

BES 6001 CERTIFICATION AND GREEN MARKETING IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY: THE ROMANIAN AND UK CASES

C t lin LUPOAIE

University of Sheffield

3 Leontos Sofou st., Thessaloniki, 54626, Greece

catalin.lupoai@gmail.com

Ana CRUZ

University of Sheffield

3 Leontos Sofou st., Thessaloniki, 54626, Greece

acruz@city.academic.gr

Abstract. *In the quest to develop sustainable buildings, construction material producers have to innovate and to implement strict standards in order to support real estate investors in receiving extra points in the green building schemes. This paper investigates how a technical standard for responsible sourcing of products, such as BES 6001, can be applied in order to improve the green marketing activities of a building material producer. Although responsible sourcing is frequently researched and there are many examples in the literature, the analysis of responsible sourcing in connection to green marketing has not been subject to rigorous analysis. Although the BES 6001 can be obtained by companies from different countries, at the time of this research, the certification was available in only two countries, United Kingdom and in Romania. This study was done through multimethod qualitative research, in order to deeply analyze the implications of this certification in green marketing. The research was prepared through cross case study analysis through in depth interviews with the marketing and sustainable development managers from both Holcim Romania and Aggregate Industries (UK) and through content analysis of the promotional materials and marketing plans related to BES 6001 certification. To date green marketing has not been linked in the academic literature with the certification for responsible sourcing of products. This research revealed that BES 6001 can be utilized as a green marketing tool, even if the context of the construction market is different from one country to another. Responsible sourcing of products has become a norm in United Kingdom, while by comparison, green buildings are the exception on the Romanian market. The paper demonstrates that responsible sourcing of products can be used as a green marketing tool, even if the context of the construction market is different from one country to another. Responsible sourcing of products has become a norm in United Kingdom, because of the increasing numbers of companies from the construction sector that obtained the BES 6001 certification. By comparison, green buildings are the exception on the Romanian market and companies such as Holcim Romania find it difficult to target the decision makers through green marketing.*

Keywords: *green marketing; sustainability; responsible sourcing; construction; BES 6001 certification.*

Introduction

One of the major challenges of the construction industry is to reduce its impact on the environment, taking in consideration that the building sector contributes up to 40% of the greenhouse gas emissions around the globe, mostly from energy used during the lifetime of buildings (United Nations Environment Program, 2007). In this context, a large number of initiatives was taken towards improving the energy efficiency of buildings, such as the green building schemes (BREEAM, LEED, CASBEE, Effinergie, Minergie and PassivHaus) introduced initially in the most developed economies and afterwards extended all around the globe (World Green Building Council, 2009).

In their goal to be a part of developing sustainable buildings, construction material producers have to support the contractors in fulfilling their goals of obtaining better scores in green building schemes (Reed, Bilos, Wilkinson & Schulte, 2013). The green buildings standards have extended also to countries from Eastern Europe, such as Romania, where the interest of the visionary companies in

developing capabilities to excel in the construction and related industries and generate sustained profits is increasing (Romanian Green Building Council, 2014).

Taking in consideration the development of the green buildings in Romania, the need of introducing responsible sourcing certifications, such as BES 6001 is becoming more important. In June 2014, Holcim Romania, the local subsidiary of the Swiss cement producer Holcim, received the first BES 6001 certification for responsible sourcing off all its products: cement, concrete and aggregates. According to Holcim Romania (2014a), through the BES 6001 certification, obtained at "Very Good" level, their customers can be awarded with 2 points in both BREEAM 2011 and LEED 2013 for the responsible sourcing of materials criteria, offering them a better position and advantage in the market by optimizing their scores in respect of Green Buildings Certification Schemes. Holcim Romania was the first company outside United Kingdom to have this external recognition. In this way, the company joined the group of 222 British companies that have received this certification, according to Green Book Live (2014).

This study analyses how did Holcim Romania implement this certification and how is going to deploy this certification in order to make green marketing for its products and services. Until now, research related to green marketing has focused mainly on the developed markets, such as USA, Great Britain, Germany, or on the major emerging economies such as India or China. This research contributes to knowledge because the BES 6001 certification was not a subject of research in connection with green marketing initiatives. Researches on this topic, such as the ones made by Glass, Achour, Parry and Nicholson (2012), were mainly related to responsible sourcing, without targeting the green marketing approach. Still, the research on BES 6001 revealed the fact that this certification is increasing the reputation of a company (Glass, 2011; Glass et al., 2012).

