



Marketing Trends to Face the Sustainability Challenge

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Summary

Sustainability issues are currently included in marketing studies and practices, and demonstrate the interdependence between the interests and needs of companies and society. This paper presents reflections about the marketing trends in order to face the sustainability challenge. The methodology is based on bibliographic researcher. Its structure reflects: the frameworks to search for sustainable development; the challenges of sustainability, business management, and marketing; a reflection about what do innovative companies do when faced with the challenge of sustainability. As some of the main conclusions we found that the adoption of sustainable positions allows reaching new markets, to expresses values, to contribute to the corporate transformation, and increases credibility in the long-term.

Keywords: Marketing, sustainable development, social marketing, green marketing, sustainable marketing.

Introduction

Historically, traditional business and marketing management, in general, focused on the topics of interest to the shareholders and business owners, and hardly ever on the real environment. However, management is contextualized in a society that has gradually changed from a market economy to a market society (Sandel, 2012). This reality has contributed to the increase of unjust situations and lack of sustainability.

Over time, the importance of stakeholders—such as consumers and employees—for decision-making and, above all, of the strategies for business positioning in the different markets are understood. In addition, the relationship between the companies and the third sector has changed from a confrontational situation to a business partnership through systematic steps. These include the following facts: (a) be responsible; (b) change the way of doing business; and (c) experience the co-creation of business models (Bruggman and Prahalad, 2007). For instance, large companies have a different way of thinking, since it combines financial with social logic to build a lasting success (Kanter, 2011). The search for sustainability transformed the competitive landscape of companies, which forced them to change the way of thinking about its products, technologies, processes and business models (Nidumolu, Prahalad, Rangaswani, 2010). This demanded to revise the business positions and practices in order to adapt to the new context.

In marketing, inputs would serve as resources to make decisions related to compound marketing management, brand management and market research. With the improvement of practices and changes in consumer behavior, managers will increasingly understand that not only market issues are relevant in order to have results, social and environmental issues are important too. Trade relations are a consequence of the search to satisfy the customer's needs and, therefore, the organizational interests. It is, therefore, essential to understand the reality of the global environment.

In a broader context, the challenge of sustainable development is set, in which all entities—government, society and businesses—are responsible for the balance among economic, social and environmental issues. As a result, this reality is mainly shown through more responsible management practices. If businesses analyze its social responsibility alternatives with same

frameworks guiding its business decisions, companies may discover that this can be a source of opportunities, innovation and competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Managers are not only doing it because they believe it is something important, but because the consumers, society, governments, media or activists increasingly require it. However, corporate responsibility efforts—especially Corporate Social Responsibility—tend to be counter-productive due to the disconnection with the business strategy or to not making the necessary changes for society in general (Porter and Kramer, 2011).

In terms of market and marketing, there are very important and fundamental changes in habits and behaviors that affect the consumption patterns, and the corporate and business attitudes. Although the competition among companies used to be based on prices and on the generic advantages of products, nowadays the competition and the criteria for selecting one company over another are based on elements related to people's well-being and their environment. Understanding well-being, in this new context, has a vast meaning. Feeling good implies maintaining the quality of life of people and their environment, as well as preserving the environment. Conscious consumers look for a different business profiles and products that contribute to maintain the sustainability. Their decisions consider different components of goods and services, which include economic, financial, social and environmental aspects. For instance, it is known that both environmental concern and health and changing habits are factors positively associated with the value given by the consumer to products, goods and services that are environmentally friendly and the companies that bring them to the market (Lira, 2018).

Thus, sustainability issues are currently included in marketing studies and practices, and demonstrate the interdependence between the interests and needs of companies and society. In

this context, the importance of social and environmental responsibility and the search for sustainability is to bring the actors closer in order to give them enough space to achieve their objectives. For marketing managers, the sustainability challenge includes asking questions that, once answered (or analyzed), allows making disruptive changes. Subsequently, the following questions can be considered: (a) why do companies should focus on sustainability?; (b) what are companies doing in regard to sustainable development issues?; (c) what makes innovative companies when looking for solutions to sustainability problems?, (d) Are there unmet customers' needs in this context?; (e) what are the opportunities in this context?

