

Sustainability and Social Marketing Issues in Asia

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Sustainability and Social Marketing Issues in Asia

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Preface

Sustainability is regarded as the key to a better future. It ameliorates the quality of our lives, safeguards our ecosystem, and preserves natural resources for current and future generations. We depend on natural resources for our business activities and day-to-day survival. Thus, overlooking sustainability can lead to the depletion of these resources from our planet. The emergence of global factors such as economic growth, technological advancement, and overconsumption have resulted in negative consequences on the environment in terms of radical changes in climate, damage of flora and fauna, deforestation, ozone layer depletion, acid rain, and air and water pollution. This critical situation made people more conscious about the sustainability of the planet earth in recent years. As a result, individuals started to be more environmentally friendly and embracing values and concepts like “less is more,” “3R principle,” “go green,” “ethical consumption,” “green consumerism,” etc.

Sustainability cannot be attained without paying attention to the social aspects. In this regard, social marketers as well as entrepreneurs seek to encourage changes in behavior that benefit individuals, community, and society at large. This can be achieved by encouraging desirable activities like corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR has become a global phenomenon that helps solve social, environmental, and economic problems to increase benefits for individuals, organizations, and society. However, the required change is not moving in the expected direction in many parts of the world, which calls for more exploration of the issue. In addition, many organizations worldwide have not yet undertaken initiatives related to CSR due to the lack of knowledge and reluctant attitude. For many cultures, discussion on bringing issues such as sustainability, social marketing and CSR are relatively new and requires more discussions in the academic platforms based on different contexts and cultures.

The global environment is always subject to change and development, which is a fundamental part of growth and progress. Therefore, individuals, groups, organizations, marketers, and the whole society need to change their behavior to respond to these global changes, challenges, and issues. Like other emerging economies, research on sustainability, social marketing, and SCR issues in Asian culture is still at an early stage. While developed nations are more advanced in adopting sustainability metrics, less examples can be found in the developing country perspectives. This edited book “*Sustainability and Social Marketing Issues in Asia*” is an attempt to fill this gap in the existing literature. This book showcases 13 cases that portray different aspects of sustainability, CSR,

and social marketing of 10 Asian countries – Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Iran, China, India, Brunei, Pakistan, Syria, Philippine, and Indonesia. In addition, this edited book seeks to widen the understanding of the latest trend on “sustainability” and “social marketing” issues such as “*sustainable energy*,” “*sustainable agriculture*,” “*sustainable ecosystems*,” “*social development*,” “*green marketing*,” “*traditional Chinese medicine*,” “*CSR initiative*,” “*waste management problem*,” “*refugee crisis*,” “*care for animals*,” and the like. To provide a systematic understanding on the issues, this book is divided into three sections as follows:

- Green and Sustainability
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Social Marketing

This book is unique in two main aspects: (i) it focuses on sustainability, social marketing and CSR and (ii) it provides understanding and insights from the Asian cultural perspective. This book is relevant to different disciplines such as marketing, organization behavior, waste management, sustainability, and corporate social responsibilities which can serve as a guide for students, academicians, marketers, managers, and policymakers.

In addition, the topics that are covered in the “*Sustainability and Social Marketing Issues in Asia*” highlight the latest and relevant issues such as care for the environment, care for animals, refugee crisis, and CSR. The readers of this book will advance their understanding by gaining new knowledge from different Asian contexts.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, all praises be to the Creator Almighty, the most merciful the most benevolent for His guidance and blessings for giving us the inspiration and opportunity to embark on this project and to make this dream a reality.

There are significant changes happening on our planet that can impact the existence of all species and threaten their sustainability. Thus, dealing with the consequences of environmental issues and resource depletion has become a crucial matter. Organizations and individuals are trying to cope with these changes by adopting more sustainable activities and practices. Therefore, researchers from different fields have been increasingly making effort to understand what can be done to create positive changes among organizations and individuals in different contexts. Driven by this thought, this book is an attempt to explore the issue more and came up with the idea of this edited book concerning sustainability and green behavior, social marketing and corporate social responsibility from the Asian perspective. Many people were directly and indirectly involved with the completion of this book. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for their support, guidance, encouragement, and contribution to the completion of this work.

We would especially like to thank all chapter contributors who have diligently addressed reviewers' feedback and amended the chapters several times. We also express our appreciation to the companies for providing valuable information to write cases about their company issues. Finally, we are grateful to those who provided us with their support and feedback to enhance the quality of this book.

Indeed, it has been a great pleasure to work with the Emerald Publishing team. Thank you very much for your continuous support and cooperation. The special appreciation goes to our beloved families for their love, support, and sacrifices in allowing us to devote a lot of time to complete this book.