Green marketing has been mainly researched in contexts such as opportunities and challenges (Mishra & Sharma, 2012), impact on stakeholders (Cronin, Smith, Gleim, Ramirez, & Hutchins, 2012), best practices (Bedek, 2011), market segmentation (Choi & Ng, 2011) and less on the connection between responsible sourcing and how this can be used in order to support green marketing. Moreover, as described in the literature review, the construction industry has only recently started to embrace the green strategies and innovation, although is one of the industries with the highest impact on the environment.

Thus, this research contributes to knowledge, as it analysed how responsible sourcing improves the green marketing strategy of two building material producers from two different regions that have contrasting developments of sustainable constructions: Romania and United Kingdom. The British construction industry is one of the most advanced in terms of responsible sourcing of building materials (Glass, 2011; Glass et al., 2012), while Romanian construction companies have just started to develop green innovations, green products and responsible sourcing (Langa & Zegreanu, 2011; Paraschiv, Lang & Olaru, 2011).

Therefore, the final aim of this study is *to investigate to what extent the BES 6001 certification can be used for implementing green marketing in the construction industry.*

BES 6001 certification can become a valuable tool that can be used for making green marketing for sustainable products. That is why, starting from the above mentioned research and continuing with the other studies described in the literature review, four research questions were defined for the purpose of this study:

R1: Which were the main drivers of the companies to pursue such a certification?

R2: How is the BES 6001 certification implemented in Romania and in UK and to what extent can it be used to promote green marketing in the construction industry?

R3: How do marketing managers identify and target the decision makers that are interested in developing green buildings?

R4: How can marketing managers improve the results of green marketing initiatives using BES 6001 certification?

Literature review

According to Pane Haden, Oyler and Humphreys (2009), from the decade of '90, companies have started to be more interested in solving the environmental issues and the vision of sustainable approach in business has changed in the past 20-30 years the progress of humanity. Garbowsky and Rahman (2013) states that especially in the European countries environmental sustainability represents nowadays front page news, as a response to the global warming process. Starting from organic food, continuing with travelling in an environmental-friendly way or reducing the consumption of non-renewable products, people have become aware of the need to live in a better environment. In addition, Edeholt (2012) believes that all stakeholders should start to make a difference in their activities, because the impact of climate change has increased significantly and there are many pessimistic scenarios that might be overcome with a more positive contribution to sustainable development.

One of the most condensed definitions of green marketing was published by Bhalerao (2014), who stated that: "Green marketing is the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe". This definition is supported by Rex and Baumann (2007) who believes that the aim of green marketing is to include environmental issues in the marketing efforts, with the scope of providing consumers information about the green properties of the products and their advantages.

Polonsky (2001) considered that responsible green marketing has transformed into a complex, integrated, strategic and tactical process from its initial conception in 1970s, having developed a wide set of strategic activities and tactics (Figure 1).