2. Frameworks to search for sustainable development

The discussions about sustainable development are not recent; these are increasing globally. In historical terms, the relevance of long-term development is a process of actions and events predominantly occurred in the last five decades.

In general, the public opinion has begun to change based on the influence of several events, such as: (1) The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972), or the Stockholm Conference, was the first event to address international environmental issues. The final objective was to find alternatives to raise awareness about the importance of improving the relationship with the environment. (2) The Brundtland Report (1987), also known as "Our Common Future", is a document that reaffirms the critical view about the prevailing development model. (3) The Earth Summit (1992), also known as Rio Summit, brought new ideas of economic growth that are less consumerist and more appropriate to the ecological balance were suggested in the conference. (4) The United Nations Conference on the Natural Development (2012), or Rio+20, had participants from the private sector, NGO's, governments and other groups. The addressed topics included, besides the alternatives for environmental

protection in an increasingly populated planet, the possibilities of poverty reduction and the promotion of social equity. (5) The Millennium Development Goals were initially agreed in 2000. Eight goals were to be met in the first fifteen years. In September 2015, the results and requirements were reassessed and reclassified in 17 integrated and indivisible objectives, bringing together the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

With the help of the United Nations, these were the most representative efforts to think of new possibilities to achieve a more sustainable reality. The consequence was mostly the increase of public attention about development issues. In parallel, the evolution of digital media and social media helped to raise awareness and to increase the educational level. Differing positions concerning the expected realities were more frequent. That is to say, the adoption of ethical and healthy positions ceased to be the exclusive responsibility of one individual; it became a responsibility shared by all governments, civil society, and companies.

3. The challenges of sustainability, business management, and marketing

As a reflection of these changes, the access to information and the opinions about social and environmental issues increased. In the recent context, as a result, the public increasingly expect from companies to adopt responsible positions and to assume their roles as change agents, either for attracting attention or for contributing to the improvement and maintenance of sustainability. The new relationship between companies and society helps to understand the consequences of their actions to discover new opportunities that benefit their environments and strengthen the competitive environment more effectively (Porter and Kramer, 2011). In the same way, the market has always depended on society even to overcome the most critical moments (Patel, 2010).

A more vigorous and robust society favors the expansion of businesses to the extent that the needs are met and the aspirations are achieved (Kamlot and Schmitt, 2016). As a result, companies that prioritize its interests without considering the well-being of society and the preservation of the environment tend to achieve an apparent and temporary success. Then, in the same way companies need suitable conditions for its operations, society also needs appropriate environments.

In the markets, the most significant change is the consumers' behavior. Consumers change their behavior due to the notion that sustainability—or the lack of it—affects the well-being. Quality has an expanded concept that includes the customers' expectations of companies and products throughout all stages of the life cycle. The conscious consumer understands that his or her consumption decisions often affect directly or indirectly the environment, since the production process until the disposal. Many accept the social and environmental quality costs and agree to pay an appropriate or fair price or to include new criteria for making purchasing decisions. This reality creates new market segments and products, rediscovers and develops productive processes, alternatives for communicating with consumers, distribution strategies, and decisions related to the business location.

Modern companies are more aware of seeing things as a whole when making marketing decisions. As a result, companies generate new technologies to keep track of this reality because they need to provide new opportunities and benefits for the people. In this context, the major management challenges are: making sure that the management is goal-oriented (relevant social and noble objectives); including the concepts of community and citizenship in the management

systems; expanding and exploiting diversity (Hamel, 2009). Sustainable development is part of the solution to provide opportunities in emerging market segments. The new practices increase the credibility in society and generate inequalities in the consumer market.

Executives are the guardians of the most powerful institutions of society (Prahalad, 2010). Managers are challenged to understand that being responsible is part of the solution, which includes changing processes and programs that might generate income and positive results for the companies. On the one hand, we have the opportunities, such as cost reduction or the creation of new markets. On the other hand, we have business survival issues, such as the preservation of the environment and the production conditions of raw materials. This situation has been the same for decades in the most developed countries and it is increasingly present in developing countries.

