

Green Marketing as Part of Digital Sustainability Strategies

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Abstract

The article discusses green marketing as an integral part of a digital sustainability strategy. The purpose of the article is to theoretically explain how sustainability principles and digital technologies are linked in the context of contemporary marketing approaches. Based on an analysis of professional and scientific literature, the article shows the connection between green marketing, digital communication, knowledge management and trust as fundamental elements of sustainable corporate identity. The findings show that digitalisation enables more effective, transparent and participatory sustainable communication, while at the same time requiring greater ethical responsibility and credibility of information. Knowledge management is emerging as a key factor in establishing internal consistency and transparency, while trust is emerging as strategic capital for companies in the digital environment. The article contributes to the understanding of green marketing as an interdisciplinary concept that combines sustainable values, technological innovation and social responsibility..

Keywords: green marketing, digital transformation, sustainability, knowledge management, trust, digital ethics

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, sustainability has become a central guiding principle of economic and social development. Companies are increasingly aware that long-term competitiveness depends not only on financial indicators, but also on their attitude towards the environment, society and ethical behaviour. The concept of sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission (1987), is based on the idea that current economic progress must meet the needs of present generations without

compromising the opportunities of future generations. In this context, there is a need for new business models that combine economic efficiency, environmental responsibility and social justice.

One of the most important responses to this challenge is green marketing – a marketing approach that goes beyond traditional sales logic and puts the values of sustainable development at the forefront. Green marketing involves the development, promotion and distribution of products and services that have less impact on the environment while maintaining or increasing value for consumers (Bhalerao and Deshmukh, 2015). Its purpose is not only to increase market share or brand awareness, but also to establish a responsible relationship between the company, the environment and the consumer.

In the last decade, green marketing has increasingly been placed within the broader context of digital transformation of companies. Digital tools, platforms and data technologies enable companies to communicate sustainability messages directly and interactively – through websites, social networks, ESG reports and applications. The digital environment opens up opportunities for transparency, participation and personalised communication, while also requiring greater responsibility in the communication of information. In the digital age, credibility is becoming a key value, as consumers expect real evidence of sustainable practices, not just symbolic expressions of environmental concern.

An important aspect of successful green marketing in a digital context is knowledge management. This is the process of collecting, sharing and using information that enables a company to communicate its sustainability goals and achievements in a coordinated manner (Grundstein, 2000; Neef, 2005). Knowledge management ensures internal transparency, reduces the possibility of misinterpretation and enables better integration of sustainability strategies with digital processes. It is thus becoming a key element in establishing a culture of trust, transparency and innovation.

Green marketing in the digital age is no longer just a marketing tactic, but an integral part of corporate sustainability strategy. Its role is to transform the company's relationship with consumers, the public and the environment – with the aim of achieving economic goals in line with social and environmental principles. The successful implementation of this vision requires the integration of digital technologies, ethical principles and knowledge, enabling companies to become active agents of sustainable transformation.

Green marketing today is increasingly moving towards regulatory compliance, transitioning from voluntary environmental commitments (soft law) to mandatory legislative standards (hard law). With regulatory frameworks such as the EU Green Deal and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), companies are under increasing pressure to ensure that their sustainability claims are supported by verifiable evidence. This shift is critical in transforming green marketing from a voluntary approach to a mandatory requirement, where companies not only communicate their environmental efforts but also ensure compliance with legal standards.

The purpose of this article is to theoretically highlight the role of green marketing as an integral part of companies' digital sustainability strategies. The article combines insights from the fields of marketing, management and communication studies and emphasises the importance of digital ethics, knowledge management and trust in shaping the sustainable identity of brands. The aim of the article is to present a conceptual framework that links green marketing, digital transformation and sustainable management, and to highlight the new challenges that the digital age brings for responsible marketing communication.

2. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Methodology

This article is based on a theoretical-analytical approach, the purpose of which is to present and interpret existing scientific knowledge about the role of green marketing as an integral part of companies' digital sustainability strategies. The article does not include empirical research, but focuses on the synthesis of theoretical starting points derived from contemporary literature in the fields of marketing, sustainable development, digital transformation and knowledge management.

The methodological framework of the article stems from an understanding of companies as sustainable systems in which the economic, environmental and social dimensions of business are interconnected. In this context, green marketing appears as a communication and strategic instrument that enables the transfer of sustainable values between an organisation and its stakeholders (Polonsky, 2008; Peattie, 2001; Peattie, 2016). The analysis in the article is based on an interdisciplinary integration of theories from the fields of sustainable marketing, digital communication, knowledge management and ethical management.

