

Chapter 9

The Sustainability Marketing Canvas: From Conceptual Chaos to Coherence



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Abstract Historically, marketing has made a questionable impact on environmental and social sustainability due to a conceptual and level-of-analysis fragmentation. This disjointedness not only impedes theoretical advancement but also hinders the implementation of coherent and sustainable actions. The challenges facing our planet—such as climate change, resource scarcity, biodiversity loss, and social degradation—necessitate a paradigm shift in production and consumption patterns. Marketing, as a discipline with a broad interdisciplinary reach, is uniquely positioned to contribute to meaningful solutions to these sustainability challenges.

This chapter introduces the need for and the logic of the Sustainability Marketing Canvas (SMC), a decision-making framework. It integrates the traditional 7Ps of marketing with the dimensions of Planet and People from the Triple Bottom Line. The logic of the SMC is further elucidated through an industrial taxonomy developed during a pilot study conducted at Hilti AG. The study, implemented across two of Hilti's business units, aimed to facilitate measurability, comparability, and strategic planning.

Keywords Sustainability marketing · Marketing strategy · Sustainability marketing canvas

...what else is modernization than a process of rational differentiation of society in autonomous, mutually isolated sub-spheres to the point where no one any longer knows what the unity of it all is? We differentiate, we specialize, we hyperspecialize, and then we get puzzled over the fragmentation we have produced around us, between ourselves and even within ourselves.

(Jeurissen, 1997)

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Introduction

Sustainability Marketing, as a concept and as a discipline, still has conceptual problems due to fragmentation in academia and in practice. Ten years ago, McDonagh and Prothero (2014) implored future research to engage with the question “what is sustainability marketing.” The fact that, still today, many sustainability marketing definitions exist demonstrates the contested nature of the concept. We cannot seem to agree on what sustainability marketing is, and there are no generally accepted theoretical frameworks that the academic community can agree on. Why is this a problem? If we view sustainability marketing as a phenomenon with siloed terms, models, and frameworks, then we are limiting our understanding of the larger phenomenon set in a complex, interconnected system and, most importantly, the opportunities inherent in it.

At the practitioner level, a key barrier to understanding sustainability marketing is the dominance of compliance-driven strategies (Bhattacharya, 2022). While compliance ensures a level economic playing field and supports ecological and societal goals, it fosters a reactionary mindset that overlooks sustainability’s potential for Schumpeterian “creative destruction” (Schumpeter, 2012). The prevailing narrative—“We must complete reports”—contrasts with a proactive, opportunity-driven perspective—“We seek business innovation.” A systems-oriented approach reframes sustainability as a catalyst for innovation, optimization, and strategic partnerships, leveraging disruption to create competitive advantages. When commercial enterprises lack straightforward, efficient, and scalable solutions for conducting business in a more ethical and sustainable manner, the environmental and social challenges exacerbated by economic activity will persist and, in many cases, intensify. Without strategic interventions that align profitability with sustainability, commerce will continue to drive systemic issues rather than contribute to their resolution.

The absence of a strong theoretical foundation, coupled with compliance-driven business strategies, has created a fragmented landscape of digital ESG reporting tools and consultancies. This environment resembles a “Wild West” of competing solutions, characterized by information asymmetry—a classic principal–agent problem. ESG tool developers and consultants (principals) sell their expertise to businesses (agents) that lack the resources and knowledge to grasp sustainability’s broader implications. This restricted flow of information hinders both corporate progress and academic advancement, resulting in suboptimal sustainability solutions, particularly for resource-constrained SMEs facing increasing reporting demands.

This chapter addresses the conceptual and practical fragmentation in sustainability marketing through the Sustainability Marketing Canvas (SMC). The SMC provides a simple, structured framework to define, conceptualize, and operationalize sustainability marketing for academics, managers, and students. It answers the academic question—What is sustainability marketing?—while offering practitioners guidance on how to implement it effectively.

