



Social entrepreneurship and sustainable development: Case study of responsible Moroccan companies

Entrepreneuriat social et développement durable : Etude de cas d'entreprises marocaines responsables

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Abstract: Nowadays, most markets are saturated and infested with cut-throat competition between companies, where only the most resilient can survive. Every year, companies race to achieve higher sales than in previous years, to outstrip the competition and ensure their survival. However, ecological and social equilibrium is all but forgotten by most of these companies, which are only interested in achieving their sales targets. It is in this context that NGOs and environmental and consumer protection associations have been able to put pressure on companies by asserting the importance of protecting the environment, natural resources and, more generally, the principles of sustainable development. As a result, many companies have designed and integrated CSR approaches into their strategies, to ensure responsible operations that take into account the ecological and social aspects.

With this in mind, our aim in this article is to highlight the themes of social entrepreneurship, sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, while emphasizing the role of marketing in the process of communicating the steps and actions taken by socially responsible companies. We then turn to a case study of Cleanzy and Cuimer, two Moroccan start-up models with a social and environmental impact.

Keywords: CSR, sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, responsible marketing, startups

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1. Introduction

In the last decade, companies became more aware of the importance of the social and ecological dimensions, and thus are trying to be more responsible with regard to the environmental and social cause, and this following the growing ecological demands and the signing of global pacts around sustainable development. And so, most companies now adhere to the principles of sustainable development, and make sure to respect its three axes in the generation of their activities and in the development of their strategies, by formulating their intentions in a charter of corporate social responsibility. Through this CSR approach, companies also aim to improve and enhance their image in the eyes of consumers and the general public.

On the other hand, marketing has known since the 1970s several variations relating to the social and environmental aspect, hence the birth of responsible marketing which is interested in environmental and social causes, using the classic tools of commercial marketing in sales, including communication. Socially responsible and ecological advertising is one of its essential tools.

Thus, we wish to present in this paper a synthesis of our literature research in terms of the themes of sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and responsible marketing. And then we will end up illustrating with a case study of the companies Cleanzy and Cuimer, two Moroccan responsible startups, with an ecological and social impact.

2. Social entrepreneurship and responsible marketing: Conceptual framework

2.1 Sustainable development and CSR in social entrepreneurship

The end of the 1980s was marked by an increase in the attention paid to the environment and the protection of natural resources, in particular through the Brundtland report in 1987 which highlighted the importance of sustainable development, and defined the latter as being a development which will make it possible to satisfy the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. Therefore, sustainable development is a meticulous process that influences investment choices and technical development, while encouraging responsible thinking and responsible management, regarding the exploitation of natural resources (RakotomalalaRamandimbiarison, 2019).

In 1992, 172 governments signed the Rio Declaration during the Rio Conference on Development and the Environment, with the aim of establishing and promoting a global partnership that encourages the adoption of an attitude that is respectful towards the environment and conscious enough about the importance of the protection of the available natural resources (Arcuset, 2013). The principles of sustainable development revolve around 3 aspects: environmental, socio-cultural and economic, and

these principles must achieve a certain balance and consistency between them (Senn Zilberberg et al, 2016).

The integration of the principles of sustainable development into the company's overall strategy refers to a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) approach which has several competitive advantages for the company, whether in terms of enhancing its image in the eyes of consumers and the general public and which will be subject to transparent communication advocating sustainability and ecological quality or in terms of cost and waste control (Lejeune, 2010). In addition, it turns out that the countries of northern Europe are more sensitive to the environmental and ecological cause (Guillon, 2004).

2.2 Responsible marketing in the context of social entrepreneurship

According to Le Gall (2002), marketing has also taken an interest in the ecological and social dimension and has experienced several variations related to the environment (El Balbal and Omari, 2024). And so we have responsible marketing, green marketing, social marketing, ecological marketing and environmental marketing. In the scientific literature related to responsible marketing and its variations, some use these denominations interchangeably (Peattie, 2001), while others believe that there are terminological differences.