Finally, we hope that our audience will enjoy reading this book and find it interesting, thought-provoking, relevant, and insightful.

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Section 1

Green and Sustainability

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Chapter 1

Red Globe Grapes with Big Green Dreams: Sustainable Agriculture of Honliv Group Co. Ltd in Henan, China

Zhang Yi and Farzana Quoquab

Abstract

This case highlights the green agriculture initiative of the Honliv High Tech Agricultural Development Co., Ltd. towards agriculture environmental protection and better life. In this process, the Honliv Company confronted many difficulties, such as addressing the green transformation concerns of the team, identifying the sustainable agriculture target, the project selection of red globe grape products, the planning of a demonstration vineyard and green marketing. Nevertheless, with the Red Globe Grape of the “Honliv brand” had won the certification of China’s “Grade A” green food mark, and its green marketing initiatives, such as the “picking and demonstration model” had won people’s identification. The company was awarded the honorary titles of “Red Globe grape planting demonstration base with the Chinese characteristics” and “pollution-free science and technology demonstration unit of Chinese fruits and vegetables.” By discussing the Honliv Company’s experience and difficulties during the sustainable agriculture transformation process, one can realize the importance of green agriculture initiatives for creating a better life for humans.

Keywords: Sustainable agriculture; social responsibility; agricultural ecological protection; Green Food; Green Food Certification mark; Honliv Enterprise

Honliv’s Challenges of Business Transformation

This case highlights the green agriculture initiative of the Honliv High Tech Agricultural Development Co. Ltd. (afterwards referred as Honliv) toward agriculture

environmental protection and welfare. In China, during the past decades, the agricultural production model with the primary goal of increasing production meets the enormous needs of the Chinese people for food. However, the abuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the excessive reclamation of agricultural land, the excessive use of water resources etc., have caused severe environmental pollution and food safety problems. Due to the urgent need for environmental protection and people's strong demand for healthy food, the Honliv in Changyuan City, Henan Province, China, started to explore the way to ecologically sustain agriculture transformation.

Qin Zili (subsequently named as Qin) was the chairman of the Honliv, a diversified private enterprise founded in 1992 and located in Changyuan City, Henan Province, China. When the company was first established, the initial business scope was concentrated in the field of construction and renovation. In 1999, he found plenty of information about ecological environment degradation and traditional agricultural production mode problems in the newspapers and magazines. The environmental issues arising in conventional agriculture attracted his attention. He was aware of the fact that the problems arouse in the agricultural production were responsible for the ecological degradation of China.

China was a conventional agricultural Country with 7% of the world's arable land feeding 21% of the world's population. Thus, China faced the urgent need to fulfill people's basic needs for food and clothing in daily life, and the Chinese government put the priority to increase the agricultural production. However, the agriculture mode negatively affected the environment in the long run, which caused the excessive reclamation of agricultural cultivated land, the waste of water resources, etc. With the development of China's economy and the improvement of people's living standards, food safety issues and environmental degradation become the most significant concerns and urgent matters to be addressed.

In a hope to contribute to people's food safety demand and environmental degradation issues, Honliv opted to make a transition to the agriculture field and explore how to reach this meaningful goal. Qin was very excited about the idea, but the board held the opposite opinion. They argued that rushing into the unfamiliar agriculture field only by enthusiasm, giving up the advantages in the existing area, risk to increase the costs can cause fatal risks for the enterprise. Although Qin's proposal sounded reasonable and potential for development, the board needed more evidence to support the feasibility of the company transformation. Qin confronted the first obstacle on the way to a sustainable agriculture career. It was a challenging task for Qin to convince the board.

It's Time for Action

Honliv invited environmental protection experts to give special lectures on environment degradation of China, and the agricultural experts to tell the food safety problems and the hostile environment influence of the existing agriculture production process. On the other hand, several surveys were conducted in the local supermarkets to identify the market demands and people's concerns for food. In addition, photo exhibitions on the environmental damage of the current

agricultural model and the benefits of the new ecological agriculture to environmental protection were usually held in the company, etc.

The board gradually reached a consensus that the demand for high-quality, healthy food and a suitable living environment was the best promise for the company's development. On November 10th, 1999, the first senior management meeting of Honliv on the transformation to agriculture lasted all day. The company's transformation adjusted to the market demands and considered benefits for the environment protection, which was supported by the board. Qin recalled the origin of the name of Honliv, which was originated from the group's hope and responsibility with profound implications. Honliv followed the corporate philosophy of "being proud of creating a better life." Honliv believed that the development of enterprise was inseparable from the Country's support and people. Just as an old Chinese proverb said, thinking of the source of drinking water and returning when you know kindness. The transformation toward agriculture provided the sense of honor and dream of the enterprise to contribute to environmental protection and create a better life for the people!