This study introduces the foundational elements of the SMC: the Marketing 7Ps (Booms & Bitner, 1981) and sustainability’s Triple Bottom Line (3BL) (Elkington,

1997). It then examines the current state of sustainability marketing knowledge, highlighting conceptual gaps. Three key findings emerge from the literature:

- A lack of definitional and conceptual synthesis impedes the development of a unified, accessible sustainability marketing framework.
- Planetary and social dimensions of sustainability marketing are often treated separately.
- The 4Ps and 7Ps of marketing are typically analyzed in isolation. In other words, only the product level is analyzed or the placement (supply chain). When considered holistically, the Ps are rarely integrated with *both* planetary and social dimensions.

To address these gaps, the SMC is proposed as a unifying framework. It was tested in two pilot studies. The first at VAUDE GmbH in Germany and then at Hilti AG's headquarters in Liechtenstein, demonstrating its value in providing a coherent structure with a standardized taxonomy for comparative sustainability assessments with the company itself, competitors, and customers.

Method

The first step in developing a holistic sustainability marketing framework is to assess the existing knowledge and conceptual foundations. A literature review was conducted to identify seminal papers defining sustainability marketing. The search focused on academic studies explicitly addressing the conceptualization, definition, or bibliographic analysis of sustainability marketing. Studies on micro-level consumer behavior and macro-level economic or political perspectives were excluded, as they fell outside the scope of this work.

The primary search terms were “sustainability marketing” and “sustainable marketing.” The search was later refined by combining marketing's 7Ps with sustainability (e.g., “Product and Sustainability” or “Pricing and Sustainability”) to uncover relevant conceptualizations. The SCOPUS database, the largest repository of academic research, was selected for its extensive coverage of journals and conference proceedings.

No timeframe restrictions were applied. Articles were selected based on relevance and, partly, citation count. Whilst citations are higher for older articles, to avoid this bias, newer articles were included, which built upon previous research. This yielded 150 sources. Titles were screened for relevance, followed by abstract reviews and, where applicable, full-text analysis. Additional studies were identified through cross-referencing key sources. After filtering, 15 articles were deemed relevant for analyzing the conceptual landscape of sustainability marketing.

This methodology prioritized studies explicitly using the terms “sustainability marketing” and “sustainable marketing,” potentially overlooking relevant discussions in related fields such as channel management or architecture/construction for the “physical evidence” P. However, broadening the scope would have exceeded the

study's objectives. The chosen search strategy and exclusion criteria are deemed appropriate for capturing the current academic discourse on sustainability marketing.

Following the identification of literature gaps, the SMC was developed as a holistic framework. To evaluate its conceptual and practical relevance, a pilot study was conducted in 2020 at VAUDE GmbH, a German sports equipment company with approximately 1600 employees. The study assessed the SMC's coherence and applicability to business strategy by mapping VAUDE's sustainability initiatives using internal and publicly available documents. The findings confirmed that the SMC served as a comprehensive conceptual tool, enabling managers to understand their sustainability initiatives in a systems-focused way (Fuduric, 2020). However, the study also highlighted a key limitation, particularly the lack of a standardized taxonomy for categorizing sustainability data within the SMC. This absence hindered comparability across departments, competitors, and customers and would restrict the assessment of sustainability maturity through standardized metrics or KPIs in the medium to long term. We still had the problem of comparing apples to oranges, so to speak.

The next research phase aimed to remedy this weakness. The goal was to refine the SMC from a conceptual sustainability marketing framework into a practical, complexity-reducing decision-making tool. A second pilot study was conducted at Hilti AG, a multinational construction solutions company headquartered in Liechtenstein with approximately 34,000 employees (Fuduric et al., 2022). This study had three key objectives: first, to establish an industry-specific taxonomy using the SMC structure to enable comparability across Hilti's nine business units. We conducted qualitative, secondary research using Hilti's internal and external sustainability reports to code statements and categorize them within the SMC rubrics. Focusing on publicly available reports and data, the same was done for one of Hilti's competitors and for one of their key B2B customers. A total of 1200 statements were coded and cross-analyzed using ATLAS.ti to establish the industry taxonomy. Second, two business units' adoption of the SMC was guided, and its potential application across the remaining seven was evaluated. Third, sustainability maturity was evaluated by comparing the SMC maps of Hilti, their key competitor, and their customer.

