



Chapter 2

Reverse Logistics and Marketing as Tools for Sustainability


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ABSTRACT

The 2030 Agenda calls for a series of actions to increase prosperity while protecting the planet. Companies can drive sustainable development by fostering cooperation between actors in the business and social ecosystem under a new approach in which reverse logistics represents a marketing mix strategy with great potential to promote sustainability. Based on a documentary methodology, and through secondary exploratory research, the aim of this chapter was to investigate the importance of reverse logistics for the development of new circular business models and the joint potential of reverse logistics and marketing in the complex web of business activity. From the literature review, the importance of reverse logistics for the development of new business models, the necessary consumer involvement for the successful implementation of these new business models, and the potential of marketing to develop strategies focused on fostering a sustainable consumer response. Therefore, reverse logistics and marketing intersect in a common space: they both are tools to achieve sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The global consumption of resources has grown enormously in recent decades and, in a linear economic scenario, it has generated adverse consequences for the environment to the point of threatening people's way of life (Oberle et al., 2019).

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Overexploitation of natural resources, pollution and huge and growing amounts of waste as a result of a pattern of economic activity based on produce-use-throw away - typical of the linear economic model - have generated an unprecedented environmental crisis that leads to an economic and social crisis, by extreme that, in the medium term, the most important risks facing the world economy are related to climate change, both in terms of probability of occurrence and economic severity. (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Global warming is accelerating and countries, cities and people are threatened by natural catastrophes with the cruel irony that it is the nations with the lowest incomes and the lowest contributors to emissions that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate breakdown. Because, if we continue with the economic models and levels of extraction and consumption of resources, this is the scenario: climate collapse. And, with climate collapse, economic and social collapse.

Faced with this situation, a reaction was imposed and the concept of sustainability emerged. The concept “sustainable” has its origin in Germany, when in 1713 it was already coined by Hans Carl Von Carlowitz. Over the years, the concept of sustainability has been revised until reaching the proposal of the socio-economic report of the United Nations Organization “Our Common future”, in 1987, known as the “Brundtland Report” which, with its idea of sustainability, contributed international awareness of environmental degradation, the interrelationship between development and the environment, as well as the need to recognize that we live in a world in which social inequalities are a reality.

In the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development, held in 1992 and, given the need to maintain a balance to achieve a competitive market and generate benefits without jeopardizing the social and environmental future of the planet, a sustainability model based on three pillars: economic, social and environmental sustainability.

On September 25, 2015, within the framework of the United Nations, world leaders agreed on a set of global goals (SDGs) to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. A total of 17 goals, each of which has specific goals to be achieved in the next 15 years. These goals and objectives are ambitious; they have the potential to transform society and mobilize people and countries; integrate the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and go further by addressing inequality, new challenges and structural issues such as climate change, sustainable economic growth, productive capacity, peace and security, and effective institutions, responsible and inclusive at all levels; they adopt a dynamic approach to achieve gender equality and reflect in a balanced way the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development (New York, 2015. Chap. II of the Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations). It is a new global social contract to leave no one behind.

As Koffi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations from January 1, 1997 to December 31, 2006 and Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2001, already anticipated: “We have to choose between a global market driven only by calculations of short-term profits, and one with one face human. Between a world that condemns a quarter of the human race to hunger and critical poverty, and one that offers at least an opportunity for prosperity, in a healthy environment. Between one full of selfishness for all in which we ignore the fate of the losers, and a future in which the strong and successful accept their responsibilities, showing global vision and leadership” (Koffi Annan, 1999).

And, in a Resolution approved by the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 2015 (70/1): “Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda for sustainable development” establishing the post-2015 development agenda: ” Private entrepreneurship, investment and innovation are the great drivers of productivity, inclusive economic growth and job creation. (...) We urge all companies to use their

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