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**Strategic Marketing for Sustainable Development: Promoting Environmental
Responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Matthew Kiptoo



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Corporate Social Responsibility**



Matthew Kiptoo
Kenyatta University

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to examine the Strategic Marketing for Sustainable Development: Promoting Environmental Responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study found that strategic marketing plays a crucial role in promoting environmental responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within organizations. The studies reviewed highlight the effectiveness of various marketing initiatives, such as green marketing strategies, cause-related marketing campaigns, and integrated communication approaches, in fostering positive consumer perceptions, enhancing brand reputation, and driving sustainable business practices. By prioritizing credible and transparent communication about CSR initiatives, businesses can strengthen stakeholder relationships, build trust, and differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Stakeholder Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory & Diffusion of Innovation Theory may be used to anchor future studies on Strategic Marketing for Sustainable Development: Promoting Environmental Responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) that incorporates sustainability messages across all touchpoints is essential for promoting environmental responsibility and CSR effectively. Organizations should ensure that their communication strategies are consistent, transparent, and aligned with their sustainability goals. By integrating sustainability messages into marketing campaigns, product packaging, corporate websites, and social media channels, businesses can reinforce their commitment to sustainability and build trust with consumers. Businesses should actively engage in advocacy efforts to promote supportive policy frameworks that incentivize and reward sustainable practices. By collaborating with policymakers, industry associations, and non-governmental organizations, organizations can influence the development of policies that facilitate the transition towards a more sustainable economy.

Keywords: *Strategic Marketing, Sustainable Development, Environmental Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility*

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INTRODUCTION

In developed economies like the USA and the UK, there has been a growing emphasis on environmental responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among businesses. According to a study by Nielsen, 66% of consumers in the United States and 55% in the United Kingdom are willing to pay extra for products and services from companies committed to positive social and environmental impact (Nielsen, 2019). One example of a company demonstrating environmental responsibility and CSR in the USA is Patagonia. The outdoor apparel retailer is renowned for its commitment to sustainability, with initiatives such as using recycled materials, reducing water consumption, and advocating for environmental causes. Patagonia's annual donations to grassroots environmental organizations and transparent reporting on its environmental footprint showcase its dedication to CSR (Mont, 2017).

Similarly, in Japan, Toyota stands out as a prime example of a company prioritizing environmental responsibility and CSR. Toyota has made significant investments in hybrid and electric vehicle technology, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable transportation. In addition to its environmental efforts, Toyota is actively involved in community engagement and philanthropy, supporting initiatives in education, healthcare, and disaster relief both domestically and globally. Through its Toyota Environmental Challenge 2050 and corporate citizenship activities, Toyota demonstrates its commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).

Turning to developing economies, countries like Brazil and China are increasingly recognizing the importance of environmental responsibility and CSR (Jiang & Zhang, 2018). In Brazil, the Forest Code, which mandates conservation measures for landowners, has been enforced more rigorously in recent years, reflecting a growing awareness of the need for environmental protection (Brazilian Forest Code). Additionally, Chinese companies are starting to embrace CSR practices, the adoption of CSR reporting by major Chinese corporations as evidence of this shift towards greater social responsibility

In developing economies, various countries across different continents are actively engaging in efforts to promote environmental responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). For example, in India, the government has introduced the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates companies meeting certain financial thresholds to allocate a portion of their profits towards CSR activities (Companies Act, 2013). This legislative measure has prompted Indian companies to invest in initiatives related to education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, India). Furthermore, in Mexico, companies are increasingly adopting sustainable practices in response to consumer demand and regulatory pressures. García-Santillán, (2018) highlighted the efforts of Mexican firms in implementing eco-efficient strategies and integrating CSR principles into their operations (García-Santillán, 2018).

In another part of the world, in Nigeria, the government has established the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) to enforce environmental regulations and promote sustainable development (NESREA). Nigerian businesses are gradually recognizing the importance of CSR in mitigating environmental risks and contributing to social welfare (Anyanwu, 2019). Additionally, in Indonesia, companies are increasingly investing in renewable energy projects and adopting sustainable business practices to address environmental challenges such as deforestation and pollution (Indonesian

Renewable Energy Initiatives). A study published by Sucahyo (2017) highlighted the role of Indonesian corporations in promoting CSR and sustainable development.

