

SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING

Ken Peattie.

1. Introduction

Within any consumer society most of what we consume will have been marketed to us. Not just the goods and services that we associate with the notion of ‘*consumption*’, but also the public services we use, the charities we patronize, the politicians we vote for, the places we visit and even the institutions and ideas that we think of as part of our society. There will be exceptions to this, such as when people grow their own food, make their own furniture or entertainment, or generate their own energy. In poorer countries consumption on a self-sufficiency and barter basis outside the formal economy may be the norm for many citizens. Within consumer economies however our consumption is facilitated and influenced by marketing thinking, processes and practices, and for that reason marketing sometimes takes the blame for the unsustainable nature of our consumption (Kjellberg 2008). Despite this, marketing can play a pivotal role in developing more sustainable systems of production and consumption within our societies in future (Belz and Peattie 2012).

The term ‘*Marketing*’ can refer to an academic discipline, a business process, an organizational function or division or a management philosophy. The focus of all of these is the customer. In business-to-business or organizational marketing, customers will be companies or public sector organizations. Such marketing is still relevant to the sustainability of consumer lifestyles, since marketing practices within industry supply chains will strongly influence the sustainability of consumer goods (see Sharma et al. 2010). However the form of marketing most visible, both in scholarship and in daily life, and which forms the focus of this chapter, is consumer marketing.

A growing phenomenon within marketing practice over the last three decades has been the intersection between societal concerns about sustainability, consumer behaviour and the marketing of products and services across a range of key markets (many of which are discussed in Part 5 of this book). This in turn has been reflected in a growing body of research into the influence of marketing processes and practices on elements of consumption such as product choice, price sensitivity, consumer satisfaction and post-purchase consumption behaviours.

2. Marketing and sustainability—An evolving relationship

Marketing has continually evolved throughout history, from the informal marketing practices of pre-industrial artisans through to the sophisticated social media and relationship-based marketing of the 21st century. During the first half of the 20th century, marketing scholarship evolved from the study of how to efficiently sell and distribute products to consumers, to increasingly sophisticated efforts to research and understand consumers, and to develop products and services to meet their needs. During the 1960s and 1970s what is often referred to as the ‘*modern mainstream marketing*’ emerged based on a ‘*marketing philosophy*’ centring companies’ efforts around the needs and wants of the customer as the means to deliver profits and growth (Bartels 1988). It also emphasized research to understand the customer and the marketing environment, which then allowed for the effective targeting of a customised ‘*mix*’ of marketing variables at specific market segments.

By the late 20th century, this conventional mainstream was being challenged on several fronts including its failure to address marketing’s socio-environmental impacts. Another critical school of thought focused on the discipline’s preoccupation with marketing as an economic transaction and on the tangible products provided to consumers. Such critics argued that the field needed to evolve to reflect a service provision mindset, partly due to the increasing dominance of services markets within developed economies. They called for marketing to be reconsidered as a process of building and managing relationships with customers with an emphasis on the intangible dimensions of those relationships and the companies behind them (Vargo and Lusch 2004).

2.1 The marketing-sustainability relationship.

The relationship between marketing and socio-environmental sustainability can be categorized into three ‘*ages*’ (Peattie 2001a). It began with ‘*ecological marketing*’ in the 1970s that focused on pressing environmental problems, such as air pollution, depleting oil reserves, and the environmental impact of pesticides (e.g. Henion and Kinnear 1976). It impacted a narrow range of industries and largely focused on technical solutions to resource use, pollution or waste concerns (e.g. the addition of catalytic converters to cars). The 1980s era of ‘*environmental marketing*’ focused on developing products with superior socio-

environmental performance with the aim of marketing them to the '*green consumer*' in search of competitive advantage. This was more opportunity focused and involved a far wider range of industries. It reflected growing consumer interest in sustainability issues, and higher levels of information available through the development of sustainability oriented guides and labels. The third age, of '*sustainable marketing*', involves the transformation of markets and marketing to achieve substantive progress towards the internalization of socio-environmental costs previously treated as externalities. Since sustainable marketing implies it having reached a sustainable end state (which ultimately is both impossible to judge and dependent on the sustainability of the society within which it takes place), it is more helpful to talk about '*sustainability marketing*'. This is marketing that seeks to integrate the ecological and ethical concerns of the green marketing era, along with a relationship marketing focus, to create a form of marketing that develops long-term, sustainability oriented value relationships with customers (Belz and Peattie 2012).

