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How corporate marketing strategy can leverage the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Master in Management

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BUSINESS
SCHOOL

Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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*Inspiring people and creating value is an ongoing race.
And a race has many steps. In every step of the race there are challenges.
And in every challenge there are tools and people that have value.
And people are inspiring: family and loved ones, colleagues, academics,
supervisor and professionals. Making it endlessly brighter.*

*As Philip Kotler said 'marketing is a race without a finishing line'.
Keep competing valuably for the world.*

Resumo

A sustentabilidade é muito valorizada hoje em dia devido à envolvente de pressão e preocupação socioambiental dos últimos anos, tal como também as Nações Unidas sugeriram metas para tornar a prosperidade benéfica para todos. Assim, os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) para 2030 reconhecem o papel crucial das empresas por meio da sustentabilidade corporativa (CS). Porém, a grande dúvida dos académicos e dos especialistas que resulta no objetivo da pesquisa deste trabalho é como integrar a sustentabilidade na estratégia de marketing no nível micro para contribuir para o desenvolvimento sustentável, para além de saber a importância do marketing nesta questão. Este trabalho desenvolve uma abordagem qualitativa por meio de dados recolhidos de entrevistas com diretores e chefes de marketing para responder sobre estratégias de marketing corporativas usadas para aumentar a sustentabilidade, a importância do marketing e seus desafios e como melhorar em direção ao desenvolvimento sustentável. Nas descobertas verifica-se uma visão de marketing crucial em questões relacionadas ao produto como soluções, à pressão externa e comunicação como uma ferramenta relevante. Há um papel da estratégia de marketing nas mudanças táticas. Questões como consumo, processos e outros na criação de valor sustentável para todos são um desafio atual. No final, este assunto precisa de mais esforços de estudo, de preferência de académicos e profissionais juntos.

Classificação JEL: Q01, M31

Palavras-chave:

Desenvolvimento sustentável, sustentabilidade corporativa, estratégia de marketing

Abstract

Sustainability is highly valued nowadays due to the surroundings of social and environmental pressure and concern over the past few years, such as the United Nations also suggested goals to make prosperity beneficial to all. Thus, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 recognise the crucial role of companies through corporate sustainability (CS). However, the biggest question by academics and by experts resulting in the research purpose of this work is how to integrate sustainability into the marketing strategy in the micro level to contribute to sustainable development, going beyond knowing marketing importance in this matter. This paper develops a qualitative approach through data collected from marketing directors and heads of marketing to respond about business marketing strategies used to enhance sustainability, marketing importance and its challenges and how to improve towards sustainable development. In findings it is verified a crucial marketing view with product related matters as solutions, external pressure and communication as a relevant tool. There is a marketing strategy role in changes with tactics. Issues as consumption, processes and others in creating sustainable value for everyone are a current challenge. In the end, this matter needs more studying efforts, ideally from academics and professionals together.

JEL Classification: Q01, M31

Keywords:

Sustainable Development, Corporate Sustainability, Marketing Strategy

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Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BM: Business Model;

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility;

CS: Corporate Sustainability;

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations;

SD: Sustainable Development;

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals;

SM: Sustainability Marketing;

SMS: Sustainability Marketing Strategy;

TBL: Triple Bottom Line.

Introduction

Sustainability is a topic that has gained a massive importance due to a transition from social and environmental acknowledgment to an integration in strategies. Society and the business sector have understood that sustainable development (SD) is key for surroundings and entities' survival, due to implications shown by the following literature.

The context shows that problems have arisen due to countless trends in economic systems with liabilities, trade matters and dissimilarities, as well as natural distress, consumption concerns and poverty, which the economic crisis of 2008 also had a contribution (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017; Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Ghosh, 2015; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), requiring collaboration (Lankoski, 2016).

All the previous situations increase the importance of SD, with the Brundtland Commission Report being one of the most known milestones in the history of the subject, which theoretically has three dimensions namely economic, social and environmental, besides each dimension consistence being still questioned by some authors (Elkington, 1998; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; Tregidga et al., 2018; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Also, the international awareness caused an inevitability to take SD in a much specific way (Ghosh, 2015; Sachs, 2012) generating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 by the United Nations (UN) in an attempt of a real commitment, issued after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the SDGs are a set of goals related to the dimensions presented earlier (Caiado et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2018; Scheyvens et al., 2016; United Nations, 2015). Essentially, the aim is to have a common vision as there are not opposite sides in SD (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017).

Nevertheless, the response to this kind of proposals is been unsatisfactory (Blanc, 2015), even if this matters shouldn't be disregarded (Ashrafi et al., 2018). As Ghosh (Ghosh, 2015) revealed, the SDGs are not enough when drivers of change are not seen as a transformation. The SDGs aims to inspire governments, businesses and people, and businesses are vital with resources and advantages towards SD, according likewise with academics (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Chang et al., 2017; Christ & Burritt, 2019; Contini et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2018; Olwig, 2021; Scheyvens et al., 2016; United Nations, 2015; Vermeulen & Witjes, 2016).

Moreover, according to Ashrafi et al. (2018), there is a social expectation for companies to get into social and green practices and to prevail it needs financial viability, meaning it is through corporate social responsibility (CSR) or corporate sustainability (CS). CSR and CS allow SD in the business level

(Chang et al., 2017), but there is still uncertainty (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Bansal & Song, 2017), although, it appears that CS is more comprehensive (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Hahn et al., 2015).

Subsequently, including sustainability in corporate strategy is not being mindful of its relevance (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016). There is a need to understand the role (Mio et al., 2020) since CS can lead to competitiveness (Ferro et al., 2019; Lloret, 2016). Yet, there is a difficulty to connect sustainability and businesses, and linking SD with management orientation and strategy to create value (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Byrch et al., 2015; Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Engert et al., 2016; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Neugebauer et al., 2016; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015), existing social pressure and other tensions into a strategic alignment (Hahn et al., 2015; Hengst et al., 2020; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015).

In addition, there is still a doubt in the role of marketing in SD (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019), even though it is being addressed over the years without certainty in knowledge yet, defined as sustainability marketing (SM) and sustainability marketing strategy (SMS), including green marketing and social marketing (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017; Kumar et al., 2016; Wymer & Polonsky, 2015).

Marketing, management and strategy are also connected, because marketing has grown in economics, psychology, sociology, communication and management (Rundle-Thiele et al., 2019) and businesses build relationships with stakeholders, reputations and deal with competition (Lloret, 2016; Werner, 2015). In addition, there is an effort in strategy and communication to include sustainability (Contini et al., 2019), even though every company has its challenges (Schaltegger et al., 2016). Communication is crucial for awareness and for links internally and externally in sustainability strategy (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016; Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016). So, sustainability is important in marketing, which link is meaningful as solutions and practices to address challenges may appear in the marketing area (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016; Lim, 2016).

Consequently, it is possible to realise the public concern and the progress in sustainability area treasuring business responsibility and CS with also the SDGs from the United Nations indicating companies as important tools. According to Christ and Burritt (2019, p. 587), “with some business organisations generating revenues which exceed the Gross Domestic Product of developed countries, one thing is clear: the SDGs will not be achieved without business engagement”.

Hence, in the business world some companies are constructing comprehensive sustainability reports and using standard GRI rules or broader guidelines, like those formed by the United Nations Global Compact and the Carbon Disclosure Project, but the coverage of these topics varies and some other companies only show partial information, which is making it “difficult to make any meaningful

comparisons” (Jones et al., 2018, p. 4). Furthermore, it is still visible organisations avoiding SDGs that will show “problematic practices and systemic power relations that it is not in their interest to change” (Olwig, 2021, p. 10) while doing an effort on those with benefits for them, which delays an all-inclusive perspective (Olwig, 2021). Yet, there are profit-oriented companies that understand marketing as significant towards state-of-minds and actions linking sustainability to this area that evolve in SD in a frank way, stripped of false image (Jones et al., 2018; Olwig, 2021).

However, there is a “need for going beyond the self-reported SDG contributions of organizations” (Mio et al., 2020, p. 23), as some of the sustainability leading companies do more than risk management and don’t exploit SDGs to keep the same business (Olwig, 2021). Risk management also found alarming matters about public sector and corporate legitimacy (Sharma & Soederberg, 2020), meaning that past research was not sufficient on the business role, showing influence of politics and practices stressing limits (Mio et al., 2020). So, according to Mio et al. (2020, p. 22), the pending way has to comprehend “how companies and specific industries integrate SDGs into their internal processes and value chains, as well as (...) in relation to their peers or competitors.”. This is also relevant in a COVID context and after because “there is increased need for business reconversion towards more sustainable business models” (Mio et al., 2020, p. 22), meaning that academic intervention and investigation is relevant to work with companies to provide lasting perspectives and knowledge.

Basically, there are still a lot of gaps and ambiguity in this field, also in the link with strategic marketing. The major answer needed and the actual aim as a key research question of this work is how to integrate sustainability into the marketing strategy in a micro level to contribute to SD, to search about the problem statement of insufficient knowledge and practices in businesses explained earlier, besides only perceiving its importance by businesses. There is a great business impact in this introductory study to enable more investigation, commitment and practices, which for the business environment is needed to understand their role and the contribution of marketing for them on how and why in SD. The research that relates the SDGs and integration of SD in the marketing strategy is quite recent, and most of the articles are literature reviews or a recognition of its importance. Articles that make a practical approach to research are beginning to appear more, although the literature is still scarce. So, the main objectives of this research are:

- To explore the importance of sustainability in marketing and main challenges;
- To explore marketing strategy link with SDGs;
- To explore the change or improvement needed for sustainability marketing strategy.

Dissertation structure

Chapter 1 - Literature Review: This chapter presented the literature that explain main issues for this work, namely Sustainable Development (SD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Sustainability (CS); Corporate Strategy and Marketing impact on Sustainable Development (SD); Corporate Strategy and Marketing link with Corporate Sustainability (CS).

Chapter 2 - Methodology: The qualitative method to study the research problem and objectives, through topics of Research Design; Data Sampling, Data Analysis and Research Techniques.

