

Chapter 2

The Past, Present, and Future of Sustainable Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goals have to be integrated into every aspect of modern society. Economic agents are transforming accordingly taking into consideration the economic, social, and environmental footprints of their activities. The marketing domain has devoted attention to sustainability issues for a long time. Organizations have applied social marketing, ethical and green marketing, as well as corporate social responsibility in their marketing strategies and programs. Sustainable marketing can center on sustainable communication, sustainable production and consumption, sustainable branding, and the promotion of sustainable behavior. The connection between marketing and sustainability can be contradictory as traditional marketing strategies induce overconsumption. Moreover, enhanced digitalization affects marketing and shapes the tools and strategies marketers are adopting. Digital transformation of marketing is expected to be based on sustainable development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable marketing, also known as *green marketing* or *environmental marketing*, is a concept that involves the development and promotion of products and services with the aim of reducing their environmental impact and promoting sustainability. The concept of sustainable marketing emerged in the

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1980s and 1990s, when environmental issues began to gain increased attention from both consumers and companies. Since then, sustainable marketing has become an increasingly important area of study and practice, as companies seek to respond to consumer demand for environmentally friendly products and services, and as consumers become more aware of the impact of their purchasing decisions on the environment.

Sustainable marketing is considered important for the next generations and for the future of the Earth because it addresses some of the most pressing environmental and social challenges facing the world today. Companies that adopt a sustainable marketing approach seek to promote environmental and social sustainability through their marketing activities, and to shape consumer behavior in ways that support sustainability.

One of the key reasons that sustainable marketing is considered important is because of the growing impact of human activities on the environment. Climate change, deforestation, pollution, and other environmental problems are having a significant impact on the health of the planet and on the well-being of future generations. In order to address these challenges, companies and consumers alike need to adopt more sustainable practices, and sustainable marketing can play an important role in promoting sustainability and shaping consumer behavior.

Another important reason that sustainable marketing is considered important is because of the growing awareness of the environmental impact of consumer behavior. As consumers become more conscious of the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions, they are increasingly seeking environmentally friendly products and services, and are making purchasing decisions based on environmental considerations. This shift in consumer behavior presents a significant opportunity for companies that adopt a sustainable marketing approach, as they can differentiate themselves from their competitors by promoting their environmental credentials, and by appealing to the growing number of consumers who are seeking environmentally friendly products and services.

An important contribution to the field of sustainable marketing was made by Kotler, who defined sustainable marketing as “the blending of marketing strategies and tactics with the principles of sustainability to create mutually satisfying exchange relationships and build long-term customer loyalty while maintaining the viability of natural systems” (Kotler et al., 2002).

In fact, according to Kotler, sustainable marketing involves a shift in focus from the traditional emphasis on product-centered marketing, to a more customer-centered and environmentally responsible approach. In a somewhat similar manner, some other authors have suggested that sustainable marketing requires a new type of marketing mix that includes elements such as sustainability communication, sustainability labeling, and sustainability education.

Over the last 30-40 years, there are studies that underlined the interaction between the economy and the environment. During this period there are identified different steps in developing the critical issues that are considered as main pillars for generating the sustainable marketing framework (Peattie, 2001).

Another useful contribution to the field was made by Elkington, who argued that sustainable marketing requires a new type of marketing that goes beyond the traditional “4 Ps” (product, price, promotion, and place) of marketing (Elkington, 2018). In fact, Elkington considered that sustainable marketing must also incorporate the “3 Ps” approach of people, planet, and profit.

This approach means not only is important to consider the economic and marketing aspects of a product or service, but also its social and environmental impacts. In this regard, Elkington has argued that sustainable marketing must be based on a “triple bottom line” approach, which considers the economic, social, and environmental impacts of marketing activities.

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