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**Marketing for
Sustainable Development**

Rethinking Consumption Models

**Coordinated by
Sihem Dekhili**

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Marketing for Sustainable Development

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Foreword

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Since the Industrial Revolution, humanity has been extremely successful in combating diseases, producing a sufficient supply of food and other necessities and adapting its environments to its needs. However, this success has a downside. The boom in human production and consumption has led to planetary boundaries for safe operating spaces being crossed in a range of areas, including climate change, biosphere integrity, biogeochemical flows and land-system change. Humanity is now so plentiful and powerful that our activities impact basic planetary functions. This development is so radical that scientists speak about a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene. Therefore, humans, for their own sake, must become stewards of the planet and get us back into a safe operating space, while maintaining acceptable ways of life, as expressed, for example, in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This is a major task and it is the government's responsibility to organize and regulate it. However, governments will not be able to prevail without the support and active engagement of companies and the civil society as both consumers and citizens.

Engaged citizens are a valuable source of knowledge and ideas for new norms and regulations that are adapted to the national and local context. An informed citizenry is also a prerequisite for achieving the necessary acceptance and support for new regulations. In addition, changes in consumer behavior are a prerequisite for many transformations, including the move from fossil to renewable energy, from a linear to a circular economy, and to a more plant-based diet in industrialized countries.

The scientific understanding of global challenges and technical solutions has increased tremendously in recent decades, but knowledge and understanding of “the demand side” is lagging behind. We need more knowledge and understanding of citizen-consumers’ concerns, limitations, goals and wants with regards to new and sustainable products, services and wider solutions, as part of a wide range of sustainability transformations. We also need more knowledge of how to gain the acceptance, support and engagement of the public, as citizens and consumers with diverse values, needs, wants, resources and contexts.

For example, in developed countries, private households are responsible for about a third of wasted food and about two thirds of plastic waste. Packaging waste, most of which is discarded by households, creates significant problems in nature. Therefore, consumers need to be actively engaged in closing the loops for materials that pass through private households in huge volumes for the radical and urgently-needed transformation from a linear to a circular economic model to succeed. Marketing, as a discipline and practice, has accumulated experiences and insights and developed effective tools to strengthen consumer acceptance of recycled products or products made using recycled materials, and to increase the amount and quality of waste materials that are reused or recycled from households.

This book coordinated by Sihem Dekhili is a welcome contribution to advancing our knowledge and understanding of the role of the demand side for sustainable development and especially about how to mobilize the tools, techniques and insights of marketing for sustainable development. It offers a range of fresh perspectives on sustainability transformations in the modern digital era, drawing on the creativity and skills of a broad group of researchers. Like marketing in general, its main focus is on individuals as consumers and on creating value for all parties in an exchange as a means to achieve organizational and societal goals. This customer-centric perspective of marketing may be the most important contribution to speeding up sustainability transformations. However, marketing is not limited to commercial exchanges and viewing people as individual consumers. Marketing has proven to be an effective means for attaining massive changes in behaviors and lifestyles, including making citizens aware of the need for sustainability transformations in order to accept the required regulations. It is important to ensure consumers are well-informed and understand and trust sustainable products, services and solutions, both to convince them that it is worth their effort and help them to adopt more sustainable goods and practices. Especially, marketing has refined effective tools to help consumers make sustainable choices in supermarkets, including credible sustainability labeling.

Mobilizing consumers and engaging them in sustainability transformations requires a deep understanding of their diversity, and the ambiguity and conflicts related to their goals. Some consumers resist the conventional market system and experiment with various forms of simpler, sufficiency-oriented lifestyles. Others make an effort to choose environmentally-friendly products and services. Still others are environmentally concerned, but feel unable to do anything because they feel that they lack credible environmental information or believe that the tradeoffs are insurmountable. It is therefore important to differentiate between people with different needs, wants, and abilities and to adapt regulation, education, communication and solutions accordingly. More than any other discipline, marketing has developed insights and effective tools for the segmentation and targeting of consumers with different needs, wants, and abilities.