Chapter 3 - Results: This topic shows the analysis and results of the research, divided into Sample Characterization; Discussion and Findings.

Chapter 4 - Conclusions: This chapter presents conclusions and contributions of the findings; Limitations and Recommendations.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

1.1 - Sustainable Development (SD) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The recent system of open markets and growth by capital theoretically originates prosperity, investment, income, employability, technological evolution, and other tendencies. In contrast, it has actually exposed a rise on global indebtedness, trading dependency, crises and inequality linking social and economic problems (Ghosh, 2015). Environmental destruction, climate change, demographic effects on urbanization, access to resources and consumption issues, poverty, inequity and others exist in a long-term showing the importance and breadth of SD (Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Ghosh, 2015; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). So, there are a sum of reasons why sustainability is a main subject, which is not about a concern of contradictory topics like sustainability and economic growth as some defend, because it is complex (Jones et al., 2018; Tregidga et al., 2018) requiring engagement and cooperation of different actors (Lankoski, 2016; Olwig, 2021).

Accordingly, SD is usually described by academics by embracing three dimensions or the triple bottom line (TBL) approach introduced by Elkington: economic (profit and the capacity to be sustained long term); social (people dimension towards equality and a reduction of related effects); and environmental (preserving natural resources and the planet) (Elkington, 1998; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). In fact, SD is acknowledged for numerous of decades and related ideals were introduced even before the most widespread definition known presented in the 1987 report named Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Commission Report, that states that SD can meet the needs of the present generations such that the needs of future generations are not compromised (Chang et al., 2017; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). There are also many attempts to clarify it, considering concern and capacity of systems, both environmental and social, and calling humanity to notice the durability of them, which allowed an evolution in the area having theories in time (Chang et al., 2017), and meaning that ambiguity still exists (Tregidga et al., 2018).

Hence, there is a need to link local, national and global strategies in a more balanced way and that consider the context (Ghosh, 2015), which made sustainable goals to be recognised as needed in the Rio+20 summit in 2012, because of the rising urgency of SD worldwide for post-2015 (Sachs, 2012). Therefore, from a world perspective, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were issued in 2015 as a wide-ranging set of 17 goals, as shown in figure 1 (United Nations, 2020), and 169 targets on a social, economic and environmental nature, agreed at a United Nations General Assembly, which reveals common objectives with different expectations and actors towards a sustainable pathway,

including countries and governments, businesses and society to make efforts into a new direction, which the business sector has also an important role (Chang et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2018; Scheyvens et al., 2016; United Nations, 2015).



Figure 1 - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Thus, the SDGs are a planification for people, the world and development (United Nations, 2015), which were built on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to act on improving the work developed, where the businesses’ activities “are major drivers (...), ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals” (United Nations, 2015, p. 10). Basically, according to Annan-Diab and Molinari (2017, p. 74), SD is relevant for “business leaders, governments, universities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the media”, reinforced by the financial crisis of 2008 and the United Nations proposals over time. SDGs entails commitment, all countries and entities in reducing poverty, adjusting consumption and production and other goals on sustainability, which means that the “ongoing population and economic growth will (...) increase the planetary pressure and escalate social exclusion and inequality” (Caiado et al., 2018, p. 1284).

However, despite “government policies worldwide increasingly require companies to provide environmental and social protection, as well as to conform to a growing number of international agreements on human rights and labor conditions” (Olwig, 2021, p. 4), the response to sustainability initiatives is unequal by attitude bringing a need for integration of SDGs in strategies, which prior efforts report a lack of integration across sectors (Blanc, 2015). There is a widespread awareness that helping or concerning about matters has not solved anything and that investments and capital are misused and wasted, thus “whether NGOs or businesses - must stop branding development as a political doing good and instead engage substantively with development as an emplaced politicized

practice” (Olwig, 2021, p. 10). It’s key that the economic progress doesn’t depreciate society and the environment, where it is essentially constructed and performs (Ashrafi et al., 2018).

Consequently, it’s indispensable to find strategies to make the most of sustainability (Pizzi et al., 2020), although, Ghosh (Ghosh, 2015) mentioned that the SDGs are insufficient if not considering the procedures that difficult or not towards transformational progress not only by knowing discouraged actions. Meaning that for businesses the “SDGs might be yet another example of selective behaviour unless compelling reasons to support the SDGs that concern society are demonstrated” (Christ & Burritt, 2019, p. 573). So, “the breadth and interconnectedness of the SDGs make it evident that professionals from different disciplines and sectors must work together to deliver the goals” (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017, p. 81) and it would be possibly beneficial for companies to give priority to certain goals first (Ike et al., 2019).

1.2 - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Sustainability (CS)

According to academics, the evolution in the area states that businesses are central in transition to SD (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Chang et al., 2017; Vermeulen & Witjes, 2016), as they are accountable for salary and jobs, human capital and skill development, technology and advances in main activities, as stated by Ashrafi et al. (2018). This means that they have knowledge and resources to face sustainability issues (Contini et al., 2019), however it is still tough aligning with strategy to change towards creating value, even if it is advantageous to the society, the organisation and the environment (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Dyllick & Muff, 2016).

Nevertheless, there is a wide expectation from stakeholders for companies to change from economic and legal responsibilities and obligations to embrace social and green practices, which must also need profitability for a company to endure, and it may be called corporate social responsibility (CSR) or corporate sustainability (CS), which irregularity in micro-level advance, meaning sustainability in business, and macro-level deterioration, relating to SD, is an unbalanced inconsistency in actions and the entire situation (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Dyllick & Muff, 2016). Also, despite all the theories identified, CSR and CS theories allows to operationalise SD in the micro corporate level (Chang et al., 2017).

Additionally, there is discrepancy in literature terminology of CSR and CS (Ashrafi et al., 2018), since both origins are different and it “has caused confusion and stunted the growth of the field” (Bansal & Song, 2017, p. 106). Although, similarities are in shared value creation with social, environmental and economic actions (Ashrafi et al., 2018), where the rule of judgement for each

business underlies the choice of corporate governance to act in suitable social matters for company best interests (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). In fact, responsibility origin was normative and welfare economics and ethics, whereas sustainability was in systems science and its initial steps focused on environmental concerns and natural surroundings where society also exists (Bansal & Song, 2017). So, “responsibility and sustainability emerged from different paradigms and converged only in the last two decades” (Bansal & Song, 2017, p. 130).

Accordingly, CSR shows concern with society, from social and philanthropy origin, with social pressure in capabilities to improve livelihoods and also get financial benefits because of it, starting academically in the fifties transitioning to an wider extent in time (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2017). The vision that CSR only aims profit despite social wellbeing has to change to allow social improvement and only then to make enough earnings to grow (Hoque et al., 2018). Nevertheless, according to Hoque et al. (2018, p. 1130), CSR makes enterprises “mindful of their societal responsibility and mend the damage of their public and social image”, being one of the most known practices worldwide for businesses to positively adjust mindsets. CSR can also be defined as “the responsibilities of a firm for economic gains, society and the environment” (Chang et al., 2017, p. 50). Also, one of the main discoveries in the eighties was that stakeholders are actually more than suppliers, clients, workers, including other entities and actors (Chang et al., 2017).

Similarly, CS is a commitment to perform in the three dimensions stated by the TBL (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2017), as “definitions of CS all emphasize the importance of meeting stakeholders' need; and balancing the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of corporate performance” (Chang et al., 2017, p. 51). The TBL approach allows CS in the business context, likewise helping implement CSR (Chang et al., 2017). Although, CS also considers business short and long-term sight to create value for stakeholders in strategy (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Hahn et al., 2015). It ponders about internal and external accountability and responsible practices and CS with basis in sustainability and SD provides a holistic perspective of different subjects (Ashrafi et al., 2018). Also, it considers the Business model (BM) (Chang et al., 2017).

In comparison, Engert et al. (2016) indicates that the integration of CS in strategy is aimed to be durable and Ashrafi et al. (2018) revealed that adding CS in corporate models means also CSR, but the other way around doesn't mean really incorporating sustainable actions into the business, because CSR seems to embrace dimensional considerations in short-term and CS integrates and connects them in activities and in long-term (Ashrafi et al., 2018; Hahn et al., 2015). That is the reason why CS is more complete. Although, the future research and the notion about merging responsibility and sustainability initiates in strategic management with relevant points on the literature, namely shared value and the

TBL, where firms aim to profit and link themselves with the surroundings, natural and social (Bansal & Song, 2017). Also, there is a wide-ranging trend in fresh concepts and subjects like green growth and green economies, since “the core assumption (...) is that currently environmental progress cannot be separated from economic growth and development” (Chang et al., 2017, p. 52). However, the main doubt remains on how to actually use sustainability in businesses, despite knowing its value, having current challenges and tensions in understanding the matter (Byrch et al., 2015) and doing gradual efforts to integrate it (Lozano, 2015).

1.3 - Corporate Strategy and Marketing impact on Sustainable Development (SD)

Sustainability converted into a strategic urgency due to the generalised awareness (Hengst et al., 2020), but many tensions in different dimensional levels and conflicting aspects must not be neglected (Hahn et al., 2015; Slawinski & Bansal, 2015). There is also doubt in having a more specific answer on the dimensions (TBL), what is really critical and what is each consistence, emphasizing that SD is still a sum of popularised and generalised discourses and what enables evolution in knowledge is not completely answered (Tregidga et al., 2018).

Moreover, strategy is known as a long-term direction even though it may also occur from emerging contexts and change, and sustainability impacts and complexities are actually challenging, showing the difficulty for entities to undertake it (Neugebauer et al., 2016; Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015). Values of accountability and responsibility must encourage it, like electing suppliers assessing conduct and production, paying attention to human and environmental norms and appreciation, selecting transportation seeing green effects and investing in research including SD and technology related to it (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016). Similarly, according to Tregidga et al. (2018, p. 297), SD in the micro level “requires technical modifications to the means of production to produce an efficient, modified version of “business as usual””, perceiving that sustainable business models have been gaining recognition (Dentchev et al., 2018) in managing and communicating the “company’s sustainable value proposition (...) and how it captures economic value while maintaining or regenerating natural, social and economic capital beyond its organizational boundaries” (Schaltegger et al., 2016, p. 268).