This study also identified future research needs, including assigning standardized KPIs to each taxonomy and digitalizing the SMC for simpler and faster usability. Ultimately, these advancements would facilitate rapid sustainability maturity assessments and the scaling of sustainability strategies. We examined the SMC's logic and analytical application at Hilti AG, using two business units: Anchors and Fire Protection for our data sets. To demonstrate the SMC's capabilities, only Fire Protection is presented in this chapter for the sake of brevity.

Literature Background: Conceptualizing Sustainability Marketing

The Marketing Mix

The traditional marketing mix or the 4Ps, namely, product, promotion, placement, and price, has been an enduring marketing management framework since its origin in the 1960s. Academics and practitioners embraced the marketing mix as the indispensable element of marketing theory and marketing strategy development (Constantinides, 2006). The 4Ps are controllable parameters for organizations to drive their marketing strategy and influence the target audience's buying habits and decisions (Brassington & Pettitt, 2007).

In the 1970s and 80s, when global economies were transitioning into services, the 4Ps needed to be updated to include three more service-supporting components: Processes, Physical Evidence (buildings, offices, and stores), and People. At this time, marketing moved from a transaction (sales) to a relationship (service) based activity (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Wilson, 1974). The 7P framework has maintained widespread acceptance and practical utility for over three decades, demonstrating its value through its simplicity and adaptability. Presently, it is the most holistic way to delineate the field of marketing.

Sustainability

A modern version of understanding sustainability stems from the United Nations' Brundtland Report, which divides the concept into three Es—Environment, Equity, and Economics (United Nations, 1987). Later, the three Es were adapted into the three Ps (People, Planet, Profit or Prosperity) or what is called the 3BL (Elkington, 1997). Since then, it has been widely used as a framework to understand sustainability's reach and context. The 3BL then morphed into the environment, social, and governance aspects of the ESGs, often embedded on the corporate analytical level or in the field of finance.

The 3BL invites marketing strategy to see the social, ecological, and long-term economic motives as factors equally important and in interaction with one another.

- The **“People”** variables refer to the positive and negative impact an organization has on its most important stakeholders and the social dimensions of a community or region. They could include: measurements of education, equity and access to social resources, health and well-being, quality of life, and social capital.
- The **“Planet”** factors represent the positive and negative impact an organization has on its natural environment. This includes reducing its carbon footprint, usage of natural resources, toxic materials, effects upon biodiversity, but also the active removal of waste, reforestation, and restoration of the natural harm done.

- Finally, the **“Profit”** aspect focuses on the positive and negative impact an organization has on the local, national, and international economy. This includes creating employment, generating innovation, paying taxes, wealth creation, and any other economic impact an organization has (Elkington, 1997). Elkington viewed “Profit” on the macroeconomic level. Today, sustainable profit is often conceptualized on the meso, firm level, supporting the notion that sustainability activities also need to remain profitable.

Despite the 3BL’s popularity, Elkington has criticized the misuse of the economic dimension as an accounting and reporting tool whilst keeping profit-making at the center stage (Elkington, 2018). As Elkington explains: “The 3BL wasn’t designed to be just an accounting tool. It was supposed to provoke deeper thinking ... Its goal was system change—pushing toward the transformation of capitalism” (Elkington, 2018).

Sustainability Marketing

There is no clear definition of sustainability marketing. Some researchers define it as an environmental concept, others define it more holistically, with definitions from the Brundtland Commission (United Nations, 1987) and the 3BL (Elkington, 2018). Today, it is still an evolving concept (Lunde, 2018). Peter Drucker was one of the first researchers in marketing and management to explore notions of sustainability. He concluded that management “has to consider the action that is likely to promote the public good, to advance the basic belief of our society, to contribute to stability, strength and harmony” (Drucker, 1955). He later argued that firms should produce a benefit for society (Drucker, 1974).

During the 1970s and 1980s, sustainability was viewed through the lens of an environmental focus (Kassarjian, 1971; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Products were assessed mainly for the destruction they were causing to our environment. This decade had an ecological and product focus. The 1990s saw these ideas diverge into related concepts such as societal marketing (El-Ansary, 1974), green marketing (Kumar Kar & Harichandan, 2022), green products (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017; van Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996), and consumer-focused sustainability (Peattie & Belz, 2010; Peattie & Crane, 2005). In the 2000s, researchers sought to systematize sustainability marketing through comprehensive frameworks, yet the field remained fragmented due to diverse research streams lacking integration (Thomas, 2018).