This book is a much-needed contribution to the understanding of the demand side in sustainability transformations and especially of marketing as a force for change towards sustainable development goals. It combines a solid foundation in the accumulated insights of marketing with an appreciation of the specific challenges and opportunities of the current age, including digitalization, mobile applications, machine-to-machine communication and the Internet of Things. These new technologies are rapidly changing our lives and when they are used well, they offer new opportunities for supporting responsible consumer behavior and sustainability transformations. This makes this book a useful resource for marketing scholars and practitioners alike; indeed for everyone who is engaged in the sustainable transformation of society, in companies, politics, NGOs and the civil society.

Acknowledgments

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The journey from an idea born several years ago to the production of this book has been an extremely exciting adventure!

First of all, my warmest thanks go to the 41 authors of this book who have shared my enthusiasm for the topic of responsible marketing and its role in strengthening the sustainable development movement. The exchange of ideas and discussions has been a source of great richness.

All of the authors have brought their expertise to the reflections within the framework of a collective work that has been undertaken in a spirit of attentive listening and conviviality. This kind of project makes the job of an academic even more stimulating.

Huge thanks go to John Thøgersen for the Foreword, as well as for his availability and great kindness. He is a renowned researcher, whose activities and publications in the field of sustainable consumption are numerous.

I would also like to extend particular thanks to Jean-Marc Ferrandi and Patrick Gabriel for their thoughtful advice.

Lastly, the aim of proposing a work anchored in action would have been impossible without the numerous practitioners who offered their viewpoints and

enriched the analyses of the researchers. If only they could all be thanked here for their precious contribution!

I hope the readers take as much pleasure from the reading of this book as its authors did from creating it!

Introduction

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For a number of years, sustainable development has been an omnipresent issue in both media discussions and in political, economic and academic debates. It is pushing a real challenge into the spotlight: the balance between the economic, environmental and social components, with the aim of satisfying the needs of the current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland 1987). Sustainable development, looking to the long-term, promotes altruistic values that are beneficial not only to the protection of the planet, but also to social justice and the well-being of others. Indeed, as stated by Gabriel (2003), the wealth created by companies can have an environmental and social cost, and those that benefit from this wealth are not necessarily those that bear the cost. Sustainable development also refers to the idea of controlled production and mindful consumption, with personal pleasure pushed to the background.

Various efforts have been made to take these considerations into account. Most countries have implemented regulations supporting sustainability. Companies have become involved and some have even put sustainability at the heart of their business models. We have thereby seen the development of a new offer on the market, with products using fewer resources and polluting components, and generating less waste (Auger and Devinney 2007; Yannou-Le Bris *et al.* 2019).

At the same time, there has been an increase in environmental and social awareness among consumers. A large number of surveys support the idea that individuals, especially in Western societies, are concerned about ecological crises. This is the case in a survey conducted by Ifop in late 2019, which estimated that

86% of French people were aware of this issue. Groups of “consum’actors”, looking for meaning in life, have emerged and reveal a significant expectation of societal change. As a result, they are turning to an alternative mode of consumption and practices, such as donation and sharing that aim, in particular, to extend the lifespan of products.

The efforts made and the prevailing discussions around sustainable development tend to suggest that we are experiencing a “green era” (Davies *et al.* 2012). However, the reality is quite different! The sustainable criterion is far from being a decisive factor in consumer purchasing decisions, even for the individuals with the greatest level of ecological awareness. Sustainable consumption, primarily the reserve of those with the highest levels of income and education, is for many merely a “surface engagement”, as the new consumption pattern that they embrace is being superimposed over entrenched consumerist habits (rather than replacing them) (Daumas 2020). Within this context, the gap between values and declarations, on the one hand, and behaviors, on the other, has been widely documented in the literature, often by using the term “green gap”. Despite the efforts made, sustainable development remains the preserve of a niche market. The strategies of companies in this field sometimes turn out to be insufficient. Indeed, their desire to make their image greener can result in opportunist behaviors and greenwashing. Consumers perceive environmental communications as ambiguous and overblown and express little trust in the brands that spread them. Some think that the ecolabeling procedure is based on an incomplete approach that only takes into account a limited number of criteria, and that the communication on ecolabels remains insufficient (Thøgersen *et al.* 2010; Dekhili and Achabou 2015). At the distribution level, super/hypermarkets suffer from a lack of legitimacy in selling ecological products and the price policies are not always considered fair for consumers (Dekhili *et al.* 2017). A cultural barrier can be added to this; responsible practices such as the example of the *doggy bag* can be slowed down by the social norms that dominate a country (Achabou *et al.* 2018).