Investigation on Agriculture Pollution – Targeting Sustainability

As the agriculture pollution caused environmental degradation and people's concerns about food safety, if Honliv transformed into the agriculture field, the board needed to know the reasons and causes of the agricultural pollution, which were the critical aspects for Honliv to decide what kind of agriculture project to select. A market investigation team was immediately formed, with the first mission to survey the agriculture pollution in farmers' agriculture production process. Zhou Lin (subsequently named as Zhou) was delegated as the manager of the investigation team, who supported the transformation plan in particular from the beginning of the idea had been proposed.

Zhou's hometown was located in a rural village on the outskirts of Changyuan City, his father supporting the entire family's expenses with the meager income from farming. Since childhood, he had always seen his father working in the fields from morning to night, while the income earned throughout the year was not enough to feed the family. He remembered that an overuse of pesticides resulted in no harvest of grains in the field and even polluted the land influencing the subsequent production of the following year. His father was devastated for the loss, which made him determined to find out problems affecting farmers earn in the future since he was young.

Zhou's team carefully studied the condition for the national agricultural development. Henan Province was one of the major agricultural provinces in China, where a large proportion of people lived as farmer for generations, with a lower-income contracting with heavy farming and planting activities. Considering the conditions of agriculture resources and farmers' demand of improving their lives, Zhou proposed to carry out the investigation in Henan Province targeting local agriculture activities to identify the major problems existing in the planting process and factors resulting in agricultural environmental pollution.

Time was limited, but the task was urgent. During a short two weeks of field investigation, Zhou and his colleagues finished the task to interview nearly 100 farmers in three villages on the use of chemical fertilizers and the agricultural production process. Although they encountered some people's incomprehension and non-cooperation besides extreme weather such as heavy rain, the firm belief in creating a better life for the people and Honliv's social responsibility to promote green agricultural development supported them. Based on Zhou's survey, 80% of farmers' households relied on growing crops or raising livestock for their economic income; 90% of farmers believed that sufficient chemical fertilizers and pesticides must be used to increase the production; 90% of farmers bought fertilizers with lower economic costs in the market, of which were almost phosphate fertilizers and nitrogen fertilizers, but they were not very clear with the precise measurement and the specific effects of these fertilizers; 90% of farmers had never been exposed to technology planting or technology breeding, and believed that farming was a skill handed down from generation to generation and did not require high technology; 90% of farmers did not understand the meaning of agricultural pollution, and did not think that the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, etc. would cause the environmental pollution.

The investigation team found that the agricultural environment pollution in Henan Province was prominent, especially the overuse of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, veterinary drugs, and agricultural film. The main reasons were summed up as focusing on the quantity of agriculture outcome and lack of technical knowledge of planting. Due to the desire to live a better life and change the poor conditions, farmers usually linked the expected high economic profit with the high output. Moreover, the lack of agricultural technical knowledge caused to be dependent on generation experience of planting, which usually resulted in the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The short-term profits through merely increasing the agricultural production neglected food quality and resulted in the negative impact of agricultural pollution on water, land, and even the whole eco-environment. The substantial effect of environmental pollution restricted the economic development and negatively affected the social stability. Thus, Zhou proposed that Honliv's agriculture project to be confirmed must benefit the environmental protection, improve local farmers' incomes, and simultaneously fulfill consumers' food safety demand. Agricultural development should neither sacrifice the ecological environment, nor affect the supply of agricultural products and farmers' income because of ecological protection.

Therefore, Zhou's team suggested the sustainability of agriculture as the focus of the specific project, and ensured the sustainable development of agriculture by rationally utilizing and maintaining natural resources and implementing technological and institutional reforms. Sustainable agriculture focused on the management, conservation, the sustainable use of natural resources, and the adjustment of farming systems and techniques, which fitted well with the needs of the previous survey and may provide solutions to the agricultural pollution reflected in the investigation report. On the one hand, sustainable agriculture projects maintained and rationally used land, water, animal, and plant resources. In the long run, if the whole society widely accepted sustainable agriculture to replace

the traditional agricultural methods, it could effectively prevent environmental degradation. On the other hand, with the improvement of people's living standards, people's demand for quality food quickly increased. Although "green food and organic food" were expensive, they still won consumers' trust in the market. Therefore, the sustainable agricultural projects were technically suitable and feasible and had high economic vitality to bring high profits to farmers.