In Sub-Saharan economies such as Kenya and South Africa, there is a burgeoning interest in environmental responsibility and CSR (Ondari-Okemwa & Njanja, 2016). For instance, in Kenya, the government has introduced incentives for renewable energy projects to promote sustainable development, while in South Africa, companies are increasingly investing in community development programs as part of their CSR initiatives (Kenya Renewable Energy Incentives; South African CSR Initiatives). The growing importance of CSR in Sub-Saharan Africa, noting a gradual shift towards more socially and environmentally responsible business practices

In Kenya, there is a growing recognition of the importance of CSR in driving sustainable development and addressing social challenges. The Kenyan government has enacted laws such as the Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA), which sets out regulations for environmental conservation and management (Republic of Kenya, 1999). Kenyan businesses are investing in CSR activities such as education programs, healthcare initiatives, and environmental conservation projects to fulfill their social responsibilities and enhance their reputation (Maina et al., 2019). Furthermore, in Ghana, companies are increasingly integrating CSR into their business operations to promote environmental sustainability and social welfare. The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre Act provides incentives for companies that engage in CSR activities, encouraging them to contribute to the country's development goals (Ghana Investment Promotion Centre Act, 2013). Research published in the African Journal of Economic and Management Studies in 2017 highlighted the positive impact of CSR on business performance and social development in Ghana (Addae-Korankye & Owusu-Ansah, 2017).

Implementing strategic marketing initiatives involves the systematic execution of plans aimed at achieving marketing objectives and enhancing organizational performance. One key implementation strategy is the adoption of green marketing practices, which involve promoting environmentally friendly products and practices. By incorporating environmental responsibility into marketing strategies, organizations can appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and differentiate themselves in the market (Polonsky, 2016). For example, companies may develop products with eco-friendly attributes, such as biodegradable packaging or energy-efficient features, to align with consumer preferences for sustainable products (Kotler, 2020).

Another implementation approach is the integration of cause-related marketing campaigns, where companies align with social or environmental causes to drive positive change while promoting their brand. Through cause-related marketing, organizations demonstrate their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by supporting initiatives such as environmental conservation, community development, or humanitarian aid (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Such initiatives not only contribute to societal welfare but also enhance brand reputation and consumer loyalty (Mohr, 2001). For instance, companies may donate a portion of their sales revenue to environmental organizations or launch campaigns to raise awareness about pressing social issues, thereby fostering goodwill and trust among consumers (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

Statement of Problem

In today's globalized and increasingly environmentally conscious marketplace, businesses face the challenge of aligning their strategic marketing efforts with sustainable development goals to promote environmental responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) effectively. While there is growing recognition of the importance of sustainability in business practices, there remains a gap in understanding how strategic marketing initiatives can be optimally leveraged to drive environmental and social impact while also achieving business objectives. Recent research underscores the need for businesses to integrate sustainability principles into their marketing strategies to address pressing environmental issues and societal concerns (Tantalo & Priem, 2016). However, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific strategies and tactics that companies can employ to navigate this complex landscape and effectively communicate their commitment to sustainability to consumers (Dangelico & Pujari, 2010).

Furthermore, as consumers become increasingly discerning and socially conscious, there is a growing demand for transparency and authenticity in corporate sustainability efforts (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Businesses must navigate the challenge of balancing profit motives with genuine environmental and social impact, avoiding accusations of greenwashing or token CSR initiatives (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Additionally, the emergence of digital marketing platforms and social media channels has transformed the way businesses interact with consumers, presenting both opportunities and challenges in promoting sustainability messages effectively (Hollebeek, 2019). Therefore, there is a pressing need for research that explores how strategic marketing can be harnessed as a tool for sustainable development, addressing issues of environmental responsibility and CSR in a way that resonates with consumers and drives meaningful change.

Theoretical Review

Stakeholder Theory

Originated by R. Edward Freeman in the 1980s, Stakeholder Theory suggests that businesses should consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, in their decision-making processes. This theory posits that by actively engaging with stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and communities, organizations can create long-term value and sustainable competitive advantage (Freeman, 1984). In the context of strategic marketing for sustainable development, Stakeholder Theory is relevant as it emphasizes the importance of understanding and responding to the expectations and concerns of diverse stakeholders, including those advocating for environmental responsibility and CSR.

Relationship Marketing Theory

Relationship Marketing Theory, developed by Berry, Gronroos, and Gummesson in the 1980s, emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining long-term relationships with customers based on trust, mutual respect, and shared value creation. This theory suggests that by cultivating strong relationships with customers, organizations can enhance customer loyalty, satisfaction, and lifetime value (Berry, 1983). In the context of sustainable development, Relationship Marketing Theory is relevant as it highlights the role of strategic marketing initiatives in fostering meaningful connections with environmentally conscious consumers and promoting CSR activities that resonate with their values and preferences.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Originated by Everett Rogers in the 1960s, Diffusion of Innovation Theory explains how new ideas, products, or practices spread through a population over time. This theory identifies key factors influencing the adoption and diffusion of innovations, including the characteristics of the innovation itself, communication channels, social networks, and the perceived benefits and barriers to adoption (Rogers, 1962). In the context of strategic marketing for sustainable development, Diffusion of Innovation Theory is relevant as it provides insights into how environmentally responsible practices and CSR initiatives can be effectively communicated and adopted by consumers, businesses, and society at large.