By the end of the 1970s, responsible marketing variations related to the environment were officially used (Boyer and Poisson, 1992), namely responsible marketing, ecological marketing and green marketing. The use of these terms has paved the way for various attempts and approaches aimed at taking into consideration ecological issues and social and environmental issues in the disciplinary field of marketing (Lavorata, 2012).

Indeed, ecological marketing refers to the integration of the axis relating to ecology in marketing strategies (Boyer and Poisson, 1992). In other words, ecological (or responsible) marketing brings together all marketing approaches and activities whose purpose is to help find solutions to the various environmental problems in question (Henion and Kinnear, 1976).

As a result, ecological or green marketing was born following a growing demand from consumers, who now want to consume in a "greener" and more responsible way, but also following the desire of companies to improve and enhance their brand image in the eyes of consumers and the general public, by presenting an offer that is concerned and respectful of the environment, and by committing to its protection and preservation. Moreover, according to Kotler and Bliemel (1999), ecological marketing is an integral part of the disciplinary field of social marketing, and uses the tools of commercial marketing in order to provide a solution to the various ecological and socio-cultural problems.

As for green marketing, it really emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It refers to the various marketing approaches and activities whose purpose is to help find solutions to minimize the negative impacts of the products on sale on the social and the ecological dimension, but also of the production systems used, making sure in the same time to guarantee sustainable profitability and the satisfaction of customer needs (Peattie, 2001).

Furthermore, green marketing is perceived as an ethical argument for services and products that have added value of an ecological or social nature on the market (Laville, 2009). It also turns out that it is a socially responsible process, since individuals can meet their needs in an ethical and ecologically respectful way (Ramezainian et al., 2009). Thus, through what has been stated, we can observe that the two concepts of marketing, green and ecological, are very close to each other and are indeed part of the field of study of social marketing (Laville, 2009), whose common point is the association of the environmental and ecological cause with marketing.

Nevertheless, the distinction between ecological marketing and green marketing or responsible marketing is mainly made through the notion of the social aspect, which is an integral part of the definition of responsible marketing (Le Gall, 2002), where the motivations expressed are moral and societal, while in ecological marketing it is more about market pressures, and is characterized by a rather anticipatory vision (Elloumi Ayedi and Kammoun, 2019). That said, it is of great importance that marketing managers take into consideration the political and societal repercussions of their decisions (Dampérat and Dussart, 2007).

In addition, responsible marketing relies on responsible advertising in communication, which is a powerful communication tool. Indeed, advertising is a persuasive communication instrument whose goal is to encourage consumers to acquire goods and consume more (Cathelat, 1968). As for responsible advertising, it is an advertising discourse that adheres to the principles of sustainable development (Banarjee, Gulas and Iyer, 1995 ; El Balbal and Omari, 2022).

3. Case study of the Cleanzy and Cuimer companies

3.1. The Cleanzy company : an eco-responsible dry cleaner

The start-up Cleanzy was launched in 2015 by Mohamed Khachani, entrepreneur and expert in finance and strategy consulting, is a new generation of eco-responsible dry cleaners which is based on the technique of aquacleaning instead of the classic products used by dry cleaners, in particular perchlorethylene, deemed to be pollutants and harmful to health and the environment.

Perchloroethylene dry cleaning is used in most dry cleaners in Morocco. It is a highly volatile toxic solvent and banned in several countries. Indeed, it has been classified as a probable carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the World Health Organization. For its part, the Moroccan Poison Control Center has also alerted to its toxicity and dangerousness.

The company has the ambition to open 20 dry cleaners in Morocco by 2022 and to develop internationally as well. Cleanzy dry cleaners offer a cleaning service with superior quality allowing the most delicate fabrics to be treated, using eco-efficient technology based mainly on aquacleaning and biodegradable products, respectful of the health of customers, employees and the environment as well.