This fragmentation is particularly evident in the way studies handle the 4Ps and 7Ps of marketing. The Ps are often examined in isolation rather than as interconnected components (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014; Oates et al., 2016; Peattie & Belz, 2010; Thomas, 2018). Research still today disproportionately focuses on planetary sustainability, with social dimensions underdeveloped both conceptually and in terms of measurement.

The absence of a unifying structure hinders the seamless flow of data and knowledge from operational levels to corporate decision-making. This limitation creates a knowledge gap, hindering potential process optimizations and opportunities for sustainability-driven innovation (Thomas, 2018).

Conceptual Gaps

This chapter does not aim to provide a systematic literature review but rather to illustrate the conceptual gaps identified in the preceding section regarding the definition of sustainability marketing. Table 9.1 presents seminal articles that have shaped the field's conceptual development. Additionally, these articles were evaluated based on their emphasis on planetary and social sustainability and their primary focus within the 7Ps of marketing.

This analysis highlights key inconsistencies: First, the absence of definitional and conceptual synthesis among scholars adds to thematic and conceptual fragmentation. This impedes the development of a unified and accessible framework. Table 9.1 on the next page shows that there is little dialogue among scholars to either refute or support conceptualization suggestions. Second, the 4Ps and 7Ps of marketing are often examined in isolation, with studies focusing on individual elements—such as products or supply chains—rather than considering them as an integrated whole. Even when addressed holistically, these marketing models are rarely aligned with both planetary and social sustainability constructs (Pomeroy, 2017). Third, the focus of a large amount of research is on planetary versus social boundaries. Therefore, the social component of sustainability lags in conceptualization and measurement in the marketing discipline.

Introducing the SMC: A Roadmap

Given these gaps, a holistic sustainability marketing approach must integrate both planetary and social dimensions. As a comprehensive marketing strategy traditionally encompasses the 7Ps, a coherent *sustainability* marketing framework should do likewise. The SMC, presented below, addresses these needs by offering a structured framework that both defines sustainability marketing and guides its implementation (Table 9.2 on page 166).

The SMC provides the most comprehensive current definition of sustainability marketing by integrating widely accepted yet straightforward constructs from marketing (7Ps) and sustainability (Planet & People). It serves as a strategic tool for mapping a firm's existing sustainability initiatives, identifying gaps, and ensuring coherence with operations. When sustainability marketing is viewed from a systems perspective, suddenly overlooked connections turn into opportunities for

Table 9.1 Sustainability marketing literature assessment and gap analysis

Authors	Year	Journal	Citations	Title	Research focus	Planet and people/7P categories
Van Dam Apeldoorn	(1996)	Journal of Macromarketing	606	Sustainable Marketing	A critical assessment of marketing theory: Economic and cognitive approaches	Planet People Products
Peattie and Belz	(2010)	Marketing Review St Gallen	320	SM: An Innovative Conception of Marketing	A new consumer-oriented marketing mix with socio-environmental priorities: • Customer solutions (reminiscent of Products/ Services) • Customer cost (reminiscent of Price). • Convenience (reminiscent of Place or distribution) • Communication (reminiscent of Promotion)	Planet People Product Price Place Promotion
Gordon et al.	(2011)	Marketing Theory	568	A Framework for Sustainable Marketing	• Green marketing • Social marketing (marketing social change) • Regulation and control	Planet People Product

Rettie et al.	(2012)	Journal of Marketing Management	340	Normalizing green behaviors: A new approach to SM	Consumer behavior assessing: Normal vs. green marketing Sustainability marketing strategies based on consumer perceptions	Planet Product
Leonidou et al.	(2013)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing	744	“Greening” the marketing mix: do firms, do it and does it pay off?	4Ps focus on environmental “green” themes	Planet 4Ps
McDonagh and Prothero	(2014)	Journal of Marketing Managment	535	SM Research: Past Present Future	Bibliometric assessment of articles defining sustainability marketing and critique of the field	Planet
Lim	(2015)	Marketing Theory	261	A blueprint for sustainability marketing: Defining its conceptual boundaries for progress	Views SM from the dimensions: Economic, environmental, social, ethical, and technological. Macro level perspective	Planet People

