

The Impact of Sustainable Development on Marketing Activities of Companies

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Abstract: The article indicates the impact of sustainable development on the marketing activities of companies. The essence and importance of sustainable development has been explained. It presents the triangle of economic objectives of sustainable development. The further part of the article presents the influence of sustainable development on the companies marketing areas. It also presents the definitions of sustainable marketing according to different authors. The final part of the paper includes a summary.

Key words: sustainable development; sustainable marketing; the company

JEL codes: M31, Q56, Q57

1. Introduction

The observed increase in the societies demand for the products and services creates increase in production in order to meet growing demand. Manufacturing companies produce increasing quantities of products meeting the needs of buyers. With the increase in production there is an increase in demand for all kinds of raw materials, energy and fuel necessary to carry out the production process. Such a situation on the market of enterprises results in excessive exploitation of natural resources of our planet, which contributes to the destruction of nature. The increase in industrial production is highly influenced by consumption attitude of societies and the rapid pace of growth of the natural inhabitants of the Earth. Excessive consumption of goods is characteristic for highly developed societies, namely the United States and Western European countries. This observed tendency is also increasingly visible in developing countries with emerging economies. In turn, rapid population growth is observed in poor African and Asian countries. Presented state of affairs is the reason for the emergence of global issues in environmental and social dimensions.

Natural environment degradation as a result of meeting the growing needs of the residents of developed countries and the increasing social problems mainly in poor countries in Africa and Asia have become the reason for taking a global discussion on the state of the environment and the health of societies. Broad debate on environmental protection launched creation of the concept of sustainable development.

2. Sustainable Development

The starting point for discussion on the concept of sustainable development was the over-exploitation of

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natural resources which took place in the seventies and eighties of the last century. Then, the humanity started to realise that poses a threat to the foundations of their own lives. However, politicians and entrepreneurs do not attach much importance to this matter. Natural resources were treated as unlimited good that is available anytime, any quantity.

In 1972 in Stockholm, the United Nations held a conference on “Human Environment” (United Nations Conference on the Human Environment — UNCHE). The conference was attended by the representatives of 113 countries in the world and representations of numerous international and non-governmental organizations. The conference aimed at analysing the impact of human activity on the environment. Stockholm debate was one of the major international conferences devoted to nature conservation. Next meeting devoted to environmental protection, among others, were held twice in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and 2012. In 1987 the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development of United Nations, which met under the chairmanship of Gro Harlem Brundtland was released. The report was called “Our Common Future”, and defined the concept of sustainable development as “a process designed to meet the developmental aspirations of the present generation in such a way as to guarantee realizations of the same aspirations of future generations”. [UNESCO] H. Rogall devoted much space to sustainability matters. The author argues that “sustainable development aims to ensure to all people living today and to future generations sufficiently high environmental, economic and socio-cultural standards up to limits of the natural strength of the Earth, using the principle of intergenerational justice” (Rogall, 2010). F. Belz and K. Peattie argue that there are many different approaches to the essence of sustainable development. The authors present the concept of *hard sustainability*, which focuses on maintaining environmental quality through the protection of the environment as a result of rational economic activity and *soft sustainability*, which focuses on ensuring that economic growth can be maintained by limiting the impact on the environment and society (Belz, Peattie, 2010).

H. Rogall mentions the three objectives of sustainable economic development. The author lists the ecological, economic and socio-cultural objectives. Table 1 shows the triangle of objectives proposed by H. Rogall.

Table 1 The Triangle of Sustainable Economic Development Objectives

Ecological objectives	Economic objectives	Socio-cultural objectives
Protection of the Earth atmosphere (limiting global warming)	Stability of National economy, ensuring independent existence at acceptable quality of work	Participatory democracy and rules of law in all areas of life
Not harming the environment; preserving the diversity of species and landscape	Ensuring basic needs for sustainable products (food, housing, clothing, energy)	The elimination of poverty, social security, controlling the demographic problems
Sustainable use of renewable resources	Price stability and prevention of concentration and economic powers, internalization of external costs	Equal opportunities, integration (e.g., gender, immigrants)
Sustainable use of non-renewable resources	Non-economical balance and cooperation for the sake of development with the least imports of raw-materials	External and internal security, solving conflicts without violence
Healthy living conditions (elimination of harmful substances, radiation and noise)	Efficient state budget with sufficient standards of equipping society in substantive/collective goods and the correct division of incomes	Health and quality of human life protection

Source: H. Rogall, *Ekonomia zrównoważonego rozwoju. Teoria i praktyka*, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań, 2010, p. 47.

