

Marketing for a Better Planet: Aligning CSR Strategies with the SDGs

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ABSTRACT

As temperatures continue to rise to record highs and social justice concerns remain a global concern, there is an urgent warning. Governments are responding by mandating sustainability reporting, which companies and financial institutions are progressively adopting. In an effort to meet the urgent need to reduce our environmental impact, billions of dollars are being invested in the growing Greentech industry.

In this context, sustainable marketing emerges as a cross-functional, strategic tool that helps companies promote their environmentally responsible practices while fostering corporate growth. As a framework for resolving urgent global issues and ensuring a sustainable future for all, the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, have attracted a lot of attention.

Businesses are beginning to include the SDGs into their marketing strategy as they see how important it is to connect their operations with them in order to improve brand reputation, gain market share, and have a good effect. Additionally, SDGs are starting to appear more frequently in sustainability research. Businesses can gain a competitive edge through innovation, customer involvement, and legitimacy by carefully integrating CSR with SDGs. This article's goal is to investigate how marketing strategy could help CSR decision makers. Keywords: Business, SDGs, CSR, sustainability, and sustainable marketing techniques

The research specifically aims to answer the following question: (1) How may marketing strategy-influenced CSR efforts impact company performance? And (2) Does the relative strategic emphasis on marketing mitigate these effects? examines the significance of the SDGs in ESG communication and sustainable marketing, emphasises pertinent industries for each objective (with corporate examples), and offers a workable action plan for a better planet..

Keywords: CSR, Sustainability, SDGs, Business, Sustainable Marketing Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

The private sector has two different functions in today's society: it is a major source of employment and revenue, but if its obligations are disregarded, it may also lead to social inequality and environmental harm. the CSR or Corporate social responsibility has been recommended as a solution to these conflicts and introduces the idea of businesses as advocates for sustainable business growth by engaging purposefully in social and environmental issues (Yadav S, 2021). Business activities are more and more seen as ethical decisions, and companies have realized that a deliberate and structured approach, known as corporate social responsibility (CSR), can help them integrate their activities into long-term sustainability requirements. (Shayan N. Fallah, 2022).

The threats of a global climate crisis and deep inequalities in development and social and economic vulnerability highlight the need for CSR to move beyond local philanthropy. The decisions made by businesses are

having intergenerational and inter-jurisdictional impacts in an interdependent global economy. Therefore, rather than being an option, CSR must be seen as a global strategic requirement. (SO, 2016). The businesses, governments, international organisations and civil society are implementing CSP.CSP is implemented through CSR initiatives that include collaborations, voluntary codes and networks to promote sustainable solutions. (Dharmapala Dhammika, 2016).

The objective of sustainable marketing is to create value for long-term to companies, customers and the environment as a whole. Sustainable marketing combines social, environmental and economic goals with a focus on long-term relationships with stakeholders and responsible product life cycles in the marketing process. In this case, sustainable marketing is defined as marketing activities that promote economic, ecological and social sustainability (Martínez, 2020).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a concept that can be manifested in various ways in line with sustainable marketing, for example through charity activities, fair working practices and community participation (Carroll 1991). Although sustainable marketing and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are seen as two different activities, they are complementary and reinforce one another, and both are the cornerstones of an ethical and competitive business strategy.

Strategic CSR is a contemporary approach to CSR that integrates social values into the company's value proposition. As a reminder of the significance of the connection between CSR and sustainable marketing, Porter and Kramer (2011) published their methodology Creating Shared Value (CSV). According to this viewpoint, businesses should create shared value by developing innovative solutions for environmental and social problems. Furthermore, the approach suggests that socially conscious corporate practices should be viewed as sources of long-term economic benefit and distinctiveness rather than expense (Roreng et al., 2024).

India's development efforts in global CSR are good arguments. It was the first country to compel CSR for qualified businesses by passing the Companies Act 2013 (Section 135). The Company shall comply with the guidelines mentioned in Schedule VII and the companies meeting specific financial criteria shall have to provide 2% of their median net revenues of the previous three years to the CSR programmes listed in Schedule VII. This is a first step toward institutionalized CSR, providing an annual budget of ₹200 billion, and involving almost 16,000 companies (Dharmika Dharmapala, 2016).

