

Sustainable Marketing: A New Path to Build Brand Image Based on Fulfilling Social Responsibility

– Take the Starbucks Brand as an Example

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Abstract: Sustainable marketing represents enterprise comprehensive conception, careful design, efficient sales and high quality manufacturing of products and services in its production and operation activities, centred on the close integration of its own economic interests, the interests of consumers and the interests of environmental protection. This strategy is not only designed to guide customers to consume, but also a key action to build the enterprise brand image. This paper focuses on the sustainable development strategies of enterprises from two aspects: first, how the Chinese and foreign markets are committed to achieve the goal of sustainable development worldwide; second, how the sustainable economic development in China is integrated with the development trend of the Chinese economy and the world economy. Integrating the concept of sustainable development into the marketing strategy is becoming a new engine to promote brand innovation and enhance market competitiveness. But will the sustainable strategies of enterprises affect consumers' purchasing decisions, and how to better fulfill their social responsibilities and achieve real sustainable development while pursuing economic benefits? This is still a question worth making any further study. Taking Starbucks as an example, the present study this paper thoroughly analyze how enterprises implement sustainable marketing in the current context.

Keywords: sustainable marketing, Starbucks, corporate social responsibility

1. Introduction

As the world's largest coffee chain brand, Starbucks has been actively implementing sustainable marketing initiatives. Starbucks has launched plans to save energy and reduce emissions worldwide. Starbucks' "green stores" system is an invitation letter sent to consumers to the green future, and it is also an experimental field for comprehensive exploration of green retail and creating low-carbon consumption scene. It is anticipated that each green-certified store will decrease carbon emissions by approximately 10.57 tons annually and water usage by around 301.7 tons per year, in comparison to a standard Starbucks store of the same size in 2019 [1]. Starbucks will open 60 certified "green stores" in mainland China in 2022, and gradually promote them to the Chinese mainland market, bringing green touch and inspiration to more star fans, and integrating the concept of environmental protection into everyone's daily life. As a member of the sustainable development of the association, Starbucks

strives to connect more consumers, so that every cup of coffee can truly become the "coffee of tomorrow" for the future, and build a green earth together. In 2021, Starbucks opened the world's most "green" store: Xiang Green Workshop in Taikoo Li, Qiantan, Shanghai. At Green Workshop, about 50% of the building materials used in the store are expected to be recycled, upgraded, or biodegradable in the future [2]. This positive corporate image helps to attract more environmentally conscious consumers and enhance their sense of identity and goodwill towards the brand.

Starbucks is the first company to offer discounts to customers who bring their own reusable cups, taking the lead to include 10% post-consumer fiber (PCF) in hot drink cups, and has been leading the industry in increasing recycling infrastructure. Starbucks, the world's largest coffee chain, launched a plastic restriction program in 2018 to phase out single-use plastic straws in stores around the world.

To advance this goal, Starbucks cooperated with McDonald's to invest \$5 million to sponsor the "NextGen Cup" initiative, inviting all sectors of society to participate in the development of paper straws and paper cups. Starbucks has completely eliminated plastic straws in 2021 and instead adopted a straw-free cup lid. In addition, Starbucks plans to double the number of its reusable coffee cups between 2016 and 2022. At the same time, in order to encourage consumers to reduce the use of plastic coffee cups, Starbucks tried to charge customers with plastic coffee cups in the UK and Germany, while those who bring their own coffee cups [3]. On April 20, 2021, Starbucks China launched a new straw called "slag tubes" at its 850 stores in Shanghai, made from coffee grounds, reflecting Starbucks' unrelenting efforts and innovation in the field of plastic restriction. Starbucks plans to promote this environmental straw to all stores across the country, contributing to the global environmental cause [4]. Starbucks is working with local governments and stakeholders to advocate for enhanced recycling in all proprietary markets. Starbucks China, together with global plant-based dietary advocates and OATLY, launched the "GOODGOOD Star Food Association" campaign, advocating consumers to actively explore the environmentally friendly lifestyle of "good to themselves, good to the earth, and good to change". Through this action, Starbucks will launch new plant-based food products for mainland Chinese consumers, as well as biodegradable food products made from food boxes and recycled materials. They reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions by using more efficient electrical appliances and lighting equipment, as well as by using renewable energy sources. Starbucks' energy-saving and emission-reduction measures have improved the operating efficiency of its stores. Through effective energy management and resource utilization, energy cost is reduced and operating efficiency is improved. This enables Starbucks to better maintain the environmental quality and service quality of its stores, and provide consumers with a more comfortable and pleasant dining experience. A comfortable, warm and environmentally friendly dining environment will undoubtedly increase consumer satisfaction and loyalty, thus improving user viscosity.

Starbucks pays great attention to where and how the beans are grown. They work with sustainably grown coffee farmers to purchase beans that meet sustainability standards to ensure that the growing process is both environmentally and socially beneficial. Starbucks launched in 2001 with the "C.A.F.E. Practice programs", designed to evaluate and improve the social and environmental performance of their supply chain [5]. The program ensures the sustainability and ethics of its products by evaluating their social and environmental performances, including aspects of working conditions, human rights, environmental protection, etc. The core goal of the program is to ensure that its production of coffee beans and other related products is fully compatible with both social and environmental standards. In addition, Starbucks is also active in supporting the sustainable development of coffee growers and the community. This move not only reflects Starbucks' sense of social responsibility, attracts socially conscious consumers, and improves its brand reputation, but also injects new vitality into the future of the coffee industry.