Empirical Review

Jansson (2018) examined the effectiveness of green marketing strategies in promoting environmental responsibility and CSR. Through a meta-analysis of existing empirical studies, it was found that green marketing strategies positively influenced consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty, particularly among environmentally conscious consumers. The study recommended that businesses prioritize the implementation of credible and transparent green marketing initiatives to enhance their environmental reputation and attract environmentally conscious consumers.

Sen (2017) investigated the relationship between CSR initiatives and brand performance over time. Through longitudinal analysis, the study revealed that companies that consistently engaged in CSR activities experienced long-term improvements in brand reputation, customer loyalty, and financial performance. The findings suggested that organizations should adopt a strategic approach to CSR aligned with their core values and business objectives to maximize the positive impact on brand performance.

D'Souza (2016) assessed the effectiveness of cause-related marketing campaigns in promoting environmental sustainability across different industries. Findings indicated that cause-related marketing campaigns supporting environmental causes positively influenced consumer perceptions of brand authenticity and increased purchase intentions, especially among younger demographics. The study recommended leveraging cause-related marketing as a strategic tool to engage consumers in environmental sustainability efforts and differentiate brands in the marketplace.

Etzion & Ferraro (2016) identified effective communication strategies for enhancing perceptions of CSR initiatives among stakeholders. Through qualitative analysis, the study highlighted that transparent, authentic, and engaging communication about CSR initiatives fostered positive perceptions among stakeholders and strengthened brand reputation. Recommendations included prioritizing clear and consistent communication about CSR activities across various channels.

Magnusson (2015) examined the influence of eco-labeling on consumer purchase behavior across different cultural contexts. Results revealed that eco-labeling positively influenced consumer perceptions of product quality, trustworthiness, and environmental impact, with variations observed across cultural groups. The study recommended investing in eco-labeling initiatives and ensuring clear and credible communication to leverage consumer preferences for environmentally responsible products.

Peattie & Belz (2010) explored best practices and future directions for integrating sustainability messages into marketing communications. Through literature review and case studies analysis,

the study emphasized that integrated marketing communications emphasizing environmental responsibility and CSR contribute to brand differentiation, consumer engagement, and long-term business success. Recommendations included adopting a holistic approach to marketing communications that integrates sustainability messages across all touchpoints.

Chen & Chang (2019) investigated the impact of green advertising on consumer perception and behavior. Through an experimental study manipulating green advertising messages, it was found that such messages positively influenced consumer perceptions of brand trustworthiness, product quality, and purchase intentions, particularly when aligned with authentic CSR initiatives. The study recommended designing green advertising campaigns that are informative, credible, and emotionally engaging to effectively communicate environmental responsibility and drive consumer action

Yoon & Osland (2017) examined how consumers perceive CSR initiatives across different cultural contexts. Through surveys and focus groups in multiple countries, the study found that cultural values significantly influenced consumer perceptions of CSR, with variations in the importance placed on different CSR dimensions such as environmental responsibility and philanthropy. The findings suggested that companies should tailor their CSR initiatives to align with cultural values to effectively resonate with consumers and enhance brand reputation.

Trapp (2018) investigated the influence of social media platforms on the communication of CSR initiatives by companies. Through content analysis of social media posts by various organizations, the study revealed that social media served as a powerful tool for disseminating CSR-related content and engaging stakeholders. Recommendations included leveraging social media platforms to amplify CSR messages, foster dialogue with consumers, and showcase the organization's commitment to sustainability.

Branco & Delgado (2016) synthesized empirical studies to examine the relationship between corporate environmental responsibility (CER) and financial performance. The meta-analysis revealed a positive but moderate association between CER and financial performance indicators such as profitability and stock returns. The findings suggested that integrating environmental responsibility into business strategies can contribute to long-term financial success, although the magnitude of the effect may vary across industries and contexts.

Seuring & Müller (2018) investigated the impact of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices on firm performance over time. Through longitudinal analysis of data from multiple companies, the study found that firms implementing SSCM practices experienced improvements in operational efficiency, cost reduction, and customer satisfaction. Recommendations included adopting a proactive approach to integrate sustainability principles into supply chain operations to achieve competitive advantage and long-term profitability.

Auger (2016) explored the relationship between corporate environmental performance (CEP) and consumer brand attitudes. Through a field study involving surveys and brand evaluations, it was found that companies with strong CEP were perceived more favorably by consumers, leading to enhanced brand attitudes and purchase intentions. The study underscored the importance of transparent communication about environmental initiatives to build trust and credibility with consumers.

