



# Impact of Sustainable Development Goals on Sustainable Marketing Practices

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The manuscript reflects on the impact of Sustainable development Goals on sustainable marketing practices of businesses. The study has examined the state of SDG's in India and identify the SDG's which require immediate attention. This study aims to bring together existing scenarios and to serve as a springboard for future research and applications.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The manuscript is designed and executed as a conceptual study exploring the current state and prospects for sustainable marketing in businesses which also fulfil the UN SDG 2030. The study synthesizes the concepts of positioning strategies in context to sustainable products.

**Findings:** The authors found that sustainable marketing has strong presence in businesses and has international presence yet they are facing various challenges. The authors also found that the state of few SDG's need to be given attention and requires the astute planning . The manuscript offers relevant information to businesses and marketers to improve on their international positioning strategies in sustainable practices and proposes avenues for future research.

**Originality/value:** The study outlines future development and positioning strategic plans that businesses may consider and reflect in their strategic plan. The study will provide companies with a new lease of life in the future.

**Keywords:** Sustainable, Businesses, Development, Marketing

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development and marketing practices refer to the integration of environmentally and socially responsible principles into marketing strategies and activities. It involves the promotion of products and services that are produced, distributed, and consumed in a manner that minimizes negative environmental and social impacts while maximizing positive contributions to society.

Instead of solely focusing on profit and sales, sustainable development and marketing practices prioritize long-term environmental and social well-being. This approach considers the entire life cycle of a product or service, from sourcing raw materials to disposal, and aims to reduce resource consumption, waste generation, and harmful emissions.

Sustainable marketing practices involve several key elements, including:

1. Green product development: Designing and producing eco-friendly products that have a minimal environmental footprint, such as using

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recycled materials, reducing packaging, and incorporating energy-efficient features.

2. Ethical sourcing: Ensuring that raw materials are obtained from suppliers who adhere to ethical and sustainable practices, such as fair trade, responsible mining, and sustainable forestry.
3. Green packaging and labelling: Using environmentally friendly materials for packaging, such as biodegradable or recyclable materials, and providing clear and accurate information about the product's environmental attributes.
4. Responsible advertising and promotion: Avoiding misleading or exaggerated claims about a product's environmental benefits and ensuring that marketing messages are truthful, transparent, and aligned with sustainable values.
5. Stakeholder engagement: Engaging with customers, employees, and other stakeholders to understand their sustainability concerns and preferences, and incorporating their feedback into marketing strategies and decision-making processes.
6. Social impact initiatives: Supporting social causes and initiatives through marketing activities, such as donating a portion of sales to charity or partnering with non-profit organizations to address social issues.

By adopting sustainable development and marketing practices, businesses can not only contribute to a more sustainable future but also enhance their brand reputation, attract environmentally conscious consumers, and differentiate themselves in the market. 73% of the world's population are living without access to comprehensive social protection. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are a bold move towards improving the quality of life of all of humanity, therefore bold ideas and innovate perspectives will be required. social protection has become a more popular approach to dealing with poverty and inequality.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Nguyen and Nguyen (2020) investigate the determinants of the disclosure of sustainable development information by enterprises. While Gale (2018) and Sabau (2020) have investigated various aspects concerning the political economy of sustainable development, there remain numerous unexplored political facets in relation to sustainable development. One such aspect that has received insufficient attention in existing research on sustainability and sustainable development is the analysis of how a government's priorities and political aspirations can impede endeavors towards achieving sustainability.

The study supported by the Queen Mary University of London and a group of partners from India and Europe had aimed to map and assess the trajectory of sustainable development in India through the lens of SDG implementation. The report is based on an analysis of SDGs implementation in India by focusing on three goals-Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2: Zero hunger; and Goal 5: Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. The selection of three SDGs was because poverty, food insecurity, and gender imbalance are visible in India.

This research paper examined studies conducted after 2000 concerning sustainable development and sustainability. The main findings of the study can be summarized as follows. Firstly, there has been a considerable amount of research conducted on sustainable development and sustainability in the period following 2000. Secondly, each region around the world has made certain advancements towards achieving significant levels of sustainable development. However, every region faces distinctive challenges that hinder the achievement of sustainable development goals, encompassing social, political, structural, institutional, and economic dimensions. Additionally, the review identified several areas that warrant future

research. These areas include the necessity for further investigation into the politics and political economy of sustainable development, as well as the requirement for more research on how the agenda of sustainability and sustainable development can address local issues within a country (Ozili, 2022).

The article establishes a plan for marketers to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their business frameworks (Anwar *et al.*, 2019). The Challenges of attaining SDGs in India are Defining indicators, financing SDGs, Monitoring and Ownership, Measuring progress. India has second largest population in the world. The steps were taken by India for the achievement of SDGs matter a lot to the world. If India succeeds in attaining the SDGs, a more extensive section of the world has achieved it. India need to develop effective methods for implementing, monitoring, and measuring the progress of SDGs (Mohandas, 2018).