Also, according to Rundle-Thiele et al. (2019, p. 161), marketing is a “strategic planned process (...) to deliver solutions that drive profit”. Although, the academic work evolution diverge in understanding the role of sustainability marketing to be an input in SD (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019), even though marketing “has played an important role in economic growth and prosperity across the globe” (Rundle-

Thiele et al., 2019, p. 161) and being important in conduct and behaviour impacting social matters. Basically, as Wymer and Polonsky (2015, p. 254) stated that “marketing across the economic system needs to be transformative and needs to improve society and human welfare, moving beyond a profit-maximizing myopia”. It is also due to initiatives started in policies and public developments that organisations can change and undertake sustainability efforts to get over barriers (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019).

Also, the market is getting more conscious of consumption issues and tendencies (Ingenbleek et al., 2015) and, in order to comply with the paradigm, sustainability marketing (SM) and sustainability marketing strategy (SMS) appeared recently considering strategic segmentation, targeting and positioning towards sustainability in the marketing mix, also entailing green or social marketing (Kumar et al., 2016). Several academics actually predict in time the blend of relationship, social, green and ethical marketing into sustainable marketing (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019).

Green marketing aims at reducing “dissonance between cognitions about attitudes and (...) behaviors” and possibly provoking social norms (McDonald et al., 2015, p. 1520). It must aim conditions improvement, but then many environmental problems don’t start or resolute only in national limits needing international cooperation going against unethical capitalism and consumption (Wymer & Polonsky, 2015). There is an interest on environmental business objectives in SDGs as they are the most mentioned in studies highlighting the strategic role on this (Mio et al., 2020). Accordingly, there is an urgency to find out the corporate role in green marketing and issues in SD, which means starting to appeal to the overall public and not only green consumers (Wymer & Polonsky, 2015).

Also, social marketing is important since having an environmental culture is not enough and learning agendas are desirable to allow people to know and recognize the matter (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017; Wymer & Polonsky, 2015). Social marketing is different than traditional marketing perceived to trade goods that offer value to the market (Rundle-Thiele et al., 2019).

The key basically is to deal on how to strategically implement sustainability (Engert et al., 2016; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016) and having a common vision in all actors with no opposite sides (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017).

1.4 - Corporate Strategy and Marketing link with Corporate Sustainability (CS)

Companies outline reputations through strategic relationships with stakeholders to prevent also activism actions and reputation may still be seen as an economic performance (Werner, 2015), as

according to Lloret (2016, p. 418) “competitiveness reflects its long-term performance and relationships”. Companies try to use capabilities to reach strategy and communication objectives, since associations can lead to reputation (Contini et al., 2019). Although, gaps in a company affect progress opportunities, namely culture, values and communication (Vermeulen & Witjes, 2016) and all types of organisations from “niche market players and mass market incumbents, all have different business models and (...) different challenges in developing and establishing them ” (Schaltegger et al., 2016, p. 265). Although, “the lack of strategic orientation in corporate sustainability management is one major reason for lack of progress” (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017, p. 89) in the study of the business function in transitioning to SD (Dyllick & Muff, 2016).

CS is not about being mindful of its relevance and seeming responsible for external drivers, it is not about involvement on a moral social duty without strategic vision excluding marketing, it is not inertia and unawareness by being invisible in the market and having lack of competitiveness (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016). It is still crucial to relate companies as producers of SD (Mio et al., 2020). Sustainability strategies are “more than a responsibility (...) to be able to survive over time” (Ashrafi et al., 2018, p. 677) and structures and processes must fit consistently (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Székely & Brocke, 2017). Some practices are to expand operations, functions and governance, support autonomy and know-how, adjust values and culture, form anti-misleading and anti-corruption work structures, implement training, learning and ideals of privacy, and others (Jones et al., 2018).

Basically, the connection is to create value (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017) from planned to emergent strategy, most of it is mixed (Neugebauer et al., 2016). Sustainable actions avoid costs of fixing damages or fines and helps the brand image and reputation, market coverage, risk reduction and financial results, engagement and recruitment, by creating value for the company (Ferro et al., 2019). CS can mean competitiveness, as some authors believe like Ferro et al. (2019) and Lloret (2016), if opportunities linked are recognised suitably (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017). It is important to get in the culture to develop sustainable corporate practices with commitment and engagement aiming to shape reputation and attractiveness into brand equity and loyalty (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016; Ferro et al., 2019; Galpin et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2018; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). So, “the involvement of all the areas of an enterprise implies that sustainability is a shared value (...) with a high level of empowerment facilitated by profound cross departmental communication” (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016, p. 426).

Sustainability in marketing has been an objective over the last 30 years, yet without solid knowledge as seems not having considerable similarities (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; Lim, 2016). The concern is that it can be judged of unethical to exploit and make profits, yet it is crucial in any

sustainability strategy and to have communication to provide awareness and alignment which can't be seen as immoral (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016). The integration of sustainability means culture, decisions and practices (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). The main topics are still around products and market orientations, having small impact overall because it is a much multifaced and dense subject (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). Also, it is focused on economic growth with "the concept of sustainable consumption, which is a major element of one of the SDGs", being still difficult for advertising and marketing practices (Jones et al., 2018, p. 6).

In fact, since the 20th century academics are advising businesses to move from only making profit by contributing with societal value (Vermeulen & Witjes, 2016). This is about the fact that the "business objective cannot solely be to gain profit, but also to achieve it ethically" (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016, p. 427) and transparency must arise for stakeholders to be informed about actions, which means that CS requires change and learning (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Rundle-Thiele et al., 2019). Goals, learning, feedback and activities must be integrated and it is challenging with a fresh relevant aspect being communication internally and externally in sustainability strategy (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016; Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016). Consequently, communication is of great importance in sustainability strategy (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016).

Therefore, sustainability is pertinent from a marketing point of view, since "the interconnection between sustainability and marketing is closer than it appears" (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016, p. 421), because marketing has several responses to sustainability challenges to benefit companies and stakeholders with creativity and innovation to find ways to improve and be efficient (Lim, 2016). "Sustainability can represent a marketing tool for companies, but on one condition: they must believe in its realization" (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016, p. 428), transitioning from morality to a strategic balanced way shared with stakeholders.

1.5 - Critical Analysis and Main Issues

There are still a great share of breaches and doubts in the research area and still uncertainty of strategic marketing and CS. Accordingly, the relevant amount of consideration that academics have towards the SDGs and its relation to sustainability quickly increased during 2012 and 2019, which the Journal of Cleaner Production being the most cited, followed by management journals (Pizzi et al., 2020). Other contents about sustainability marketing and strategy in the literature have a small range, although having a notion that sustainability marketing deserves a new viewpoint also to the way it is implemented by marketing professionals (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). To sum up, the following table

(Table 1) shows several relevant issues in the literature part of academic papers for this work development, according to a thorough search in the area.

Table 1: Main issues in the Literature Review

Author	Title	Journal (Year)	Main Issues
Ashrafi, M., Adams, M., Walker, T. R., and Magnan, G.	How corporate social responsibility can be integrated into corporate sustainability: a theoretical review of their relationships	International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology (2018)	From corporate obligations towards sustainability practices, CSR and CS concepts and relations as strategies
Baldassarre, F., and Campo, R.	Sustainability as a marketing tool: To be or to appear to be?	Business Horizons (2016)	Sustainability strategic relevance and practices, also marketing towards competitive advantage, and communication as relevant
Bansal, P., and Song, H. C.	Similar but not the same: Differentiating Corporate Sustainability from Corporate Responsibility	Academy of Management Annals (2017)	Distinguishing CS from CSR and its origins
Baumgartner, R. J., and Rauter, R.	Strategic perspectives of corporate sustainability management to develop a sustainable organization	Journal of Cleaner Production (2017)	Strategic management and sustainability integration into activities creating value
Chang, R., Zuo, J., Zhao, Z., Zillante, G., and Gan, X.	Evolving theories of sustainability and firms: History, future directions and implications for	Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews (2017)	SD evolution and corporate role, theories allowing SD including CSR and CS

	renewable energy research		and its relations with TBL
Dyllick, T., and Muff, K.	Clarifying the Meaning of Sustainable Business: Introducing a Typology From Business-as-Usual to True Business Sustainability	Organization and Environment (2016)	Role of business on effective contributions to sustainability and difficulty to align with management and strategy
Ferro, C., Padin, C., Høgevoid, N., Svensson, G., and Sosa Varela, J. C.	Validating and expanding a framework of a triple bottom line dominant logic for business sustainability through time and across contexts	Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing (2019)	TBL logic for business and actions advantages for corporate and brand interest
Ghosh, J.	Beyond the Millennium Development Goals: a southern perspective on a global new deal	Journal of International Development (2015)	Contemporary realities, financial-led markets and the international context, SDGs towards strategy
Jones, P., Comfort, D., and Hillier, D.	Common Ground: the sustainable development goals and the marketing and advertising industry.	Journal of Public Affairs (2018)	SDGs and engagement, sustainably as a main subject
Kemper, J. A., and Ballantine, P. W.	What do we mean by sustainability marketing?	Journal of Marketing Management (2019)	The role of marketing in SD and conceptualisations towards evolving
Kumar, V., Rahman, Z., and Kazmi, A. A.	Assessing the Influence of Stakeholders on Sustainability Marketing	SAGE Open (2016)	Sustainability marketing (SM) and sustainability

	Strategy of Indian Companies		marketing strategy (SMS)
Rundle-Thiele, S., David, P., Willmott, T., Pang, B., Eagle, L., and Hay, R.	Social marketing theory development goals: an agenda to drive change	Journal of Marketing Management (2019)	Marketing relevance, link of sustainability and social marketing
Vermeulen, W. J. V., and Witjes, S.	On addressing the dual and embedded nature of business and the route towards corporate sustainability	Journal of Cleaner Production (2016)	CS on social dynamics, from profit to societal value, where internal efforts matter

Chapter 2

Methodology

Academics are part of the required input in sustainability in searching and analysing data of SDGs and corporate solutions by developing knowledge and teaching upcoming managers, which cooperation of academics and people in business practices is important leading to “new opportunities for knowledge-generation and, it is hoped, a feedback loop of continual improvement” (Christ & Burritt, 2019, p. 587). Consequently, this research is relevant.