In 2017, Cleanzy Academy was launched to provide training to teams in terms of textile treatment and eco-responsible treatment methods, and in 2022 the Cleanzy mobile application was launched to allow customers to organize collections and deliveries wherever the customer is.

❖ SWOT analysis of the Cleanzy company:

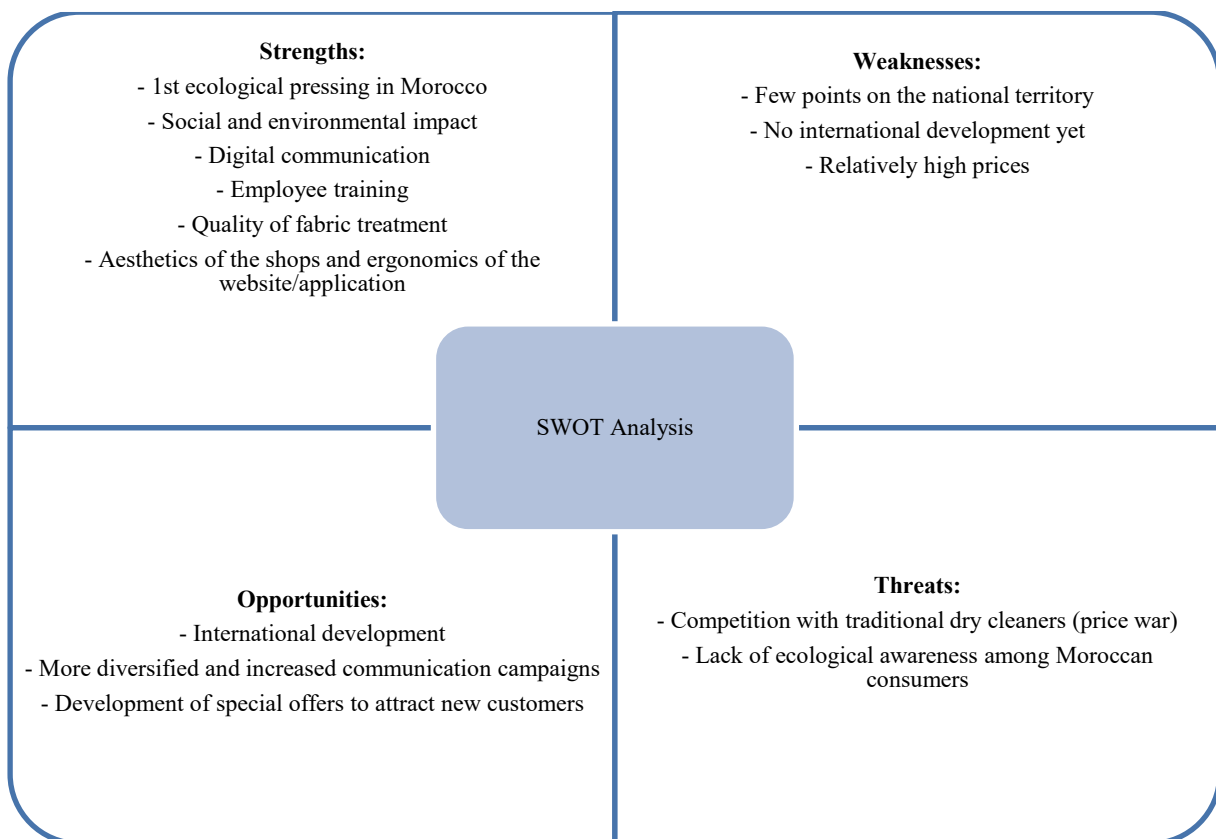


Figure 1: SWOT analysis of the Cleanzy company

➤ **Strengths ;**

- 1st ecological pressing in Morocco: Cleanzy is the first pressing that respects the ecological dimension in Morocco. The company uses the aquacleaning technique instead of the traditional harmful products used by dry cleaners.
- Social and environmental impact: the company delivers an environmental impact by using biodegradable products in the process of its activities in order to contribute to the preservation of the environment and also has a social impact by ensuring respect for the health of customers and employees and by planning diversified training courses for them.
- Digital communication: Cleanzy uses digital communication in its marketing strategy to increase visibility through its website, its accounts on social networks and its mobile application, and to get closer to customers and to those who are curious to know more about the company and find out about the services it offers.
- Employee training: Cleanzy trains its employees in terms of textile processing and eco-responsible processing methods and supports them during these training sessions.
- Quality of fabric treatment: The company stands out from other dry cleaners for its cleaning service with superior quality, allowing the most delicate fabrics to be treated, using eco-efficient technology based mainly on aquacleaning and biodegradable, chlorine-free and odorless products offering exclusive Ultra White care. Thus, the most delicate fabrics can be cleaned without being damaged, such as the caftan, shirts with pearls, etc.
- Aesthetics of the shops and ergonomics of the website/application: the company has well-maintained shops with a pleasant and welcoming design. The website and the application also have pleasant ergonomics and easy and fast navigation. The green color is omnipresent and alludes to the presence of the ecological dimension.

➤ **Weaknesses:**

- Few points on the national territory: so far, the company has only a few shops in the cities of Casablanca and Rabat. The company has launched a franchise network, and offers a form to fill out on its website to facilitate the processing of franchise applications, but the expansion is rather slow.
- No international development yet: Cleanzy is limited to the national territory with only a few stores in Casablanca and Rabat, and has not yet developed internationally despite the fact that its founder has expressed his desire to develop internationally too.
- Relatively high prices: the prices offered by Cleanzy are a little more expensive than a traditional dry cleaner, which could push consumers towards conventional dry cleaners at reasonable prices.