The investigation report and the sustainable agriculture program proposal were highly recognized by the company's board. The sustainability was determined as the general direction of the Honliv agriculture project selection. Honliv was exploring the green and sustainable way of agricultural development and farmers. With the more profound learning on sustainable agriculture and green concepts, Honliv realized that actively promoting sustainable agricultural development would not only an enterprise's business objective, but also the social responsibility, toward the environmental laws and the compliance with environmental protection. Honliv was ready to shoulder the enterprise's responsibility of promoting sustainable agriculture, and following the internal needs of agricultural development of China. So, Qin was thinking what products were to be selected as entry points for the sustainable agriculture project?

Red Globe Grapes – Key to the Ecological Protection

In 1999, China's economy grew quickly, with the acceleration of the urbanization development process, people's educational chances, income levels, and life quality were also enhanced. At the same time, it had also improved residents' consumption toward a higher quality of life and a more healthy and balanced diet. As the leader of the Honliv, Qin had many years of business experience and was sensitive to the development of the economic trend, the government policies, and the science and technology. Since 1993, people's demand for fruit had been increasing consistently. More and more people were conscious that fruits' various vitamins and dietary fiber were beneficial for their health. Besides, fruits consumption represented people's pursuit of a high-quality diet and their different lifestyles. Although the price was relatively higher than traditional foods, it did not stop people's need for healthy food and the pursuit of high-quality life. This made Qin realized that fruit products would be a good option for the sustainable agricultural project, which could satisfy both consumers' healthy food demand and farmers' economic desires. Then, the team's next challenge was to choose a specific fruit as the representative of the specialty products.

Qin recommended Li Yonghong (subsequently named as Li) as the responsible person-in-charge for the task. Li was one of the earliest founding members of the Honliv, who strongly agreed with the sustainable development project. He was entrusted with the planning and selecting of the specialty fruit products, and designing the construction plan of the future ecological agriculture community. In the late 1990s, at the peak of foreign supermarket chains entering the Chinese market, Carrefour, Metro, Wal-Mart, and Lotus Flower scrambled into the retail market. As a new retail format, supermarkets provided customers with novelty open shelves, a one-stop shopping experience, and a complete range of products

at higher quality and lower prices than traditional markets, which had become the main channel for citizens to buy fruits. Therefore, Li took the supermarket as the key investigation places for consumers' fruits demand.

Li's survey lasted for almost 30 days, and nearly 100 supermarkets were included to conclude the first-hand data on people's demand for the fruit. Meanwhile, all team members were amazing at the earth-shaking changes that China's economic development and consumption upgrades brought to the residents' lives. Back in the 1980s, when China was at the beginning of reforming and opening up, only coastal cities had real fruit markets. There were occasional chances that farmers carried fruits grown by themselves into the city to sell on the street in inland cities. One pole, two baskets and hard-working farmers consisted of the original fruit shops, but the income from selling fruit can only barely make ends meet. However, now consumers' fruit consumption has developed from the pursuit of edible fruit to the goal of delicious and healthy ones. The fruit consumption of ordinary Chinese families was no longer the traditional "four old patterns" of apples, bananas, pears, and oranges. In addition to the seasonal fruits, there were many cross-season fruits with scientific grown and new fruit varieties introduced from foreign countries. Especially some new types of foreign-trained grapes were often sold out immediately when put on the shelves, which caused Li's significant interest. He decided to carefully investigate the well recognized and welcomed grapes to find the key to the sustainable agriculture in the next step.

After nearly a month, Li completed the investigation task, and gradually understood the general situation of China's fruit market, as well as the research and judgment of the development trend of the fruit market. Since China's reform, the grape planting industry had experienced two climaxes. In the early 1980s, a Jufeng grape fever swept through China's grape planting industry. Jufeng grapes were marked by the medium and large grains, which were introduced, planted, and developed in large quantities all over the country except Xinjiang and Zhangjiakou City, Hebei Province. In the early 1990s, the Tengren grapes were introduced in Zhejiang Province and soon received the intense welcome in the market. Similarly, the fruit grains of Tengren grapes were also substantial, the size of which were like table tennis, and its yield was significantly higher than Jufeng grapes. Tengren grapes soon caused a significant impact on the sensitive nerve of China's domestic grape industry, and soon spread to the whole country, forming the second climax of grape planting industry. The well recognized and welcomed grapes in the supermarkets were almost these two kinds of grapes.

Furthermore, Li found that both of the popular grapes had a common characteristic of the large fruit grains, which were in line with the cultural preference for big in Chinese tradition. Most Chinese people believed that big was equal to good, which was the most important reason for consumers' first impression of big grapes. Besides, Li had found another similarity between these two popular products, which was medium and early maturing products, and the Medium Maturing grape varieties accounted for more than 85% of the planting area of the market. This caused an imbalance in the grape planting structure in China, with the result of the single of grape varieties and the maturity cycle being too consistent. Meanwhile, the excessive concentration of the ripening period caused price competition