(continued)

Table 9.1 (continued)

Authors	Year	Journal	Citations	Title	Research focus	Planet and people/7P categories
Lunde	(2018)	AMS Review	140	Sustainability in Marketing: a systematic review unifying 20 years of theoretical & substantive contributions	Theory-level literature assessment from 1997 to 2016. Proposes a GREEN Framework as a conceptualization. Combines business and consumer theories. Focus on academia and not practitioners	Planet People
Thomas	(2018)	Journal of Marketing Management	55	Sustainability marketing: The need for a realistic whole systems approach	Acknowledgment of theoretical fragmentation. Positions critical realism as a metatheoretical framework. Meta-level discussion	Not applicable
Kemper and Ballentine	(2019)	Journal of Marketing	344	What do we mean by SM?	Levels of SM: • Auxiliary: 4Ps • Affirmative: Consumption Transformative: Institutional change	Planet People Product

Tollin and Christensen	(2019)	Journal of Business Ethics	92	Sustainability Marketing Commitment: Empirical Insights About Its Drivers at the Corporate and Functional Level of Marketing	Understanding corporate sustainability through the lens of the functional level of marketing	Corporate level of analysis
Sheth and Parvatiyar	(2021)	Journal of Macromarketing	282	Sustainable Marketing: Market-Driving, Not Market-Driven	A framework for driving sustainable consumption through corporate marketing strategy and government interventions	Planet People Product
Bhattachary-ya	(2022)	Asia-Pacific Journal of Business	31	The structure of SM research: a bibliometric review and directions for future research	Article categorization into 11 thematic categories. Verifies fragmentation of the field	Not applicable
Fuxman et al.	(2022)	Sustainable Production & Consumption	67	The new 3Ps of sustainability marketing: The case of fashion	Examines the role of three new Ps—Public, Process & Preservation—within the traditional 4Ps perspective.	Planet People 4Ps
Kumar et al.	(2022)	Journal of Cleaner Production		Green marketing innovation and sustainable consumption: A bibliometric analysis	Analysis of 1121 research and review articles published in 462 journals listed in the Scopus and Web of Science databases during 1990–2021. Points to research focus on consumption and environmental factors	Planet

Table 9.2 The SMC

	Product	Place	Price	Promotion	Physical Evidence	Processes	Employees
Planet							
People							

Source: (N. Fuduric, 2020; Fuduric et al., 2022)

optimization and innovation. The SMC enables firms to refine their sustainability strategies through this structured evaluation process:

- **Define** relevant business activities within a standardized taxonomy.
- **Map** existing sustainability strategies at the product, project, or business unit level.
- **Assess** coherence with industry standards and corporate strategy—identifying misalignment or conflicts.
- **Check** for inconsistencies in strategic and tactical approaches.
- **Measure** performance using KPIs, impact valuation coefficients, or third-party certifications.
- **Evaluate** potential new sustainability strategies that enhance value propositions and competitive differentiation.
- **Decide** which sustainability initiatives serve as flagship activities for stakeholder communication and brand positioning.
- **Maintain** honesty and transparency, avoiding greenwashing.
- **Control** and periodically reassess to ensure continuous improvement.

This structured approach helps organizations systematically implement and refine sustainability marketing practices.

The Hilti Pilot Study: The SMC in Action

The Hilti Group provides products, systems, software, and services to the global construction and energy industries. With approximately 34,000 employees across 120+ countries, the company is recognized for its direct customer relationships, quality, and innovation, generating CHF 6.5 billion in revenue in 2023 (Hilti: Sustainability Report, 2023). Since 2021, Hilti has expanded its sustainability efforts through a global strategy centered on three pillars: environment, people (health and safety of construction workers), and society.

Hilti's Customer Sustainability Team supports clients in achieving their sustainability goals. The company engages in extensive reporting initiatives, including the Science Based Targets Initiative, UN Global Compact, EcoVadis, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and the Net Zero Standard. These commitments require substantial internal expertise and resources. Acknowledging that many customers and partners lack the financial and human resources necessary to align with Hilti in its sustainability transformation, the company sought to develop a more comprehensive framework and saw potential in the SMC.