There is no penal enforcement, notwithstanding the requirement. The Sustainable Development Goals, which were created in 2015, offer a framework for international policy to address issues of poverty, inequality, institutional integrity, and climate resilience (Gatti, 2019). It's interesting to note that the SDGs align with India's Schedule VII CSR obligations. The Companies Act provides legal avenues for resource mobilisation, but the SDGs broaden the goal to include intergenerational fairness. The Indian government acknowledged this synergy and stated that CSR must work with the SDGs and national development goals in the 2018 High-Level Committee Report (Jain, 2020).

Sustainable marketing is essential for several company facets:

According to a Nielsen study, 73% of consumers worldwide are willing to change their buying practices in order to lessen their environmental impact.

According to Deloitte research, millennials are more inclined to stick with their employment for a longer amount of time if they think they are socially conscious.

According to the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer, companies are now the most trusted organization in the world, surpassing governments, the media, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are supposed to step in when they fail. (Levytskyi, 2025).

Sustainable marketing has a number of advantages:

- being a good corporate citizen and contributing to society; and
- building the right team and workforce, especially Gen Z and Millennials who are actively seeking companies that give sustainability a high priority; and
- winning bids, particularly for government tender, as sustainability credentials are increasingly demanded from suppliers;
- building awareness of sustainable projects through attracting green funding and investors;
- building a brand's reputation and positively influencing community and the environment.

Purpose of the study:

To understand the role of CSR in sustainable marketing

To examine the impact of sustainable marketing on sustainable consumption

To analyse the importance of aligning CSR with the SDGs for marketers' success

To understand the role of CSR in sustainable marketing

The merging of these two ideas is a growing realization of the University that the business activities are inextricably linked to their impact on society and the environment (Elkington, 1997). Considering the social injustice, resources limitation and climate change issues around the world, businesses need to increasingly embed sustainability values into their core business activities, not just complying with regulations (Syah, 2025).

In order to move towards sustainable marketing, it is important that companies consider the entire product and service life cycle, including their impact on customers, communities and ecosystems at the end of their useful life (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Besides preventing negative impacts, this approach focuses on establishing positive value based on ethical production methods, ecologically responsible product development and dialogue. Companies that engage in sustainable marketing strive to establish a long-term partnership with their stakeholders, characterized by trust and common values, instead of focusing on short-term transactions and business relationships (Halik et al., 2023; Halik & Halik, 2024).

There is a positive link between consumer perception of brands and sustainable marketing strategies, supported by a growing body of research (Goyal and Kumar, 2021). The study by Wang, Tong, Takeuchi and George (2020) proved that companies can leverage consumers' loyalty by mixing real CSR with sustainability-oriented messages. Likewise, other research (Martínez et al., 2020) demonstrated that the regular reporting of CSR using marketing strategies can enhance the trust of stakeholder and reduce the consumer scepticism. In addition, Ali, W., Frynas, J. G., & Mahmood, Z. (2017) found that CSR has a significant effect on brand value and customers' purchase intentions, especially in the retail and fast-food sectors. At the same time, stressed the importance of stability and clearness in sustainability communication, which can have a negative impact on the reputation of the

brand if actions are not aligned with the company's communication.

A sound review of the research related to sustainable marketing and recommendations for future research. This literature study provides a comprehensive overview of ethical marketing strategies while incorporating socially aware, moral, and a natural approach to marketing. It identifies key concepts, theories, and research needs and suggests further research within this field. Bansal (2022). Extensive literature review and recommendations for future research in the area of sustainable marketing methods and company performance. The major emphasis in this literature review is on the relationship between sustainable marketing strategies and corporate performance. It discusses how eco-labeling, green marketing, and innovation—with an emphasis on sustainability—affect both financial and non-financial performance metrics. The evaluation also identifies areas that require further research, such as how consumer perceptions work and how to include sustainability in the marketing mix (De Giovanni, P., & Zerrillo, P. C., 2021). Incorporating CSR into the core business strategy can sometimes result in enhanced brand reputation and greater trust and loyalty by customers (Öberseder et al., 2013). An emotional bond between a business and its customers is one of the major reasons for CSR's popularity.