Most sustainability marketing activity and research has focused on the ecological sustainability of products and production systems rather than on their contribution to greater social justice (with some particular exceptions such as FairTrade marketing which is primarily social). However in practice social and environmental issues are so intertwined within the sustainability agenda that it is unhelpful to draw a clear distinction between them. This chapter will use terms such as '*green*', '*sustainable*', '*ethical*', '*environmental*' and '*ecological*' in ways that reflect the source research material. It is more helpful to consider all of these terms as referring to either social/ethical or ecological issues or both, reflecting Hopwood et al.'s (2005) conception of business sustainability initiatives as plotted on a two dimensional space with degree of improved social justice and ecological protection representing the two axes.

2.2 Marketing sub-types

Marketing's evolution has involved the emergence of marketing sub-disciplines. Several are important for sustainability due to their socio-environmental impacts and/or the extent to which consumers are sensitive to sustainability issues. These include travel and tourism marketing and particularly eco-tourism (Middleton and Hawkins 1998); arts and culture marketing and its role in promoting and protecting cultural resources (Boorsma 2006); charitable and not-for-profit marketing that supports pro-sustainability causes (Kotler and Andreasen 1996); and financial marketing of ethical investment and banking products

(Getzner and Grabner-Krauter 2004). A particularly important sub-type is social marketing (Kotler and Lee 2007) which involves non-commercial organizations using commercial marketing techniques to change peoples' behaviours to contribute to social goals linked to health, environmental protection and social equity (discussed further in section 7.5).

2.2.1 Services marketing

The largest marketing sub-discipline is services marketing which recognizes the distinctive characteristics of marketing intangible services compared to tangible products. Although sustainability issues are reflected in research for specific services (such as ecotourism or ethical banking), in the generic services literature there is a comparative lack of consideration of sustainability (van der Zwan and Bhamra 2003). This is surprising given that service provision has a key role in the potential transformation to a more sustainable economy through the substitution of resource intensive product elements of companies' offerings with services (van der Zwan and Bhamra 2003). This is most obvious in 'use' services where instead of owning a product, customers access the benefits of use through rental or leasing arrangements (e.g. car-sharing services versus car ownership and use). A core strategy for the dematerialization and improved sustainability of many markets is through 'product-service systems' that integrate elements of tangible products and service provision through innovative business models (Tukker 2004). However van der Zwan and Bhamra (2003) note that the success of such business models depends on understanding how consumers perceive behaviours such as renting and leasing as a different form of consumption to purchase and ownership, and on designing strategies to address consumer concerns about issue such as the continuity of service provision.

2.3.2 Macromarketing

Like economics, marketing scholarship has a dual focus. Micro-marketing considers the efforts of particular companies to develop attractive and profitable offerings, including more sustainable offerings, for their customers. Macro-marketing seeks to systematically consider the inter-relationship between marketing as a field and society as a whole with an emphasis on the (often unintended) socio-environmental impacts (Hunt 1981). This 'big picture' view of marketing remains a field of academic interest for a specialist few, whilst the mainstream field has increasingly focused on the technical minutiae of micro-marketing (Wilkie and Moore 2003). In relation to environmental concern, in a review of marketing research between 1971 and 1997, Kilbourne and Beckman (1998) noted that up until 1995 it was

dominated by micro-marketing, managerialist studies, after which more macro-marketing and critical studies emerged (but remained a minority). This chapter will focus on micro-marketing perspectives and the ways in which marketing scholars and practitioners seek to understand and influence consumers and their behaviour.

3. Understanding consumers

Effective marketing depends upon gathering research data on consumers and the influences on their behaviour, and applying analytical approaches to interpret the data in search of insight. It is worth noting that marketing oriented research into sustainable consumption is heavily biased towards purchasing aspects of consumer behaviour. This is unsurprising, since from the marketer's perspective purchases ultimately remain the yardstick of success or failure. Another aspect of consumer behaviour that features relatively prominently is recycling as a post-purchase behaviour. Other elements of consumption including non-consumption decisions (particularly through product boycotts), product repair and maintenance, product re-sale and the sharing of products all feature in the research literature but comparatively rarely. Recent research has seen attempts to develop more multi-dimensional notions of pro-sustainability consumption behaviours (PSCBs) such as Webb et al.'s (2008) '*Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal Scale*' encompassing pro-sustainability purchasing choices, recycling and avoidance/reduced use of products due to their environmental impact.