➤ **Opportunities:**

- International development: international development will be an asset for the company, especially since the countries of northern Europe are more sensitive to the environmental and ecological cause (Guillon, 2004).
- More diversified and increased communication campaigns: the company must set up advertising campaigns, particularly on social networks, in order to increase its visibility, given that it is not yet well known on the market.
- Development of special offers to attract new customers: this could attract new customers and contribute to increasing the visibility of the company, through the development of special offers, coupons, discounts, etc.

➤ **Threats:**

- Competition with conventional dry cleaners (price war): the prices offered by the Cleanzy company are a little more expensive than those of a conventional dry cleaner. This is due to the ecological techniques that the company uses, and could push a large part of consumers towards classic cleaners deemed polluting which are less expensive.
- Lack of ecological awareness among Moroccan consumers: Moroccan consumers are less sensitive to the ecological cause compared to other foreign consumers, and are therefore not ready to pay more to contribute to the preservation of the environment.

3.2. CuiMer: : a responsible company operating in the crafts and fine leather goods sector

CuiMer is a Moroccan start-up co-founded in 2017 by Aya LARAKI, which transforms fish skins into exotic marine leather, thanks to a vegetable tanning process (tannin). In this way, responsible high leather goods accessories are produced.

The company favors salmon leather for its creations, and this for two main reasons: its resistance and its flexibility, since the fibers of the salmon skin are flexible and resistant, which allows the company to have a great margin of creativity in the design and production of its articles, and its appearance which closely resembles the exotic leather of reptiles.

The CuiMer company places the principles of sustainable development at the heart of its concerns. Thus, it has developed a CSR strategy based on 3 components:

- **Environment:** CuiMer relies on the recovery of marine waste destined for waste to then transform it into resistant and supple exotic leather, thanks to a vegetable tanning process. Indeed, the company has been able to recycle more than 40 tons of fish skins since its creation;
- **Social:** CuiMer values its human capital very highly and invests enormously in the training and support of its craftsmen in the art of fine leather goods, in order to polish their skills and guide them to be able to flourish in their artisanal passion;
- **Awareness:** CuiMer is very active in terms of raising public awareness of the importance of recycling marine waste in order to contribute to the protection of the environment. It was able to lead more than 60 creative recycling workshops, suitable for adults and children, in several cities.