Starbucks also actively participates in social welfare activities and contributes to the community. They support local nonprofit organizations, provide financial support to the community, and also give employees the opportunity to volunteer. Starbucks is also committed to fostering an awareness of sustainability among its employees, who provide relevant training and educational resources to understand the importance of sustainability and encourage them to practice the concept of sustainability in their work. These initiatives not only help Starbucks achieve its sustainable development goals, but also improve the brand's social reputation and consumer recognition. By implementing these sustainable marketing initiatives, Starbucks has gained consumers by demonstrating their trust and support.

2. Sustainable Marketing Measures for Enterprises

2.1. Improvement of the Correlation between Enterprises and Customers

Enterprises need to deeply understand the needs and preferences of customers through market research and customer insight, so as to develop marketing strategies that meet customer expectations. This correlation is not only about the provision of products or services, but also about understanding and meeting customers' deep needs from their perspective. By providing high-quality products and services, timely responding to customer feedback and complaints, and actively paying attention to customers' expectations and continuous improvement and innovation, enterprises can enhance the connection with customers and establish long-term and stable relationships. For example, baristas will invite users to participate in coffee tasting parties in the enterprise micro-group to enhance the connection between users and users, and between users and baristas. At the same time, Starbucks also increases the affinity and interest of the brand through IP operation means such as bear store manager, so that customers are more willing to interact and share with the brand.

2.2. Timely Responding to the Market Environment

From a speculative business model to one highly responsive to customer needs. This means that companies need to have the ability to respond quickly to market changes, making a timely and accurate response to customer needs and feedback. This reaction ability can help enterprises to seize the market opportunities, improve customer satisfaction, and thus enhance the market competitiveness. In the face of growing environmental problems and social calls for sustainable development, Starbucks has responded positively to promoting the use of green supply chain and environmentally friendly packaging. It uses recyclable paper cups and straws to reduce the generation of plastic waste and promote energy-saving and emission-reduction measures worldwide. These measures not only help protect the environment, but also enhance Starbucks's brand image and social responsibility.

2.3. Establishing Long-term Friendly Relationship with Consumers and Partners

Consumers have become aware of the problems caused by environmental change and worry about population growth, and how the impact of the products they buy on the environment is also the focus of their concern [6]. This requires enterprises to shift from focusing on short-term interests to long-term interests, from customers' passive adaptation to single sales to customers' active participation in the production process, and from mutual conflicts of interests to common and harmonious development. By establishing such relationships, companies can improve customer loyalty and satisfaction, thus achieving sustainable marketing goals. Facing the development trend of marketing in the new economic era, enterprises should develop systematic and linkage marketing strategies.

Specifically speaking, enterprises need to pursue profit as the goal from the overall perspective, but also need to adopt the strategy of cooperation alliance [7] .

2.4. Achieving a Win-win Reward Mechanism

The consolidation and development of any transaction and cooperation relations need to consider the issue of economic interests. In sustainable marketing, companies need to ensure that their partnership with customers delivers mutually satisfactory returns. This includes providing reasonable prices, high-quality products and services, and good after-sales service. With an increasing consumer focus on environmental and social responsibility, companies that actively adopt sustainable marketing strategies are often able to win the trust and recognition of consumers, thereby increasing market share and sales.

2.5. Product Angle

Starbucks' demonstrated sustainability in product development provides valuable advice to other companies. Starbucks uses biodegradable and recyclable and environmentally friendly materials to reduce its environmental impact. Other enterprises can also learn from this approach and integrate environmental protection concepts into the product design and production process to promote sustainable development. Starbucks optimizes waste utilization, realizes resource reuse and reduces waste, reminds other enterprises to examine production processes, improve resource efficiency, and reduce the burden on the environment. While focusing on improving the taste and quality of its products, Starbucks takes into account consumers' pursuit of healthy diet, and launches healthy drinks and food. Other enterprises should also pay attention to the market demand and develop high-quality products to meet consumers' expectations. Starbucks actively supervises its suppliers to ensure that the purchase of coffee beans meets environmental standards, thus ensuring the quality and sustainability of its products. Other enterprises should also strengthen cooperation with suppliers to jointly establish a sustainable supply chain to achieve win-win results.