3.1 Marketing research

Researching and analysing consumers to understand how to promote PSCBs is an endeavour that marketing scholars and practitioners have engaged in over the past decades. However this research has focused on a narrow range of markets, particularly packaged goods and other relatively low involvement purchases (Prothero et al. 2011). It has also tended to focus on consuming differently in terms of substitutions between product types rather than on consuming less (Mont and Pleyps 2008). There has been some exploration of lifestyles of voluntary simplicity (Bekin et al. 2005) or anti-consumption (Cherrier et al. 2011), but the majority of research focuses on individual purchases rather than a broader understanding of consumption as a process, consumer lifestyles and alternatives to purchasing (including consumption reduction).

It is also worth noting that much of the scholarly research into sustainable consumer behaviour comes not from marketing academics but from environmental psychologists, environmental economists, social geographers and sociologists.

3.2 Consumer behaviour modelling

A key focus of sustainability consumer research has involved models of behaviour that have the potential to inform marketing strategies. There are a range of different types of model developed which are usefully reviewed by Jackson (2005). One of the most common approaches are extensions of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991), although other approaches apply Attitude-Behaviour-Context (ABC) Theory (Stern 2000), the Motivation-Ability-Opportunity model (Ölander and Thøgersen 1995), Norm Activation Theory (Schwartz 1992), and Value-Belief-Norm Theory (Stern et al. 1999; Stern 2000). These modelling approaches are split between those that apply conventional models of consumer behaviour (such as Theory of Planned Behaviour) to sustainability contexts, and those like ABC Theory that have been specifically developed to explain sustainable consumer behaviours. Although each of these modelling approaches has produced results that suggest some explanatory power, they all tend to focus on a relatively small set of key variables linked to complex behaviours and situations (Jackson 2005), and as such their application in, and usefulness to, marketing practice is limited. Further consideration of the use of such behavioural models to understand sustainable consumer behaviour is provided in Chapter 3.

3.3 Segmenting consumer markets

A key marketing task is the grouping of consumers into distinctive market segments. Segmentation aims to identify groups of consumers who share particular traits that make them meaningfully similar in their consumption behaviour, and different to people in other segments. Segmentation has been enthusiastically applied to markets for more sustainable goods and services in an attempt to identify, and market to, ‘*green*’ or ‘*ethical*’ consumers by using a range of segmentation bases. Many of the early attempts focussed on demographic factors such as age, gender or educational attainment. Later studies attempted to segment markets using psychographic bases such as personality variables (particularly perceived locus of control and alienation), values and identity (both social and self-identity). Behavioural and attitudinal factors have also been used, particularly environmental knowledge, ecological concern/consciousness, perceived social norms and ‘*environmental affect*’ (the emotional response of consumers to sustainability issues). Segmentation is discussed further in Chapter

22 and for a broader review of segmentation bases see (do Paco and Raposo 2009; Straughan and Roberts 1999).

One type of consumer that may be particularly important to understand is the so-called '*early adopter*'. More sustainable consumption behaviours may be achieved through engaging consumers with innovative products and services, encouraging consumers to adopt new types of behaviour, or engaging consumers in new types of business model to deliver benefits to them. Marketing innovative products such as electric vehicles requires early adopters to take a lead that more conservative consumers can later follow, in order for markets to grow beyond small niches (Gärling and Thøgersen 2001). Bhate and Lawler (1997) found that willingness to choose more sustainable product offerings was associated with innovativeness as a personality trait.

3.4 Consistency in sustainable consumer behaviour

The focus of behavioural modelling and segmentation studies has been to identify those consumers most likely to respond positively to pro-sustainability marketing offerings, and therefore those consumers who are relatively consistent in their PSCB. Unfortunately perhaps the most common observations about research in the field concern (a) the contradictory results and the lack of consistency about the significance of many of the key bases on which consumers have been segmented (do Paco and Raposo 2009; Kilbourne and Beckmann 1998; Straughan and Roberts 1999), and (b) that the behaviour of particular consumers will vary considerably in different contexts. For example Dolnicar and Grun (2009) found that consumers rarely maintained their '*at home*' PSCBs when on holiday.