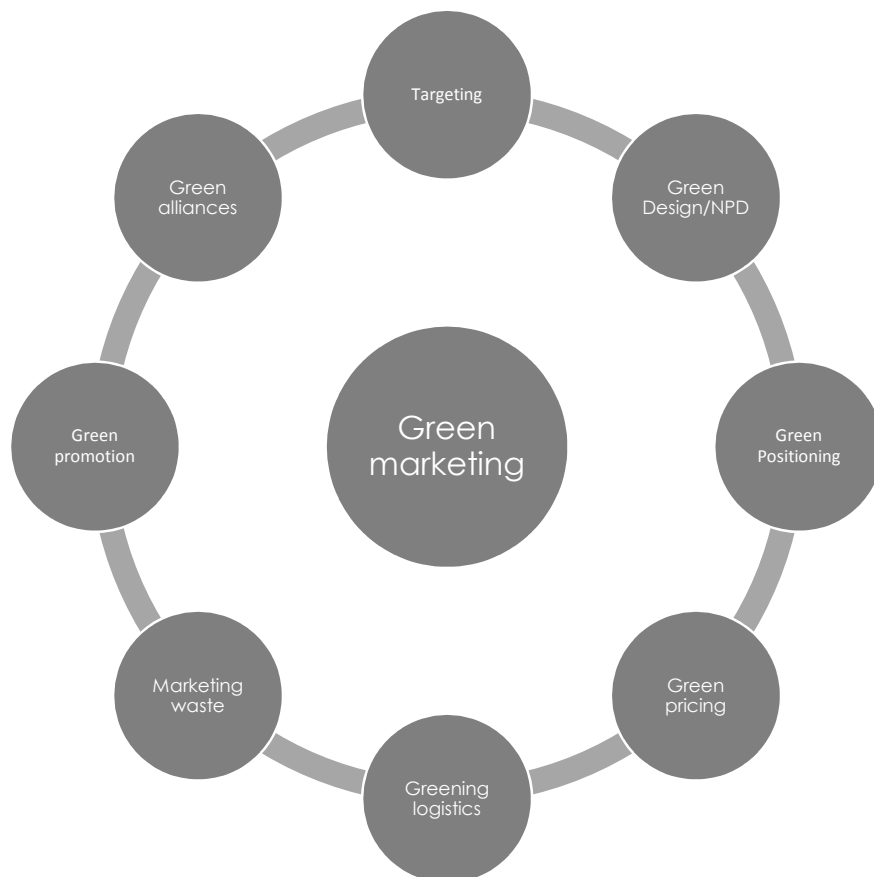


Figure 2. Strategic activities and tactics of green marketing

In order to reach the holistic development and approach mentioned by Polonsky (2001), it was a difficult path. Ken and Andrew (2005) made a research into the history of green marketing and revealed the fact that progress was difficult in this field, because of the tendency of companies to focus mainly on product, communication, selling and costs, while ignoring the customer needs and expectations.

Banyte, Brazioniene and Gadeikiene (2010) supports the idea of creating priorities for green marketing, by searching the needs of green consumers, offering high-value products and services, in order to increase the trust in eco-friendly products. On the contrary, Rettie, Burchell and Riley (2012) believes that green marketing has not proved its efficiency and the fact that companies are developing new products and services that are green is not enough. Companies have to come with effective solutions that satisfy the needs of customers.

Unruh and Ettenson (2010) mention that companies have to ask themselves if their green strategies are credible or vulnerable, because green activists will not hesitate to attack a company if they sense that a company is using green washing.

Green marketing in construction industry

The construction sector has one of the highest impacts on the environment and every little improvement can make a big impact if it is scaled up and multiplied. Over its lifetime, buildings consume enormous amounts of raw material and energy and leave a heavy footprint in the environment. According to the World Green Building Council (2013), buildings are accountable for having a high ecological footprint, over their lifecycle they consume 17% of the fresh water, 30-40% of energy, 40-50% of raw materials, they are responsible for 25% of the wood harvesting and they produce 33% of the CO₂ emissions. That is why starting the 1990s, governments and corporations have started to promote new regulations, certifications and rules for the construction industry. As to Macomber (2013), many areas of the world are already overcrowded and it is expected that by 2050 the urban population to nearly double in size, reaching six Billion.

A research made by Reed et al. (2013) revealed the fact that there are 18 sustainable rating tools for buildings in the world, most of them being in the United Kingdom and Europe. The first Green Buildings Certification Schemes was the one named Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), was created in 1990 in the United Kingdom (Akadiri, 2013). Since then many different tools have been launched around the world that helped the construction industry to become more environmentally friendly.

In the literature review, the only definition used for describing the responsible sourcing of products is the one of BRE (2009), which states that: "Responsible sourcing is a holistic approach to managing a product from the point at which a material is mined or harvested in its raw state through manufacture and processing, through use, re-use and recycling, until its final disposal as waste with no further value."

Using BES 6001 certification for implementing green marketing

In order to receive the above mentioned green building certifications, developers and construction companies have to receive a certain score, which is obtained by proving that they build a sustainable building that offers them a better position in the market. Developers receive points also for the type of building materials that they used during the construction works and for the responsible sourcing of the products.

Under the BES 6001 Framework Standard, products are assessed by looking at existing quality, environmental, health and safety management systems together with other important criteria including:

- Greenhouse gas emissions;
- Resource use;
- Waste, water and life cycle assessment;
- Local communities;
- Employment and skills.

Although there are research studies made towards responsible sourcing in construction industry, there is a lack of research related to what extent a standard such as BES 6001 can be used in order to improve the green marketing initiatives of a company related to promoting green products and services and supporting sustainable constructions. In addition, the situation is more difficult in Romania, where there are only a few green buildings certified with BREEAM or LEED green standards. This paper aims to tackle this gap and the research objectives of this paper are also related to the status of green buildings development in Romania.

In Romania, there is a positive perception related to green marketing, especially towards cause related marketing made through corporate and social responsibility actions, according to a study prepared by Stancu, Grigore and Rosca (2011).