The opportunities to promote changes are diverse and involve several events, such as: making changes in production processes, breaking the stereotypes and paradigms— which today are no longer contributing to maintain sustainability—, offering more and better information that values the environment and society, and engaging and contributing to causes. The first step towards the new reality is to consider that traditional marketing, which disregards the social and environmental issues, no longer contributes to maintain business competitiveness in the long term.

The great challenge for business and marketing managers is to understand that today, and especially in the future, its permanence in the markets will depend on the adequacy of their practices to the current sustainable development reality. That is, the management should worry about

being ethical, just and responsible, but it must also look for sustainability. In marketing, several subjects are discussed, such as social marketing, green marketing and sustainable marketing. This is a greater challenge for companies in developing countries, because most of the time these are producers—for the internal market and export—and consumers simultaneously.

a) The social side of marketing or social marketing

Nowadays, knowledge-based competition no longer allows the false dichotomy related to the separation between economic and social objectives (Porter and Kramer, 2002). Social marketing aims to influence the consumer's behavior in order to make positive impacts for society. The concept of social marketing is similar to organizational resilience because the adaptation and change of behaviors, actions and attitudes are related to the need to adapt to certain unexpected situations (Kamlot, 2017).

In addition, there is a strong similarity between social marketing and social responsibility, since both perceptions require managers to consider the business performance, to give the same weights to income, consumer satisfaction and well-being of the society (Boone and Kurtz, 1999). The similarity between social marketing and social responsibility concepts is focused on a type of commitment that a company makes with the society (Zenone, 2006). Many companies include social responsibility actions to their businesses activities in order to make profits. Therefore, these actions are incorporated into marketing campaigns that relates their brands and products or services. In return, their brands are reinforced, the companies gain a good reputation, expand to new markets, and gain the customers loyalty (Oliveira, 2008).

The adoption of social marketing develops the ethical and transparent relationship with target markets and establishes business goals that are compatible with the development of society, respecting diversity and promoting the reduction of social inequalities. Prahalad and Hammond (2005) pointed out that improving the lives of people at the bottom of the pyramid (the poorest socio-economic group) is a noble effort, but it can be lucrative too. Moreover, the manager is responsible of understanding the cultures—their values, beliefs and myths—which are crucial to create empathy and social sensitivity. The greater the proximity between the company and the different audiences, the greater the potential for having successful strategies.

In commercial terms, the focus is on the so-called social products, which tend to be ideas, practices or tangible products (Kotler and Roberto, 1992). The ideas correspond to beliefs (the perception about something concrete, without assessment), attitudes (positive or negative ones, towards people, events, ideas or objects), and values (general ideas about what is right and wrong). The practices involve actions (unique activities) and behaviors (a standard action). The tangible products are tools to establish a social practice. Sometimes these are physical products or services included in a campaign with social purpose.

In large companies, social marketing practices gain more strength with the growing demand for companies and organizations to adopt corporate social responsibility practices. However, social marketing in developing countries has focused much more on products and services, while in developed countries has often focused on persuasive communications to change behaviors (Lefebvre, 2011). In daily life, the purpose of social marketing is to develop programs to motivate (or not) the acceptance of ideas or social behaviors (Vázquez, 2006). In addition, objecti-

ves provide information, stimulate beneficial actions to the society, modify harmful behaviors, and transform the values of society.

Social marketing is a result of adapting traditional marketing technologies to programs that influence the consumers' behaviors in order to improve the individual and collective well-being (Andreasen, 1994). It is the result of social actions and marketing activities that have the objective to benefit society without directly generating links with the brand or to sell more (Zenone, 2006).

The differences of this aspect of marketing are: change behaviors, raise awareness, provide resources, and recruit volunteers for specific actions (Kotler and Lee, 2005). The possibilities are the development and implementation of campaigns aimed to change behaviors in order to improve public health, safety, social inclusion and integration, the reduction of prejudice, gender equity, access to quality education, high quality of life, etc. However, the term is often misused to describe the promotion of multi-component interventions or communication campaigns (McDermott, Stead, and Hastings, 2005). In addition, this perspective must not be only perceived as a public relations tool or a means to inform critical social issues resulting from business practices, but also as the companies' obligations to act as corporate citizens and to consider the social problems in their business models (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2010).