The notion that there is a particular group of '*green*' consumers goes against the proposition of Kardash (1976) that all consumers (barring a contrary few) are potentially environmentally-responsible consumers in that, given the choice between two products that are identical in all respects other than their socio-environmental performance, they will choose the more sustainable option. Therefore variations in consumers' willingness to purchase greener products can partly be understood by their perception of any other differences between sustainable and conventional goods and services. Perceived differences of price, value, convenience, reliability or technical performance will vary across different purchase contexts. Peattie (2001b) proposed two explanatory factors for the success of sustainable market offerings:

(1) *The degree of compromise* involved which could be a price premium, the need to travel further to make a purchase or accept some reduction in technical performance. Although consumer acceptance of premium prices is one of the most widely researched topics via ‘*willingness-to-pay studies*’ (see 7.4.2.1 and Chapter 30), Bhat and Lawler (1997) found that consumers were more willing to accept price increases than an increase in the effort required to access more sustainable products

(2) *The degree of confidence* consumers have in the significance of the relevant socio-environmental issue, the sustainability benefits of the offering and the contribution that a purchase will make, which equates to the notion of perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) which has been shown to be a significant influence on their PSCB (Straughan and Roberts 1999)

McDonald et al. (2006) provided an empirical test of a simplified version of these factors by asking consumers to score 40 PSCBs according to the consumer effort required and the perceived difference/contribution they make towards sustainability. This revealed that perceived effort and difference are influential in consumers’ propensity to engage in PSCB, that individuals tended to exhibit relatively consistent patterns in their attribution of effort or worth to a range of PSCBs, and whilst some PSCBs were perceived relatively consistently by consumers (e.g. switching off lights or engaging in kerbside recycling perceived as high worth/low effort), others such as purchasing organic produce, composting or ethical banking were perceived very inconsistently across consumers in terms of effort and worth.

The subject of consistency across PSCBs was also explored by McDonald et al. (2012) as they attempted to understand how consumers reconcile sustainability concerns with their lifestyles. A key group identified in their study were ‘*Exceptors*’, consumers who generally followed-through on their sustainability oriented values within their lifestyle, but would treat certain categories of consumption (such as use of a private car or foreign holidays) as distinct from their other everyday consumption activities as an exception.

3.4.1 Attitude/behaviour gaps

An important stream of research concerns the apparent gap between consumers’ pro-sustainability attitudes, values and expressed intentions and their actual behaviours and actions (Pickett-Baker and Ozaki 2008; Prothero et al. 2011). Several explanations are offered for such attitude/behaviour (or value/action) gaps. One is simply that consumers over-

report socio-environmental concerns as a form of social acceptability bias. Biel and Dahlstrand (2005) suggest that the barrier to action is the comparatively large amount of cognitive effort required to translate sustainability oriented values into purchases. White et al. (2012) showed that marketing activities could reduce this gap, for example by making clearer to consumers the improvement in social justice that FairTrade purchases could deliver.

3.4.2 Scepticism, uncertainty and trust

Whether or not consumers believe marketers' claims about products and companies is crucial to the success of any form of marketing. It is arguably more crucial in an arena like sustainability where cynicism about companies' motives and behaviour is evident and problematic for marketers (Carlson, et al. 1993; Mohr, et al. 1998). Osterhus (1997) found that consumer trust was a highly significant moderator of consumer willingness to respond to marketers' attempts to market products on a sustainability basis. Even when consumers are not overtly sceptical of marketing claims, the complexities and ambiguities involved in many sustainability issues can generate uncertainties that undermine consumers' willingness to engage in PSCBs (Van Dijk et al. 2004). Given the importance of trust, it is perhaps surprising that there has not been more exploration of its link to the attitude-behaviour gap.