Particular attention is paid to the role of digital technologies in communicating sustainable messages and the impact of knowledge management on building trust and organisational transparency. The article takes into account current concepts such as *ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance)*, digital ethics and sustainable communication, which together form the framework of the contemporary understanding of corporate sustainability.

The following theoretical research methods were used to address the topic:

- Descriptive method – to define basic concepts (sustainability, green marketing, digital transformation, knowledge management, trust) and show their development in the literature.
- Analytical method – to examine individual elements of a digital sustainability strategy and their interconnections.
- Comparative method – to compare different authors' approaches to green marketing and corporate sustainability and to identify common theoretical starting points.
- Compilation method – for summarising, synthesising and systematising key theoretical findings from scientific articles, monographs and reports by international organisations.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, the article draws on both classical theories (e.g. Peattie, Polonsky, Ottman, Kotler) and more recent research (e.g. Van Bavel et al., 2024; Thakkar, 2021), which link sustainable marketing with digital technologies and ESG principles.

The chosen methodological approach enables the creation of a conceptual model that explains how green marketing is integrated into the digital sustainability strategy of companies and how knowledge management and digital tools contribute to the credibility of sustainable communication.

As the article is theoretical in nature, its aim is not to test hypotheses but to develop a synthetic view of the field in question. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the processes that link digitalisation, sustainability and market communication, and the formation of starting points for future empirical research and practical applications in the business environment.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Green marketing as part of a corporate sustainability strategy

Green marketing has emerged in recent decades as one of the key concepts of modern sustainable business. Its basic goal is to establish a balance between economic growth, environmental protection and social responsibility (Polonsky, 2008). Compared to traditional marketing, which is primarily focused on satisfying consumer needs, green marketing also includes responsibility towards the environment and society as a broader system (Peattie, 2001).

The fundamental principle of green marketing is to create value that does not harm the environment, with sustainability built into all stages of business – from product design and raw material selection to distribution, advertising and end-of-life management. This approach promotes the concept of a comprehensive sustainable business model, where green marketing is no longer a separate function but an integral part of corporate strategy (Ottman, 2017).

In recent years, green marketing has become increasingly linked to ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) principles, which provide a global framework for evaluating the sustainable performance of companies. In this context, green marketing contributes to the creation of a positive public image and strengthens stakeholder confidence, while encouraging companies to systematically measure and communicate their environmental and social impacts.

Companies that understand sustainability strategy as a fundamental organisational philosophy, rather than a communication tactic, can use green marketing to create long-term competitive advantages – consumer loyalty, greater visibility and public reputation (Vukasović, 2023).

Greenwashing has become an increasing problem for companies seeking to capitalize on environmental trends without genuine sustainable practices. Today, companies that fail to comply with regulatory standards risk legal sanctions, including fines, lawsuits, and loss of reputation. Green marketing, therefore, is not just about reputation management, but also a key mechanism to reduce the risks of civil liability and sanctions arising from greenwashing.

3.2 Digital transformation and sustainable communication

Digital transformation has had a major impact on how companies design and communicate their sustainability strategies. Online platforms, social networks, digital media and data technologies enable a new model of communication based on speed, interactivity and global reach (Van Bavel, Robertson, Del Rosario, Rasmussen and Rathje, 2024).

In the context of sustainability, digital channels are a tool for transparency and stakeholder engagement. Companies can use digital tools to publish information about their carbon footprint, resource consumption, supply chains and social responsibility. Such communication not only raises awareness, but also fosters dialogue between the company and the public.

Social networks play an important role in this, as they enable direct contact with consumers and communities. From a green marketing perspective, these tools are an opportunity to build trust, but also a challenge, as the digital environment requires a high level of ethical consistency and credibility.

Consumers increasingly expect concrete evidence of sustainability measures, which means that digital communication must be based on verifiable data rather than symbols (Thakkar, 2021).

In addition to communication, digital tools enable the measurement of the effects of sustainability activities, e.g. through data analytics, artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies. This makes digital systems a key part of sustainable management, as they enable monitoring, verifiability and improvement of environmental indicators.

Digital ethics has become an increasingly important area of research as companies strive to ensure the integrity and transparency of their sustainability claims in the digital environment. According to recent studies (e.g., Floridi, 2020; van den Hoven et al., 2022), digital ethics involves ensuring that digital technologies are used responsibly and transparently, especially in the context of sustainability. These ethical considerations not only protect consumer interests but also help companies build trust and credibility in their green marketing practices. Scholars argue that ethical principles such as accountability, fairness, and transparency are essential when communicating sustainability claims, as the digital environment amplifies the potential for misinformation and greenwashing (Binns, 2018).