Citizenship is relevant to the sustainability and sustainable consumption concepts (Frame and Newton, 2007). Social marketing focuses on issues related to behavioral changes for the well-being of society in the future; therefore, it has an impact in this context. One of the most evident links between marketing and sustainability is the way in which a growing number of

companies are emphasizing its commitment to sustainability in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors and to improve the brand and corporate reputation (Jones, Clarke-Hill and Comfort, 2008). However, in some markets—e.g., the Turkish market—there is a concern about moral issues in social marketing practices; many consumers believe that their practices must be highly regulated by the Government (Ayvaz and Torlak, 2016).

b) The green side of marketing or “green marketing”

Managers are increasingly taking into account the importance of researching the ecological effects of raw materials, production processes, logistics and distribution, and final disposal of the products. In terms of the use of natural resources, the challenge goes beyond a simple discussion about regulations. Being “green” is also a means to achieve competitiveness. Many businesses prioritize using financial resources to comply with the regulations, including those related to environment; however, companies should be looking for solutions to adapt to the relationship of resources versus productivity (Porter, 1995). The following environmental topics are critical management issues: 1. The development of products that have the minimum impact on the environment; 2. The projection of a high quality image that includes environmental sensitivity. Although it sounds like a recent topic, the search for alternative solutions has been an important issue for decades. Green Marketing reflects the extent to which society is concern about the importance of preserving the environment.

In general, companies are expected to have green marketing strategies due to four main causes: the costs of materials and energy continue to increase; the public pressure continues to

increase; “*triple-bottom line*” practices might increase the consumer’s demand; and the increasing antipathy of consumers toward globalization strengthens NGO activities in relation to the environmental performance (Cronin et al., 2010). The value of a company in the market is related to its long-term impacts, whether in the processes or products offered in the market. Quality is an image that is not separated from the generated impact. The brand must be managed considering the long-term objectives, the impact and its consequences, the profits, and the compatibility between communications and actions.

There are many environmentally friendly possibilities in products and services, e.g., organic productions and the responsible and efficient use of water and energy. In addition, there are five desirable benefits commonly related to green products: cost efficiency and effectiveness; health and safety; performance; symbolism and status; and convenience (Ottmann, Stafford, Hartman, 2006).

The development of products consider several concerns, such as the protection of the environment and the increase of the useful life of the product. Some of the solutions are: the use of productive processes that make the most of natural resources, such as energy, water, soil; the use of less packaging; recycle and reuse of materials; the adoption of transport systems; and the use of clean technologies (Richers, 1996). However, it is important to note that the ability to penetrate the markets is not only a consequence of offering “green” products, but also that also the ability to communicate the other benefits of environmentally correct products. When consumers perceive green and “non-green” benefits, the possibilities to buy these products increase (Ottmann, 1994). Consumers thus become followers of green markets, regardless of the environmen-

tal reasons. Communicating the benefits not only considers the objective benefits, but also the intangible results from experiences (e.g. flavors) and sensations (e.g. security).

c) Sustainable Marketing

Sustainable marketing, in contrast to traditional marketing, acts on the community. Sustainable marketing highlights the importance of ethics, social responsibility, the environment, people, and the planet in order to understand the market. While traditional marketing prioritizes the individual (consumers) and organizational (companies) objectives, sustainable marketing involves the generation of collective benefits. The combination of social marketing, green marketing, and critical marketing (Tadajewski, 2014) is aimed to regulate, control, and encourage innovation with a focus on sustainability. Marketing practices shall convey the company's strategic decision to consider equally relevant financial, social, and environmental objectives.

Sustainable Marketing looks for a solution in which products can be responsibly commercialized without having an adverse impact on sustainability. When Green Marketing and Social Marketing strategies are combined, this can be an effective “pathway” to encourage more sustainable marketing solutions (Gordon, Carrigan and Hastings, 2011).