3.5 Perceived consumer social responsibility

One emerging sustainability marketing issue is the notion of perceived consumer social responsibility as a corollary to CSR (Wells et al. 2011). This is a radical proposition for marketers, since the marketing discipline is founded on the principle of consumer sovereignty and consumer rights rather than responsibilities. Perhaps for this reason, despite being a potentially worthwhile approach to understanding and influencing consumers, it has been under-researched (Wells et al. 2011). Empirical evidence is emerging that consumers feel a sense of partial responsibility towards both causing and tackling issues such as climate change, and that this can influence their behaviour (Wells et al. 2011). A further exploration of notions of consumer responsibility is provided in Chapter 15.

What stands out most from the research about consumers, and how they relate to companies and products in relation to sustainability issues, is the sheer complexity of potential influences on behaviour. As Jackson (2005) noted, a difficulty facing consumer behaviour modelling is that any model comprehensive enough to be realistic is rendered untestable by

its complexity (see for example Bagozzi et al. 2002), and any model that is testable will be unrealistically simplistic. Consumer behaviour reflects a wide range of consumers' demographic, psychographic, attitudinal and behavioural traits; and also the context in which consumer decision making and behaviour takes place in time, place, social linkages and other situational factors. Finally consumer behaviour will reflect what it is that the consumer is being offered and how they perceive both that offer and the company behind it. Research evidence suggests that consumers will respond positively to CSR initiatives amongst companies that go beyond improvements to individual products and their production systems (Brown and Dacin 1997). Success partly depends on promoting issues that consumers perceive as consistent with the nature of the product and business, since they can respond negatively if they perceive companies to be inappropriately or insincerely appropriating socio-environmental issues for marketing purposes (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001).

4 Influencing consumers—The marketing mix

Once marketers have targeted a market, their strategy is implemented through a '*marketing mix*' of variables. The standard mix model is the '*4Ps*' developed by McCarthy (1960) of Product, Price, Place (referring to distribution) and Promotion. Despite decades of criticism, its memorability and simplicity have allowed it to endure. However, it has been criticized from a sustainability perspective for over-emphasizing product and production issues at the expense of consumers and consumption (Belz and Peattie 2012).

4.1 Offerings to consumers

A company's offering to its consumers can usefully be thought of as a '*bundle of benefits*', or as a solution to a particular want or need. The move towards providing '*solutions*' rather than products is more typical of business-to-business marketing, but it also resonates with both the shift towards a service-based logic in marketing (Vargo and Lusch 2004), and with a move towards product-service systems as a means to create more sustainable consumer markets (Tukker 2004).

Improved socio-environmental performance of an offering can come via specific features (such as low-energy appliances or low emission vehicles), through production or service delivery characteristics (such as recycled paper, organic food or ethical banking), or from additional services or attributes (such as provision for recycling end-of-life product). Many

environmental product attributes such as recyclability or recycled content, low energy or low emission performance, or a reduction in ecologically sensitive ingredients requires their specification through a design-for-environment process (Chen 2001). Some sectors are using processes of ‘*co-design*’ to work collaboratively with consumers in search of environmental improvements and innovation (Lebel and Lorek 2008). Heiskanen and Lovio (2010), in a study of the low-energy housing market in Finland, found that close cooperation between builders and prospective purchasers led both to design innovations and improvement in householders’ use of energy saving features.

Whether or not perceived sustainability performance impacts consumer perceptions of technical quality is a subject of some controversy. Research from Landor Associates (2007, quoted in Connelly et al. 2011) shows that consumers associate improved socio-environmental performance with an increase in technical product quality, whilst other research suggests that consumers may draw negative inferences about the technical performance of more sustainable products (Luchs et al. 2010).

4.2 Cost/price issues

Whether or not consumers are willing to pay a premium for more sustainable products has been a core research topic, particularly through ‘*willingness-to-pay*’ studies in markets such as green energy and organic food (see for example Laroche et al. 2001). Since the influence of pricing on sustainable consumption behaviour is central to Chapter 15, this field of research will not be explored further here. However, two points are worth making. The first is that such studies perpetuate a view of sustainable products as luxuries that command a premium price, and of their conventional competitors as ‘*normally*’ priced. In many cases more sustainable product prices reflect the internalization of socio-environmental costs that conventional competitors treat as externalities and leave unmet. Unfortunately research is rarely phrased in terms of whether or not consumers view as acceptable conventional products with unrealistically low prices because they are subsidized by environmental destruction and human suffering (Belz and Peattie 2012).