These obstacles to the spread of responsible behaviors and goods put the importance of the sustainable development movement into perspective. At the same time, they offer immense avenues for exploring solutions to reconsider consumption patterns and develop the green market. This leads us to the key question guiding this book: how can marketing contribute to strengthening sustainable consumption?

Marketing is undoubtedly the area most suited to market development. However, its objectives can be perceived as opposite to those of sustainable development (Kotler 2011). In any case, the compatibility between the two fields has been widely

questioned. Marketing aims to sell in a profitable manner. It is seen as a field based on the short term and on the response to selfish motivations. Marketing is also accused of having encouraged overconsumption and waste in shifting the focus from the satisfaction of real consumer needs to a response to short-lived individual desires (Brownlie 2006).

In this respect, the “power” of marketing and its key role in the evolution of modes of consumption should be recalled. Marketing choices can have an influence on individual health through the products promoted and the social groups targeted (as with advertisements for food products high in saturated fats during programs aimed at children). Moreover, marketing affects the representation of individuals and their lifestyles (for example, the demeaning image of women in advertising).

Because marketing enjoys a certain “power” and in view of the significant effects it can have on individuals, particularly the most vulnerable, a number of business practices have been condemned following denunciations from NGOs, scientists and consumer groups. As a result, advertisements that are considered problematic have been withdrawn (as in case of exaggerated claims made by Nivea about its beauty creams) and brands have been boycotted because of sales practices that are considered irresponsible (such as Nestlé in view of its marketing practices for powdered milk for infants in Africa), giving rise to a stricter legislative regulation of marketing practices. In this regard, we can note the example of the obligation, in France since 2007, for the advertisers of some food products to introduce health information into their communications, such as “For your own health, avoid eating too much fat, too much sugar or too much salt.”

If there have been some opportunist practices on the ground, this should not, in any case, call into question the marketing field as a scientific discipline. From the beginning, marketing has been positioned as a medium for the relationship between a company and its consumers, and the search for well-being remains at the very foundations of the discipline (Andreasen 1994). Today, more than ever, marketing should implement credible and visible actions that will help to increase the legitimacy of companies in relation to the concept of sustainable development (Gabriel 2003). Our society, as a whole, seems to demand marketing that is accountable and demonstrates “its good faith”. This book aims to respond to that demand: it is essential not only to go beyond the marketing-sustainable development split, but also to demonstrate the interest of relying on the tools and analytical frameworks of marketing to serve the cause of sustainability. Marketing and sustainable development can be intertwined in order to achieve a common goal, of strengthening ecological behaviors.

Fourteen chapters, rooted in action and offering rich and detailed views of different topics related to the question posed, are included in this book. The analysis suggested by scholars specializing in the field of responsible consumption is completed by the views of professionals in the field (managing directors, sustainable development heads, managers, consultants, public officials, etc.). These chapters cover five complementary themes.

The first theme explores, in the first two chapters, *the role of the consumer in the green movement*. In Chapter 1, Abdelmajid Amine and Mouna Benhallam consider individuals with a high level of environmental and social concern, who opt for radical changes regarding the traditional consumer pattern. By studying the case of engaged online communities, the authors show that, through their resistance to the market, these consumers are contributing to transforming it by promoting responsible consumption.

In Chapter 2, Mohamed Akli Achabou and Sihem Dekhili, on the other hand, consider the case of consumers less sensitive to ecology. The significant attention paid to the intrinsic characteristics of the offer (such as quality in the case of luxury products) can lead to a rejection of eco-products; some consumers believe that the integration of sustainable attributes decreases the offer's value. More broadly, by highlighting a perceived contradiction between luxury and sustainable development, the authors deduce that the green issue cannot be explored in the same way for different product categories.

The second theme, addressed over three chapters, concerns *waste*, in particular, that produced in the food sector. This is a subject that has played an important role in media and political debates in recent years.

In Chapter 3, Guillaume Le Borgne, Margot Dyen, Géraldine Chaboud and Maxime Sebbane question the role of the consumer in the above-mentioned waste. By analyzing the different structural, contextual and chain organization constraints, the authors call for the responsibility of consumers in waste to be put into perspective, compared to the other actors in the food system. By exploring the case of mass catering companies, they highlight the sources of the ineffectiveness of measures to combat food waste.

