

Sustainable Marketing within the Environmental Responsibility Context: Research and Communication Strategies for Businesses Growth

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How to cite this paper: Zrybnieva, I., Burdyak, O., Venherova, O., Nosachenko, O. and Serhiienko, O. (2025). Sustainable Marketing within the Environmental Responsibility Context: Research and Communication Strategies for Businesses Growth. *Grassroots Journal of Natural Resources*, 8(1): 759-776. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.33002/nr2581.6853.080132>

Received: 17 February 2025

Reviewed: 03 April 2025

Provisionally Accepted: 05 April 2025

Revised: 12 April 2025

Finally Accepted: 15 April 2025

Published: 30 April 2025

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Abstract

This article aims to investigate the role of marketing research and communication tools in developing sustainable marketing strategies to improve business efficiency in the context of environmental protection. The study's methodological approach is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. In particular, qualitative methods include the synthesis of literary sources, systematization and generalization; while quantitative methods are based on the application of statistical analysis, in particular the calculation of the Sustainable Marketing Index (SMI). This approach allowed us to determine the level of integration of sustainable practices into the marketing strategies of European enterprises and to identify the relationship between the volume of investments and the financial capabilities of businesses to implement them. Additionally, we conducted an impact analysis of marketing research on strategic decision-making, cost optimization and increasing the profitability of enterprises. As a result of the calculations, it was established that most companies recognize the feasibility of investing in sustainable marketing campaigns ($ICM_{small} = 1,75$; $ICM_{medium} = 2,259$; $ICM_{large} = 1,99$), which is confirmed by the growth of budgets and allotted time resources for their implementation. It was determined that the level of investment in sustainable development depends on the scale of the company, macroeconomic factors and the effective communication with stakeholders. The study confirmed that the level of investment in sustainable marketing campaigns increases depending on the scale of the company and macroeconomic conditions, and as stated, effective interaction with stakeholders seemed to be a determining factor in the success of such strategies.

Keywords

Marketing research; Communication tools; Sustainable marketing; Sustainable development; Environment; Environmental marketing

Introduction

In the current conditions of globalization and increasing environmental challenges, strategic marketing is qualitatively building new characteristics that focus on the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable marketing involves both economic efficiency and environmental and social attributes, which makes it a key element of long-term business competitiveness (Rusiyati *et al.*, 2024; Widiastuti, Sukesu and Sarsiti, 2024). An important factor in the successful implementation of sustainable marketing strategies is marketing research, which allows enterprises to identify trends, assess changes in consumer priorities and develop effective business models (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Maseer, Zghair and Flayyih, 2022; Talukder, Kumar and Das, 2024). Simultaneously, the use of communication tools contributes to the dissemination of sustainable development values among consumers and stakeholders, forming a positive image of the company and increasing the level of trust in its products and services (Nurjaman, 2024).

One of the main drivers of the implementation of sustainable marketing strategies is the growing motivation of companies to invest in relevant initiatives. In particular, European companies are motivated by such factors (Figure 1), as there is a growing desire to increase energy efficiency, the expectation that sustainable development provides the prospect of a new impetus for innovation and future technologies, the desire to combat climate change and preserve natural habitats, the desire to see a positive impact on corporate value creation, the need to meet customer expectations, external requirements and investor demands, and to benefit from competitive advantages. The multidimensionality of motivational factors of modern European companies stimulates companies to integrate the principles of sustainable marketing into their business strategies.