The authors Lii and Lee (2012), claim that when it comes to social welfare and environmental sustainability, customers are more inclined to see businesses who participate in CSR initiatives favourably. Mohr, Webb, and Harris (2001) mention that the market's propensity to pay more for goods from ethical businesses is largely responsible for these assumptions. This is one way that corporate social responsibility (CSR) can change the competitive marketplace by assisting businesses in gaining new clients and cultivating enduring connections with existing ones that are not dependent on product quality or pricing.

With the growing number of "conscious consumers," corporate social responsibility is more crucial than ever. According to survey by Bhattacharya, Sen, and Korschun's (2008), customers are drawn to businesses that are perceived as ethical, socially conscious, and ecologically sustainable, according to a

Customer loyalty and repeat business may increase as a result of CSR programs that align with consumer values. In a time when consumers are more accountable and more transparent for the brands they purchase (Jones, Comfort, & Hillier, 2007), those brands that are proactive in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) are standing out in the current marketing environment. By socially and environmentally responsible (Porter & Kramer, 2006), the businesses can stop the negative publicity and negative customer reactions.

Incorporating ethical supply chain management and environmental protection can help a corporation shield itself from the attacks of advocacy groups and the repercussions of a crisis over unethical business practices. Higher capital, improved market opportunities, sustained sales and profits, lower operating and maintenance costs, efficiency and quality assurance, improved human

resource base, improved brand image and reputation, higher customer satisfaction, improved decision-making and risk management processes, and more are some of the competitive advantages that can be obtained from CSR concepts when they are implemented successfully (Kim, 2016). Therefore, a marketing campaign can be considered a failure if the value of the input resources is greater than the revenue generated, and a success if the revenue generated is greater than the value of the input resources (Wali, 2012).

To examine the impact of sustainable marketing on sustainable consumption

Customers expect companies to improve the world and are more conscious of social and environmental issues. If a brand doesn't engage in socially conscious activities, its market share may be at risk in today's competitive market. Today the consumer expects a good deal from brands (Peloza & Shang, 2011).

Incorporating CSR into corporate values frequently improves customer trust and brand loyalty as well as the brand's reputation. (Lii and Lee, 2012). The response of consumers to CSR programs is, however, very varied. The reactions of customers can be quite different according to their values and the level of trust that they have in CSR projects (Green and Peloza, 2011). They argue that if the consumer feels that a company's CSR doesn't feel like a marketing ploy and is sincere in its intent, they will be more apt to support the company's sales. Kotler (2011) feels that CSR is important to the concept of sustainable marketing because it strives to provide customers value, yet in an ethical manner. Another driver is the growing number of customers who are environmentally conscious and who look for companies which embody their values and apply sustainable marketing.

Businesses are increasingly using sustainable marketing techniques to satisfy consumer demands in an ethical and ecologically conscious way while maintaining long-term financial viability.

When it comes to social welfare and environmental sustainability, customers are more inclined to see businesses who participate in CSR programs favourably. The willingness of a sizable portion of the market to pay more for goods associated with ethical companies can be explained by the following presumptions (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001): Here's an example of how CSR can make highly-competitive markets more appealing to customers who care more about factors beyond the product's quality and price.

Ethical consumerism is closely related to the trend of customers opting for companies who are ethical about their business and are socially responsible. Carrigan, Szmigin and Wright (2004) claim that people are engaging in ethical shopping when they select brands based on their moral values. Animal rights, worker rights, and environmental sustainability are just a few of the many factors that must be considered. Their study shows that as ethical consumption becomes more popular, companies are increasingly required to integrate CSR into their corporate business statements and in their business activities.