3. Long-term Development Prospects of Enterprises

To achieve operational sustainability goals, companies must follow eight elements: vision, strategy, goals, procedures and protocols, key performance indicators, measurement and reporting, stakeholder engagement, and culture [8]. By optimizing production processes, reducing resource consumption and reducing waste emissions, companies can reduce operating costs and further improve economic benefits. Secondly, sustainable marketing is conducive to achieving environmental benefits for enterprises. Enterprises can choose to adopt environmentally friendly materials, improve production processes and promote circular economy and other ways to reduce the negative impact on the environment, reduce resource consumption and energy consumption, thus helping to achieve sustainable development. This can not only improve the environmental performance of enterprises, but also help enterprises to remain competitive in the market environment with increasingly stringent environmental regulations. Sustainable marketing also has a positive impact on the social benefits of enterprises. By participating in social public welfare undertakings, supporting education undertakings, improving employee treatment and protecting employees' rights and interests, enterprises can actively fulfill their social responsibilities, enhance their social image, and enhance their public recognition and reputation. This will not only contribute to the long-term development of enterprises, but also create a more harmonious social environment for enterprises. Through achieving a win-win reward mechanism, enterprises can maintain and strengthen the cooperative relationship with customers and achieve sustainable marketing goals.

While some companies claim to implement sustainable marketing, consumers must be wary of the "illusions" created for public relations purposes or to pursue short-term interests. Some companies may mask their unsustainable behavior in the production or supply chain by overemphasizing the environmental nature of their products or services, namely "green whitewashing". For example, some heavily polluting manufacturers will emphasize their recyclability when promoting their products, but turn a blind eye to the damage to the environment in their production process. In addition, some companies may issue ambitious statements about sustainability, but these statements often lack specific action plans and timelines, simply to cater to consumer expectations and not really intended to be put into practice. Some businesses may create the illusion that they are working to sustainability by making superficial changes, such as changing packaging materials or reducing the use of single-use plastics. However, these changes may not be sufficient to produce a substantial improvement in the overall environmental impact of the enterprise. At the same time, people need to be wary of companies that focus on their own economic interests and ignore the impact on communities, employees and consumers.

To reveal these artifacts, consumers and stakeholders need to remain vigilant and require companies to provide specific, verifiable evidence of sustainability. In addition, governments and social organizations should also strengthen the supervision and evaluation of enterprise sustainable marketing practices to ensure that enterprises truly integrate sustainable development into their business strategies. Only in this way can sustainable marketing be ensured to not only stay on the slogan, but also truly be implemented into action to contribute to the sustainable development of enterprises and society.

4. Conclusion

The development of enterprise marketing should be firmly based on the sustainable development strategy of society, consumption and enterprises themselves. The marketing strategy of an enterprise should realize the following changes: the products and services provided by an enterprise to the market should not only fully meet the current needs and expectations of consumers, to pursue the maximization of operating profits, but also fit the long-term development of consumers and the society. In other words, enterprises need to closely combine the pursuit of profits, the satisfaction of consumer demand and the sustainable development of the society to form an organic unity. Only in this way can people truly realize the sustainable development strategic goal of "meeting the needs of contemporary people without damaging the ability of future generations to meet their needs", and ensure the steady and long-term marketing activities [9].

In the whole process of their production and operation, enterprises should not only devote themselves to meeting the needs of consumers, but also strictly follow the principles of sustainable development of ecology, economy and society. This requires enterprises to maintain and enhance the value of natural and human capital while creating value for consumers, so as to establish a long-term and stable relationship with consumers, and maintain coordination with the pace of social development.

With the increasing public awareness of the environment, enterprises not only need to deal with the global environmental problems, but also should regard them as an opportunity for development, rather than just a burden. Enterprises are guided and constrained by social ethics, morality and law in their behavior, which encourages enterprises to choose sustainable marketing methods. The improvement of enterprises and their employees' awareness of social responsibility and environmental protection is also an important factor in promoting sustainable marketing.

In sustainable marketing, enterprises should not only guide consumers to form a sustainable consumption concept, but also meet their needs in this aspect. This is not only the embodiment of corporate social responsibility, but also the key to the market recognition of their products or services.

Companies should see the sustainable consumer demand created by global environmental issues and increased public awareness of the environment as opportunities for development, not just challenges.

Sustainable marketing is a new marketing strategy in line with the trend of social development. It requires enterprises to actively respond to global environmental problems while meeting consumer needs, and realize the coordinated development of economy, ecology and society. This not only helps to improve the social image and competitiveness of enterprises, but also is the positive contribution of enterprises to the future social development.

This paper aims to deeply analyze the positive role of sustainable development. By paying attention to social and environmental issues, enterprises can effectively shape a positive corporate image, and enhance the brand value, and then enhance the sense of identity and loyalty of consumers to the enterprise, so as to stabilize and enhance the market competitiveness of the brand. The implementation of sustainable marketing strategy encourages enterprises to optimize the utilization of resources, reduce unnecessary resource and energy consumption, effectively reduce production costs, and improve economic benefits. For consumers, the concept of sustainable marketing can meet their growing demand for environmentally friendly and fair products. By purchasing and using these products, consumers can not only contribute to the improvement of the environment and society, but also improve the quality of life of themselves and their families, and maximize their personal value. In addition, sustainable marketing also emphasizes the pursuit of economic benefits, while taking into account social justice and environmental protection, providing strong support for promoting the sustainable development of the society. By advocating enterprises to adopt environmentally friendly production methods and product design, sustainable marketing can help reduce environmental pollution and resource waste, improve environmental conditions, and contribute to the construction of a better future.

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