Kemper and Ballantine (2019) suggest that sustainable marketing may be analyzed from three categories: 1. Auxiliary Sustainability Marketing, which focusses on the production of sustainable products; 2. Reformative Sustainability Marketing, which extends the auxiliary approach through the promotion of sustainable lifestyles and behavioural changes; 3. Transformative Sustainability Marketing, which further extends the auxiliary and reformative through the need for transformation of current institutions and norms, and critical reflection.

Sustainable thinking involves considering the availability of resources in the long term, the characteristics of the influence communities, and the consequences of consuming the products. As a result, the entire process requires several changes, such as: the selection of suppliers, staff training, the management of the products and brands, and the process of communication (more transparent). This means that the inclusion of sustainable development becomes constant in the companies seeking to position competitively in their markets. In organizational terms, studies associate sustainable practices with positive organizational performance, such as increased profit on product sold, quality improvement, reputation improvement, waste reduction, among other gains (Hepper, Hansen, Santos, 2016). However, the structural and contextual conditions for the promotion of sustainable consumption depend heavily on the articulation between companies, governments and civil society, considering both sides - consumption and production - to mitigate social and environmental externalities (de Oliveira, Gomez, Correia, 2018).

Thinking in a sustainable manner involves considering together the stages of the productive process, consumption and post-consumption, and the environment of the company. In terms of market positioning, sustainability can be a basic criterion for penetrating certain markets. By incorporating sustainable meanings and influencing processes of change in current consumption patterns, companies should seek to immerse themselves in leading sustainability-related subcultures to identify widespread sociocultural trends (de Oliveira, Correia, Gomez, 2016).

Another way for participating in some markets is to obtain certifications to validate the adequacy of business practices related to social and environmental standards, which are an alternative for companies to stand out or to penetrate in the “sustainability markets”. The potential of brand distinction depends on the consumers’ understanding about the contents that are validated for each of the certifications awarded. This is especially true when companies want to penetrate markets with consumers who are more conscious or to export to the developed countries. Usually these certifications are fundamental requirements for the acceptance of the products. Some examples of certifications, considered as a distinguishing criterion for companies around the world, are:

a) Organic: these products are produced, stored, processed, handled and sold in accordance with precise technical specifications (standards) to guarantee that the product has been produced in a way that does not harm the environment. Some examples are: food, cosmetics and clothing.

b) Fair trade: the principles are: creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers; transparency and accountability; fair trading practices; payment of a fair price; ensuring no child labor and forced labor; commitment to nondiscrimination, gender equity and women’s economic empowerment and freedom of association; ensuring good working conditions; providing capacity building; promoting fair trade; and respect for the environment. The most important examples of Fair Trade certified products are cocoa derivatives, coffee, and other foods.

c) B corporation: A certification assesses the financial interests, positive social and environmental impacts, and the high standards of performance and transparency of a company. The alignment of the purposes and business model to the governance (transparency), government officials, community (suppliers and distributors), and the environment is very important. The B corporation certified companies are in several business sectors, such as: food and beverages, services, communications, tourism, energy, finance, agriculture, construction, recycling, etc.

d) FSC: It guarantees that timber products come from well-managed forests without damaging native areas and endangered species. FSC certified companies use wood derivatives, i.e. paper, packages and construction material.

e) ISO 14001: It assesses the integrated management policy about the improvement of the environmental management system and community relations, and to the development of a prevention and continuous improvement culture. Companies that provide services and technologies are some of the ISO 14001 certified businesses.

In fact, certifications often contribute to the credibility and compliance to certain standards expected by consumers and society. A company can have one or more certifications, because some of them are complementary, such as the Organic and Fair Trade certifications. However, it is important to note that: 1. Multiple certifications are not always necessary. The level of rigorousness does not necessarily bring benefits or substantial changes in the processes and improvements; 2. The excess of information can confuse the public. The

strategic decision to innovate must be the result of the comparison among the objectives, expected results, and final benefits.