The second point worth noting is that the transformation of markets towards more sustainable systems of consumption and production may make conventional notions of price less applicable as we move away from business models based on the sale of products towards more product-service systems. In such cases price becomes less meaningful than the

transaction costs (including all financial and psychological costs) associated with accessing and using products and services (including product disposal costs). A transaction costs approach is advanced as a way to explore the viability of sustainability marketing strategies when applied both to the internal processes of developing sustainability solutions and to understanding the consumer's response (Connelly et al. 2011) and presents research opportunities across a range of markets.

4.3 Distribution

The notion of the '*Place*' marketing mix variable has conventionally related to the management of distribution channels for tangible products or places of service encounter. For tangible consumer goods, much of their environmental impact is linked to energy and resource consumption within distribution channels and also in consumer travel to and from retail locations (Pretty et al. 2005). Developing eco-efficient distribution channels is a significant subject for research in marketing scholarship and practice, and although consumers have a vested interest in it through the impact on the distribution component of costs and prices, it is not generally an issue that concerns them directly. There has been an exception to this in the food market through consumer concern about food miles and the growth in the interest of more '*local*' food consumption (see also Chapter 19).

The other significant field for research linked to product distribution is in the role played by retailers in building relationships with consumers and influencing their behaviour through their sustainability marketing strategies (Jones et al. 2011).

4.4 Communications media

Although all aspects of marketing activity tend to communicate with consumers and other stakeholders, there are a range of specific media companies use (often in integrated ways) to build stakeholder relationships and influence consumers.

4.4.1 Advertising

Advertising is the most visible form of marketing communications encompassing print, broadcast, outdoor and online media. The popularity of sustainability oriented advertising has varied over time (Leonidou et al. 2011) with a particular spike in its use in the period 1990 to 1992, perhaps explaining the flurry of marketing scholarship looking at its use and effects in the mid 1990s. Some of this research sought to classify ads according to various criteria

linked to the style of appeal and ‘*depth*’ of green-ness presented. Other research has sought to understand such advertising's influence on consumers, but has tended to produce contradictory results (Leonidou et al. 2011). There is also direct mail advertising, although its associations with generating waste as indicated by the term ‘*junk mail*’, make it a challenging medium to use for sustainable consumption based messages (Belz and Peattie 2012).

4.4.2 Sales promotion

Sales promotion covers a range of techniques that seek to elicit a response from consumers (usually a sale, but also possibly a product trial or the gathering of information) through the offer of additional benefits as a ‘*special offer*’. Vouchers, coupons, contests, free gifts, samples, multi-buy offers, cash-back offers, loyalty schemes and consumer clubs are just some of the promotions used by companies. Their role in stimulating sales, and in the case of ‘*buy-one-get-one-free*’ type offers, potentially encouraging over-consumption, has led to criticism of promotions as marketing tools. Despite the prevalence of sales promotion offers in the retailing of packaged foods in particular, there is surprisingly little research exploring their role and effectiveness in influencing consumer behaviour in relation to sustainability. In one study Thøgersen (2009) found that the use of a promotional one month travel card did significantly increase consumers’ willingness to commute by public transport. Behavioural change was even to an extent evident several months after the promotional offer ended, which is in line with broader findings about short-term promotions’ ability to break habits and change longer-term behaviours.

4.4.3 Selling

Personal selling is more usually associated with industrial than consumer marketing. However there are consumer markets including cosmetics, cars, new homes and high technology goods in which selling plays a key role, and these include some of the most significant contributors to consumers’ ecological impacts (Belz and Peattie 2012). Despite the important role that sales staff could play in the sustainability marketing communications process, the research literature relating to this is very limited and skewed towards industrial markets.

4.4.4 Public relations, sponsorship and events

Products may be promoted through a range of activities under the umbrella terms of public relations including press releases, product launch events, celebrity endorsements, sponsorship

activities and ‘*experiential*’ marketing. The most comprehensively researched amongst these media is public relations where there is a significant overlap with corporate brand communications and CSR strategies (Gregory 2007). Research in relation to these media tends to focus on individual cases and rarely with a direct link to their influence on consumer behaviour.