The report on SDG progress report of Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation helps monitor the progress made by the country towards achieving SDGs to date. According to Giribabu *et al.* (2018), community-based participation in planning and development can provide massive impetus to sustainability initiatives at the national level. It is also recommended that the Government of India mandate compulsory education or courses on SDGs in all the schools and colleges, just as environmental education is mandatory by law 4 in India.

On the priority level, experts place SDGs 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10 as the ones requiring the most attention by the Government of India. On the other hand, they place a low priority on SDGs concerning no poverty – SDG 1, climate change – SDG 13, and global partnership – SDG 17 as India is already on track to achieve the global targets of these goals 2030 (Ahmad *et al.*, 2020). The paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge and recommends the key areas to be focused on achieving SDG1 in India (Singh, 2020).

While several Indian states showed progress across indicators in 2019, there are still five states that could not improve their score. There is also an alarming lack of progress in specific goals like SDG 5 – Gender equality, where all states barring Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir, all states score below 50. India also has the most flawed overall score in SDG 2 – Zero hunger, at just 35 out of 100. India has not yet achieved its targeted 100 scores in any of the goals and with the majority of the overall SDG scores hovering in the range of 50 to 75 (Bangera and Gandhi, 2021).

### **Gaps in Study**

The research gap indicates that there has been major deficiency in research in sustainable development goals that are significant for improving the marketing practices in businesses. The study taken in these SDG goals may also add to the existing literature and be valid for a country like India. The local issues on sustainability can be handled well if the sustainable development goals are meticulously planned.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The study examines the state of sustainable development goals in India. Further the paper attempts to explore impact of SDGs on the sustainable marketing practices. The focus of the research is to identify the sustainable development goals that require the high priority attention.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The paper has followed the conceptual study to explore the role of SDG on sustainable marketing practices from various secondary data sources. It has tried to synthesize and evaluate the papers based on their work on sustainable marketing practices.

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Sustainable marketing entails a strategic approach that highlights the positive ecological, governance, and

social aspects of a product or service. This strategy enables businesses to appeal to sustainability-conscious customers, minimize their environmental footprint, and align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study undertaken so far in the Indian scenario concerning SDGs indicators suggest that SDGs 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 10 are the ones that require the most attention from the Government of India. Sustainable marketing involves achieving a harmonious equilibrium between conducting business and implementing responsible marketing practices that prioritize the well-being of ecosystems.

The impact of marketing on the climate crisis can be evaluated at every stage of the product lifecycle and the consumer decision-making process. Unfortunately, many marketers neglect to incorporate sustainability into production, consumption, and disposal, leaving consumers with limited options to reduce their carbon footprint. Additionally, deceptive messages that merely greenwash and enable companies to evade accountability have the detrimental effect of desensitizing consumers and obscuring the harsh truth and reality.

Out of 17 SDGs, Affordable and clean energy, Decent work and economic growth., Industry, innovation, and infrastructure, Sustainable cities and communities, Responsible consumption and production, Climate action, Clean water and sanitation are some Sustainable development Goals that encourage the sustainable marketing practices.

Marketing carries a significant responsibility, and if not handled conscientiously, it can have detrimental effects. As custodians of culture, marketers hold the power to determine which products enter the market, which movies receive promotion, which advertisements are displayed, and which stories are shared. Behind every ad that perpetuates gender stereotypes, employs a racist mascot, delivers culturally offensive messages, or promotes disposable products, there is a marketer involved.

Marketers also bear responsibility for cultural erasure, as they often replace historically and culturally accurate events with narratives, stories, and characters that cater to and reinforce the dominant culture. Moreover, when prioritizing profits over the well-being of people and the planet, marketers contribute to widening societal inequalities and further propel consumer capitalism. Coca-Cola's recent action is in line with its ongoing commitment to sustainability as part of the World Without Waste initiative. This initiative sets a goal to ensure that all of Coca-Cola's packaging becomes recyclable by 2025. In line with this initiative, the company has undertaken various marketing endeavors, such as partnering with mobility company Lime. This partnership offers consumers who purchase a Coca-Cola Sip Size bottle and commit to recycling it a complimentary 10-minute ride on a Lime bicycle or electric scooter.

Unilever, the conglomerate behind well-known brands like Dove, Lipton, Axe, and others, has been actively leading significant environmental initiatives. With a commitment to sustainable development, Unilever aims to reduce its carbon emissions by 50% by the year 2030. This ambitious goal reflects their dedication to fostering sustainable growth. Apple has set a primary objective of minimizing carbon emissions and establishing partnerships with like-minded companies. In pursuit of this goal, they prioritize the use of aluminum, which emits lower levels of greenhouse gases compared to alternative materials.