❖ **SWOT analysis of the company CuiMer:**

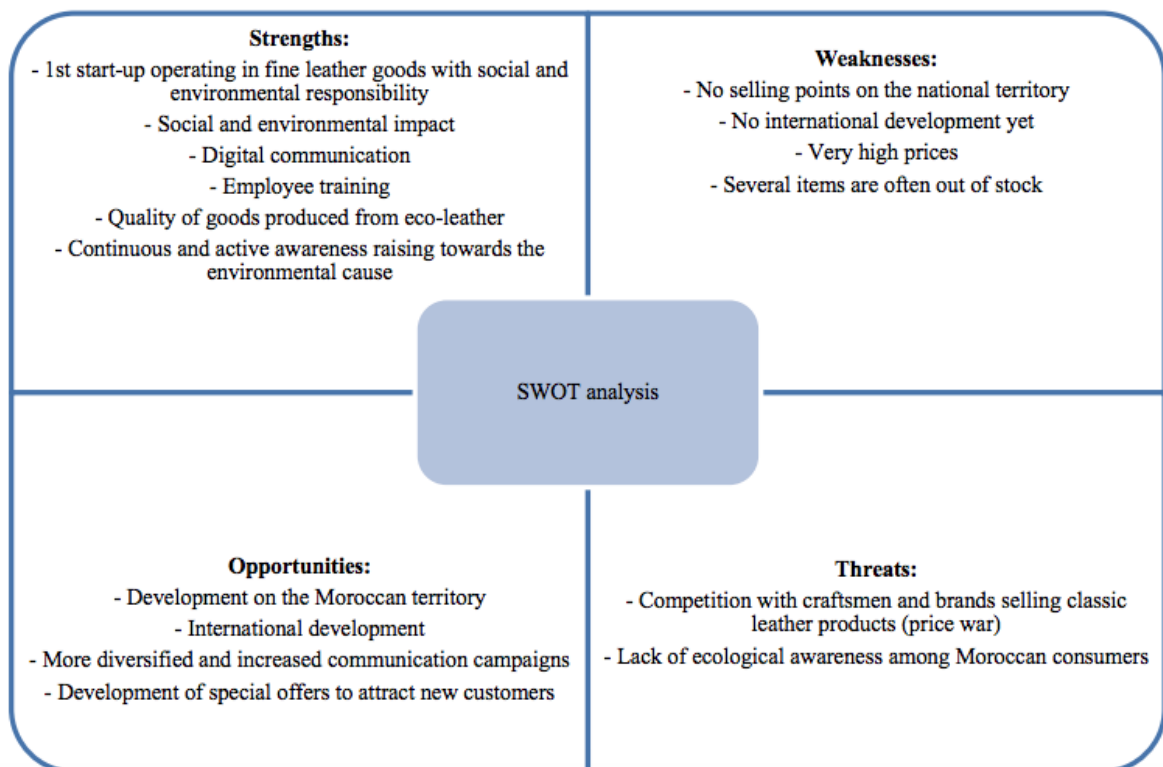


Figure 2: SWOT analysis of the company CuiMer

➤ **Strengths ;**

- 1st start-up operating in fine leather goods with social and environmental responsibility: CuiMer is a first-of-its-kind fine leather goods company in Morocco with a social purpose and which tirelessly defends the ecological cause and puts it at the heart of its concerns;
- Social and environmental impact: CuiMer generates an environmental impact by opting for the recycling of marine waste and by transforming it into products based on recycled marine leather, resistant and flexible, through a process of vegetable tanning. Since its creation, CuiMer has been able to recycle more than 40 tons of fish skins, thus contributing to the preservation of the environment;
- Digital communication: the company relies mainly on digital communication through its website and its accounts on social networks, in order to gain visibility and to communicate with its customers and also reach a larger target of Internet users, which will allow them to know more about the company and discover the exotic products it offers;
- Employee training: the company is well aware of the importance of its human capital and values it. This is why it invests enormously in the training and support of its craftsmen in fine leather goods, so that they can polish their skills and flourish in their passion for craftsmanship;
- Quality of goods produced from ecological leather: the products of the CuiMer company have high quality and are made from recycled marine leather, soft and robust, colored from vegetable tanning that respects the environment;
- Continuous and active awareness raising towards the environmental cause: the company is very active in raising awareness of the protection and preservation of the environment through the recycling of marine waste, and it was able to animate more than 60 workshops since its creation.

➤ **Weaknesses:**

- No selling points on the national territory: the company has no shops on the national territory, and has limited its actions to exhibiting its creations in a gallery on rue Abou Mahassine Rouyani in Casablanca, and relies on e-commerce to sell its products through its website, and promotes it through its accounts on social networks;
- No international development yet: CuiMer has not yet developed internationally, despite the fact that this will represent a great advantage for the company, given the advanced level of responsible consumption abroad, especially in Western European countries;

- Very high prices: the prices offered by CuiMer are very high compared to the prices of local artisans and industrial leather goods, which is most likely to push away Moroccan consumers with limited purchasing power;
- Several items are often out of stock: CuiMer must work more on its logistics and update its stock on its website as well as its production chain in order to guarantee the availability of all items on its website.

➤ **Opportunities:**

- Development on the Moroccan territory: CuiMer must develop on the national territory through the opening of a few shops in big cities such as Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier, in order to be close to consumers so that they can see the products on sale in person and the new features offered, and that will also help in terms of gaining visibility;