Reviewing the literature in the field of sustainable development it can be stated that the essence of sustainable development focuses on respect for the environment and considering the social aspects in business enterprises at the same time taking into account economic objectives of the organisation. Proceedings of enterprises in accordance with the principles of sustainable development create a chance to provide opportunities for the development of future generations, and even increase those development opportunities.

One of the most important features of sustainable development is early prevention of destructive events and phenomena in society and the environment, rather than repairing damage interfering equilibrium (Pabian, 2010).

3. The Impact of Sustainable Development on the Marketing Activities of Companies

The changing socio-economic environment forces companies to change the current proceedings in relation to their marketing activities of the organisation. Marketing ceases to be associated only with the proper diagnosis of the customer's needs and their effective satisfaction. The purchasers of goods and services are becoming more demanding and looking for bids, which will be able to meet their expectations in terms of utility, quality, price, and also environmental and social. Customers deciding to purchase a product or service put their attention to, inter alia, the composition of the product, packaging, country of origin or method of use and disposal of unnecessary product. Consumers of ecological and pro-social orientation will devote more attention to what the product features that relate to the environment and social aspects. That example of a product, next to the price, distribution and promotion mix is one of the marketing tools included in the so-called marketing mix.

The review of literature of sustainable marketing points to a small number of studies devoted to this subject. One of the few authors depicting the importance of sustainable marketing is B. Emery. The author argues that "sustainable marketing is a holistic approach whose aim is the ensure that marketing strategies and tactics are specifically designed a secure a socially equitable, environmentally friendly and economically fair and viable business for the benefit of current and future generations of customers, employees and society as a whole" (Emery, 2012). According to P. Banies, Ch. Fill and K. Page sustainable marketing is a consequence of the postmodern movement towards recognising that the capitalist progress can not proceed without taking into account the impact of marketing practices on society. According to the authors, the essence of sustainability is the search for rational solutions in relationships: people-planet-prosperity (Banies, Fill, Page, 2008). Much space to issues of sustainable marketing devoted to D. Martin and J. Schouten. According to the authors: sustainable marketing is the process of creating, communicating and delivering value to customers in such a way that both natural and human capital are preserved or enhanced throughout (Martin, Schouten, 2012).

Sustainable development affects important areas of marketing, which include (Pabian, 2011):

- study and analysis of the marketing environment,
- selection of target markets,
- marketing mix,
- management of marketing activities.

Taking into account in the presented structures the principles of sustainable development will enable companies to conduct sustainable marketing activities. Taking action in the field of research of the marketing environment in addition to examining the economic situation and consumer behaviour should include researching the environmental and social problems that may affect the course of business operations. Choosing target markets and conducting market segmentation will enable the organisation to identify groups of customers with similar characteristics and shopping preferences, including groups of customers, who are follow pro-social and ecological criteria for the purchase of products. The third area of sustainable marketing — marketing mix includes product, price, distribution and promotion mix. Using the set of elements a company affects the target market and creates an offer that will satisfy the needs of buyers and also will not cause any harm to the environment and society today and in the future. Presented and briefly described areas of sustainable marketing should be properly

managed through planning, organising, motivating staff and controlling marketing activities. Management of marketing activities in terms of sustainability should also include long-term goals and plans for the organisation, which should include the development and meeting the needs of future generations.

4. Conclusion

Progressive economic development improves the existence of modern societies, but also creates risks for humans now and for the next generations. Overexploitation of natural resources, air pollution, drinking water deficiencies, and climate change, increasing social problems such as hunger, poverty, unemployment and exploitation are serious problems facing humanity. In the face of the observed phenomena it is necessary to prevent such incidents. Sustainable development is a way of counteracting the formation of these threats.

Marketing drives the global economy and leaves a big footprint in both, the environment and society. It is through marketing systems, most human needs and psychological needs are being met. Because of this, marketing plays significant and unique role in creating a more sustainable society. Through sustainable marketing actions consumer societies attitude may change. Making purchasing decisions will be more conscious and focused on environmental and social aspects.

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