Iglesias (2018) examined the unique opportunities and challenges of implementing strategic marketing for sustainable development in emerging markets. Through case studies and interviews with business leaders, the study identified factors such as regulatory environment, infrastructure limitations, and cultural norms that influence the adoption of sustainable

marketing practices in emerging economies. Recommendations included leveraging local partnerships, innovative marketing strategies, and government incentives to overcome barriers and drive sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gap: While the studies provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of various strategic marketing initiatives for promoting environmental responsibility and CSR, there is a conceptual gap in the understanding of how these initiatives are perceived and interpreted by different stakeholders. Specifically, there is a need for research that delves deeper into the underlying cognitive processes and psychological mechanisms influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors towards green marketing, CSR activities, and sustainability messages. Understanding the cognitive processes involved in consumer decision-making can provide marketers with valuable insights into designing more effective communication strategies and interventions that resonate with diverse audiences (Etzion & Ferraro, 2016; Chen & Chang, 2019).

Contextual Gap: Despite the extensive research on strategic marketing for sustainable development in developed economies, there is a contextual gap in the literature regarding the applicability and effectiveness of these strategies in emerging markets. Emerging markets present unique socio-cultural, economic, and institutional contexts that may influence the adoption and implementation of green marketing and CSR initiatives (Iglesias et al., 2018). Further research is needed to explore how contextual factors such as cultural values, regulatory environments, and infrastructure limitations shape consumer perceptions and organizational practices related to sustainability in emerging economies.

Geographical Gap: The majority of the studies cited focus on developed economies, particularly North America and Europe, with limited representation from other regions such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This geographical gap limits the generalizability of findings and overlooks the diverse socio-cultural contexts and business practices prevalent in different parts of the world (Yoon & Osland, 2017; Trapp et al., 2018). There is a need for more research conducted in diverse geographical contexts to capture the nuances and complexities of strategic marketing for sustainable development across various regions and cultures. Such research can provide valuable insights into region-specific challenges and opportunities for promoting environmental responsibility and CSR on a global scale.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, strategic marketing plays a crucial role in promoting environmental responsibility and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within organizations. The studies reviewed highlight the effectiveness of various marketing initiatives, such as green marketing strategies, cause-related marketing campaigns, and integrated communication approaches, in fostering positive consumer perceptions, enhancing brand reputation, and driving sustainable

business practices. By prioritizing credible and transparent communication about CSR initiatives, businesses can strengthen stakeholder relationships, build trust, and differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

Moreover, while the literature predominantly focuses on developed economies, there is a growing recognition of the need to explore the applicability and effectiveness of these strategies in emerging markets. Understanding the contextual nuances and cultural dynamics of different regions is essential for designing targeted marketing interventions that resonate with diverse audiences and address region-specific challenges.

Overall, strategic marketing for sustainable development holds immense potential for businesses to align profit motives with environmental and social impact, driving positive change and contributing to long-term business success. By embracing sustainability as a core tenet of their marketing strategies, organizations can not only enhance their brand image and financial performance but also play a significant role in advancing environmental stewardship and social welfare on a global scale.

Recommendations

Theory

Enhance Stakeholder Engagement: Organizations should prioritize stakeholder engagement as a fundamental aspect of strategic marketing for sustainable development. By actively involving stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and communities, in the development and implementation of sustainability initiatives, businesses can foster a sense of ownership and commitment, leading to more impactful outcomes. This approach contributes to theory by advancing the understanding of stakeholder theory in the context of strategic marketing, emphasizing the importance of co-creation and collaboration in driving sustainable practices.

Practice

Adopt Integrated Marketing Communication: Integrated marketing communication (IMC) that incorporates sustainability messages across all touchpoints is essential for promoting environmental responsibility and CSR effectively. Organizations should ensure that their communication strategies are consistent, transparent, and aligned with their sustainability goals. By integrating sustainability messages into marketing campaigns, product packaging, corporate websites, and social media channels, businesses can reinforce their commitment to sustainability and build trust with consumers. This recommendation contributes to practice by providing actionable strategies for organizations to communicate their sustainability efforts effectively and differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

Policy

Advocate for Policy Support: Businesses should actively engage in advocacy efforts to promote supportive policy frameworks that incentivize and reward sustainable practices. By collaborating with policymakers, industry associations, and non-governmental organizations, organizations can influence the development of policies that facilitate the transition towards a more sustainable economy. This advocacy role contributes to policy by highlighting the importance of regulatory mechanisms in driving sustainable development and fostering a conducive environment for businesses to innovate and invest in sustainable solutions.

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