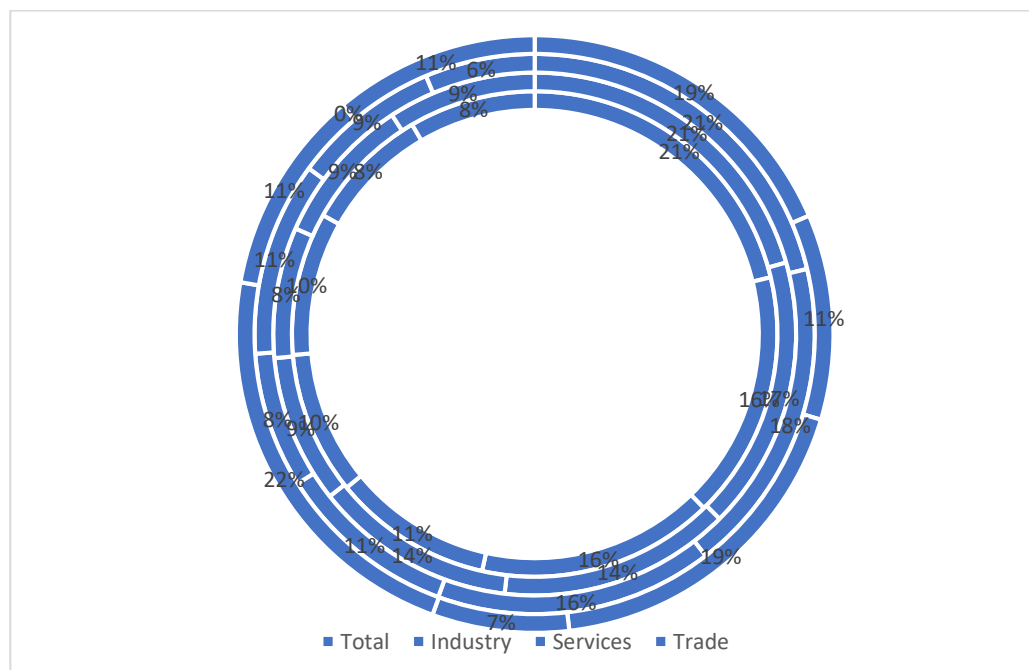


Figure 1: Motivation of European companies to invest in sustainable development initiatives [Source: Consultancy.eu (2023)]

A fairly significant proportion of the companies surveyed are focused on meeting sustainability standards (26%), which requires the active use of innovative marketing strategies. The identified trends are mainly due to the growth of investment attractiveness of sustainable initiatives: according to a report by the international consulting company Horváth, in 2023, European companies allocated an average of 27% of their total investment budget to improving sustainable development. However, there may be a potentially large gap between expected and actual results in this area, because, despite many promises, only 11% of companies have successfully reduced CO₂ emissions, and only 3% of the surveyed companies had a special sustainability department (Consultancy.eu, 2023). Therefore, research into the role of marketing research and communication tools in the formation of effective sustainable marketing strategies is relevant both from a scientific and practical point of view, which allows us to identify patterns and mechanisms that contribute to the successful integration of sustainable development principles into business marketing practices.

The purpose of this article is to substantiate the role of marketing research and communication tools in the development and implementation of sustainable marketing strategies aimed at increasing business efficiency. The research is aimed at identifying the nature of the impact of these components on the adaptation of companies to changing market conditions, cost optimization and ensuring competitiveness.

Literature Review

Given the growing importance of sustainability in today's business environment, companies of all sizes and ownership structures are increasingly investing their budgets to integrate environmental and social aspects into their business processes. In this context, sustainable marketing strategies are essential for companies seeking to meet consumer demands for environmental responsibility while maintaining or increasing profitability (Maseer, Zghair and Flayyih, 2022). Marketing strategies can facilitate the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies, in particular, Qamar *et al.* (2022) found that the key drivers are; the size of the company and the perceived simplicity and reliability of solar energy technology (SET), while price, competitiveness and energy intensity act as barriers that increase the cost reduction of technologies for their dissemination, which will subsequently have a significant impact on the long-term development of companies. Green marketing strategies, including offering green products and transparent pricing, have a positive impact on consumer perceptions and sales (Rusiyati *et al.*, 2024). In this context, Eshaa (2024) notes that sustainable product innovations, such as eco-design and packaging, are vital to meet consumer demand and regulatory pressures. Also important are the findings of Bilan *et al.* (2020), which confirmed the link between environmental pollution and the shadow economy. In this context, the shadow economy is considered economic activity that is not taken into account in official statistics and can harm the environmental situation.

Current trends in corporate promotion policies characterize the need to provide appropriate communication channels to promote green competitiveness (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Consumers of green goods and services are heterogeneous, due to differentiated socio-demographic structures, values, behavioural determinants, education levels and environmental literacy (Baydas, Yalman and Bayat, 2021; Starchenko, Samusevych and

Demchuk, 2021). Therefore, according to Dogra and Grover (2025), marketing now also involves total digitalization of communication processes, significant dominance of online channels for promoting goods and services and dissemination of other information about company activities. Consequently, companies use digital platforms to educate and interact with consumers on sustainability issues, enhancing consumer engagement through interactive content and participation in sustainable initiatives (Widiastuti, Sukesu and Sarsiti, 2024). Given this, Azhar (2024) notes that high-quality digital content and consistent messages are crucial for sustainable brand development, which emphasizes the importance of targeted digital marketing strategies.

In this context, Fuxman *et al.* (2022) emphasize the need to develop marketing strategies aimed at promoting, communicating and educating consumers who are either existing or potential customers of sustainable brands. Similar solutions have been noted before; in particular, Shen, Richards and Liu (2013) noted the critical need to inform and educate consumers about the company's sustainability efforts. A more recent study among 155 female consumers of fashion brands showed that female consumers are environmentally conscious and aware of fast fashion companies' sustainability initiatives, and therefore, fast fashion companies' sustainability initiatives (unconsciously) influence the process of shaping their purchasing behaviour (Hageman *et al.*, 2024). Even though sustainability is considered a competitive advantage in most industries (Hageman *et al.*, 2024; Hussein *et al.*, 2024; Rusiyati *et al.*, 2024; Singh and Sharma, 2022; Talukder, Kumar and Das, 2024), scientific research is still quite limited in terms of developing fundamentally new marketing paradigms and identifying new ways to promote sustainable practices among business and society. Therefore, Fuxman *et al.* (2022) proposed improving previously developed marketing mix structures, taking into account modern sustainable trends in company development (Figure 2), which will give companies new opportunities to strategically respond to marketing sustainability for consumers.