In Chapter 4, Amélie Clauzel, Nathalie Guichard and Caroline Riché address this issue in a smaller sphere, that of the family. They outline the role of each family member in the food waste phenomenon and mention the differences in perceptions of food waste within the same household. Moreover, the authors analyze the causes of waste resulting from family purchase and consumption processes.

In Chapter 5, Maud Daniel-Chever, Éliisa Monnot, Fanny Reniou and Lucie Sirieix look at a new mode of buying products that is aimed at combating waste: packaging-free products. The authors provide, on the one hand, an understanding of the profiles of consumers buying such products, their motivations and barriers, and on the other hand, an analysis of the offer in this field and the complexity of managing it.

The third theme in this book concerns *communication*. Three chapters are focused on a thorny question in responsible marketing: should companies communicate about sustainability? And if so, how? To what extent can this communication be responsible and effective in relation to the target's expectations? The topic is a particularly important one as the reactions to societal communications are often negative and the phenomenon of *greenwashing* continues to be prevalent.

To respond to these questions, in Chapter 6 Agnès François-Lecompte and Sylvie Foutrel, by considering societal communication as a triptych (“what message”, “what channel” and “to whom”), discuss the conditions of its effectiveness. The authors study the question of the credibility of the message and the potential of the societal communication to create value for customers.

This reflection is expanded in Chapter 7 through the contribution of Sihem Dekhili and Samer Elhajjar, which is focused on a particular element of communication: the tone used. More specifically, the authors examine the effectiveness of “provocation” in environmental advertising. Given the consumer skepticism towards the green claims of companies, some brands have opted for greenbashing, a form of communication characterized by sarcasm. The advertisers, in such cases, do not hesitate to deliberately mock green activists and/or trends. The authors detail the motivations that lead brands to favor this communication tone and test its effect on the effectiveness of environmental advertising.

The topic of communication is brought to a close in Chapter 8 by Philippe Odou, Marie Schill and Manu Navarro, who investigate how to communicate effectively on one particular complex topic: climate change. The authors analyze the types of communication and the emotions to stress when targeting adult profiles showing different emotional reactions and intentions to act. At a time of unprecedented mobilization among the younger generation, the authors are interested in the specific case of children, providing a deep understanding of the mental representations of climate change among this target group.

The fourth theme, addressed over three chapters, looks into the issue of *regulation*. Firstly, in Chapter 9, Leila Elgaaied-Gambier and Laurent Bertrandias suggest an interesting analysis of the following question: how can the integration of

a marketing approach into public policies for sustainability contribute to making them more acceptable in the eyes of the target audience? The authors discuss different approaches adopted by the public authorities in environmental regulations and discuss their advantages and limitations, before further consideration of the contribution of marketing in terms of strengthening the efficiency of pro-environment public policies.

Then, in Chapter 10, Mickaël Dupré, Patrick Gabriel and Gaëlle Boulbry address the issue of information on the reparability of products. They propose to determine whether this constitutes a selling point, especially among people particularly concerned by sustainability. The authors offer an understanding of the reparability concept and consider the effects of a “reparability label” on consumer perceptions and behaviors in the case of household appliances.

Lastly, in Chapter 11 Mantiaba Coulibaly-Ballet focuses on the fair trade label. Through a study conducted in Côte d’Ivoire, the author questions the role of this cue in both the spread of sustainable production and the encouragement of responsible consumption, in a context where sustainable development is still emerging.

The book concludes with a very current *fifth theme, the digital domain*. Three chapters emphasize the role that technological and digital tools can play in the expansion of the green movement. These tools have the advantage of directly affecting the decisions and behaviors of consumers more than their values, which can lead to improved effectiveness in the adoption of responsible behaviors.

In Chapter 12, Adeline Ochs and Julien Schmitt establish the general framework of the topic by showing the main mobile applications linked to responsible consumption and explaining their mechanisms for influencing consumer behaviors.

Among the different categories of products and services affected by these new digital applications, food products present specificities, as highlighted by Christine Gonzalez, Béatrice Siadou-Martin and Jean-Marc Ferrandi in Chapter 13. The authors look at the issue of the compatibility of digitization and food sustainability. They then establish a range of models that facilitate understanding of how to influence consumer behaviors in favor of responsibility. In addition, the types of digital devices that support the adoption of food sustainability are detailed.