Over the last years, sustainability is playing an important role in consumers' purchasing decisions, and all this knowledge has an impact on the decision making process in different companies. The trend towards eco-consciousness is prompting businesses to shift to sustainable marketing practices, including eco-labelling, green packaging, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Sustainable marketing is not only a way for businesses to demonstrate their dedication to sustainability, but it also helps to foster customer loyalty and trust, thereby boosting purchase intentions and forming long-term customer relationships. (Dr. Arti Dhingra, 2024). Eco-labelling is one of the most popular sustainable marketing strategies. It provides the consumers with transparency about the impact their purchases are having on the environment, helping them to promote sustainable consumption, particularly in the food, fashion and home goods sectors. Apart from the eco-labelling, green packaging has also influenced the consumer behaviour. With the increasing awareness of the environment, customers are attracted to products that reduce packaging waste and reduce ecological footprints.

The following would be the marketing implications:

Sustainable Marketing Practices: Companies can improve customer reliability and attract environmentally sensible customers by adopting environmental marketing practices, such as using environmentally friendly packing and aligning their brands as 'green'. In sectors such as fashion, agriculture, and cosmetics, where there is an increasing demand for environmentally friendly options from consumers, customizing marketing strategies to emphasize sustainability can lead to competitive advantages. G.Madaan et al (2023), In order to more precisely analyze, interpret, and quantify the impact of both short-term and long-term projects, it is necessary to understand and evaluate CSR actions from preparedness,

response, recovery, risk mitigation, and resilience perspectives. As of a corporate social duty initiative, PepsiCo India gave standard diagnostic kits to medical facilities and meals to the poor.

Consumer Trust: Companies need to focus on open and honest communication of their sustainability efforts as consumer trust in sustainable marketing has a high impact on buying intentions. When customers are wary of greenwashing practices, it can help foster a more loyal relationship and increase customer loyalty. Results highlight the importance of message framing and digital marketing for sustainable consumer behaviour and for making use of digital platforms effectively, thus, businesses should use digital platforms:

Utilising Digital Platforms Effectively; The findings highlight how important digital marketing and message framing are in shaping sustainable consumer behaviour. Digital platforms can help businesses share compelling messages about their sustainability efforts in a positive light to encourage customers to engage more and support sustainable products and services.

Because of the differences in consumer response to sustainable marketing across a variety of industries and regions, it is important that strategies be adapted to fit the context. This indicates that customised marketing plans that take into account local, cultural and fiscal conditions are necessary. For brands in emerging markets, for instance, the focus should be on enhancing customers' value perception alongside the sustainability efforts (Dr. Arti Dhingra, 2024).

2.3 To analyse the importance of aligning CSR with SDGs for marketers' success

Alignment of CSR and SDGs –



Fig: Proposed model based on CSR and SDG alignment

a. Today's marketing is more than just generating revenue and profits. Today's marketing, advertising, and branding departments have a bigger responsibility than they did in the past. It is a means to support a worthy cause and to declare morals, integrity, commitment, and care for Mother Nature. Here are some historical and contemporary examples.

b. As part of a program, the Mama Earth company offers free product testing for cruelty, recycles plastic, and plants a tree for each order placed through their app. Reforestation and community involvement are the goals of this program, which is a potent instrument for achieving numerous SDGs. The IPL's premier CSR project, Green Dot Ball, in association with the TATA company, is another excellent example. In this effort, more than 6.4 lakh trees have been planted thus far; one tree is planted for each dot ball hurled throughout the competition.

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Adopting the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) law is a paradigm shift to address several problems inhibiting the development of the country and society. As part of this strategic intervention, commercial organisations must create a strong CSR policy framework, establish a CSR Committee, include it in the Audit Report, and promote it on their website in order to address various development difficulties.

In general, the Indian government has assigned NITI Aayog the responsibility of developing initiatives and laws. Numerous ministries will be informed of this (KPMG report). India's diversity makes achieving the SDGs more challenging. Due to valid factors including a vast population, ignorance, and a lack of public willingness and knowledge, the problem only becomes worse.