The research is exploratory in nature, presenting a qualitative research as semi-structured interviews to marketing directors or heads of marketing to start this discussion in practice. Authors like Byrch et al. (2015), Slawinski and Bansal (2015), Engert and Baumgartner (2016), Ike et al. (2019), Hengst et al. (2020), Santos and Bastos (2020) and others have also chosen interviews because it is appropriate to perceive matters with no solid ground yet on how companies can improve in sustainability. It is not also to fit into a specific model since the area is still expanding, but rather to find knowledge of marketing strategy relating the sustainability and SDGs in businesses.

2.1 - Research Design

Academic work developed so far in CS strategy in theoretical models and empirical studies are mostly focused on the area of expertise of management and decision making, however, this work direction is to focus on the marketing area, namely marketing strategy and the SDGs, which prior frameworks are not a perfect fit. For example, Epstein and Roy (2001); Epstein and Roy (2007); Galbreath (2009); Simas et al. (2013); Engert and Baumgartner (2016); Fleming et al. (2017); Santos and Bastos (2020); etc.

Consequently, to comply with research objectives the design of the guidelines for the qualitative method of interviews is towards a straightforward conversation about marketing strategies and practices (annex 1). It starts with working information of the director to quickly understand the role of the interviewee and for how long, based on the structure of Engert and Baumgartner (2016). Then, the following questions focus on exploring the strategies associated to the SDGs and each goal (Christ & Burritt, 2019; United Nations Global Compact et al., 2015) with questions on marketing strategies generally introduced by Engert and Baumgartner (2016). As Olwig (2021) said, by selecting there is a focus on which SDGs benefit them and the brand. The Engert and Baumgartner (2016) structure is the basis to guide this design, however it aims to find each orientation of each of the specific companies interviewed in a strategy perspective and this specific work aims to find mainstream sustainable

marketing strategies in exploratory marketing perspective of sustainability in practice given by heads of the department. The previous study is found as the most useful in terms of direction to construct the method, which usually the questions are open and not limited to each SDGs. Although, this work objective is also about marketing approaches in a choice of five to understand how it can be useful, meaning that all the questions are chosen and adapted to the specific aim desired, as also including open and opinion questions about sustainability marketing importance, challenges, and improvement.

2.2 - Data sampling, Data Analysis and Research Techniques

The total of a sample of twenty people interviewed, which are directors of marketing and heads of the department of companies, meaning the higher positions of the area. This work uses a Nonprobability Sampling, because participants were selected relying on the personal judgment of the researcher to have relevant elements with judgmental sampling. The data collection follows a Cross-Sectional Design, since is gathered in a specific point in time.

The gathering of data in interviews was made using digital tools like Zoom and Microsoft Teams and recorded digitally using OBS Studio, lasting in average between 25 to 35 minutes, which guidelines were verified to focus participants into the subjects pretended with some flexibility associated. Transcripts were gathered from the recordings, then translated and introduced in the chosen program for analysis, which the data analysis was done by using KH Coder. Basically, the knowledge aims to benefit companies on sustainability to start acting through marketing in the current challenging world.

Concerning research techniques, the interviews have content on perspectives on matters which results will be linked with the literature later. To study this qualitative data relying on text mining analysis several tools were used:

- Word frequency Analysis: list to see the most used words and why they are important.
- Words Association Analysis: used to know the most frequent words associated with an exact word to identify links between concepts.
- Co-Occurrence Analysis: general representation to embrace the total relation between words. It includes mind mapping to found ideas with partition into minor subgraphs to compare.
- Hierarchical Cluster Analysis: analyse which groups of words have alike appearance patterns and it can be significant for summarising and organizing matters bringing extra information than the previous map.
- Characteristic Parts Analysis: used to see the wide-ranging story flow construction of the entire viewpoint in each main part and interview.

Chapter 3

Results

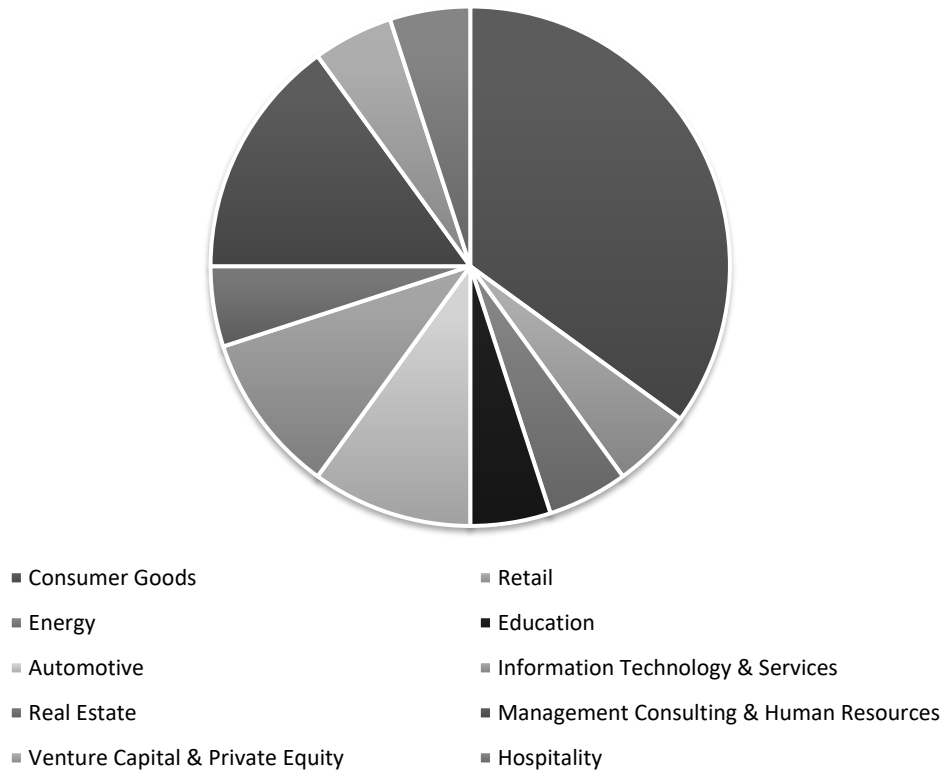
3.1 - Sample Characterization

The sample elements were assembled as twenty people in top positions of marketing in various companies. The sample dimension is not so thicker since significant areas were chosen to provide dense perspectives and elaborate on strategies to conduct clear lines of thought and remember experiences in businesses and experimental knowledge-based tactics. Depending on the company, the marketing professionals on uppermost positions have several different designations for that specific function, as it is shown in the following graph (Graph 1).



Graph 1 - Sample description: Professional Position

The obtained sample has mostly marketing director as job definition with the resulting characteristics of 12 being male and 8 being female. Also, about the years of experience in the specific companies: 25% had less than 1 year as marketing director of his/hers company, 55% had between 1 and 5 years, 20% between 5 and 15 years. Although, some of the interviewed were already experienced in the chosen area of expertise or were even directors or heads of marketing before. These professionals were in different contexts and markets, as it is shown in the following graph (Graph 2).



Graph 2 - Sample description: Industry Distribution

In addition, the companies where the interviewees work are in different categories of exploring markets and industries like Energy, Automotive, Real Estate, Retail, Education, Information Technology & Services, Management Consulting & Human Resources, Venture Capital & Private Equity, Hospitality, and Consumer Goods related to subgroups of industries such as pharmaceuticals, food products, electronics, wine and spirits, utilities and plastics, cosmetics, and coffee products. The purpose was to reach the widest ranged knowledge and experiences developed to understand the topics in a broader and relevant way. That is the reason why these companies were chosen presently working in the business sector constituted by 7 places of work in small and medium-sized companies and 11 on large companies, where the remaining 2 are in the limit between medium-sized and large companies. According to Rosati and Faria (2019), the size might show larger organizations having conditions and position, sector or country characteristics and/or capabilities like technology, marketing, and branding to address sustainability, meaning that the sample must be balanced in numbers significantly in both categories in order to reach a much richer conclusion.

3.2 - Discussion and Findings

There is a range of tools available to analyse qualitative data. It is crucial to select the most interesting for the research objectives and according to the study in question. This theme is quite introductory in terms of results and definitive answers, as elaborated in the literature and parts above. For this reason, the analysis method components and tests are chosen with this notion, which results are below.

3.2.1 Word frequency Analysis

Taking into consideration the word frequency list, the trendiest words are relevant to understand the main perspective and topics discussed as more meaningful in conversations about the theme, as it's shown in figure 3.

List				
#	Word	POS / Conj.	Frequency	
1	company	Noun	421	
2	marketing	Noun	419	
3	product	Noun	347	
4	strategy	Noun	269	
5	sustainability	Noun	251	
6	people	Noun	193	
7	communication	Noun	159	
8	goal	Noun	146	
9	good	Adj	144	
10	action	Noun	142	
11	area	Noun	141	
12	sustainable	Adj	139	
13	way	Noun	132	
14	important	Adj	124	
15	brand	Noun	117	
16	consumer	Noun	112	
17	question	Noun	104	
18	issue	Noun	103	
19	need	Verb	99	
20	challenge	Noun	98	

Figure 2 - Output: Word Frequency List by KH Coder

The word most frequently used is company, predictable seeing the practical aspect of the chosen interviewees. They have referred proper business interventions and real examples when asked questions, specifically to identify the importance of marketing strategy and analyse tactics that may have an impact. This high frequency of the word relates also with conversations mentioning the expectation of companies by everyone to have sustainable practices, as Ashrafi et al. (2018) mentioned, which motivated companies to do efforts to include sustainability, as Contini et al. (2019) said earlier. So, numerous influences bring companies to act as considered important and central in

SD, which predicts an considerable amount of the word use, as referred by Olwig (2021), Baumgartner and Rauter (2017), Chang et al. (2017) and Vermeulen and Witjes (2016).