- International development: international development will be an asset for the company, especially since the countries of northern Europe are more sensitive to the environmental and ecological cause (Guillon, 2004);
- More diversified and increased communication campaigns: the company must set up advertising campaigns, particularly on social networks, in order to increase more visibility, given that it is not yet well known on the market;
- Development of special offers to attract new customers: this could attract new customers and contribute to increasing the visibility of the company, through the development of special offers, coupons, discounts, etc.

➤ **Threats:**

- Competition with artisans and brands selling classic leather-based products (price war): the prices offered by CuiMer are very high compared to the prices of industrial leather goods and products from local artisans, which puts the company in competition with them, which could push away a large part of consumers towards these competitors;
- Lack of ecological awareness among Moroccan consumers: Moroccan consumers are less sensitive to the ecological cause compared to other foreign consumers, and are therefore not ready to pay more to contribute to the preservation of the environment.

4. Conclusion

Companies nowadays are paying more attention to sustainable development and adhering to its three complementary pillars: economic, social and environmental. Sustainable development aims to better manage the planet's resources while respecting the ecological dimension as well as having a positive social and economic impact. Thus, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) aims to integrate environmental and social aspects into corporate strategies, instead of focusing solely on the economic aspect which aims to maximize the profit of the company.

In order to promote their sustainable and socially responsible activities, companies that implemented a CSR policy use responsible marketing, in particular advertising which is a very effective communication tool, to improve their image in the eyes of consumers and the general public and to attract more consumers.

Cleanzy and Cuimer are two responsible moroccan companies that have positive social and ecological impacts. The Cleanzy company is the first ecological pressing in Morocco, which respects the environment as well as the health of customers and employees. The company relies on digital communication to promote its activities, through its website and social media pages, and it has made its services more convenient and closer to customers through the development of an application that facilitates the access to its services.

On the other hand, CuiMer is a company operating in the sector of crafts and fine leather goods with a social vocation, concerned about the preservation of the environment through the transformation of fish skins into exotic marine leather, and this thanks to a process of vegetable tanning. The company relies on digital communication to promote its products, but it still has a few points to develop, including better stock management, development on a national and international scale, as well as the development of its product and communication policies.

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