The initiatives towards sustainable construction started timidly in Romania in 2008, when the Romanian Green Building Council was founded, being the first independent entity that supports and promotes green constructions. Afterwards, other important associations were created, such as the Association of Energy Auditors for Buildings, and the Romanian Facility Management Association (ROFMA).

Methodology and research

This main objective of this research, “*to investigate to what extent the BES 6001 certification can be used for implementing green marketing in the construction industry*”, is a topic that has never been analysed, being a niche topic in the vast discussions related to sustainable development. Taking in consideration that the BES 6001 was obtained only by companies from two countries, UK and in Romania, this study was done through qualitative research, in order to deeply analyse the implications of this certification in green marketing.

This study was made using the multimethod qualitative research through in depth interviews with marketing and sustainable development managers from both Holcim Romania and Aggregate Industries from United Kingdom and through analysing the promotional materials and marketing plans related to BES 6001 certification.

For qualitative research there are two main research methods defined in the literature review, in depth interviews and focus groups. Taking in consideration the context of the research, having analysed two companies from different countries, the in depth interview was the chosen solution. In addition, this research was done through using cross-case synthesis, as Holcim Romania was compared to Aggregate Industries, the local subsidiary of Holcim Group from United Kingdom. The later has received the BES 6001 certification in 2009 and already has an extended experience in green marketing of sustainable products.

Although responsible sourcing is frequently researched and there are many examples in the literature review, the analysis of responsible sourcing in connection to green marketing has not been subject to rigorous analysis.

In this paper, the research was made through triangulation, by collecting primary data from public information about the companies from Green Book Live, the unique reference source and online listing of environmental products and services, and by analysing secondary data through interviews that aim to answer the four research questions mentioned above.

The qualitative approach was chosen, because most of the research that addressed the issues of BES 6001 and also the ones related to green marketing were making quantitative research, mainly using surveys. The interviews were made with managers from the marketing and sustainable development departments from both Holcim Romania and Aggregate Industries from United Kingdom. In total, there are four interviews analysed in detail.

The companies from this study were chosen through purposive sampling, using the Green Book Live website that comprises all the relevant data and documents referring to BREEAM green building scheme and to BES 6001 responsible sourcing certification. According to Kairuz, Crump and O'Brien (2007), the participants involved in the qualitative research have to be relevant to the objectives of the study and to contribute significantly to the research.

Both companies have many similarities and strategies in common – both of them were the first from their countries to receive the BES 6001 certification, both of them are part of the Holcim Group (Table 1), the biggest producer of cement in the world, and both of them have sustainability at the core of their business.

Table 1. Key information about Aggregate Industries and Holcim Romania (Holcim Group, 2014a; Ministry of Public Finance, 2013)

Information	Aggregate Industries	Holcim Romania
Turnover 2013 (mil. EUR)	N/A	202*
Number of employees 2013	3.956	798
Production units	350	23
Type of operations/products	Aggregates, Asphalt, Concrete, Cement, Precast Concrete Products	Cement, Aggregates and Ready-Mix Concrete

The chosen interviews were selected based on their expertise and knowledge related to the topic, being part of the senior management of their companies or having key positions. The interviews were made with:

- Sustainable Products Manager, Aggregate Industries;
- Marketing Manager Concrete Products, Aggregate Industries;
- Integrated Management System Coordinator, Holcim Romania;
- Marketing Manager, Holcim Romania.

Interview guides and data analysis

In order to make a cross-case and cross-nation analysis two interview guides with 12 questions, closely related to the research objectives, were prepared for the companies that are being analysed by this study, Holcim Romania and Aggregate Industries.

The empirical findings gathered through the interviews with the managers from Aggregate Industries and Holcim Romania were analysed in comparison with the information collected from public information about the companies and their activities related to green marketing and BES 6001 certification.

In order to analyse the content of the interviews with the managers of both companies, the interviews were transcribed and coded in order to make cross comparison between the information. According to Saldana (2013), a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. The codes were numbered in the order of relevance to the research questions, resulting 12 codes (Table 2).

For the coding, a quantitative analysis of the interview was conducted using the Atlas.ti, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). According to Saldana (2008), the CAQDAS software efficiently stores, organizes, manages, and reconfigures the data coded by the researcher in order to enable human analytic reflection.