The directive:

According to Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013, 135(1), each qualified business must invest at least 2% of its average net earnings over the previous three years in CSR initiatives.

CSR legislation is a legal framework that provides guidance, but the SDGs offer a clear objective for engagement. The 17 subject categories create a healthy mosaic platform with CSR elements. Strong connections between SDG and CSR are encouraging for both the nation and the international community.

Aligning CSR and SDGs to achieve marketers' success:

Sustainability is crucial for marketing in a number of ways. Above all, buyers are becoming more conscious of the social and environmental effects of their purchases. They search for sustainable goods and services that align with their principles and allay their growing concerns over sustainability. Businesses run the danger of losing market share and possibly damaging their brand if they fail to identify and adapt to this emerging consumer trend.

Marketers will have a first step toward environmental stewardship and social purpose commitment thanks to the groundbreaking move of connecting CSR with SDGs.

Customers assess the enhanced brand equity, purpose, and integrity when it's a sustainable cause. It is an opportunity to make a difference to the nation by having an everlasting moral legacy on the society and consumers. Incorporating CSR into SDGs and making CSR a part of the marketing function is an efficient socio-marketing strategy.

The marketing function can assist businesses to utilise many benefits, such as:

- To build brand value by showcasing environmental integrity and eco-sensitivity towards building a sustainable future. Any business can use its brand value to achieve an unparalleled success.

With the competition, create a space for Gen Z and eco-friendly buyers and build loyalty. The results are highly rewarding, and ensure substantial success in the shape of ongoing income and profiting from new markets.

Become part of the SDG revolution and the green marketing trend and gain fame as a brand that is sensitive and sustainable.

Eventually, CSR practitioners gain a competitive advantage and set high standards by following global norms and frameworks, rules and getting access to global communities (Lertlak Jaroensombut et al., 2025).

It is also beneficial to ensure and retain competitive advantage by addressing consumers' preferences such as sustainable products, eco-friendly products and assuring their concerns regarding the purchasing effect on the environment and its value (Rathore 2025).

The Golden Peacock Award is one of the most coveted and recognised awards for environmental management and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and is awarded to the most successful and effective marketers and businesses. Golden Peacock award winners have all their intrinsic values enhanced, including their brand equity, outstanding talent and their class level are equal to international levels (Secretariat. Golden Peacock).

Minimised promotion expenses to ensure profitability and improved customer retention as a result of an effective, long-term marketing plan

In terms of long-term, intangible benefits, there are many avenues by which improved consumer engagement and value, reduced over-consumption and reduced purchase frequencies will help society, the environment and organisations develop.

The Golden Peacock Award

CSR is a company's ongoing commitment to uphold moral principles, foster economic development, and improve the lives of its workers and their families, the community, and society at large. Businesses need a predictable investment and business environment, as well as a steady social climate. In today's interconnected world, it is easy for business to become enlightened by self-interest.

Anecdotes from Golden Peacock Award Recipients: Combining the Marketing Function with CSR

Tata Motors Limited, Engineering Research Centre, Pune is one of the leading international car makers. The "Tata

Prima EV E55.S (4x2) Battery-Electric Tractor" is an innovation. The principal problem was the lack of a powerful tractor that is economical, has low emission, and high performance. The Tata Prima EV E55, through the Tata Prima innovation that has been specifically developed for the heavy duty commercial sector.S (4x2) is a quick solution to the problem. The tractor's 450-kWh liquid-cooled battery pack give it an electric drivetrain and Dual-Gun CCS2 Fast Charging ensures maximum uptime. All of them make it the first and most modern (in terms of the emission free) tractor available for heavy duty usage in India.

Innovative is the world's first motorcycle tyre offering a 90,000 km tire life, "SecuraLYFE." Innovation's commuter motorcycle tyre, Innovation, is a design breakthrough tyre with a verified tyre life of 90,000 km without compromising on the materials or production process which Innovation continues to uphold. Innovation is a design-led breakthrough tyre that has been revealed by Innovation as focusing on sustainability and consumer centricity. It means motorists have to replace it less frequently than three times, but still retain grip, braking and ride confidence.

Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Marketing Division, Mumbai is a public sector company that deals in petrochemicals, energy sources, oil and gas. The novel product is called "Servogrease Miracle" and is a non-lithium hybrid metal soap grease. More than 80% greases are manufactured in India by lithium soap technique. Since the price and availability of lithium is highly dependent on its demand, the prices can significantly fluctuate with the demand of lithium. Because of the complete dependence on imports and the absence of production in India, the demand for lithium has a significant impact on price and availability. Servogrease Miracle is based on a hybrid technology of metals soaps, which is free from lithium. The ingredients promote Make in India and are easily accessible in our nation.

CONCLUSION:

The study's findings are consistent with other research showing that sustainable marketing and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are complementary strategic approaches that jointly produce a sustained competitive advantage. Beyond market positioning eco-friendly products or services, sustainable marketing is an effective way to convey CSR values to broader stakeholders.

Concurrently, CSR provides the operational, social and ethical structure that can help companies build a real sustainability narrative. A successful integration of these two attributes leads to better consumer loyalty, a positive brand reputation, attracting ESG-investors and creating value for both businesses and society.

Yet there are difficulties in the incorporation process. Apart from the continuous threat of greenwashing, which can cause community mistrust, companies are also often confronted with the cost of starting a sustainable project, resistance within the company to organizational changes, and difficulties in measuring the sustainable advantages. These challenges can only be met with a comprehensive strategy approach that is driven by strong top-

management support and commitment, continual innovation, and transparency in implementation and reporting. This paradigm suggests that the identity and the system of operations of a company should be based on sustainability and not simply sustainability as an additional option. When CSR and sustainable marketing are integrated into a business's strategies, it strengthens the company's ability to flourish in complex business environments, with a greater focus on social and environmental responsibility.

CSR and sustainable marketing should be a part of the core of the corporate strategy of every business and not a separate activity. The values for sustainability must be introduced into all organisational activities, ranging from manufacturing to research and development to communication with the outside world. To build confidence in the sustainability claims that companies make, it is important to be transparent and accountable. This includes developing sustainability reports and making them third party verified and conformant to internationally recognised standards.

Additionally, ongoing innovation ought to be a key component of business strategy. New and innovative approaches to business models, processes and products that consider the social and environmental impacts have the potential to establish efficient business practices and new markets in the long-term.

It is also important to have effective monitoring and assessment tools as well as clear, quantifiable sustainability metrics that are used to regularly assess projects and improve every step of the way. Also very important is the involvement of internal and external stakeholders. There should be strong engagement with employees, clients, local communities, and business partners to create a sense of ownership and enhance social legitimacy in the development and implementation of sustainability strategies. Researchers are encouraged to conduct future empirical studies to quantitatively analyze the relationship between corporate social responsibility, sustainable marketing and business performance. A comparative study between industries or countries can also provide valuable insights regarding the role of social, cultural and legal dimensions in the implementation of corporate strategy on corporate sustainability integration (Syah, 2025).

The way the old business model has changed, however, shows that a tremendous amount of the public begins to expect that businesses will not just be profitable, but that they will also be drivers of long-term society growth. The solution to this problem is sought by businesses more and more often. In the current context, the interests of realisation of corporate interests in the aim of maximising profits and competitive advantage, as well as the interests of society in the aim of social, economic and ecological justice, realized in the concept of 'sustainable production' and 'sustainable consumption', respectively, are balanced in practice (Georgieva, M. G.,2020).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has several positive impacts in the marketing field, particularly with regard to branding. That further reinforces the necessity of

CSR as an integral part of marketing for today's businesses that are expected to be good corporate citizens.

This is echoed by Auger et al (2007), who argued that ethical consumerism influences consumers choices, particularly politically motivated teenagers. The results show that this is more likely to be the case for those who are buying goods from companies that practice fair trade, use sustainable products and that are socially conscious. Businesses run the danger of losing market share to rivals who put today's consumers' moral values ahead of their own.

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