In Chapter 14, Myriam Ertz, Shouheng Sun, Émilie Boily, Gautier Georges Yao Quenum, Kubiak Patrick, Yassine Laghrib, Damien Hallegatte, Julien Bousquet and Imen Latrous go further in examining the benefits of technology 4.0, in terms of extending the lifespan of products and combating planned obsolescence. Through a

close analysis of the main features and functions of technologies linked to “Industry 4.0”, including additive manufacturing, the Internet of Things, Big Data and artificial intelligence, the authors show how the characteristics of these technologies can help to create augmented sustainable products. This is a major challenge of our century!

If they indicate difficulties in the dissemination of sustainable development (consumer skepticism, limitations of environmental communications, waste, ineffectiveness of environmental measures, etc.), the contributions gathered in this book have the great interest of not stopping at limitations and suggesting concrete recommendations and solutions to improve the effectiveness of organizations. Our work offers evidence of the great potential of the use of marketing tools and approaches to encourage sustainable development. This book should therefore be considered a reformer and a cause for hope!

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1

Opposing the Market Through Responsible Consumption to Transform It

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1.1. Introduction

The increase of ecological and social concerns in recent decades, calling for radical changes to modes of production and consumption, shows the signs of a societal model that is flagging. This model, long propped up by sales techniques that encouraged over-consumption and the unbridled pursuit of possessions and material comforts, is, now more than ever, being called upon to reorient itself around a fairer *sustainable* balance between people, the environment and the economy.

There has been criticism of marketing since the early 1970s (Kassarjian 1971), highlighting its shortcomings and side effects, namely, the harmful incitement to buy, the creation of superficial needs and the devastating exploitation of natural resources. This then developed with time around major concepts, such as “sustainable development” (Nader *et al.* 1971), the “social responsibility of companies” (Manrai *et al.* 1997), consumer opposition (Penãloza and Price 1993) and even theoretical frameworks, such as Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) (Mick *et al.* 2012). The latter supports results-based marketing research on major social issues (health, poverty, the environment, etc.), the results of which are intended to improve individual and collective well-being. All of these changes reflect the gradual dissemination of contestation behavior and discourse to a wider section of the population.

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This phenomenon is evidence of the normalization of these opposition practices (Amine and Gicquel 2011) and translates into an inclination among consumers to make their behaviors more disciplined, so as to bring about societal changes. In that regard, it is clear that socio-environmental concerns are preeminent, as expressed through the protest-based reactions¹ of consumers (Dubuisson-Quellier 2009). These dissenting movements have given rise to a specific form of opposition of a socially responsible nature (Benhallam 2016)², and spark recovery attempts from companies who perceive them as a threat.

With this in mind, and in view of the digitalization of social interactions and the increased speed of virtual exchanges (Kozinets 2012), we propose to explore practices of resistance, particularly those organized by consumer groups online, especially on social networks, given their significant impact.

As an example, following price increases, a boycott campaign against Danone, launched online, took place in North Africa in 2018 and cost the brand 178 million euros³. The main lessons that we want to highlight are intended to underline the ability of pressure from consumer movements to force companies to reevaluate their marketing practices and to push the public authorities and associations to rethink the regulatory mechanisms of the markets.

More specifically, we will be working on answering the following two-part question: “How does the online resistance of individuals adhering to a responsible consumption approach express itself in the face of market ideology? And which possibilities for social development does it open up?” In order to do this, a two-year netnographic study was conducted in three virtual communities based around responsible social opposition, specifically, “*Le changement par la consommation* [Change through consumption]”, “*Mr Mondialisation* [Mr. Globalization]” and “*Objecteurs de croissance* [Growth Objectors]”.

1.2. Corporate adjustment strategies in response to the contestation of market logic

1.2.1. From an adaptive perspective of uprising recovery by the companies...

In a fast-moving anti-establishment environment that often generalizes (Dubuisson-Quellier 2009), companies have a tendency to respond to opposition

1 Monnot and Reniou (2013) believe that contestation is a medial element in a continuum, where the starting point would be a feeling of skepticism, conducting an expression of resistance as an end point.

2 SRR: Socially responsible resistance.

3 Available at: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/737259/economie/danone-des-resultats-annuels-en-berne-au-maroc-en-raison-du-boycott-de-2018/>.