Public	Performance	Preservation
<p>The public represents the “who” of sustainable development.</p> <p>The public dimension includes the people involved in the trade of a product or service, i.e., contact persons, customers, staff, and management.</p>	<p>Efficiency means the “how” of sustainability.</p> <p>Efficiency is about ethical production, resource efficiency, and supply chain transparency; which in turn ensures quality, compliance, and minimizing the environmental impact of business.</p>	<p>Conservation represents the “why” of sustainable development.</p> <p>Conservation emphasizes long-term ecological and cultural responsibility, and as a result, involves reducing environmental impact, conserving resources, and protecting.</p>

Figure 2: The essence of the “3P” model is unified based on modern sustainable business development trends [Source: Fuxman *et al.* (2022)]

Successful implementation of sustainable marketing strategies requires a deep understanding of the market through market research and effective use of communication

tools. In particular, a study by Nurjaman (2024) conducted among 30 banks on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) found that integrating green practices improves operational efficiency and brand reputation, and satisfies the demands of consumers who are currently concerned about environmental issues. In addition, Oncioiu *et al.* (2021) substantiated companies' evaluations of their interactive communications and, in addition, the process of conducting dialogue with online consumers and other stakeholders. In this context, the results of a study by Chen *et al.* (2021) confirmed that the most relevant indicators of digital marketing systems for companies' environmental competitiveness are data on page speed, bounce rate, image placement and remarketing events.

From a sustainability perspective, influencer marketing is one of the most effective marketing strategies in modern-day marketing environments, promoting the social, economic and environmental sustainability of modern businesses through the use of product advocacy. However, its trajectory is somewhat ambiguous in light of new technologies and changes in consumer consumption patterns (Aw and Agnihotri, 2024). Other benefits of promoting sustainable initiatives include opportunities for innovation, competitive advantage and alignment with global sustainable development goals (Joshi, 2024). Simultaneously, companies may face challenges such as high costs, consumer scepticism and organisational inertia (Eshaa, 2024; Udeh and Dugba, 2025). On a more global scale, challenges outlined by Ngo *et al.* (2025) include the risk of "greenwashing" and the need for significant investments in innovation and stakeholder engagement. In this context, environmental marketing should also consider its authenticity, which will avoid the risks of acquiring a negative reputation due to consumer concerns about "greenwashing" tactics (Firdausyiah, Montolalu and Azzahra, 2024). However, the efficiency of communication processes can eliminate this issue, and transparent communication about sustainability efforts can strengthen consumer trust and loyalty (do Nascimento *et al.*, 2024; Prihatiningrum *et al.*, 2024). The overall trend indicates predominantly positive outcomes in the development of sustainable business practices. To further eliminate the potential risks identified in the literature, it should be noted that there is great benefit to integrating sustainability into marketing practices (Chen *et al.*, 2021; Fuxman *et al.*, 2022; Huang *et al.*, 2024), which, according to Maseer, Zghair and Flayyih (2022), will ultimately contribute to economic growth and environmental improvement.

Methodology

The following methods were used in the research process:

- A synthesis of literary sources was used to identify current trends in the development of the practice of implementing sustainable marketing strategies and applying the results of marketing research and communication tools to improve business efficiency.
- Statistical data analysis was used to process the results of secondary data on the implementation of sustainable marketing principles in 1,000 European companies (Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Spain, France). This was analyzed through Sortlist during 2022. Furthermore, to acquire a deeper understanding of the relationship between the volume of investments of European companies in sustainable marketing and their financial capabilities for its implementation, calculations on the sustainable marketing index (SMI) were carried out for each group of enterprises (small, medium and large scale) based on Uceda (2022) and the volume of investments in sustainable development by company size.

Below is the formula utilized for the sustainable marketing index (SMI) for each group:

$$ICM = \frac{S}{G} \quad (1)$$

where S – the share of companies with a sustainable marketing strategy in the group;
G – the overall level of sustainable marketing, calculated by the formula:

$$X_{cep} = \frac{X_1 + X_1 + \dots + X_n}{n} \quad (2)$$

where X_1, X_1, \dots, X_n – Percentage values of the share of companies investing in sustainable marketing.

n – number of values.

The results were interpreted according to the following principle:

ISM < 1 means that this group of companies implements a sustainable marketing strategy less often than the average.

ISM > 1 indicates that companies in this group are much more actively integrating sustainable practices into their marketing strategy.

- The systematization method was used for theoretical modelling of the marketing research process and, as a result, its impact on the efficiency of modern business.
- The generalization method was used to study modern literature on the practice of using communication tools to improve business efficiency.

Results and Discussion

In today's globalized and digitalized business environment, marketing research plays a key role in shaping companies' strategies to improve their performance. It provides a deep understanding of consumer needs, market trends, the competitive environment, and potential risks, which enables informed management decisions. The use of marketing research helps optimize costs, increase profitability, and adapt business models to changing market conditions. The growing hype around sustainable marketing strategies has also led to a new trend toward increased investment in sustainability-focused campaigns (Figure 3), despite the need to increase marketing budgets and the time required to implement them (Figure 4). According to a sustainable marketing study conducted by Sortlist among 1,000 companies in 5 countries (UK, Belgium, Germany, Spain, France), 89.5% of the companies surveyed believe that incorporating sustainability topics into their marketing strategy is worth the return on investment, as modern consumers are increasingly concerned about the state of the environment (Uceda, 2022).

According to the data provided, a significant number of companies predict an increase in spending on such initiatives, which indicates the gradual integration of environmental and socially responsible approaches into corporate strategies. In particular, 28.3% of respondents believe that the budget will increase by more than 10%, and 27.5% expect it to increase by 5%. Only 6% of companies predict no changes, and the percentage of companies considering the possibility of reducing funding is minimal (1.3%). Thus, there is a general trend towards increased investment in sustainable marketing strategies, which is consistent with empirical studies on the impact of the financial system on the

level of investment in green and sustainable initiatives. In particular, in a study of 799 polluting and 1,130 non-polluting companies in China during 2013-2020, conducted by Khalid *et al.* (2025) proven that the introduction of environmental management systems serves as one of the key mechanisms for stimulating environmentally oriented investment. Additionally, the level of marketing activity of companies is an important factor influencing this process. Another study conducted by Bilan *et al.* (2020) allowed us to argue that the level of investment in sustainable marketing initiatives can be correlated with macroeconomic factors, such as the level of tax burden, state financing for environmental programs and the level of shadow economy, which affects the overall carbon content of the GDP. This emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to developing sustainable marketing strategies, taking into account regulatory and economic aspects; however, it also reinforces the initial thesis about the need to increase marketing budgets and other resources, including time for the development and implementation of sustainable marketing campaigns to help protect the environment (Figure 4).

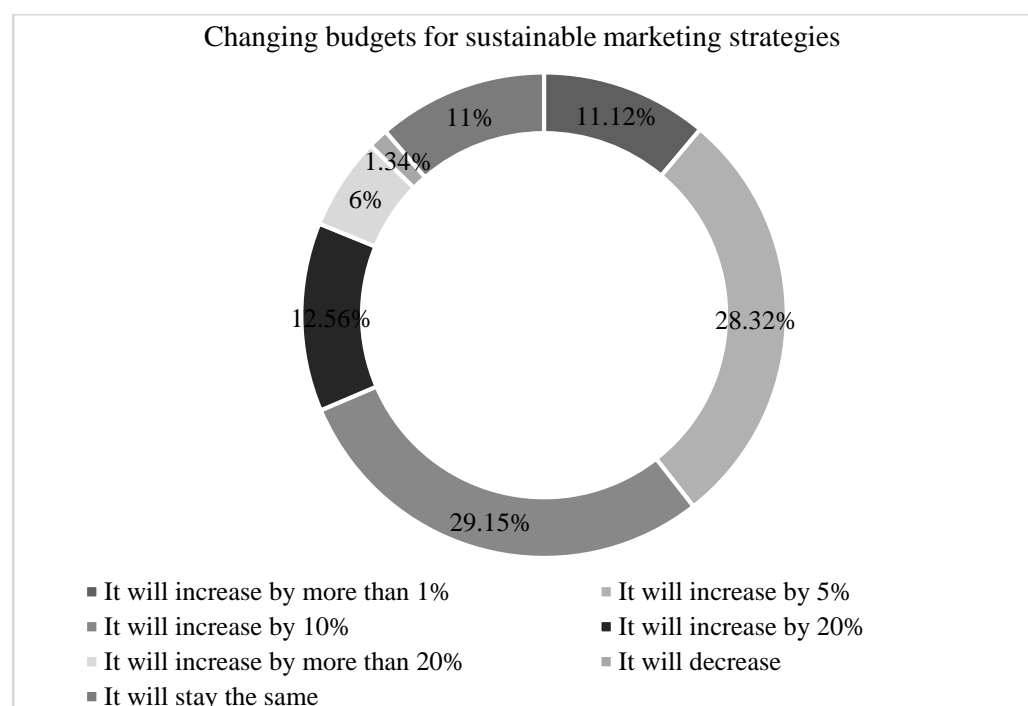


Figure 3: Companies' expectations regarding changes in budget volumes for sustainable development marketing campaigns [Source: Uceda (2022)]

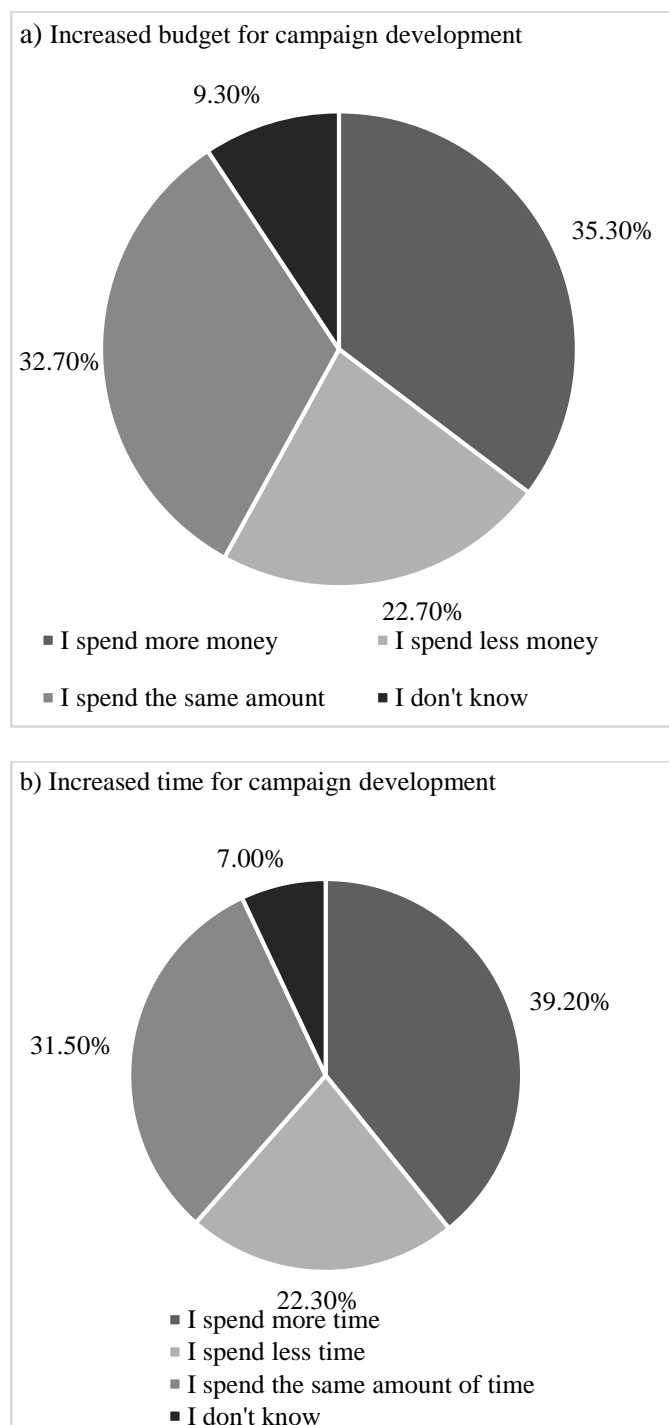


Figure 4: Expectations for increased budget and time for developing and implementing sustainable marketing campaigns [Sources: Uceda (2022)]

Chart (a) shows that 35.3% of companies report an increase in spending on such initiatives, while 32.7% maintain them at the previous level, and only 9.3% of enterprises allocate smaller amounts of funding. A similar trend is observed in chart (b), where

39.3% of companies increase time allocations for implementing sustainable marketing campaigns, while 31.5% leave them unchanged, and only 7% reduce this indicator. This data indicates that business structures are increasingly aware of the need to strengthen marketing activity in the field of sustainable development, allocating additional resources in financial and organizational aspects. To achieve competitiveness in the context of developing sustainable marketing campaigns by increasing funding and optimizing time for its implementation, it is important to establish communication processes with stakeholders. In particular, stakeholder engagement, including consumers, employees, and NGOs, is essential for developing effective sustainable marketing strategies that resonate with diverse audiences (Oncioiu *et al.*, 2021; Rathore, 2017). In addition, collaborating with environmentally friendly suppliers and engaging in partnerships can strengthen sustainability initiatives and overcome resource constraints (Tinonetsana and Musariwa, 2024). In this context, the main reasons for increasing marketing budgets, as shown in figure 5, are precisely the need to ensure a positive company image (20.76%), the possibility of increasing profitability (18.26%), and the respondents' considerations regarding the ethics of implementing sustainable initiatives within the business (13.93%).

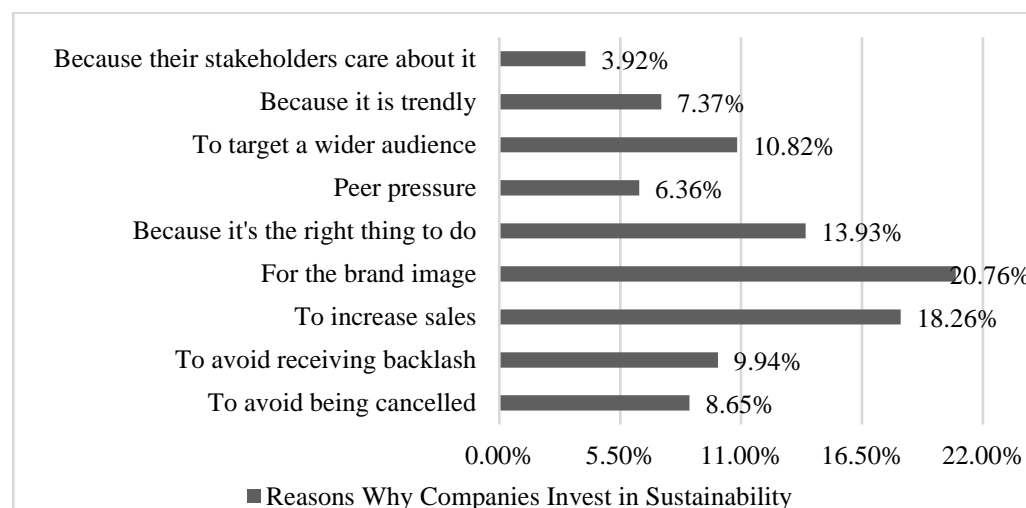


Figure 5: Reasons for increasing investments in the sustainable development of companies [Source: Uceda (2022)]

The above figure shows the reasons behind the increase in investments in the sustainable development of companies and how they determine the growth of investments in sustainable development (Figure 6). Specifically, companies with a staff of more than 250 people demonstrate the highest level of involvement in environmental initiatives, with 33.2% of the total investment. This highlights their greater financial capabilities, resilience to market fluctuations and high levels of corporate responsibility. According to Sheth and Parvatiyar (2021), the marketing of larger companies, through their consumption-oriented market practices, could directly or indirectly contribute to unsustainable production and consumption practices. This further highlights the necessity of introducing a more responsible and accountable approach. In the long term, this approach will stimulate markets for environmentally friendly products and services and will make it possible to build sustainable societies. Contrarily, it was observed that

the smallest enterprises (0-1 and 2-9 employees) have an unchanged level of investment (7.5%), which indicates the limited resources they have for implementing sustainable practices. In contrast, medium-sized enterprises (26-100 employees) demonstrate significant activity (21.7%), surpassing even companies with 101-250 employees (16%). The volume of investments in sustainable development by company size is presented in Figure 6. This trend is driven by the growth prospects of medium-sized enterprises, which mainly rely on a well-built reputation that increasingly depends on the company's ability to satisfy the demands of environmentally conscious consumers (Nurjaman, 2024).

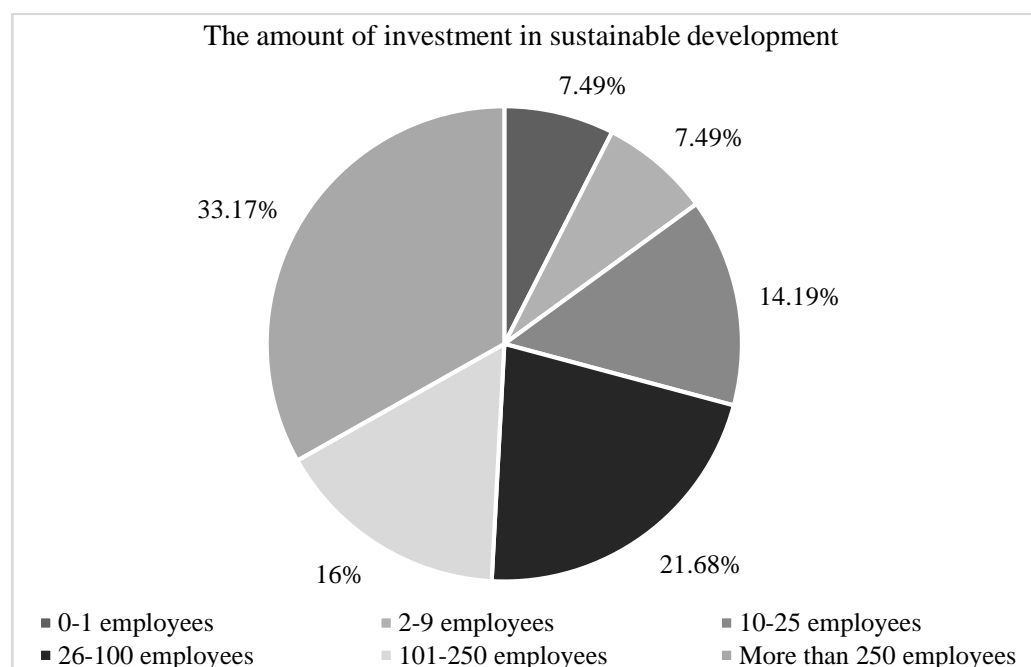


Figure 6: Volume of investments in sustainable development by company size

Source: Uceda (2022)

To establish a clear trend in the growth in investments in sustainable development, the Sustainable Marketing Index (SMI) was calculated for each group of enterprises (small, medium and large scale) based on the data in Figure 6. As a first step, the overall level of sustainable marketing (G) was determined to identify the average percentage of companies investing in sustainable marketing. This was calculated as follows:

$$G = \frac{33,2 + 21,7 + 16,0 + 14,2 + 7,5 + 7,5}{6} = 16,683$$

Next, for each group of companies, the corresponding calculation of the sustainable marketing index (SMI) was carried out as follows:

$$ICM_{small} = \frac{7,5 + 7,5 + 14,2}{16,683} = \frac{29,2}{16,683} = 1,75$$

$$ICM_{medium} = \frac{21,7 + 16,0}{16,683} = \frac{37,7}{16,683} = 2,259$$

$$ICM_{large} = \frac{33,2}{16,683} = 1,99$$

The value of $ISM < 1$ means that companies implement a sustainable marketing strategy less often than the average; on the other hand, $ISM > 1$ indicates that such companies are much more actively integrating sustainable practices into their marketing strategy. The calculations showed that the initial assumption about the dependence between the amount of financial and allocated time resources and the opportunities for implementing sustainable initiatives is justified, since for enterprises of all sizes, the indicator was $ISM > 1$. This trend is generally associated with the vulnerability of smaller companies to external challenges and limited resources, in particular, lower revenue and resulting in insufficient funds for the development of relevant sustainable marketing strategies and their high-quality implementation. Accordingly, there is a need to form effective management decisions aimed at overcoming the identified barriers and increasing the efficiency of integrating sustainable marketing into the activities of enterprises of various scales. In this context, it is necessary to ensure systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of marketing research data on the current and planned activities of the enterprise and their capabilities to promote environmental protection.

The functional significance of marketing research covers several key aspects: it helps to identify new market opportunities, allowing to identify unmet consumer needs and predict changes in their preferences; thanks to the analytics of the competitive environment, enterprises can more effectively position their products, differentiating them according to the requirements of the target audience; marketing research also increases the effectiveness of advertising campaigns through the optimization of communication channels and adaptation of the content strategy. In addition, market analysis provides businesses with substantiated data on efficient pricing strategies and the level of customer satisfaction, which contributes to increasing their loyalty and long-term cooperation and promotes a conscious attitude towards the environment. Taking into account the above aspects, which are depicted in Figure 7, marketing research provides enterprises with the opportunity to make informed decisions and also contributes to their sustainable development in the long term.

The results of marketing research should be integrated into the process of monitoring and further optimizing marketing campaigns and the corresponding consumer impact tools, i.e., complement the existing elements of the sustainable marketing strategy and improve its implementation methods. In the current digital age, marketing communications play a key role in building brand awareness, increasing consumer trust, and creating competitive advantages. With increasing attention to green initiatives, marketing strategies should also provide appropriate communication channels to promote green products and services and promote green competitiveness (Chen *et al.*, 2021).

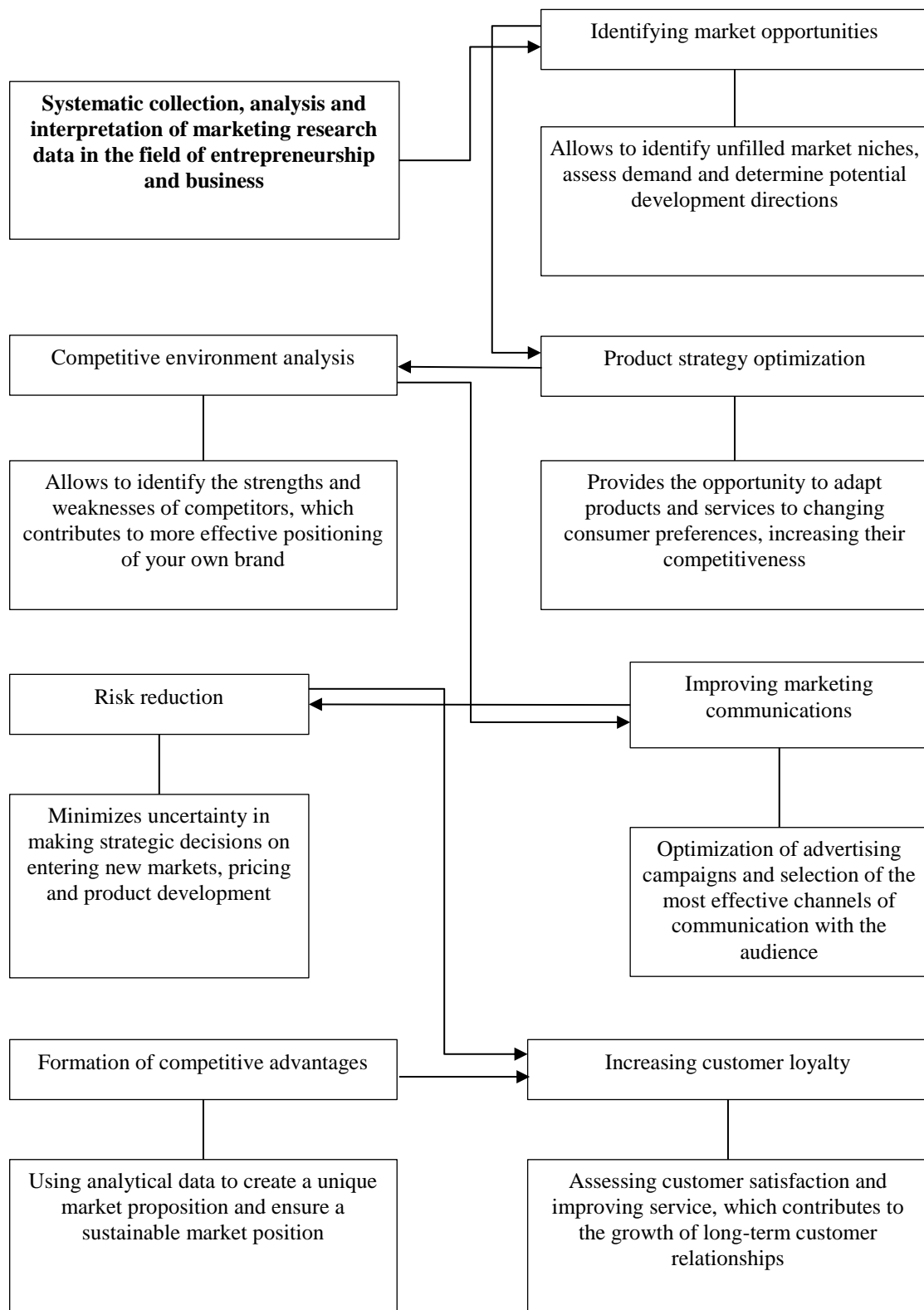


Figure 7: The impact of marketing research on business efficiency

In addition, companies that prioritise environmental protection tend to strengthen consumer loyalty and create a positive impact on consumer culture (do Nascimento *et al.*, 2024). Social media, personalized email newsletters, content marketing, PR campaigns, influencer promotion and interactive advertising provide multi-channel communication (Alhalwachi *et al.*, 2024; Aw and Agnihotri, 2024; Iqbal *et al.*, 2024). This allows for the adaptation of information messages to the specifics of different market segments. The use of integrated communication strategies that combine traditional and digital methods of interaction with customers is of particular importance. Given that modern marketing involves total digitalization of communication processes, companies need to qualitatively improve online channels for promoting goods and services to disseminate relevant information about their activities (Dogra and Grover, 2025). Therefore, the use of Big Data and artificial intelligence in the analysis of consumer preferences allows companies to develop more effective marketing campaigns focused on a personalized approach to customers. In addition, interactive technologies such as chatbots, voice assistants and automated CRM systems contribute to improving customer service, optimizing costs and accelerating feedback. Thus, the strategic use of communication tools increases the effectiveness of marketing initiatives and, in addition, forms long-term consumer loyalty, contributes to the growth of enterprise profitability and ensures their competitiveness in a dynamic business environment.

Conclusions

The study demonstrates that marketing research is a key tool for informed management decision-making, enabling businesses to respond to consumer trends and navigate the current competitive landscape. The increasing investment in sustainable marketing campaigns highlights their effectiveness, as most companies recognize the positive influence of these strategies on financial performance. The level of investment in sustainable marketing initiatives correlates with corporate strategies, macroeconomic conditions and evolving market dynamics. An important factor in the effective implementation of sustainable marketing, particularly in advancing environmental sustainability, is the expansion of communications with stakeholders and the development of strategic partnerships. These efforts not only enhance a company's public image but also contribute to long-term market resilience and ecological responsibility.

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Authors' Declarations and Essential Ethical Compliances

Authors' Contributions (in accordance with ICMJE criteria for authorship)

<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Author 1</i>	<i>Author 2</i>	<i>Author 3</i>	<i>Author 4</i>	<i>Author 5</i>
Conceived and designed the research or analysis	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collected the data	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Contributed to data analysis & interpretation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Wrote the article/paper	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Critical revision of the article/paper	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Editing of the article/paper	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Supervision	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Project Administration	Yes	No	No	No	No
Funding Acquisition	No	No	No	No	No
Overall Contribution Proportion (%)	20	20	20	20	20

Funding

No financial support was received for the research and writing of this article.

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