However, several organization adopt the greenwashing practices to promote themselves, as a result of the new demands of the market for ecologically correct or sustainable positions that require an adaptation of the organizations to be able to compete in this new competitive context (Andreoli, Crespo, Minciotti, 2017). If costumer identify misleading practices such as greewashing, it can damage the image and lower the sales volume, market share, financial results, and in extreme cases, this will continue until the product is withdrawn from the market (Braga Junior, Martínez, Correa, Moura-Leite and Dirceu Da Silva, 2019).

4. What do innovative companies do when faced with the challenge of sustainability?

It is important to consider that innovative or disruptive companies, in a market or sector in which the complexity and high costs are constant, manage to introduce new and sustainable solutions because of the simplicity, convenience, and accessibility (Christensen, Raynor, and McDonald, 2015). Sustainable Marketing managers are challenged to balance the economic, social and environmental factors, while working with actions aimed to: 1. The innovative culture, proactivity and leadership; 2. The consumer orientation and market positioning; 3. The creation of new alternatives and solutions; 4. Transparency and information.

4.1 Innovative culture, proactivity, and leadership

The first step to change is the creation of a corporate culture that respects the environment and society. Innovation must be introduced within the organization at all levels. The long-term objective shall involve the business model and strategy. It is a process of education, internalization of values, and adoption of proactive and leadership positions.

The perspective not only provides immediate actions, it also considers the efforts to maintain the behaviors that generate long-term benefits, and the consciousness that it will benefit more people in the future. Culture focuses on continuity, and not in short-termism. Everybody must commit to the change and the message.

The leadership and proactivity position is a reflection of the strategy and overall management and, consequently, of the marketing management. The work depends on the adequacy of available resources—people, technology, raw materials, money and time—, the objectives, and the marketing compound. In new companies, the process can be simpler, because it depends primarily on creating a sustainable culture. In existing companies, a strategic solution can be based on internal and external education for staff training processes, such as the introduction of new products and the repositioning of the brand image.

The culture of innovation and sustainability challenges enable businesses to become leaders who look for changes. Thus, these companies can position differently from the others and gain the loyalty of their audiences.

The culture of sustainability creates the image of a change agent and a contributor to the improvement of reality. The company's image is not only based on aesthetic aspects, but on human values. However, the culture of sustainability is essential to legitimize the actions.

4.2 The consumer orientation and market positioning

The consumer orientation and market positioning in Sustainable Marketing consist in focusing on the individual as a member of a community. The consumer is perceived as an active participant during the change process. In addition, marketing professionals aim to build relationships with the consumers, encourage their feedbacks, participation and assessments, which are relevant for developing management programs. Knowing the context, expectations and realities of consumers allows having new possibilities of action.

The commitment maximizes the collaborative capacity of users, customers, and their networks in order to create solutions based on the demand. It is also an opportunity to offer a new value proposal that creates products and services meeting the demand of emerging and/or uncovered markets, or to recreate products or services for consumers who are not satisfied with what is offered today. Moreover, knowing the consumers' experiences enhances the communication between the company and the public. This leads to a good interaction with the consumer and the use of resources—such as the storytelling—in a way that makes it easy for consumers to understand the message.

The approach to consumers and their beliefs increases the possibility to have behaviors that are consistent with the expectations (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard, 2000). The commit-

ment to the shared cause is often decisive for customer loyalty. At the same time, the rules of behaviors are learned by imitating the processes of reward and punishment of the societies (Engel et al., 2000). The trend is that the perception of different audiences about the generation of positive impacts will contribute, little by little, to the growth of specific market segments and to the acceptance of brands and products. That is to say, consumers who do not initially accept—or do not prioritize—the most sustainable products and services, often change their preferences as a result of learning and the access to education or information.

The following verbs are used during the process of change: minimize, reuse, educate, preserve, prevent, include, assess, donate, share, recycle, return, raise, rationalize, empathize, inform, respect, etc. The communication process is fundamental, even to provide credibility and legitimacy with consumers and different audiences. The proximity does not necessarily depend on high investments. It relies upon simple solutions and effective communication and education—both internal and external to the company.