4.4.5 Point-of-sale

In-store communication provides opportunities for retailers and manufacturers to engage with consumers on sustainability issues during the shopping and purchasing process, and at a moment that many purchase decisions are made. In a comparison of in-store communications practices amongst leading UK grocers, Jones et al. (2011) found that most such communication was about promoting, rather than restraining, consumption. Sustainability communications tended to be insignificant compared to communications about value and special offers. With the exception of Marks and Spencer's ‘*Plan A*’ communications materials that were thematically linked, most in-store communication addressed sustainability issues in a piecemeal way including topics such as FairTrade, local sourcing, use of re-usable shopping bags, sustainably sourced fish and recycled packaging.

4.5 Interactive marketing

Online and mobile phone based communication has been a key growth area in marketing communications in recent years. Leonidou et al. (2011) noted that a common means to connect companies' print advertisements to their environmental agenda was through a reference to online environmental resources (either a specific environmental website or an environmental section of the conventional site). The benefits of communicating online with consumers about sustainability are considerable. Online resources can provide as much depth and detail on product ingredients, production methods and supply chain impacts as the consumer wants. The interactive nature of online communication allows companies to create a dialogue about sustainability improvements, allowing any expressed consumer concerns or scepticism to be tackled directly. Online media also allow consumers to self-select the sustainability issues that most concern to them, allowing companies to develop more customized communication than conventional mass-media campaigns providing blanket messages (Minton et al. 2012).

4.6 Communications messages

Research into marketing communication messages has largely concerned advertising campaigns and the style of appeal they employ (White et al. 2012). One key stream of research has focused on the nature of environmental claims, which Carlson et al. (1993) classify as product-oriented, process-oriented, image-oriented and environmental fact based. Leonidou et al. (2011) note that over a 20 year period there has been a gradual shift away from process-oriented, image-oriented or environmental fact-based advertising campaigns towards focusing more on specific product-oriented claims that are easier to observe and for consumers to understand, and more closely related to practical environmental improvements.

4.7 Packaging and labelling

Product packaging provides a range of consumer benefits by protecting products, portioning them for convenience and helping to attract consumer attention and communicate information to them at the points of both sale and use. Packaging is also responsible for a considerable portion of products' environmental impact through resource use and the generation of waste. This has led to packaging becoming the focus of consumers' environmental concerns (Bech-Larsen 1996) and company strategies to develop more sustainable offerings (Underwood and Ozanne 1998). Research findings suggest that consumers express concern about the environmental consequences of packaging, but a lack of certainty on the part of consumers about the relative environmental merits of different types of packaging limit its influence on consumer behaviours, particularly in food purchasing where behaviour is strongly driven by habit (Bech-Larsen 1996).

Labelling is a core research area in sustainable marketing, particularly in markets such as organic foods and low-energy appliances, and is considered in detail in Chapter 25. From a marketer's perspective sustainability labels have been shown to positively influence consumer behaviour (Grankvist et al. 2007; Thøgersen et al. 2010). It is however challenging to communicate accurately on complex sustainability issues using labels that must also accommodate a growing list of mandatory requirements about ingredients (and in the case of foodstuffs, nutrition and allergy information), and address increasingly international markets using multiple languages. The space available for labelling information is also often shrinking with attempts to reduce the amount of packaging required by products (Prothero et al. 1997). The persuasive power of labels is particularly strengthened by the use of

independent certification of product claims that reflect a full life-cycle analysis of the product's socio-environmental performance.

4.8 Greenwashing

Another stream of research concerns '*greenwashing*' and the ways in which environmentally oriented product claims and other marketing communications vary between those that are factually accurate and acceptable, and those that are flawed due to omissions, ambiguity or claims that are untrue/misleading (Kangun et al. 1991). Research into greenwashing has generally focused on understanding it as a marketing practice rather than on its impact on consumer perceptions and behaviour. However studies like that of Chen and Change (2013) have shown that greenwashing reduces consumers' trust and increases their uncertainty and perceived risks.

