

# PRODUCT DECISION

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

A product can be defined as a collection of physical, service and symbolic attributes which yield satisfaction or benefits to a user or buyer. A product is a combination of physical attributes say, size and shape; and subjective attributes say image or "quality". A customer purchases on both dimensions. As cited earlier, an avocado pear is similar the world over in terms of physical characteristics, but once the label carmel, for example, is put on it, the product's physical properties are enhanced by the image carmel creates. In "postmodernisation" it is increasingly important that the product fulfills the image which the producer is wishing to project. This may involve organisations producing symbolic offerings represented by meaning laden products that chase stimulation-loving consumers who seek experience - producing situations. So, for example, selling mineral water may not be enough. It may have to be "Antarctic" in source, and flavoured. This opens up a wealth of new marketing opportunities for producers.

A product's physical properties are characterised the same the world over. They can be convenience or shopping goods or durables and nondurables; however, one can classify products according to their degree of potential for global marketing:

- I) Local products - seen as only suitable in one single market.
- II) International products - seen as having extension potential into other markets.
- III) Multinational products - products adapted to the perceived unique characteristics of national markets.
- IV) Global products - products designed to meet global segments.

Quality, method of operation or use and maintenance (if necessary) are catchwords in international marketing. A failure to maintain these will lead to consumer dissatisfaction. This is typified by agricultural machinery where the lack of spares and/or foreign exchange can lead to lengthy downtimes. It is becoming increasingly important to maintain quality products based on the ISO 9000 standard, as a prerequisite to export marketing.

Consumer beliefs or perceptions also affect the "world brand" concept. World brands are based on the same strategic principles, same positioning and same marketing mix but there may be changes in message or other image. World brands in agriculture are legion. In fertilizers, brands like Norsk Hydro are universal; in tractors, Massey Ferguson; in soups