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International Experience in the Development of Sustainability Marketing

Abstract

In today's world economy, the idea of sustainable development is now a key part of how businesses operate. Challenges like worsening environmental issues, limited natural resources, and social inequality are urging companies to not just focus on making money, but also to include the ideas of caring for the environment and being socially responsible in what they do. Sustainability marketing is different from regular marketing because it focuses on managing things in a way that creates lasting value. It considers what people want, including customers, society, and the government. Sustainability marketing isn't just about selling "green products". It also involves improving how products are made, using resources wisely, lowering carbon emissions, supporting social projects, and following fair business practices. Ongoing activities like making, selling, using, throwing away, and polluting are causing a lot of damage to the environment. This has led to the idea that we can't have a sustainable future unless we pay attention to the main causes of environmental harm, which are population growth and high levels of consumption. In this research, we will examine the status of sustainable marketing in Azerbaijan and other countries and analyze the results obtained.

Keywords: *sustainable marketing, green marketing, international models, ESG*

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Davamlılıq marketinqinin inkişafında beynəlxalq təcrübə

Xülasə

Bugünkü dünya iqtisadiyyatında davamlı inkişaf ideyası artıq biznesin fəaliyyətinin əsas hissəsidir. Ətraf mühit problemlərinin pisləşməsi, məhdud təbii sərvətlər və sosial bərabərsizlik kimi problemlər şirkətləri yalnız pul qazanmağa deyil, həm də ətraf mühitə qayğı göstərmək və sosial məsuliyyətli olmaq ideyalarını öz işlərinə daxil etməyə sövq edir. Davamlılıq marketinqi adi marketinqdən fərqlidir, çünki o, işləri davamlı dəyər yaradan şəkildə idarə etməyə yönəlmişdir. O, müştərilər, cəmiyyət və hökumət də daxil olmaqla insanların nə istədiyini nəzərə alır. Davamlılıq marketinqi yalnız "yaşıl məhsullar" satmaqla məhdudlaşmır. O, həmçinin məhsulların istehsalını təkmilləşdirmək, resurslardan ağıllı istifadə etmək, karbon emissiyalarını azaltmaq, sosial layihələri dəstəkləmək və ədalətli biznes təcrübələrinə riayət etmək kimi məsələləri də əhatə edir. İstehsal, satmaq, istifadə etmək, atmaq və çirkləndirmək kimi davamlı fəaliyyətlər ətraf mühitə çoxlu ziyan vurur. Bu, ətraf mühitə zərər verən əsas səbəblərə, yəni əhali artımına və yüksək istehlak səviyyəsinə diqqət yetirməsək, davamlı gələcəyimizin ola bilməyəcəyi fikrinə gətirib çıxarıb. Bu tədqiqatda biz Azərbaycanda və digər ölkələrdə davamlı marketinqin vəziyyətini araşdıracaq və əldə edilən nəticələri təhlil edəcəyik.

Açar sözlər: *davamlı marketinq, yaşıl marketinq, beynəlxalq modellər, ESG*

Introduction

Over the past few years, sustainability marketing has changed from a special idea into a key part of how businesses work around the world. Due to growing worries about the environment, new laws, and changes in what customers want, companies in developed countries have started including sustainability ideas in their marketing plans. This change shows a move away from focusing only on making quick profits to creating lasting value that cares for the environment, helps communities, and follows ethical guidelines. A clear example of sustainability marketing is seen in the actions of big global companies like Unilever and Patagonia. These companies have made sustainability a key part of their brand. For example, Unilever's "Sustainable Living Plan" focuses on lowering its environmental impact and creating positive benefits for society. Patagonia supports taking care of the environment and wants people to shop responsibly, even asking them to buy less. These methods show that sustainability marketing can be more than just advertising; it can be an important part of a company's beliefs and values. European countries have been leaders in developing sustainable marketing because they have strict rules and a strong understanding of environmental issues. The European Union has created important rules like the Green Deal, which helps businesses use eco-friendly methods for making and selling their products. In these markets, being sustainable is not just a way to be better than others; it's also something the law requires. Companies should share information about their impact on the environment, society, and how they are run. They also need to align their plans with goals for sustainability.