The second most used word was marketing, suitable by the key aspect of this research being relevant from a marketing perspective, as authors like Baldassarre and Campo (2016), Jones et al. (2018) and Lim (2016) referred. The main ideas in interviews were also to move from profit (Wymer & Polonsky, 2015) and consider marketing to grow, prosper and change behaviour, as also literature predicted (Ingenbleek et al., 2015; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; Rundle-Thiele et al., 2019; Wymer & Polonsky, 2015).

Another frequent word was product, which confirms the majority of the sustainable marketing area discussion being about products and market orientations like Kemper and Ballantine (2019) suggested, meaning that there is a need to develop on the business roles of SD (Mio et al., 2020). Also, the word people is vastly stated and according to Chang et al. (2017), Jones et al. (2018), Scheyvens et al. (2016) and United Nations (2015), society is one of the many different actors and it has expectations of companies, which justifies interviewees interventions focussing on the social consideration. This is because as Ashrafi et al. (2018) and Wymer and Polonsky (2015) mentioned, it pressures to have businesses solutions on green issues for the general public, products being one of them.

Finally, other important words used a lot were strategy and sustainability calling to attention the significance of them individually. Also indicating that sustainability is in every interviewee mind and that strategy is a recognised area by all as part of the plan that conducts a direction to each business. This can also relate to the fact that CS can be a source of competitiveness if properly conducted as Ferro et al. (2019) and Lloret (2016) revealed.

In addition, there was a high value usage of the words goal, action, way, consumer, issue, need, challenge, brand, among others that are related to the exploratory nature of research in which the interviewees have a relative freedom within the parameters of the questions to speak casually and recall possibly useful circumstances and example situations to develop more on issues relating to entrepreneurial actions and internal dynamics, brands image and rebranding processes, product developments and design, value chain and processes, networking and partnerships, communications and distribution, industry and social pressures, and social behaviour in order to contribute sustainably.

Similarly common in dialogs was the word communication which is known by the sample elements in a professional manner of being of major importance to inform and to establish relations in this particular area, agreeing with the literature of Baldassarre and Campo (2016), Baumgartner and Rauter (2017), Engert and Baumgartner (2016).

3.2.2 Word Association Analysis

Three main topics of this research namely marketing, sustainability and strategy were chosen as object of analysis, as well as communication and product as a reflection the two following most talked topics in this theme, key in this area. The figures presented below (Figure 4 to 7) show words mostly associated with the term introduced, which includes the number of times used in the interviews in the unconditional part, and then a conditional reference which means the number of times the word was associated with the word in search. However, the last column Jaccard has no relevance for this research and objective.

Firstly, the marketing concept (figure 3) is associated with words like strategy and sustainability, which clearly relates to marketing being important in any sustainability strategy, as Baldassarre and Campo (2016) suggests . Also, adding the company word, this area works on what companies have to offer and by strategizing the marketing mix and elaborating on segmentation, targeting and positioning as Kumar et al. (2016) indicates. It shows that the most linked terms are sustainability marketing and/or marketing strategy, which is relevant to notice that the many branches of marketing possible for businesses are not so mentioned, inclining more to the fusion that several academics expect of all types into sustainability marketing only, like Kemper and Ballantine (2019). Other words like goal, responsibility, importance are related to the relevance of marketing action and the accountability to inform and work on relationships, and while words like improve, way, and communication reveal a path of growth and evolution in which communication in marketing is part of it, eg. Baldassarre and Campo (2016).

The screenshot shows the KH Coder interface. The 'Search Entry' field contains '#direct'. The 'Coding Rule File' is set to 'No File S'. The search criteria are '#direct: and marketing'. The 'Unit' is set to 'Paragraphs'. Below the search settings is a table titled 'Result:' with the following data:

N	word	POS	unconditional	conditional	Jaccard
1	strategy	Noun	164 (0.237)	130 (0.591)	0.5118
2	sustainability	Noun	113 (0.163)	80 (0.364)	0.3162
3	company	Noun	135 (0.195)	75 (0.341)	0.2679
4	goal	Noun	84 (0.121)	53 (0.241)	0.2112
5	sustainable	Adj	83 (0.120)	48 (0.218)	0.1882
6	responsibility	Noun	54 (0.078)	43 (0.195)	0.1861
7	improve	Verb	57 (0.082)	42 (0.191)	0.1787
8	way	Noun	83 (0.120)	45 (0.205)	0.1744
9	importance	Noun	50 (0.072)	40 (0.182)	0.1739
10	communication	Noun	78 (0.113)	44 (0.200)	0.1732

Figure 3 - Output: Word Association Table with the word 'marketing' by KH Coder

Secondly, the sustainability word (figure 4) is first associated with challenge, confirming that there is a current difficulty in actually using sustainability in businesses having tensions and challenges intensifying it with the growing awareness as indicated by Byrch et al. (2015), Hengst et al. (2020), Lozano (2015). There is also the word importance to relate with sustainability confirming this since this is a crucial subject as Jones et al. (2018) and Tregidga et al. (2018) mentioned. The words marketing, strategy and company relates to what was presented earlier since sustainability is being analysed and integrated with effort by some companies with actions towards SD in a truthful way stripped of projection, confirming what was observed by some authors like Olwig (2021), even if this particular topic of really making the difference is addressed by many as a current concern. The following words of improve, important, issue and need confirms the need to move forward, do more, and get better on it due to the many needs and consequences of sustainability effects as Chang et al. (2017), Dyllick & Muff (2016), Ghosh (2015), World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).

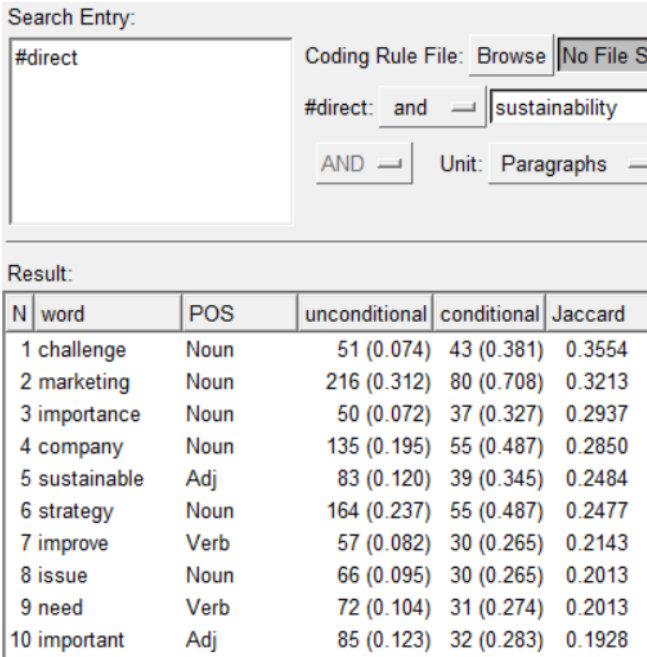


Figure 4 - Output: Word Association Table with the word 'sustainability' by KH Coder

Thirdly, the strategy term (figure 5) repeats on the main previous words by the previous analysis which clearly ends up revealing that there is a great approximation of the basic terms of importance around each one, which establishes a link between the main topics of the method, expected by the direction taken in the study questions for these same topics. The additional term choose and include which may refer to the integration aspect and the right use of strategy to contribute beneficially, calling changes for example in production, processes, human resources, transportation, technologies and

others, indicating that management issues need to be stimulated by responsibility like Baldassarre and Campo (2016) and Tregidga et al. (2018) suggested, as another frequent associated word.

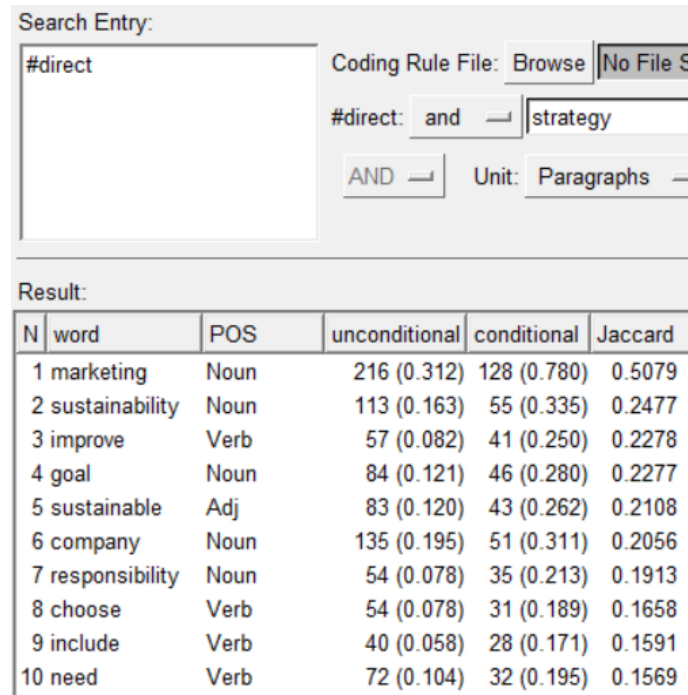


Figure 5 - Output: Word Association Table with the word 'strategy' by KH Coder

Then, the product term (figure 6) and communication term (figure7) end up being in each list of mostly used words also, since they are related in this particular area and by the interviewees. Products are main discussion since they are important for companies and consumers, which imply processes and value chains changes like the main words related in the interviews being consumer, development, important, company, consumption, issue, process, and others meaning that for sustainable commitments there is a need for changes on consumption, production, structures, processes and patterns, as literature authors like Baldassarre and Campo (2016), Tregidga et al. (2018), Engert and Baumgartner (2016), Székely and Brocke (2017) mentioned. It means that everyone is paying attention to the planetary pressure, plastic and materials questions, social matters and others as Caiado et al. (2018) for example also refers, like the words in each figure. Also, the communication figure indicates it can be internal or external, it is recognised to stimulate action and prevent behaviours on these issues, it can impact people and companies, and it is important, as the main words related shows. This relates to authors that said that there is a need to develop over time sustainable corporate practices, like Ferro et al. (2019) and Kemper and Ballantine (2019), since communication is major in giving awareness and alignment linking internally and externally, as Baldassarre and Campo (2016), Baumgartner and Rauter (2017), Engert and Baumgartner (2016) mentioned.