A sustainable marketing practice encompasses several crucial elements, including fostering customer relationships, generating social and environmental value, and minimizing adverse effects. By adopting a comprehensive approach to marketing, businesses can cultivate enduring value that benefits both their own organization and society as a whole. Green events serve as a prime illustration of sustainable marketing practices that any business can adopt. Through the utilization of eco-friendly materials like LED lighting and locally sourced items, businesses can effectively

demonstrate their dedication to sustainability. Not only does this approach showcase their commitment, but it also helps to curtail the carbon emissions associated with the event.

Through the utilization of digital media, businesses can implement environmentally friendly campaigns that eliminate the need for printing, postage, and excessive energy consumption. Moreover, digital marketing campaigns offer the advantage of robust analytics, enabling businesses to gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of their efforts and make data-driven decisions. This not only reduces costs but also enhances the understanding of the impact and outcomes of their marketing endeavors. By integrating sustainability into their messaging, brands can effectively connect with socially conscious shoppers, thereby enhancing their corporate image in a positive manner. Apart from the branding benefits, emphasizing an ethical dimension through marketing messages facilitates the establishment of loyalty between businesses and consumers. This reputation-building process not only attracts a like-minded audience but also fosters enduring connections with customers.

Community involvement serves as a prime illustration of sustainable marketing, showcasing a company's dedication to both the environment and the communities it serves. The specific approaches to community involvement may vary depending on the nature of the business. This can encompass a range of activities, such as sponsoring environmental projects, raising awareness about green issues, participating in local clean-up initiatives, supporting sustainable agricultural practices, or making donations to organizations committed to sustainability. Through such actions, businesses actively contribute to the well-being of their communities and reinforce their commitment to sustainable practices.

Engagement initiatives within a business can involve the establishment of green committees to discuss and implement sustainable initiatives, organizing a designated vegetarian day each week, or

conducting educational workshops for employees to learn about energy conservation and proper recycling techniques. By actively involving staff in these endeavors, businesses cultivate a positive environment that encourages the growth and development of sustainability ideas. Such engagement not only fosters a sense of responsibility among employees but also paves the way for the flourishing of sustainable practices within the organization. Apple has made a firm commitment to achieving 100% carbon neutrality across its entire business, encompassing the supply chain and product life cycle, by the year 2030.

Dell has made a commitment to enhance recycling programs and expand the utilization of renewable energy across its business properties. These incremental changes hold significant potential to positively impact the environment and are likely to enhance consumers' perception of Dell. LEGO exemplifies a company that employs transparency as a key element in its sustainability marketing strategies. Recognizing that LEGO bricks, made of plastic, do not fully decompose and contribute to microplastic pollution, LEGO adopts an open and honest approach about its environmental impact. To tackle this issue, LEGO has unveiled a sustainability strategy that sets a target for sustainable sourcing of all materials by 2030. Through their transparent communication and commitment to sustainability, LEGO aims to address the environmental challenges associated with their products.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study provides the future implications of SDGs for marketing as a fundamental shift towards sustainable practices, meeting consumer demands, building competitive advantage, and fostering positive brand reputation. The industry and academia may Embrace SDGs as a framework for marketing strategies can create long-term value for businesses, society, and the environment.



## CONCLUSION

Overall, incorporating the SDGs into marketing strategies can lead to more sustainable business practices, enhanced brand reputation, and positive contributions to society and the environment. As sustainability and social responsibility become increasingly important to consumers, businesses will need to integrate SDGs into their marketing strategies to meet evolving consumer expectations. Brands that fail to do so may face challenges in attracting and retaining customers. Embracing sustainable marketing practices aligned with SDGs can provide businesses with a competitive edge. Brands that effectively communicate their commitment to sustainability and showcase tangible actions towards SDGs are more likely to resonate with consumers and gain a competitive advantage in the market. Incorporating SDGs into marketing efforts can improve brand reputation, as consumers appreciate and support brands that prioritize social and environmental issues. By actively promoting sustainable practices and positive societal impact, businesses can build trust, loyalty, and a positive brand image. In an increasingly crowded marketplace, the integration of SDGs into sustainable marketing practices can differentiate businesses from their competitors. Brands that genuinely prioritize sustainability and effectively communicate their efforts are likely to stand out, attracting conscious consumers who align with their values. With the rise of digital marketing, data and analytics play a crucial role in measuring and optimizing SDG-driven marketing efforts. Companies will need to leverage data to track progress, measure impact, and gain insights into consumer behavior and preferences related to sustainability.

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