3.3 Knowledge management as the foundation of digital sustainability

Knowledge management is one of the key tools for the effective implementation and communication of sustainability strategies. It is a process through which a company systematically acquires, processes, shares and uses knowledge that is crucial for achieving strategic goals (Grundstein, 2000).

In the context of green marketing, knowledge management has a dual role. First, it enables internal consistency by ensuring that all departments are aware of the company's sustainability goals and standards. Second, it supports external credibility by enabling coordinated, demonstrable and transparent communication of sustainability practices (Serban and Luan, 2002).

Neef (2005) points out that the integration of knowledge management with risk management is essential to ensure the credibility of sustainability messages. When a company establishes effective channels for sharing information, the possibility of misinterpretation or inappropriate communication is reduced.

Knowledge management is becoming essential for companies as it enables internal consistency and reduces the risk of miscommunication of sustainability claims. By integrating knowledge management with other systems such as risk management, companies can ensure that their communications on sustainability are consistent with legal standards, helping to mitigate the risk of greenwashing.

Knowledge management is therefore a strategic mechanism that links organisational learning, innovation and sustainability. It enables companies to develop new green solutions based on verified data, monitor their environmental impact and present it transparently to the public. In this way, knowledge management becomes the foundation of a company's digital sustainability identity.

3.4 Trust and credibility in digital sustainability marketing

In today's digital environment, trust is a key value on which the success of sustainable communication is based. Consumers have become informed, critical and demanding – they are no longer satisfied with general environmental slogans, but expect concrete evidence that words and deeds are consistent.

Trust in the digital space is linked to credibility, transparency and ethical consistency. Companies that back up their sustainability claims with verifiable data, publicly available reports and independent certifications achieve a higher level of legitimacy (Bowen and Aragon-Correa, 2014). Conversely, inconsistency between messages and practices leads to a loss of reputation and reduced customer loyalty.

Theoretical approaches emphasise that trust is built through consistency – the repetition of ethically aligned actions and messages. This is particularly important in digital communication, as any irregularity is immediately visible to the wider public. Therefore, companies need to develop a digital ethic that sets standards for truthful, verifiable and responsible sustainability marketing.

Companies that seek long-term success must develop digital ethical guidelines that include transparency, accountability, and verification of their sustainability claims. Every communication about sustainability must be supported by verifiable data to maintain its credibility

3.5 Examples of good practices by global brands

Some global companies have set high standards for green marketing and have become role models for the successful integration of sustainability into digital strategies.

Patagonia bases its sustainability philosophy on the principle of "responsible consumption". With campaigns such as *Don't Buy This Jacket*, it encourages consumers to think about their purchases and at the same time transparently shows its impact on the environment. Its digital presence is based on real stories, evidence and open communication with the community.

IKEA promotes the concept of a circular economy and sustainable materials. It uses digital platforms to promote products from renewable sources and educate consumers about sustainable habits. Its ESG reports and digital campaigns enable transparency and quantified monitoring of environmental goals.

Unilever brings together more than 400 brands under the umbrella of its *Sustainable Living Plan* strategy. It uses digital tools to measure social and environmental impacts and to engage consumers in sustainability initiatives.

The Body Shop remains a model of ethical and socially responsible communication. It systematically reports on fair trade projects on its digital channels and actively involves consumers in its sustainability campaigns.

Digital tools such as blockchain and artificial intelligence enable companies to ensure traceability in their supply chains, providing greater transparency and accountability for the environmental and social impacts of products. For example, companies like IKEA and Patagonia use this technology to ensure that their suppliers meet sustainability standards, thereby enhancing the credibility and legal compliance of their green marketing efforts.

A common feature of all the above examples is the consistent link between digital presence and real sustainable actions. In this way, companies strengthen the credibility, trust and long-term loyalty of their stakeholders.

4. DISCUSSION

The debate on the role of green marketing in the context of digital sustainability shows that the field is developing rapidly, but questions remain about its strategic nature and long-term effects. While most authors (Polonsky, 2008; Peattie, 2001; Ottman, 2017) agree that green marketing is a key element of sustainable development, their understandings differ regarding its actual function in an organizational context. Some see it as a communication mechanism to promote environmental awareness, while others see it as a holistic business philosophy that links sustainable values with economic performance.