Search Entry: #direct

Coding Rule File: Browse No File

#direct: and product

AND Unit: Paragraphs

Result:

N	word	POS	unconditional	conditional	Jaccard
1	consumer	Noun	44 (0.064)	36 (0.391)	0.3600
2	development	Noun	47 (0.068)	32 (0.348)	0.2991
3	important	Adj	85 (0.123)	36 (0.391)	0.2553
4	company	Noun	135 (0.195)	43 (0.467)	0.2337
5	communication	Noun	78 (0.113)	32 (0.348)	0.2319
6	consumption	Noun	40 (0.058)	24 (0.261)	0.2222
7	issue	Noun	66 (0.095)	28 (0.304)	0.2154
8	plastic	Noun	27 (0.039)	21 (0.228)	0.2143
9	process	Noun	39 (0.056)	23 (0.250)	0.2130
10	brand	Noun	40 (0.058)	23 (0.250)	0.2110

Figure 6 - Output: Word Association Table with the word 'product' by KH Coder

Search Entry: #direct

Coding Rule File: Browse No File

#direct: and communication

AND Unit: Paragraphs

Result:

N	word	POS	unconditional	conditional	Jaccard
1	communicate	Verb	46 (0.066)	29 (0.367)	0.3021
2	external	Adj	39 (0.056)	24 (0.304)	0.2553
3	action	Noun	64 (0.092)	27 (0.342)	0.2328
4	product	Noun	92 (0.133)	32 (0.405)	0.2302
5	internal	Adj	46 (0.066)	23 (0.291)	0.2255
6	important	Adj	85 (0.123)	30 (0.380)	0.2239
7	way	Noun	83 (0.120)	29 (0.367)	0.2180
8	company	Noun	135 (0.195)	35 (0.443)	0.1955
9	people	Noun	84 (0.121)	25 (0.316)	0.1812
10	issue	Noun	66 (0.095)	22 (0.278)	0.1789

Figure 7 - Output: Word Association Table with the word 'communication' by KH Coder

Finally, comparing the first three figures mentioned above and then the other two analysed together after, it is possible to observe a very high similarity of words in the tables because they depend on each other.

3.2.3 Co-Occurrence Analysis

The aim is that Co-Occurrence Analysis allows a wider perspective on the subject starting by Text Correlation and Mind Mapping. It is possible to divide the information into 10 subgraphs to understand the evolution in the conversations.

Starting by Text Correlation and Mind Mapping in figure 8 in the subgraph 01, it is possible to observe that there is a main topic related to products, production process and development connected with the importance and power of consumers and what they think about brands and subsequent effects in markets, due to the level of understanding, of knowing about the topic, which makes them to aim being beneficial to life, health, well-being as sustainable issues arise according to sources like Dyllick and Muff (2016), Ghosh (2015) and World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). This means that the related subgraph 05 associates consumer with consumption, like Ingenbleek et al. (2015), which is also linked with production but also reducing materials, choosing sustainable sources and even carefully manage the existing ones needed for processing, for example water, plastic and energy which were frequently addressed on the interviews. So, by having internal contributions like

Vermeulen & Witjes (2016), Jones et al. (2018), Baldassarre and Campo (2016), Galpin et al. (2015) talk about, it can make a difference with making initiatives like Engert and Baumgartner (2016) and Székely and Brocke (2017) refer, since it is possible to recycle or reuse in the end of the product life cycle and also make certain decisions on the up-forward process and on the factory's contribution part. Also, other sustainable issue and impact arises connecting to promoting these actions and working on solutions like internal dynamics and gender equality on subgraph 10.

On the other hand, as well as on the previous part, in the final part of the value chain it means to offer solutions possible to buy which consider green issues and taking care of communities. This reveals in subgraph 09 a position of businesses that have capabilities and capacities to have a responsibility towards the environment and society, which means also being an agent of SD, as authors like Contini et al. (2019), Ashrafi et al. (2018), Dyllick & Muff (2016) mentioned.

Additionally, this consumer vision and impact is influenced by actions to change the ways of behaviours and perceiving matters due to communication internally and externally in subgraph 04. It is quite clear to see by the following schemes that the social dimensions of sustainability are clearly connected and influenced with the economic one, as Baumgartner and Rauter (2017) and others said it should be beneficial. This connects with companies' ways, in subgraph 02, meaning identifying issues, aiming good contributions in businesses, and applying efforts in choosing and implementing sustainable goals. As companies have indeed an important role and they effortlessly relates to a gathering of people namely employees contributing with time, capacities, intellectual abilities and judgements to have an input, but also customers who should be considered, as subgraph 06 indicates.

So, subgraph 08 creates the major relation of value and produce, revealing the importance of value creation. Also, the subgraph 02 relates to subgraph 07 indicating that there is a great deal of diversity in the business sector and areas of management, and different ways of acting like Schaltegger et al. (2016) indicates, as this area has an impact on society. It is possible to see that companies relate to sustainability in subgraph 03, as many authors create this link like Baumgartner and Rauter (2017), Chang et al. (2017), Vermeulen and Witjes (2016). Sustainability relates with marketing strategy that needs to improve and there is still doubt, as academics like Baldassarre and Campo (2016) and Kemper and Ballantine (2019) suggest, besides knowing its importance and being a huge challenge for decades until now and for many others to come.

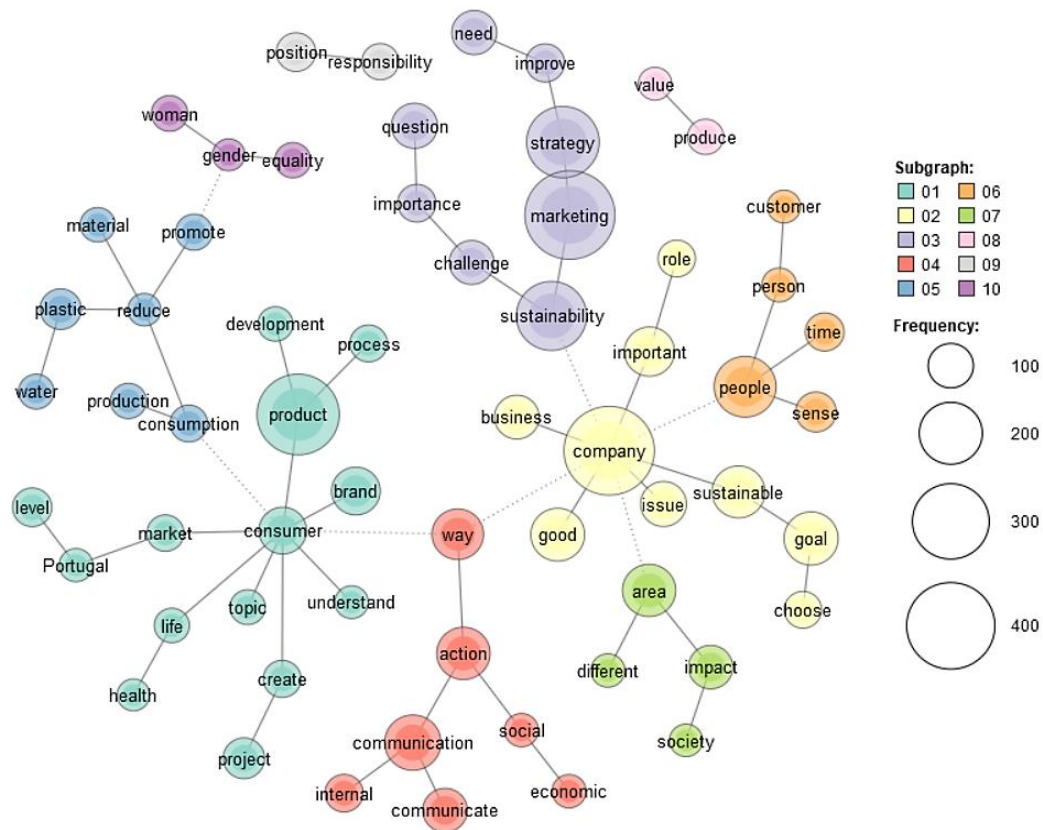


Figure 8 - Output: Co-Occurrence Network Mind Mapping by KH Coder

3.2.4 Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

As it is expectable, according to the information given below in Cluster Analysis in figure 9, 10 and 11, position in a market and a sense of accountability includes responsibility as companies should choose sustainable goals to address, which means that companies are clearly aware of the sustainability question. It is a huge current challenge related with recognising needs, as for example Baldassarre and Campo (2016) talks about, and improving marketing strategy in the right way. With this scheme it is also confirmed that some of the issues mostly spoken were related to education quality and gender equality, but also others related to find the appropriate solution for the particular business type influenced by the industry and its characteristics as the rule of judgement said by Dyllick and Muff (2016) as well as processes of innovation and changing environments.

The words produce and buy are linked. It is important for any business to create value and those achievements that have an impact are valuable and beneficial to society, as the previous analysis of mind mapping indicates. This means also promoting those efforts in a better way, which the topic of digital tools and ways arise. It is important to have a great sense of timing and addressing the message in the right way to be sent to consumers in a much comfortable environment and paying attention to his/hers concerns and desires. The information also includes that besides all the pressures that exist,

there is a clear economic and social tension which the knowledge and the right partnerships can get that sustainable question better achievable and reducing those pressures. All business aspire to grow and continue developing in the market using each team of people, resources and capabilities to get conditions better and be successful in the national context and others. That's why organizations try initiatives and create new projects to external audiences and communities as well as focusing on indoor resources and people to commit to the current key of success: to care. As caring means paying attention to issues like reducing the water consumption and waste, recycling and reusing, trying to shift or decrease the use of plastic, rethink the use of materials due to sustainable issues linking with responsible consumption and production. It implies a company action to the ways it operates, the people's understanding of the existing issue, which is an area where many different branches should be considered. Another important remark is that communication can be part of value in a decision, it has an important role. So, the perception of a product by the consumer and subsequently a brand means that there is an understanding in which businesses aim to be beneficial. It requires a process and development.