The growing interest in sustainable development creates opportunities and strategic positioning in international markets that are in the process of changing, re-educating and maturing. Innovation in this context allows new competitors to penetrate the industries, and enables innovators to take the phase of those who choose to remain stagnant.

The adoption of new clean and social technologies, the adaptation of processes, the perception of the environment and the company's role, and business communications can be elements of a new and valuable market strategy to approach consumers and other stakeholders. Sustainable products are culturally supported; hence, it might cause major changes in the financial,

social and environmental results. The value added and communication efforts are factors that differentiate markets and provides the loyalty and organizational sustainability in the long term.

Sustainable Marketing has four components: objectives, strategies, processes and benefits. The company uses sustainable management principles to: (1) anticipate and meet the customer's demands through the effective integration of environmental intelligence with the operating and marketing systems; (2) apply systems of cost-effective, socially and environmentally responsible values; and (3) generate positive results in the long term in economic, social and environmental terms that are acceptable to the stakeholders (Mitchell, Wooliscroft, and Higham, 2010).

4.3 The creation of new alternatives and solutions

Innovation results from recognizing the need to accept new alternatives and solutions. It is an exercise of recognizing standards, rules, problems to be solved, and experimentation. The new ways consumers use the products, the adoption of new technologies (including social), simple changes (but necessary) in the processes, or making products and services more simple and accessible to a public that is usually a new population or audience that until then had unmet needs, can help to achieve new results.

New outcomes are obtained because of a new architecture for management and marketing; hence, consumers intend to understand sustainable development while working with new conceptual structures, while increasing flexibility to paradigms, processes and perspectives, while making the most of the imperfections or while changing the logic of the stories and speeches.

Changing the logic demands supplying products and innovative solutions, even though it is necessary to get out of the comfort zone and break the established order.

The challenge of sustainable development requires looking into the future with a long-term perspective in order to recognize the environmental context, the latent needs, and the opportunities for change. There is no way to have a healthy business in a sick society and territory, i.e., there is no sustainable business in an unsustainable reality in the long term. It is possible to create new markets and segments that still have consumers with unmet needs.

Companies should unite the market forces—competition, suppliers, consumers, products, and strategies—and adapt their products to the new perception of quality that involves social and environmental issues. The commitment to causes is a great opportunity to contribute. However, a legitimate strategy is taken as something that is created and not as a form to sell or expand the visibility of the brand. That is, corporate values should approach the relations among behaviors, the contributions to social or environmental issues, and the brand.

The introduction of new products is a critical component, since the ability to introduce new products effectively is the capability to change the way in which society is organized, influencing directly the consumer's behavior (Engel et al., 2000). New products, therefore, prove to be the vital force for many companies that enhance the market leadership and business profitability. These new products may even represent the start of a new company. Business managers can meet the sustainable consumers' demands while their attitudes and habits are still forming, increasing the possibilities of obtaining more benefits (Ottmann, 1994). Consumers' attitudes have feelings in relation to the brand that influence the corporate image and reputation. The organiza-

tional objectives must firmly establish a good environmental by being proactive and consistent with the global needs.

In terms of communication, which is an essential element for consolidating the marketing activities, the central points are: communication and dialog based on the business processes and the information generated by consumers; use of digital platforms and social networks to have the support of public opinion; and the transparency of information. Moreover, considering that, the process of change is holistic and dependent on other actors—such as the government and society—, and providing information to the markets is part of the necessary work in order to analyze and use the necessary knowledge.

4.4 Transparency and information

Nowadays, information is a key element that increases the value of products and services for consumers (Engel et al., 2000). Companies provide information to consumers and society and establish transparent. These are no longer favors; these are mandatory criteria to stay in the markets. However, the lack of information and transparency—or even when the supply does not match the reality—can cause undesirable losses to businesses.

The credibility affects the consumer's perception about the brand personality, which is a consequence of the competitive positioning strategy (Schultz, 1994). The brand personality concept in sustainable marketing is adapted to the perceptions, ideologies and behaviors of different audiences. The higher the consumer's interest about a brand, the greater the probability of considering the product. Generating and maintaining the interest are challenges that require dedica-

tion and creativity. The company that uses sustainable marketing, or any other responsible and ethical practice, must be perceived as a leader and change agent that encourages people to think in an uncertain and feasible future.

