



Sustainable Marketing and Strategy

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1. Introduction

The theme of this Special Issue (SI) is Sustainable Marketing and Strategy, as in the literature, we have seen growing evidence of how sustainability efforts are increasingly bringing significant benefits to enterprises. This effect has been further witnessed following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereby we have seen an even more conscious consumer appear. The benefits include increased brand awareness, as those firms that stand out tend to catch attention by being keen to help and not hurt the environment as well as local communities. Consumers are thus opting for more environmentally and community-friendly firms, which is thus a means to achieving greater competitiveness. That the sustainability theme may be seen simply as a marketing tactic has also been debated. It surely makes strategic and marketing sense to be nice to the community, above what is required by law. Doing so in sincere and planned efforts will reap better returns in the age of the informed consumer. Greenwashing must be avoided at all costs, as firms will be punished for not being authentic in their social responsibility efforts. The articles published in this SI discuss how companies are managing the issues related to a new era whereby sustainability is a major goal for academics and practitioners alike.

This SI intended to explore and be an outlet of discussion regarding the following themes: sustainable marketing, digital marketing for sustainable strategies, marketing and big data to shape customer behavior, green branding strategies, marketing and corporate social responsibility, marketing ethics, marketing and sustainable decision-making, and sustainable marketing policies for a green market.

2. Discussion

In this context, eight articles were accepted for publication which discuss the topics of determinants of marketing in globalization, employer branding as a marketing tool for strategic talent management, new ways of working and the analysis of employee engagement, the sustainability of the supply chain and purchasing policies, a new strategy to measure the behaviour of wine tourists, the opinion leaders' influence on the sustainable development of corporate-led consumer advice networks, and the influence of cross-listing on the relationship between financial leverage and R&D investment.

Here is an overview of the articles published in the SI, including the focus, title, methodology of the article, and the keywords—showing how a diverse set of data (primary and secondary) and approaches (qualitative using words and quantitative using numbers) were followed:

- [1]—Focus: franchising as a strategy for business expansion. Title: Determinants of Global Expansion: A Study on Food and Beverage Franchisors in Malaysia. Methodology: qualitative (including interviews and thematic analysis). Keywords: franchising; franchisor; global expansion; case study.



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- [2]—Focus: internal human capital as a strategic asset. Title: Strategic Talent Management: The Impact of Employer Branding on the Affective Commitment of Employees. Methodology: quantitative (including a questionnaire). Keywords: employer branding; affective commitment; talent management; strategy; personal marketing.
- [3]—Focus: new ways of working as a strong predictor of increased employee engagement. Title: New Ways of Working and the Physical Environment to Improve Employee Engagement. Methodology: quantitative (including a questionnaire). Keywords: new ways of working; performance; structural equation modeling; work engagement.
- [4]—Focus: sustainable development including sustainable buying processes and practices. Title: Sustainability in the Coffee Supply Chain and Purchasing Policies: A Case Study Research. Methodology: case study based on secondary data. Keywords: sustainability; supply chain; purchasing policies; coffee business and production; Delta Cafés; Grupo Nabeiro; sustainable business; sustainable practices; food safety; buying process; agrifood products.
- [5]—Focus: rising emphasis on the employer brand (for attraction and retention). Title: Employer Branding as a Talent Management Tool: A Systematic Literature Revision. Methodology: literature review (the last ten years) relating employer branding and talent management (using the PRISMA protocol); keywords: employer branding; talent management; systematic literature revision.
- [6]—Focus: development of a wine experience scale tested in Portugal (in Porto and on the island of Madeira). Title: Developing a Wine Experience Scale: A New Strategy to Measure Holistic Behaviour of Wine Tourists. Methodology: quantitative (including a questionnaire); keywords: scale validation; SEM; wine storytelling; wine tasting excitement; wine involvement; winescape.
- [7]—Focus: a new corporate strategy - online community marketing and social media influencer marketing. Title: The Role of Opinion Leaders in the Sustainable Development of Corporate-Led Consumer Advice Networks: Evidence from a Chinese Travel Content Community. Methodology: consumer advice networks, opinion leaders and the establishment of research hypotheses (the content community of the Chinese Beijing-based (founded in 2005) “Qunar Travel” website as the research target—a standard consumer advice network); keywords: content community; sustainable marketing; SMIs marketing; consumer advice network; opinion leaders; network structure.
- [8]—Focus: investment in research and development (based on financial leveraging and the intra-industry contagion effect) as an important factor for differentiation and competitive advantage. Title: Influence of Cross-Listing on the Relationship between Financial Leverage and R&D Investment: A Sustainable Development Strategy. Methodology: quantitative; measurement of debt financing in a sample of firms, and the analysis of a sample of rival firms; keywords: cross-listing; financial leverage; R&D investment; corporate sustainability.

3. Final Considerations

We hope to have communicated a message whereby a new marketing and strategy approach is necessary. The world has become more united following recent trials and tribulations; hence, a new perspective has evolved, much to the surprise of observers, academics, and executives alike. As a result of recent hard times, consumer markets and business markets look toward new examples of ethical behaviour and seek new heroes. Often, the enemy appears unannounced and unexpectedly. In view of such occurrences, new levels need to be reached—of positive and humane human and corporate behaviour. Indeed, let us recall that corporations are run and led by people—who will be held responsible for irresponsible acts and consequences. History has shown us time and again that we as a species feel for each other and for the environment, especially when pushed to our limits and when we have had time to think beyond our immediate needs

and necessities. The recent lockdowns and imposed restrictions on our liberty, due to the pandemic, have led us down that avenue, one of introverted thought and on how we can each make a difference and a step forward towards a better life. We all in the end are mortal and accept our mortality in times of hardship. Join the new marketing and strategy generation, which seeks to create more value and benefits and less waste. It is all a question of the community—both internal and external to the firm. We hope you enjoy our SI and pass on what you learn—on strategy and about sustainable and responsible growth—to others in your network.

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