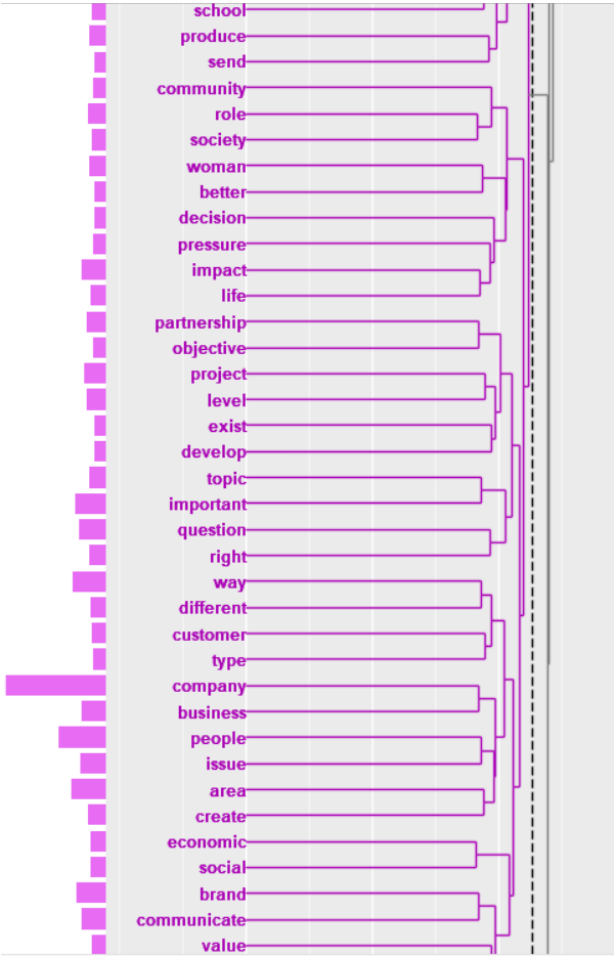


Figure 9 - Output: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis in Dendrogram by KH Coder

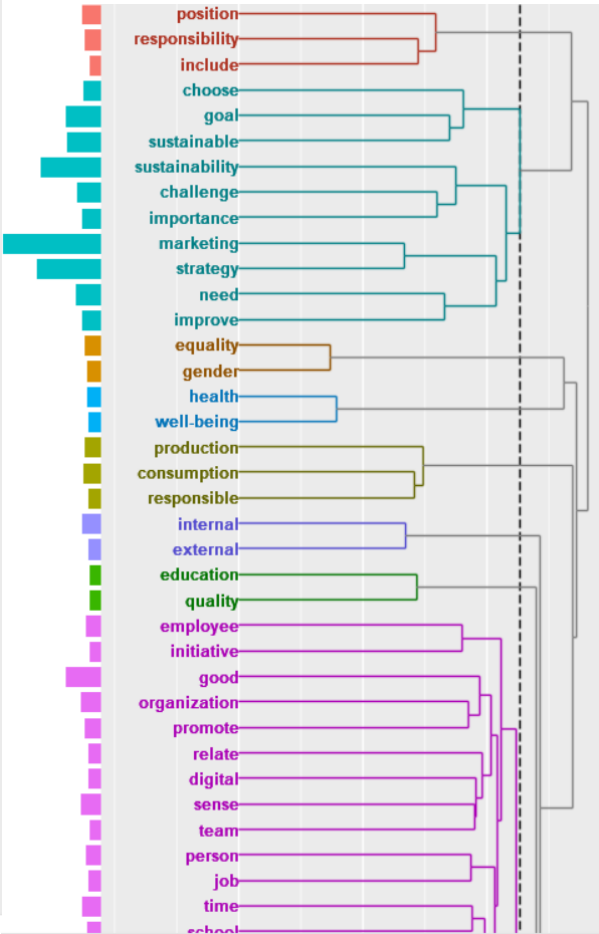


Figure 10 - Output: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis in Dendrogram (continuing) by KH Coder

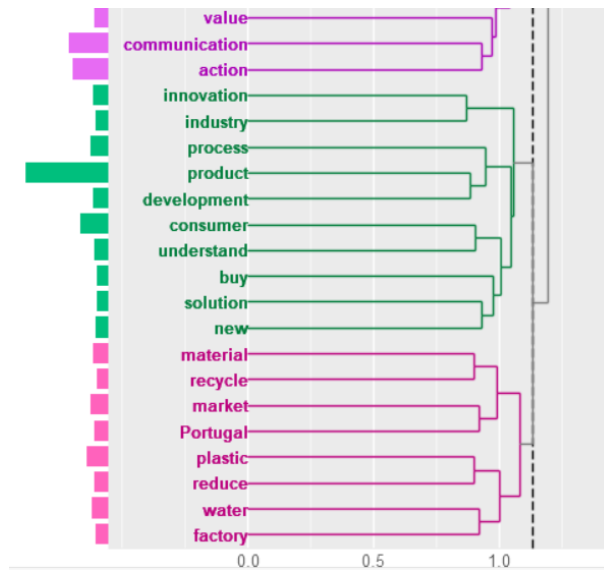


Figure 11 - Output: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis in Dendrogram (continuing) by KH Coder

3.2.5 Characteristic Parts Analysis

To understand the evolution of the conversations and the subjects, and even which subjects are important within these topics, an analysis was carried out so that it can be understood. So, the top 10 characteristic words of each part are presented, and it can be used as an alternative for correspondence analysis. The following analysis in table 2 and 3 reveals differences between groups, in this case in questions related to choosing five SDGs and talking about marketing strategies to help achieve them and about the importance of marketing strategy in sustainability, as well as what needs to be improved in this aspect.

Initially, regarding the part of the conversation about SDGs in table 2, in the interview the most prominent word was product with examples and strategies, introducing its importance when asked about SDGs, and an approach to related processes, whether development, production or consumption and every related step like the marketing mix and segmentation, targeting and positioning like Kumar et al. (2016) explained about SMS. Then, the words people and goal were highlighted, symbolising the social nature. Action and way are also used, referring to the use of practical experience and in the search for ways to encourage sustainability in companies. Communication is relevant also again as expected. Sustainable, impact, area, and brand as there is an impact in this area and brands try to identify opportunities and adapt to new realities.

Subsequently, about sustainability and marketing strategy, the most prominent word was sustainability, followed by marketing, challenge, company and strategy as predictable by previous analyses and also by the objective of the analysis. Moving forward it is visible that the main idea is that

there is a need for improvement, recognising its importance and having the presence of the word people as a reference also in the other part of the table, meaning that society, its state of mind, pressure and opinion are relevant to this issue.

Table 2: Output: Characteristic Parts Analysis about SDGs and SMS by KH Coder

About SDGs		About sustainability marketing strategy	
product	,110	sustainability	,206
people	,067	marketing	,147
goal	,063	challenge	,136
action	,058	company	,120
way	,051	strategy	,088
communication	,050	improve	,064
sustainable	,047	importance	,062
impact	,044	people	,059
area	,039	need	,057
brand	,037	sustainable	,055

The following table, table 3, reveals the main prominent words in each interview which will remain anonymous but it is only to understand the relevant aspects on each one as an extra informational analysis. Besides content spoken in interviews, it is also possible to see strategies and tactics indicated as hot topics about internal communication, external communication, message and channels choice, digital transformation, production and factory processes, equipment and conditions improvements, suppliers and materials choices, brand reputation and image, employment and internal policies, culture and values, training and experience, job creation and equality, education and learning initiatives, feedback and improvement stages, product development and packaging, quality and performance, innovation and flexibility values, consumption matters, sustainable sources and choices, decision making processes, client relationships and external pressures, transportation and value chain issues, financial value and the measurable characteristic, networking and partnerships, opportunities identification, among others.

Table 3: Output: Characteristic Parts Analysis on interviews by KH Coder

Interview b		Interview c		Interview d		Interview e	
message	,066	pressure	,211	principle	,125	critical	,088
sense	,065	public	,173	employee	,091	society	,083
transform	,062	company	,089	communicate	,084	external	,081
water	,054	organization	,087	initiative	,083	area	,071
challenge	,051	contribute	,083	ethic	,073	different	,071
important	,051	brand	,081	better	,073	internal	,070
marketing	,050	discussion	,063	education	,073	impact	,066
communicate	,048	opinion	,056	aim	,065	client	,065
access	,046	real	,052	improve	,064	business	,064
social	,045	communication	,052	company	,064	Portugal	,060
Interview f		Interview g		Interview h		Interview i	
company	,064	equipment	,114	school	,157	product	,156
product	,060	recycle	,097	communication	,078	impact	,098
good	,054	action	,064	practice	,065	brand	,091
economic	,049	material	,055	action	,061	decision	,074
people	,043	electronic	,054	student	,059	produce	,050
buy	,037	packaging	,049	marketing	,051	plastic	,048
vehicle	,036	importance	,048	mean	,050	communication	,047
industry	,032	awareness	,048	level	,046	area	,043
person	,031	project	,048	associate	,046	water	,042
electric	,031	theme	,046	concern	,044	consumer	,040
Interview j		Interview k		Interview l		Interview m	
solution	,078	job	,090	market	,061	organization	,076
sustainability	,057	candidate	,088	innovation	,059	mobility	,064
culture	,051	action	,069	product	,049	naturally	,064
type	,049	goal	,064	absolutely	,048	number	,064
company	,049	people	,063	nutrition	,048	promise	,063
client	,046	person	,062	range	,046	equality	,058
communication	,044	level	,057	people	,045	city	,055
promote	,044	value	,051	consumer	,042	common	,047
quantify	,044	company	,051	internally	,041	strategy	,045
translate	,043	contract	,050	question	,041	gender	,045
Interview n		Interview o		Interview p		Interview q	
communicate	,071	digital	,094	choice	,079	win	,183
strategy	,070	characteristic	,075	best	,069	organization	,136
sense	,063	create	,071	focus	,056	view	,100
create	,063	social	,068	store	,056	experience	,097
start-up	,062	network	,067	choose	,050	employee	,074
sustainability	,056	type	,064	equipment	,038	initiative	,074

brand	,056	company	,056	condition	,038	strategy	,064
issue	,056	opportunity	,052	hand	,036	marketing	,060
business	,056	estate	,051	awareness	,035	training	,057
consumption	,055	invariably	,051	role	,035	sustainability	,050
Interview r		Interview s		Interview t		Interview u	
hotel	,143	student	,065	consumer	,091	capsule	,065
material	,075	marketing	,060	product	,084	area	,055
implement	,074	digital	,057	project	,066	environmental	,053
produce	,073	economics	,054	company	,065	product	,045
department	,065	truth	,050	partnership	,064	plastic	,045
customer	,060	chemical	,046	understand	,049	sustainability	,044
production	,052	right	,043	profit	,047	improve	,038
quality	,050	director	,040	sustainable	,046	new	,037
waste	,048	portuguese	,040	factory	,041	packaging	,035
consumption	,044	sustainability	,040	woman	,039	question	,033