5 Social marketing

Social marketing reflects the use of commercial marketing techniques by governments and public sector bodies to promote behavioural change in the pursuit of social goals. Although the majority of applications and research studies concern health behaviours, since being established as a field in the early 1970s, social marketing has been applied to an increasingly wide range of behaviours linked also to injury/accident prevention, community involvement and environmental protection (Kotler and Lee 2007). Although social marketing campaigns typically target people with behavioural change interventions in their role as citizens, there can be a significant overlap with their role as consumers. Health campaigns promoting dietary improvement, promoting cycling and walking behaviours over driving, or promoting responsible alcohol consumption all focus on important aspects of consumption.

Environmental social marketing campaigns tend to focus on energy, water and waste reduction, and the promotion of PSCBs such as recycling, car sharing, safe pesticide use, and the consumption of local and seasonal produce (Peattie and Peattie 2011).

Community-Based Social Marketing addresses the behaviour of citizens at a collective community level (McKenzie-Mohr 2000), recognizing that many elements of consumption (such as energy, transport, recycling and food purchasing) are largely dependent on the provisioning systems within a community and the choices they offer to consumers.

Individually, consumers may face very restricted choices in terms of being able to accept or

reject what is offered. At its simplest level, consumers cannot car share on their own. Collectively communities can make sustainable consumption behaviours more feasible, more impactful and can widen the choices available to consumers through the development of community food, energy, transport or waste schemes (Carrigan et al. 2011). A combination of community-based social marketing campaigns to motivate consumers, and sustainable community enterprises aiming to develop and market sustainable goods and services on a community basis may represent one of the most promising pathways towards substantively more sustainable consumption. It will however take marketing practice and research away from the familiar territory of international scale systems of production and consumption and supply chains that have come to dominate the research agenda in recent decades.

6 Future research agenda

Chabowski et al. (2011), conducted a bibliometric evaluation of the structure of scholarship in marketing and sustainability taking in 1,320 sustainability-focused articles in 36 academic marketing and business journals over a 51 year period. On exploring their results, perhaps the most remarkable finding goes unremarked in the paper itself: that for a discipline that prides itself on its customer orientation, consumers and their behaviour are conspicuous only by their relative absence. The majority of studies focus on marketing strategies, organizational cultures, processes and activities, resources, performance measures and profitability, the ethics and conduct of marketers, advertisers, sales staff and other employees, and the relationship between marketing, CSR and corporate citizenship. Of 35 ‘clusters’ of marketing and sustainability literature identified in the study, only one explicitly mentions ‘consumers’ and that is in relation to their response to CSR strategies rather than specific marketing efforts. Marketing as a field appears fascinated by the impact that sustainability concerns are having upon itself, whilst leaving the consumer's response comparatively under-researched. Given that progress towards more sustainable systems of consumption and production will depend upon consumer responses to the sustainability agenda and to the innovations in products, services and business models that companies introduce, this is both baffling and worrying.

Prothero et al. (2011) and Chabowski et al. (2011) both review the existing literature on marketing and sustainability and seek to identify future research opportunities. Many of their

recommendations for future research focus more on the management of marketing assets, strategy development, macro-marketing issues and broader stakeholder management than understanding the marketing/consumer relationship in a sustainability context. Prothero et al. (2011), argue for the need to broaden the scope of consumer research in marketing beyond the existing emphasis on purchasing, and to understand purchases in the context of consumer lifestyles. In this way the aggregate impacts of consumption behaviours can be understood and reflected in marketing strategies. Prothero et al. (2011) also highlight the research opportunities provided by the blurring of the traditional roles of citizen and consumer, emerging notions of consumer responsibility, and the rise of sustainable consumption practices such as sharing, collaborative consumption and co-creation.

An important contribution that marketing can make to sustainable consumption is also through de-marketing activities taken to reduce demand and consumption (Peattie and Peattie 2009). Although usually associated with social marketing and the reduction of consumption of harmful products such as cigarettes, de-marketing has been applied in commercial markets such as tourism to limit access to protect the quality of destination or restrict demand in the search for exclusivity and increased prices. More de-marketing focused research would help to shift the agenda beyond the integration of sustainable consumption behaviours and practices into conventional models of consumption and marketing. Instead it would begin to use an understanding of sustainable consumption behaviours and practices to challenge those conventional models of consumption and marketing to move the field from one that seeks to perpetuate our existing consumption-production systems, to one that seeks to challenge and transform them in a search for substantive progress towards a sustainable society (Varey 2010).

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