

Marketing and sustainability

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Marketing is viewed as being based on an exchange relationship between a business and its customers, where a business offers something of value, and customers purchase this product, which provides the business with the means to continue producing this item of value (Mascara et al. 2010, p. 277).

Where does sustainability fit into marketing? In the past, the discipline of marketing has been accused of stimulating unsustainable levels of consumption amongst consumers (Retie, Purcell & Riley 2012 p. 420).

Now with the impact of our overconsumption starting to take its toll on our earth, marketers must reassess their strategies and practices to accommodate the reality of limited resources and the environmental impact our consumption is having on the planet. In order to sustain our valuable resources for future generations, businesses need to re-evaluate their research and development strategies, production methods and financial and marketing practices (Kettle 2011, p. 132). This involves integrating social and environmental concepts into conventional marketing strategies (Appel & Bell 2010, p.). Consumer behavior In the chapter by Wells, et al, the relevance of consumer behavior in marketing is discussed and broken down into the "four A's" of sustainable consumer behavior, Awareness. Acceptance. Ability and Action. This addresses a method that can be used to encourage consumers to support and engage in sustainable behaviors (Mascara et al. 2010, p. 277). Awareness In order for a customer to buy a green product, they must be aware of the sustainability issues that are being addressed by the product. If you are not aware of a problem, how can you make changes to address it?

A study conducted by Whirlpool discovered that because its customers were not aware of what CFCs were, they refused to pay a premium for a CFC-free refrigerator (Kettle et al. 2010, p. 23). Although many consumers remain uninformed about the seriousness of sustainability issues, the number of people considering the environment and social issues when making a purchase is on the rise. A study in Norway in 2011 discovered that most participants were aware of the sustainability concept, which when compared to a similar study performed in 1995, showed an increase in the awareness of sustainability.

It is plausible that this could be due to increased media coverage on the issue and is an encouraging finding for sustainability marketing (Hands & Boom 2012, p. 679). Acceptance In order to want to solve a problem, you need to accept the problem as true and elevate. One factor influencing the acceptance of a particular behavior is the individual's level of concern about an issue (Celebrate & Gosh 2012, p. 128). Is climate change really an issue or is it just another far-fetched theory being hyped up? Companies are likely to disregard products promoting their efforts of reducing their impact on climate change.

Another factor that can affect a consumer's willingness to participate in sustainable behaviors is the social acceptability of that action. The social acceptability of sustainable behaviors as a whole is becoming less of an issue in recent times, as environmental consciousness has seen things like locally and organically grown produce become more mainstream (Sheet & Cissoids 2012, p. 77). Personal biases can also play a role in acceptance. Some consumers may believe that products made from recycled materials

may be of inferior quality and therefore their performance and reliability would be negatively affected (COED 2009, p. 6). Ability Ability refers to whether a person has the means in which to pursue the desired action. Products labeled as " organic", " biodegradable", " made from recycled eternal" or other similar green claims are generally priced higher than conventional products (Kettle et al, 2010 peg 405). Low income earners, students, pensioners and the unemployed may not be able to afford a premium on sustainable products and will buy the cheapest alternative conventional product.

Also, not all products on the market may have an available green alternative and therefore the consumer has no choice but to purchase a non-green product (Mascaras et al. 2010, p. 284). Greenmailing In the text, the issue of greenmailing was addressed and its impact on consumer purchase decisions and on the sustainability market. Greenshank can be described as " the practice of overemphasis a company's environmental credentials, often by misinforming the public or understating potentially harmful activities" (Doyle 2011).

The practice of greenmailing has led to consumers being more skeptical of products marketed as 'green' or 'environmentally friendly. This skepticism may result in consumers avoiding sustainable products for fear that the 'green' labeling may indicate an inferior product using promises of sustainable resources and production to increase its prices (Retie Purcell & Riley 2012, p. 422). One Study in Norway showed that labeling of products was considered the most indicative way to ensure the sustainability of the

product and that consumers tended to favor labels in which they were familiar.

As there are a large number of CEO and fair trade labels used in Norway, customers intending to purchase sustainable products may avoid perfectly good sustainable products due to the lack of familiarity of the label and therefore trust and confidence in the product (Hands & Boom 2012, p. 685). Convenience As stated in the text, convenience and green products are not generally two terms that go together, and there has often been a trade-off between convenience and sustainability.

Although rechargeable batteries are more environmentally friendly, it is a lot more convenient to just replace old used batteries with new ones and throw the old ones away. In a constantly moving, time poor world, convenience is highly valued by customers, and sustainable products that cannot match the convenience of its conventional rivals may be unsuccessful in the marketplace (Appetite & Bell 2010, p. 13). Communication When all is said and done, it all comes down to effective communication.

Communication is vital to make consumers aware of the development of products needs and be efficiently integrated into their life style (Appetite & Bell 2010, p. 13). Conclusion This article effectively examines the challenges presented to companies in the sustainable production and marketing of their products. The movement towards the use of renewable materials is clear, nevertheless, consumers may be reluctant to accept these products for a variety of reasons. By examining the issues confronted by businesses today

the chapter addresses the main concepts of consumer behavior ND the challenges for the future.