Chapter 4

Conclusions

Sustainability is an extremely important topic, which is present in every mind, and there is a crucial social and environmental concern for development under the right conditions for sustainable progress, as it also means having economic growth to be viable, eg. Baumgartner and Rauter (2017), Ashrafi et al. (2018). Whether motivated by the massive destruction or climate change or effects on biodiversity or financial crises or poverty or lack of conditions or intolerance or inequality in opportunities as authors indicate, eg. Dyllick and Muff (2016), Ghosh (2015) and World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). In the end SD matters, and this component have been increasing in impact. Consequently, companies are also witnessing a change required in structures and processes, in the way they deliver value and how it is created, eg. Kemper and Ballantine (2019), Olwig (2021), Engert and Baumgartner (2016), Székely and Brocke (2017). A change in mentalities, prioritizing needs in a different way, seeing pressure to act nationally, internationally or in a business level by commercial relationships, with policies, certifications, activist movements and even a change in demand by markets and by the target audience eg. Olwig (2021), Ghosh (2015), Sachs (2012). The SDGs proposal for all actors created a way for also businesses to be considered essential, with resources and capabilities, with considerable generated revenue to apply in initiatives as well as by adjusting procedures to create sustainable value, shared with all the TBL dimensions through CS, eg. Kemper and Ballantine (2019), , Ashrafi et al. (2018), Baumgartner and Rauter (2017), Chang et al. (2017), Christ and Burritt (2019), Contini et al. (2019) Jones et al. (2018), Olwig (2021) Scheyvens et al. (2016), United Nations (2015), Vermeulen and Witjes (2016), Elkington (1998).

In this way, new dynamics, subjects and matters quickly arise in relation to this new reality and paradigm, for example management, human resources, risk management and continuous improvement, public relations and communication, eg. Olwig (2021), Sharma and Soederberg (2020), Epstein and Roy (2007), Galbreath (2009), Engert and Baumgartner (2016), Fleming et al. (2017), Baldassarre and Campo (2016) and one of these is the vision of marketing and how it can actually help achieve sustainable goals like the SDGs. This is due to the association that in fact marketing allows profit with measurable financial value, allows progress and beneficial relationships with stakeholders and loyalty, creating an image and business strategies so that the way in which business is actually done corresponds to the value proposition made to the market, internal and external environment. All coherent and relevant. Although, sustainability issues are not yet clear and commonly agreed on how also SMS is done, what strategies and tactics accordingly, being still confusing the breadth and impact that marketing can possibly make and how integrated and holistic strategies work or even

complementary ones, to avoid having marketing strategies not interconnected or consistent or meaningful, eg. Kemper and Ballantine (2019). Meaning that this brings a need for investigation, which specialised professionals and academics have a role, resulting in this qualitative research with the key aim on how to integrate sustainability into the marketing strategy in a micro level to contribute to SD, having an emphasis on SDGs as basis to introduce this conversation. This translated into research objectives: to explore the importance of sustainability in marketing and main challenges, to explore marketing strategy link with SDGs and to explore the change or improvement needed for the SMS. The present work was not about to try to be a fit in a conceptual model but to discover more on the practice of CS marketing strategy, as an introductory and exploratory research.

Firstly, relating the importance of sustainability in marketing and main challenges, it is confirmed the corporate relevance for sustainability issues as well as marketing view being crucial. Within this, product related matters were central seen that solutions on green issues appeals publics and make differentiating characteristics in the market, eg. Kemper and Ballantine (2019), Baldassarre and Campo (2016), Christ and Burritt (2019), Ashrafi et al. (2018). Social consideration and external pressures matter to create corporate responsibility making it challenging, eg. Olwig (2021), Ghosh (2015), Sachs (2012). Also, other important aspect seen in research for sustainable marketing is communication towards awareness, value creation, consistent image and exposure, beneficial links, and strategies, eg. Baldassarre and Campo (2016).

Concerning strategies and sustainability, there's product developments and design, value chain and processes, partnerships, communications and distribution, industry and internal dynamics, brands image and rebranding processes, eg. Baldassarre and Campo (2016), Tregidga et al. (2018), Engert and Baumgartner (2016), Székely and Brocke (2017), Ferro et al. (2019) and Kemper and Ballantine (2019). Basically, constructing the broad marketing mix as segmentation, targeting and positioning is strategic marketing like to contribute beneficially having changes in production, processes, human resources, transportation, technologies, and others, eg. Kumar et al. (2016), Ingenbleek et al. (2015). So, it is possible to withdraw strategies and tactics from content mentioned by interviewees indicated as hot topics in SDGs about internal communication, external communication, message and channels choice, digital transformation, production and factory processes, equipment and conditions improvements, suppliers and materials choices, brand reputation and image, employment and internal policies, culture and values, training and experience, job creation and equality, education and learning initiatives, feedback and improvement stages, product development and packaging, quality and performance, innovation and flexibility values, consumption matters, sustainable sources and choices, decision making processes, client relationships and external pressures, transportation and value chain issues,

financial value and the measurable characteristic, networking and partnerships, opportunities identification, among others.

Correspondingly, regarding changes or improvements, SMS embraces other related branches, and, in the end, marketing needs to get better as highlighted, which relates to the importance and power of consumers and consumption, products and production processes, promotion actions and communication matters, shared value creation, brand image and reputation, differentiation characteristics and partnerships, internal dynamics, and others. It is basically a huge current challenge.

4.1 - Limitations and Recommendations

This study allows to introduce marketing strategy and activities that may be responsible for the CS to contribute to SD, and it is a starting point in analysing CS with SDGs and SM. This method could present some limits due to personal language expressions, transcription process, or other related step, despite the rigorous and professional work. Additionally, there might be other alternatives or complementary programs, tools and tests regarding text mining that could gather information and make the research richer, if the research had a need for more layers and specifications, even though these were the relevant tests perceived and chosen.

As the research in the area is still scarce, it may not lead to unrefusable conclusions for all companies in all industry sectors. So, one possible limitation resulting in a suggestion is the need to investigate and study more about all industries sectors, being recommended future studies about industries and economic activities relation to SDGs about sustainable marketing, individually and in group to allow comparisons and more conclusions. As Mio et al. (2020, p. 22) mentioned, there are breaches in “the balance and integration of the business processes with economic and social sustainability in relation to business models and/or specific industries”.

Additionally, there is a clear need to develop studies specifically in each industry, possibly also relating to crucial models in marketing and management like SWOT and Marketing Mix. Correspondingly, also by analysing the external environment it would be possible to see the influence in success and the possibility to overcome difficulties in the application of CS, as well as the internal characteristics, capabilities, and potentials. Also, there is also a need to investigate about how specific strategies interconnect enhancing each goal in a marketing perspective in a more complex net to provide the SMS a more vibrant role and direction to grow in CS. It is also important to learn more through researches on connections between the business role and governments and/or the business role and society on sustainability in a more precise practical way, increasing knowledge in deep

meaningful drivers, not only through discourses and conceptual answers to actually acquire know-how on the processes and points of contact that may contribute positively and/or negatively to SD. Also relevant with the influence of COVID context and the remote work liked with the digital transformation and gradual acceptance of new ways to interact to external and internal environments and deliver products and services, it would be appropriate to see how points of contact, digital tools and value chain processes are adapted to also include sustainability seen the consciousness in society and how SMS works in it.

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Annexes

Annex A. Interview guidelines

<p>Introduction: At the beginning... First, it is relevant to say that this qualitative research aims to learn about how corporate marketing strategy can leverage the SDGs towards SD and this conversation will probably last 20 minutes. Also, I need to ask you if there is consent to record our conversation only for academic research purposes (yes, and start recording).</p>	
<p>About personal/working position: What extent does your position include strategic and marketing responsibilities? When did you start your position?</p>	
<p>Development: Now that you have told me about your job, could you please explain... Choose 5 of the following SDGs and tell me about marketing strategies to enhance them, by ordering strategies by importance (impact/contribution) and explain.</p>	
1 No poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
2 Zero hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
3 Good health and well-being: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
4 Quality education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
5 Gender equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?

6 Clean water and sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
7 Affordable and clean energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
8 Decent work and economic growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
10 Reduced inequalities: Reduce inequality within and among countries	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
11 Sustainable cities and communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
12 Responsible consumption and production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
13 Climate action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
14 Life below water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?

15 Life on land: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
16 Peace, justice and strong institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
17 Partnerships for the goals: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	Are there sustainability/marketing strategies?
<p>In the end: Finally, ...</p> <p>How would you describe the importance of sustainability in marketing and main challenges?</p> <p>Is there anything you think needs to improve concerning sustainability marketing strategy?</p> <p>Is there anything you would like to add about this theme?</p>	
<p>If there is a need to find more and help the participant develop the idea:</p> <p>Could you please explain this further? Could you elaborate on that point? How important is it?</p>	
<p>References for this structure (Christ & Burritt, 2019; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; United Nations Global Compact et al., 2015)</p>	