Hilti's aim was to support partners in adopting a more systemic perspective on their own sustainability efforts. As a result, Hilti identified new service opportunities, providing consulting and support to key customers who were lagging in critical sustainability areas. To this end, we tested the SMC on two business units—Anchors and Fire Protection. To maintain conciseness, this chapter presents findings from the Fire Protection unit as a representative example of the SMC's potential as a practical framework for practitioners.

The Requirements

The Hilti team identified the need for a sustainability planning framework that could:

1. Ensure coherence in sustainability reporting across business units by enabling comparability of strategies and operations.
2. Facilitate benchmarking of Hilti's sustainability strategies against competitors.
3. Assess customers' sustainability progress and anticipate their needs, potentially uncovering new service opportunities.

The first step involved developing a precise industry-specific taxonomy for the SMC rubrics to establish a structured framework. This taxonomy enhances comparability across Hilti's business units, competitors, and customers. Data for rubric classification was sourced from Hilti's internal and external sustainability reports, as well as publicly available reports from key competitors and customers. Table 9.3 presents the finalized taxonomy for the construction industry.

Interpreting the Results through the SMC Framework

The Fire Protection business unit at Hilti specializes in passive fire protection, preventing the spread of fire, smoke, and toxic gases through pipe, cable, or line penetrations. Hilti provides software that helps customers identify optimal fire protection products and streamline data preparation for fire authority approvals. Given the extensive use of products, materials, and chemicals in fire protection, sustainability has become increasingly relevant for this business unit.

Using the SMC taxonomy, we mapped Hilti's sustainability activities alongside those of a key competitor and a key customer. The comparison across all rubrics (Table 9.4) revealed that the competitor was more active in physical evidence/planet

Table 9.3 Construction industry SMC taxonomy based on Hilti AG

	PLANET – Plants, insects, animals, biodiversity, natural resources –	PEOPLE –Human health, safety, education, well-being –
PRODUCT	Product considerations impacting the environment incorporating all circular product elements: Design Sourcing Production Waste management Recycling, regeneration, reuse	Product considerations impacting humans: Product usage: Safety & no damage to health Product donations
PLACEMENT	All upstream & downstream channel impact on the environment. Logistics Supplier themes: governance & code of conduct Lowering channel GHG emissions protocols	All upstream & downstream channel impact on humankind or social justice. EHS requirements for channel members Code of conduct with partners Partnership transparency
PRICE	True cost transparency for the usage of common pool resources.	True human cost transparency: Cost of health & safety effects on the population.
PROMOTION	All planet-related communication where environmental promises are made & kept: Environmental focused SDG's CO2 compensation projects Environmental projects unrelated to business Providing tools & communications for customers & suppliers Sustainable promotional materials. Creation of foundations	All human-related communication where social promises are made & kept: Humanitarian projects Business values/ethics Socially focused SDG's Supporting customer certification Charity investment
PHYSICAL EVIDENCE	The effect a firm's physical conditions have on the environment: CO2 neutrality Energy efficiency Renewable energy sources Water usage – reduced, recycled Machine heat recovery Building materials- nontoxic, reusable, recyclable Office interiors-nontoxic, reusable, recyclable	The effect a firm's physical conditions have on a population: Buildings Materials Chemicals Land usage Noise effects on health Pollution effects on health
PROCESS	The effect of interdisciplinary firm processes on the environment: Third party certifications Industry standards: ISO Environmental compliance strategies Processes reducing energy, water & production waste Developing holistic sustainability strategies Prioritizing strategies Specialized staffing for sustainability projects	The effect of interdisciplinary firm processes on humankind & society: Third party certifications Industry standards: ISO Social/workplace compliance strategies. Employee health & safety strategic level HR processes: Diversity Training
PEOPLE (Employees)	Employee environmental engagement: Training for increased environmental awareness at work & at home Reduced business travel Mobility solutions to & from work Volunteering Donating	Employee engagement for social causes: Volunteering Donations. Employee Health & Safety functional level Culture of engagement Diversity on the functional level Mentoring

(Source: Fuduric et al., 2022)