Digital transformation has further deepened these differences. On the one hand, digital tools enable greater transparency, traceability, and stakeholder engagement; on the other hand, they also create the risk of information overload and fragmentation of sustainability messages. Authors such as Van Bavel et al. (2024) and Thakkar (2021) point out that digital tools alone do not guarantee credibility—this depends on how an organization manages data, ethics, and knowledge. This confirms the insight that green marketing must be supported by an internal organizational culture based on consistency and authenticity, not merely on technological accessibility.

In this context, knowledge management acts as a central connecting element. The theories of Grundstein (2000) and Neef (2005) emphasize that systematic knowledge management reduces the risk of inconsistent communication and increases the internal coordination of sustainable practices. However, contemporary literature raises the question of how effectively knowledge is transferred between departments in a digital environment and how this knowledge is translated into concrete sustainable decisions.

Numerous sources point out that digital tools are often used only as a means of collecting data, rather than as a platform for organizational learning and reflection. Therefore, the task of knowledge management in the digital age is twofold: not only to store information, but also to interpret it meaningfully and use it in the development of a sustainable strategy.

From the perspective of trust, which is at the heart of sustainable communication, the discussion shows that there is a tension between public expectations and the ability of companies to meet them. Bowen and Aragon-Correa (2014) emphasize that trust is the result of a lasting balance between transparency and legitimacy. Digital environments often disrupt this balance by increasing the speed of public response and thus reducing the time a company has to explain or correct mistakes. In practice, this means that any digital communication about sustainability must be pre-substantiated with verified data, otherwise it quickly loses credibility.

Despite theoretical consensus on the importance of trust, ethics, and knowledge, questions remain open in the literature about the measurability of these factors. Numerous studies (e.g., Peattie & Crane, 2005; Thakkar, 2021) describe how trust is built, but few offer concrete models for monitoring it in the digital space. This indicates a need to develop standardized indicators of digital credibility that would enable comparisons between companies and sectors, as well as the development of new theoretical approaches to understanding sustainable communication.

A synthesis of existing knowledge therefore shows that green marketing in the digital age is more than just a marketing tool—it is a bridge between technology, ethics, and knowledge. Its effectiveness depends on how well organizations understand the interaction between these elements and incorporate

them into their strategic culture. The key challenge for the future is no longer how to talk about sustainability, but how to systematically manage and demonstrate it in a digital environment where credibility has become the most valuable currency.

5. CONCLUSION

Green marketing has become one of the key pillars of sustainable business transformation in the modern business environment. Its importance goes beyond the traditional function of marketing, as it acts as a strategic framework for achieving sustainable goals related to the environment, society and the economy. In connection with digital transformation, green marketing is also becoming a tool for innovation, transparency and responsible communication, enabling companies to build a credible and trustworthy identity in a globally connected world.

Digital tools, social networks and data systems enable companies to communicate sustainable practices more effectively, openly and participatively. At the same time, digitalisation requires greater ethical consistency and verifiability of information, as every message is subject to public scrutiny. In such an environment, credibility becomes a key condition for success – companies can no longer build their reputation on image, but on actions. Green marketing is therefore based not only on persuasion, but on proof.

The central theoretical insight of the paper is that a successful sustainability strategy is built on the connection between knowledge, ethics and digital communication. Knowledge management enables internal consistency and coordination of sustainable activities, digital tools ensure transparency and accessibility of information, and ethics set the boundaries within which responsible market practices are formed. Together, these three areas create digital sustainability credibility, which is becoming a new form of competitive advantage for companies.

In this context, consumer and stakeholder trust is the most valuable asset. It is built through long-term consistency, truthfulness and a willingness to engage in dialogue. Companies that understand trust as a strategic value invest in systematic knowledge management, employee training and the development of transparent communication. In doing so, they create an organisational culture that is not only profit-oriented, but also focused on creating sustainable value for all stakeholders.

From a theoretical perspective, the article confirms that the future of green marketing lies in the integration of digital and sustainable approaches. The focus is shifting from individual marketing campaigns to a long-term, data-driven and ethically based strategy in which sustainability, knowledge and technology are intertwined.

Important avenues for further research are opening up for the development of theory and practice, including:

- the role of artificial intelligence in verifying sustainability claims and monitoring environmental impacts,
- the development of digital ethics standards and methodologies for measuring digital authenticity,
- studying the impact of organisational learning and knowledge culture on the long-term success of sustainability strategies.

In conclusion, we can say that green marketing in the digital age has moved from the phase of symbolic communication to the phase of value integration. Its power no longer lies in persuading consumers, but in demonstrating the sustainable reality of the company. Only those organisations that understand this transformation and internalise it in their operations will be able to build trust, build reputation and help shape a sustainable future for the economy.

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