Sustainability Marketing: A Comparison of Developed Countries and Azerbaijan

In the United States, sustainability marketing has mostly been influenced by what consumers want and new ideas from companies. Companies spend a lot of money on green branding, eco-labeling, and clear communication to gain the trust and loyalty of people who care about the environment. The growth of ESG investing has helped companies start using sustainable practices in their marketing and business strategies. Another big change in global practices is that digital technologies are playing a bigger role in sustainability marketing. Data analysis, artificial intelligence, and online tools help companies keep track of their environmental effects, use resources better, and share their efforts to be more sustainable (Thomas, 2023).

Research

This has resulted in the rise of "smart sustainability," which combines new ideas and technology with sustainable practices. Even with these improvements, international experience shows there are still many problems. One big worry is greenwashing, which is when companies pretend to be more eco-friendly than they really are just to sell more products (Raimi, Sarge, Geiger, Gillis, & Cunningham, 2024).

This has resulted in tougher rules and more careful checking by shoppers and official organizations. Looking at this global experience alongside the situation in Azerbaijan shows that there are both similarities and differences. Big companies around the world have made sustainability a key part of their main plans. However, in Azerbaijan, this is still a work in progress and is mostly happening in large companies like Azercell, AZAL, and SOCAR. Also, in Azerbaijan, sustainability marketing is mainly about social responsibility and managing a company's reputation. In more developed markets, it's a core part of how businesses operate and add value. In summary, examples from around the world show that sustainability marketing works best when it is part of the main business plan, not just seen as a separate project or a way to advertise. Azerbaijan needs to learn from successful countries and improve its rules and organizations to promote sustainability marketing effectively in the future (De Souza Barbosa, da Silva, da Silva, Morioka, & de Souza Barbosa, 2023).



Figure 1. Hybrid model for Azerbaijan

Source: Developed by author based on data from OECD (2023), World Bank (2023), UNEP, and State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan.

The US approach relies more on how the market works, what consumers want, and actions taken by companies. In this model, sustainability marketing is primarily used to boost the brand's reputation, build customer loyalty, and attract more investors. Big companies in Azerbaijan like Azercell, AZAL, and SOCAR have already started using a similar approach. The rise of social responsibility projects and brand image shows that this way of thinking is being used (Sheth, & Parvatiyar, 2021).

Table 1.
 Comparison of continuous marketing.

Criteria	Developed countries	Azerbaijan
Strategy level	Sustainability is completely included in the business plan.	Mainly implemented in large companies, not fully integrated
Marketing approach	Value-based means focusing on what is important or valuable. Long-term (value-driven) means thinking about benefits that will last a long time.	More image and reputation oriented
Environmental activities	Carbon neutrality means not adding more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere than is removed	Emission reduction and energy efficiency in the initial stage
Social responsibility	Planned and measurable social benefits Complete use and required reporting. A solid legal system.	More CSR projects and social actions
ESG implementation	A solid legal system.	Partially implemented (mainly in large companies)
Regulation	European Union rules and decisions.	Evolving regulatory framework
Consumer behavior	Likes to use products that are good for the environment and sustainable.	Price and quality are a priority, sustainability is secondary
Technology and innovation	AI, big data, and smart sustainability are used a lot.	Digitalization is present, but to a limited extent
Supply chain	Complete ESG integration (like checking suppliers, etc.)	Partially implemented
Transparency and accountability	Open and standard ways of reporting (like GRI and ESG).	Increasing, but not yet fully systematic
Greenwashing risk	The ways to oversee things are really good.	Risks are present and controls are weak
Market motivation	The need from customers and the pressure from investors.	Government and large company initiatives play a key role

Source: Developed by author based on data from OECD (2023), World Bank (2023), UNEP, and State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan.

