior has a great impact on the environment in the long run. The relationship between man and nature must be checked

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again. Since attitude is the most important determinant of behavior, consumption attitudes are assumed to affect consumption behavior. The key to the effective protection of the environment is "environmental ethics" Man is judged by his behavior. As studies show, green consumers, who strengthen ethics, can greatly help to alleviate environmental problems. Nowadays, however, the use of natural resources and human coexistence with the environment are not ethical enough. In rural areas, ecological conditions are relatively stable, and environmental sensitivity is higher than in urban areas. This is because previous generations would pay more attention to green ethics. As such, what would it mean to devise optimal strategies to strengthen green ethics in villages and to regulate the consumption behavior of rural families?

2. Methodology

The research method is descriptive-analytic, and, in terms of objectives, it is functional. For data classification and processing, Excel and SPSS software programs were used. The data collection was done with a combination of field and documentary technique. The rural households participating in the study were analyzed, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.778, indicating a good reliability for the study. Bashd.mntqh tool was used to study five villages in the central area of *Khaf* County. Totally, 75 questionnaires were given to the local informants in those villages. The informants included village administrators, members of Islamic councils, local teachers, and indigenous educated people, and some common people living there.

3. Results

Out of the items investigated, "optimal use of the existing materials in nature to meet daily needs" scored 0.2341 and proved to be the most important strength. However, "ignoring green ethics by the younger generation" and "preference of immediate environmental interests to the interests of the future" scored 0.103 as the major weak points. Threat analysis in the field of ethics can raise green consumption behavior. According to the final scores in the evaluation matrix of internal factors and external factors, the items that scored 2.86 and 2.64 were selected as "invasive strategies", namely the strategies of priority for action. Based on the analysis of the items in the QSPM priority matrix, "massive financial support" and "technical use of indigenous knowledge of the field" with the score 1.04 are assumed to be in line with the tenets of green ethics.

4. Discussion

Green consumption is a problematic and contradictory concept. Being green means the protection of environment or natural resources, while it somehow involves destruction of them. Nowadays, control of population growth and technological changes has led to the control of environmental problems to some extent, but the main problem that remains is the dramatic acceleration in the growth of a consuming society. Solving environmental problems requires changing the practices and behaviors in production and consumption as well as methods of organizing social and personal life.

5. Conclusion

In this study, a matrix was used to evaluate the internal and external factors that can strengthen green ethics in connection with the behavior of rural consumers. The scores obtained point to certain strengths and opportunities that can be used to control or regulate the consumption behavior of citizens. In this regard, as the analysis of the factors in the matrix indicated, the priority for action should be given to measures that are based on "aggressive strategies". It was also found that implementing strategies using internal strengths can result in maximum external opportunities. Based on the analysis of strategies in the QSPM matrix, among six cases of priority, "broad financial and technical support for indigenous knowledge" obtained 1.0452 as the highest score. Furthermore, the strategies "inclusion of concepts of green morality in school textbooks" with the score of 0.990, "development of programs to institutionalize green ethics" with the score of 0.830, "sponsored and state associated protection of the environment" scoring 0.764 and "coexistence with the environment rather than having attitudes of dominance over the rural environment by authorities" scoring 0.623 were ranked 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The strategy of "paying more attention to behavior as a factor affecting the environment" got the score of 0.298 and turned out as the least important strategy for policy enforcement.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest