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Sustainable Marketing Concept – A New Face of Capitalism

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Editorial on Sustainable Marketing

For many years business people and scientists alike have been engaged in discussion on sustainable development, the concept of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. The idea of sustainable development should be implemented at all levels of the economy, including enterprises. According to this concept, considered in a micro-scale, the sources of success for modern enterprises are sought in long-term sustainable development, realized through the economical, ecological and social aspects of their operations. The popularity of this concept has led to a change in the ways European economies and businesses operate. They currently face the necessity to reconfigure their strategies, including marketing strategies. A new concept of sustainable marketing has emerged. It is closely related to the concept of sustainable development, and in this context, in the micro-scale, it affects economic development. A new approach to how company offerings are created, delivered and communicated, the rules governing cooperation between suppliers and consumers, the implementation of various marketing functions, as well as the analysis and mitigation of adverse influence of these activities on social and ecological environments, provide a firm basis for a better life for present and future generations.

Marketing perceived either as a company philosophy or as one of the key components (functions) of business, which is most strongly involved in connections between an enterprise and the environment it is based in, should be the main source and focal point for an enterprise, as far as sustainable development is concerned. In modern concepts of marketing the necessity for enterprises to engage in socially and ecologically oriented activities is underlined. These activities include, amongst others, recycling, returnability of product, recyclable packaging, low level of chemicals and heavy metals in offered products, biodegradability of products, communication concerning ecological and environmental aspects of company activities, support of social actions, encouraging healthy lifestyle among the community members and employees, following ethical practices, and providing employees with social care. Marketing is therefore related to the social, ecological and economic dimensions of sustainable development at the micro level, and comprises the relations as well as attitudes of market

entities in the value chain. In this context marketing may be perceived as a component of sustainable development and an activity supporting it. The increased involvement of companies in social and ecological marketing activities is strongly related to the implementation of modern technologies and innovations in business processes, the development of relationship marketing, and creation of partnership relations with customers and other market entities. Since at present sustainable production must be related to sustainable consumption, modern marketing plays a key role in creating opportunities for future development. In these circumstances sustainable marketing is not just an option to consider but also a major challenge to be responded to, and to be used as a source of competitive advantage in the near future.

Marketing as a key management concept currently faces a serious dilemma. In the face of an increasing number of accusations relating to creating artificial demand for products and services by selling offerings and encouraging increased consumption in order to maximize profits, it must be now perceived in the wider social context. In this context one assumes that striving for a better quality of life contributes to the gradual deterioration of grounds for prosperity in future. Thus, managers and scientific circles need to reflect on whether and how it would be possible to reconcile a focus on customer satisfaction, profits for the enterprise with long-term prosperity for customers and future generations.

The concept of sustainable marketing is not the complete new presentation of marketing activities. An increased interest in environmental issues in the 70s led to the emergence of quasi new concepts of marketing, which to a smaller or lesser degree underline that marketing is a social system that concentrates on environmental and social aspects. Among them one can distinguish macromarketing, ecological marketing, green marketing, and social marketing. The concept of sustainable marketing, which emerged in western literature at the end of the 90s, is a natural subsequent stage in the evolution of marketing. It is a wider concept of management, which adopts the idea of sustainable development, and entails the necessity to change behaviors of all participants of the value chain including producers and consumers. The necessity to reconcile a constant focus of marketing on boosting consumption and better-balanced use of natural and tangible resources has been even more significant in the last years. Fisk underlines that the

long-term consequences of activities undertaken form the basis for a shift from a focus on customer satisfaction maximization to sustainable consumption maximization [1]. Within the concept of sustainable marketing, enterprises aim at accomplishing ecological, social and economic objectives. This approach comes down to maintaining an environmental, equity and economic balance. In literature these three elements are referred to as 'the 3Es' and constitute the three aspects mentioned above. From the perspective of the above deliberations, sustainable marketing can be defined as the process of planning, organizing and implementing marketing programs relating to designing products, prices, ways of selling, promotion and people (employees) so that 1) customers are satisfied and their needs are met, 2) company objectives are accomplished, 3) these processes are compatible with the ecosystem. As the consequence, the concept of sustainable development necessitates a new look at marketing tools that influence the market (sustainable marketing mix), as well as incorporating sustainable marketing-related issues into the main trend in research on marketing and consumer behavior. Before an enterprise develops it, it will be necessary to conduct market research in order to answer the following questions: Is the enterprise aware of the concept of sustainable development and

the influence on its activities? Is the enterprise able to modify its offerings and processes accordingly? Will innovations be necessary? Does the enterprise establish positive connections with ecological organizations and groups of local community? Do activities undertaken as part of market communication underline the enterprise's involvement in environmental and community problems?

The significance of marketing from the perspective of sustainable development will vary according to the company size, the business it is in, or its organizational culture. In some companies, under the pressure exerted by customers, it will be limited to designing more 'sustainable' products or services. In those which undertake sustainable development activities because they cherish these values, marketers will implement the concept of sustainable marketing by changing and redesigning the whole corporate marketing strategy and culture.

References

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