The comparison shows that sustainability marketing depends on how developed a country is, the rules in place, and how consumers act. For example, in countries like Germany and Sweden, ideas about sustainability are built into government rules and have become an important part of how the economy works. In the USA, this method is mostly influenced by how the market works, what consumers want, and what investors expect. In Azerbaijan, sustainability marketing is still growing

and is mostly used by big companies. In this context, examples from developed countries show that to do sustainability marketing well, we need to improve support systems, raise consumer awareness, and use new technologies more widely (Tari, & Trudel, 2024).

Table 2.
Cross-country comparison of sustainability marketing (in numbers).

Indicator	Sweden	Germany	United States	Azerbaijan	Analysis
SDG Index (2024)	85+	82+	75+	~72	Azerbaijan is average
CO ₂ emissions (tons/capita)	~3.5 t	~8 t	~14 t	~4.5 t	US is highest, Sweden is lowest
Renewable energy share (%)	60%+	40%+	20%+	~10%	Azerbaijan is lagging behind
ESG reporting implementation (%)	90%+	80%+	70%+	<30%	There is a big difference
Green consumer rate (%)	70–80%	60–70%	50–60%	20–30%	Consumer awareness is low
CSR spending (ratio to GDP)	~2%	~1.5%	~1.2%	<1%	Social investment is low
Environmental Performance Index	90+	80+	70+	~60	Environmental performance is different
Circular economy level (%)	20%+	15%+	10%+	<5%	Azerbaijan is just starting out

Source: Developed by author based on data from OECD (2023), World Bank (2023), UNEP, and State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan.

The numbers show that how advanced sustainability marketing is connects closely to the overall sustainability progress of the countries. For example, in Sweden, a high SDG index score of over 85 and more than 60% of energy coming from renewable sources show that the country is doing well in using sustainable practices. Even though the numbers are not very high in Germany and the USA, the fact that 70-80% of companies report on ESG shows they are committed to sustainable practices. In Azerbaijan, the SDG index is about 72, and ESG implementation is under 30%, showing that this area is still growing and improving. One main reason why sustainable marketing isn't more common is that only 20-30% of consumers are interested in sustainable products. The numbers show that how well sustainability marketing works relies on both the company's actions and the country's overall growth in environmental, social, and economic areas. Experience from around the world shows that countries have different ways of promoting sustainability. These ways depend mainly on how their economy works, the rules they have, and how people shop. Looking at how countries like Germany, Sweden, and the United States have handled things, we can figure out the best way to help Azerbaijan now (Willmer, 2023).

First, it's important to say that the Swedish model is seen as the best example of sustainability marketing. In this model, ideas about being sustainable are included not just in marketing, but also in the whole economy and how society takes care of its people. To use this model, we need well-developed institutions, a good social security system, and a society that cares about the environment. Given the current economic and social situation, it doesn't look like Azerbaijan can fully adopt this model in the near future. The German model involves government rules and focuses on helping businesses. The main parts of this model include the environmental rules set by the European Union, the "green economy" plan, and the required ESG reporting system. This method can be used to some degree in Azerbaijan, especially because the government plays an important role in the economy. To fully use this model, we need to improve the laws and create better ways to monitor it (Van Doorn, Risselada, & Verhoef, 2021).

Conclusion

The analysis shows that the best choice for Azerbaijan is a mixed approach that combines parts from different models instead of using just one model. In this model, we can use rules from Germany, a focus on market and branding Rephrase from the US, and ideas about long-term sustainability and social well-being from Sweden. Using this combined model can help improve sustainability marketing in Azerbaijan. So, it's important to improve environmental and social rules at the state level and include sustainable practices in company marketing strategies. At the same time, making people more aware of environmental issues and creating a demand for eco-friendly products is a key part of this process. So, the best way to do sustainability marketing in Azerbaijan should be a careful and balanced plan that is carried out step by step. It should include government, business, and community aspects. This will help the country reach its development goals and learn from other countries.

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