Table 2. Defining the codes

Code	Definition	Interview question
Drivers	The main factors that influenced the decision of obtaining the BES 6001 certification	Which were the main drivers in taking the decision of obtaining the BES 6001 certification?
Implementation	Process of implementation	How is the responsible sourcing of products currently implemented by the company?
Management support	Implication and support of the management	To what extent does the management of construction materials producers need the BES 6001 certification?
Green buildings	Status of sustainable building	Which are the barriers/challenges for marketing managers in order to target the decision makers that are interested in developing green buildings?
Pioneer	Why being the first is important	Which were the strategies for implementing the BES 6001 certification in green marketing initiatives from 2011 until now?
Transparency	Public availability of the performance indicators	How does the company communicate sustainability towards its customers?
Barriers	Difficulties in promoting BES 6001 certification	Which are the barriers of making best practices in green marketing in the construction industry?
Green Marketing	Connection between BES 6001 and green marketing	To what extent is green marketing applied in the United Kingdom/Romanian construction industry?
Competitive advantage	The advantage provided by the BES 6001 certification	What makes you think that the BES 6001 certification improved the green marketing strategy of Aggregate Industries/Holcim Romania?
Promotion	Targeting decision makers	Which were the strategies for implementing the BES 6001 certification in green marketing initiatives from 2011 until now?
Consequence	Using BES 6001 in the construction market actual context	Are the companies from the United Kingdom/Romanian construction sector aware of the potential benefits of environmentally responsible innovation?
Innovation	The main eco-innovations of the company	Which are the main eco-innovations of the company and what were their impact on the green marketing initiatives of the company?

After coding the interviews, the three most used codes were “promotion”, “pioneer” and “implementation” (Figure 2). These top 3 codes reveal the fact that BES 6001 certification represents an opportunity for promoting the sustainable approach of the companies, while being the first to obtain it offers an advantage in front of the competition. The second most discovered code, the “implementation”, presents how difficult and resource consuming was to obtain and implement the certification.

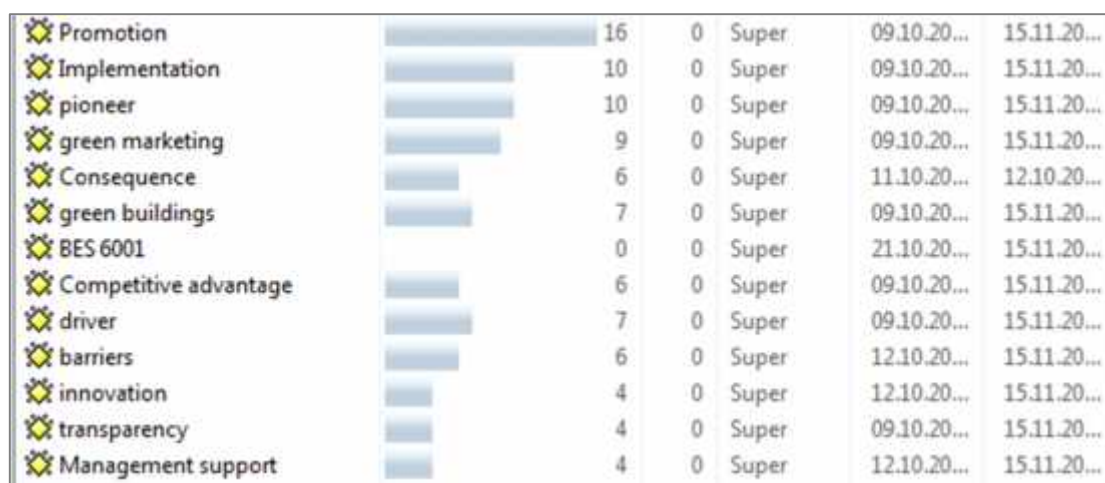


Figure 2. Coding the interviews

Findings

Taking in consideration the qualitative analysis made, the strategies of Holcim Romania and Aggregate Industries can be compared in order to find the similarities and the differences between their approach towards BES 6001 certification and green marketing.

Through the analysis of interviews resulted that the approach in obtaining and implementing the BES 6001 certification was similar for both companies, while the context of the market was totally different. Holcim Romania and Aggregate Industries decided to obtain the responsible sourcing standard in order to gain a competitive advantage by being the first to have a high level certification, useful for developing green buildings. In addition, both companies had the support of their management and had dedicated teams for making the research and preparing the necessary procedures and documentation (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison between the strategies of Holcim Romania and Aggregate Industries towards BES 6001 certification

Research questions	Similarities	Differences
Which were the main drivers of the companies to pursue such a certification?	Both companies were the first to achieve the BES 6001 certification in their countries.	In United Kingdom one of the main drivers for obtaining the BES certification were the codes and regulations established for building sustainable projects by the Government.
	Both companies spend around 18 months to obtain the certification	
	They had the full support from their management.	
How is the BES 6001 certification implemented in Romania and in UK and to what extent can it be used to promote green marketing in the construction industry?	They establish a team for making research about responsible sourcing and deal with the formalities for receiving the standard.	
	All their suppliers have implemented procedures that allow them to provide raw materials.	
How do marketing managers identify and target the decision makers that are interested in developing green buildings?	Both construction markets are now price oriented and promoting responsible source products is very difficult.	Aggregate Industries benefited from the beginning from BES certification, becoming the supplier of choice for sustainable buildings. Holcim Romania has only 2-3 companies interested in developing green projects.