Table 9.4 Hilti fire protection, a key competitor and a key customer

	Sustainability marketing canvas elements	Hilti <i>n</i> = Statements	%	Key competitor <i>n</i> = Statements	%	Key customer <i>n</i> = Statements	%
Planet	Product	44	13	48	18	55	22
	Price	12	4	11	4	5	2
	Placement	25	7	13	5	31	12
	Promotion	8	2	7	3	44	17
	Processes	30	9	29	11	7	3
	Physical evidence	21	6	31	11	3	1
	Personnel	6	2	3	1	0	0
Social	Product	18	5	4	1	6	2
	Price	2	1	17	6	2	1
	Placement	13	4	6	2	14	5
	Promotion	17	5	12	4	35	14
	Processes	69	20	22	8	8	3
	Physical evidence	28	8	45	17	10	4
	Personnel	48	14	23	8	35	14
	Total	341	100%	271	100%	255	100%

Source: N. Fuduric et al. (2022)

and people sustainability initiatives than Hilti, while the key customer demonstrated significantly greater engagement in sustainability promotions at both the planetary and social levels.

Hilti's sustainability strengths lie in product/planet, processes/people, and people/people(employees) rubrics. While Hilti and the competitor showed similar activity levels in product/planet initiatives, Hilti demonstrated a stronger presence in the product/people category.

The SMC provided Hilti with a structured approach to assessing Fire Protection's sustainability maturity, addressing key strategic questions:

Strategy Congruence: To what extent are business unit strategies aligned with corporate sustainability goals?

Impact Valuation: Which activities have the greatest planetary and social impact, and how are these impacts measured through metrics or certifications?

Sustainability Maturity: What is the maturity level of each sustainability initiative—emerging, maturing, or expert? Compared to competitors? Compared to customers?

Strategy Gaps: What gaps exist in sustainability strategy, and how can they be addressed in the short, medium, and long term?

Market Differentiation: Which sustainability initiatives enhance competitive positioning?

Sustainability Value Propositions: How do sustainability activities create value for customers and stakeholders?

Transparent Communication: Which mature strategies should be promoted, and which ongoing initiatives require transparent communication to avoid greenwashing?

By systematically addressing these dimensions, the SMC offered Hilti the ability to evaluate, refine, and align its sustainability efforts with both corporate strategy and market expectations. Once the taxonomy was established, Hilti was able to assess its position as an industry leader in sustainability and identify opportunities to extend services to customers requiring additional support.

Conclusion

The SMC addresses key conceptual gaps in sustainability marketing. Its strength lies in integrating planetary and social considerations within the 7Ps framework, which provides a unified conceptualization of sustainability marketing. In practice, it aids businesses in strategizing, measuring, and planning sustainability initiatives.

Hilti's application of the SMC offers valuable insights for firms seeking to enhance their sustainability strategies:

- **Comprehensive Strategy Mapping:** The SMC serves as an effective tool for systematically mapping sustainability strategies at the business unit level, as well as those of key competitors and customers, enabling a broader industry perspective.
- **Comparability Through Standardized Taxonomy:** By adhering to a defined taxonomy, the SMC facilitates comparability across business units, allowing firms to benchmark sustainability performance and identify best practices.
- **Encouraging Systems Thinking:** The structured process of mapping sustainability marketing activities fosters a systems-thinking approach, ensuring that sustainability efforts are proactive and strategic rather than reactive and short term.

The SMC empowers firms to develop coherent, competitive, and forward-thinking sustainability strategies that align with both corporate objectives and broader industry trends. However, to drive meaningful change, our questions and expectations of marketing must expand—becoming more ambitious, inclusive, and transformative.

While sustainability marketing has advanced the conversation, its impact has yet to scale. True transformation requires a systematic and comprehensive framework that embeds sustainability marketing into a unified strategic and operational approach. As McDonagh and Prothero (2014) challenge, “Can marketing be trusted to support the sustainability transition?” The answer is a resounding yes.

If marketing has contributed to the system's problem, it must also be part of the system's solution. By embracing integration, innovation, and accountability, marketing can drive the sustainability transition—not as a peripheral concern, but as a core business imperative shaping the future of commerce, society, and the planet.

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