Communication processes are essential if companies want consumers to have specific information. Consumers can only make the most of the information if it can be used to understand and improve their purchase decisions (Quelch and Jocz, 2007). Given population's general lack of knowledge of environmental and social issues, companies and other industry sectors have to provide information about the consequences of consuming certain products and services (Belz, Peattie and Gali, 2013).

In addition, when providing information to consumers, businesses have the opportunity to provide arguments that support the purchase decision, promote inclusive actions for “unmet” customer’s needs, disseminate the brand ethics, evaluate local aspects such as culture and interculturalism, and inform the consequences of consumption for society and the environment. The central point of communication and information is the establishment and maintenance of the company’s credibility.

To build trust, companies must consider from the product advertising to the packaging, including the appearance, the wording, and entrepreneurial attitude (Schultz, 1994) towards the environment. The reliability can be increased by obtaining trustworthy certifications that allow the spontaneous development and sharing of information. Companies need to deliver clear and honest messages about what the organization really care about, and how the environmental (Ottman, 1994) and social issues are integrated in the products and processes. It is important to note, however, that not all companies do this legitimately because it allows them to obtain posi-

tive results for a period of time. Nevertheless, once consumers perceive the incompatibility between discourses and practices, the results are usually devastating.

It is essential to recognize that companies are also part of the environmental preservation process and social transformation; therefore, organizations are publicly responsible for the actions that affect its performance. The concept of quality is extended and complex. The perception of quality is a factor that increases the consumer loyalty because of the ideologies and actions.

5. Conclusions

The main trend of marketing in the face of sustainability is to understand that the companies' success is also a consequence of: 1. The existence of healthy and inclusive societies in terms of education, health and equitable opportunities; 2. The preserved environments. The adoption of sustainable positions not only allows reaching new markets, it also expresses values, contributes to the corporate transformation, and increases credibility in a competitive way in the long-term.

To rely on values, think differently, propose new ideas, take risks, and to reconstruct the management and its environment according to the new reality is what makes innovative companies when looking for solutions to sustainability problems. Organizations need to stop predominantly thinking on the market and consider the citizens (Patel, 2010). Innovation, in the context of sustainable marketing management, consists in, first, changing the perceptions of managers, consumers, suppliers, and society. Second, it consists in generating positive social and environmental impacts that go beyond the conventional techniques of management.

Likewise, Sustainable Marketing Management is part of a long-term strategic program that includes consumer orientation and sustainability issues. It is a holistic and interdependent process that balances the economic, social and environmental dimensions towards welfare in the present and future. So, companies should be innovative not because of the difficulty of the solutions, since these can be simple, accessible and consistent with social technologies. The focus should be in the innovative actions and its potential, which often contributes to transform markets—encouraging new behaviors—and the society, seeking its welfare and prosperity.

The opportunities in this context are the most different. There are several consumer segments with unmet needs and these are excluded from the labor market. In addition, companies have to be proactive, offer a new value proposal, and include sustainability and consumers as a part of the business. The preservation of the environment and the generation of fair social conditions are not trending topics; however, these are concerns that will increasingly dominate the corporate environments. This is common in developed countries, while in developing countries this tends to be a similar reality. Managers should wisely be ahead of their time.

In terms of marketing management, there are different possibilities to achieve better and more sustainable results, such as: 1. The adoption of distribution alternatives that require less energy; 2. The development of products that respect the cultural and environmental conditions of the influence areas; 3. Hire workers on fair conditions during the whole production and trade process; 4. Fix fair prices that are coherent with the producers' reality; 5. The provision of adequate and transparent information; 6. Promote ethical and responsible values and actions in business practices; 7. Understand that transformation is a shared responsibility among society, governments and businesses.

Finally, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2010, p. 122) in “*World of Consumption: ethics of the individual in the global village*” reflects that: “The question is not how to reverse the course of history, but how to combat the pollution that is dragged in form of human suffering and to channel the flow in order to have a more equitable distribution of the benefits”.

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