		In United Kingdom all the new construction projects have to be sustainable. In Romania, there aren't any strict rules and regulations related to sustainable constructions.
How can marketing managers improve the results of green marketing initiatives using BES 6001 certification?	The most efficient communication with decision makers was made through events	Aggregate Industries launched a catchy strapline "The responsible source", that was utilized in all the promotional materials and in their external events
	Both companies launched a new range of products under the BES 6001 certification	Aggregate Industries has a wider range of sustainable products, under the Life Product brand.
	The communications with decision makers is done mainly through sales teams.	Aggregate Industries has 30 products and services brochures mentioning the BES 6001 certification, while Holcim Romania has only two.

Both companies have mentioned that transparency is essential when taking the decision to allocate resources for making responsible sourcing, in order to avoid green washing. In addition, promoting BES 6001 was not an easy task for the companies researched in this study. One of the main barriers for Aggregate Industries when promoting responsible sourcing identified by the company was that the construction companies want to build as cheaply as possible, and the procurement departments might not have the same goals as the Sustainable Development departments and therefore the high ideals are often forgotten. On the other hand, Holcim Romania mentioned another type of barrier for promoting BES 6001, responsible sourcing is a quite narrow niche in a construction market with a more or less favourable evolution.

The major difference in taking the decision to obtain the BES 6001 certification was the context of the construction market. The Government of the United Kingdom was one of the main drivers for developing sustainable constructions and green certifications, while in Romania only the private investors and associations are supporting the development of green buildings.

Conclusions

This study revealed the fact that responsible sourcing of products can be used as a green marketing tool, even if the context of the construction market is different from one country to another. Aggregate Industries and Holcim Romania had many similarities related to green marketing strategies using BES 6001 certification. Still, Aggregate Industries has placed BES 6001 at the heart of its communication with external stakeholders, creating a strapline called "The responsible source", while Holcim Romania is just at the beginning and took the decision to have a more targeted approach towards its customers.

Both companies were pioneers on their markets in terms of receiving the responsible sourcing standard and wanted to have a competitive advantage in difficult market conditions. The informants recognized the fact that the management team was one of the main drivers for implementing this certification and also promoted the green marketing initiatives related to BES 6001.

Responsible sourcing of products has become a norm in United Kingdom, because of the increasing numbers of companies from the construction sector that obtained the BES 6001 certification. By comparison, green buildings are the exception on the Romanian market and companies such as Holcim Romania find it difficult to target the decision makers through green marketing.

There are not only advantages in using BES 6001 for making green marketing. The main barriers of the BES 6001 certification mentioned by the managers of both companies are:

- The narrow niche of sustainable projects in the whole construction industry;
- Customers are mainly interested in having a reduced price for building material products;
- In United Kingdom the private investors decisions depend on Government regulations, while in Romania there are only a few companies that understand what a sustainable construction means.

Targeting the decision makers is one of the most difficult tasks for both companies when making green marketing, especially for Holcim Romania. This study revealed the fact that companies need the support of the Government in reinforcing regulations for sustainable constructions, a conclusion that has been demonstrated also by the researches of (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Lee, 2009; Serpell, 2013; Shi, Zuo, Huang, Huang & Pullen, 2013). Aggregate Industries benefited from the green initiatives of the Government, such as the National Planning Policy Framework, the Code for Sustainable Homes or the Energy Performance Certificates.

Limitations and further research

The limitations of the study are that the sample size might be considered too small, but taking in consideration that there is only one company in Romania that obtained the BES 6001 certification, this case study will be very useful for further research related to green building environment in Romania.

The aim of this research was not to generalize, but to explore the data that is available related to the responsible sourcing of products and its connection to green marketing and to understand the implications of applying the BES 6001 certification.

Another obstacle in this research might be that the Romanian market is not yet ready for initiatives such as BES 6001 and the gap between United Kingdom and Romania is too large, which might imply a reduced level of validity and reliability.

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