



## CASE STUDY



## THE ROLE OF MARKETING IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF COMPANIES WITH SUSTAINABLE POSITIONING

O PAPEL DO MARKETING NA EDUCAÇÃO PARA O CONSUMO SUSTENTÁVEL: UM ESTUDO DE CASO MÚLTIPLO DE EMPRESAS COM POSICIONAMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL

<sup>1</sup> **Maria Fernanda Cury Camis**  
**Sisternas Fiorenzo**

Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing (ESPM), São Paulo (Brazil).

**Orcid:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9265-2234>

**2 Thelma Valeria Rocha**

Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing (ESPM), São Paulo (Brazil).

**Orcid:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3825-4343>

**3 Caline Migliato**

Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing (ESPM), São Paulo (Brazil).

**Orcid:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2356-7301>

**Corresponding Author:**

**Thelma Rocha**  
E-mail: [tvrocha@espm.br](mailto:tvrocha@espm.br)

**Editora chefe**

Dra. Eliana A. Severo  
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE), Brazil.

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** to understand the role that marketing can play in educating consumers to acquire sustainable consumption habits.

**Methodology/approach:** exploratory qualitative research based on the multiple case study method, with in-depth interviews with marketing managers and actions developed to educate the customers.

**Originality/Relevance:** this study innovates by analyzing three cases of companies with sustainable positioning, verifying sustainable practices in their marketing mix as managerial contribution.

**Key findings:** it was clear that they need to carry out an analysis of their value chains before applying sustainability elements to their marketing mix to educate their consumers. It is important that they first understand whether they are in fact acting sustainably, and then create actions in this direction.

**Theoretical/methodological contributions:** the managerial model has shown that companies with a sustainable positioning can follow it to approach marketing strategies that educate their consumers in relation to sustainable consumption.

**Keywords:** Marketing; Consumer education; Consumption; Sustainability.

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## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** entender o papel que o marketing pode assumir na educação de consumidores para que adquiram hábitos de consumo sustentáveis.

**Metodologia/abordagem:** pesquisa qualitativa exploratória baseada no método de estudo de caso múltiplo, com entrevistas em profundidade com gestores de marketing.

**Originalidade/Relevância:** esse estudo inova ao analisar três casos de empresas com posicionamento sustentável, verificando práticas sustentáveis em seu marketing mix e ações desenvolvidas para educar seus consumidores.

**Principais conclusões:** percebeu-se a necessidade de as empresas realizarem uma análise de suas cadeias de valor antes de aplicarem elementos de sustentabilidade no seu marketing mix, tendo em vista a educação dos seus consumidores. É importante que antes elas entendam se estão, de fato, agindo de forma sustentável, para, em seguida, criar ações nesse sentido.

**Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas:** o modelo gerencial demonstrou que empresas com posicionamento sustentável podem segui-lo para abordar estratégias de marketing que eduquem seus consumidores em relação ao consumo sustentável.

**Palavras-chave:** Marketing; Educação do Consumidor; Consumo; Sustentabilidade.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainability and consumption have gained prominence over the past decades. Consumption significantly impacts society, as it involves consumer purchasing habits and is influenced by companies that seek consumption to increase their profits. While many brands encourage excessive consumption, others are beginning to adopt more sustainable practices, promoting alternatives such as eco-friendly products, circular economy initiatives, and awareness campaigns.

According to Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong (2023), marketing aims to engage a target audience of buyers and generate profit from this relationship by employing strategies to convince consumers that a given product is the best option to meet their daily needs. However, when consuming reflects the satisfaction of "exaggerated" desires, it is understood as consumerism.

Consumerism is a collective act influenced by individual perceptions, cultural values, and shared experiences. Viewed through the lens of collectivity, the uncontrolled consumption model exposes environmental degradation, which necessitates the adoption of new forms of production and conscious consumption throughout society (Cruz et al., 2007).

Despite the apparent relationship between consumption and environmental impact and the increasing media exposure regarding the planet's condition, research indicates that most people do not perceive their actions as responsible for this destruction. The Akatu Institute conducted a study to gain insights into how companies can act as drivers of healthier and more sustainable lifestyles. The respondents, aged between 18 and 40, revealed that sustainability is not among their priorities; 28% stated that they do not know how to live in a way that benefits themselves, others, and the environment, reinforcing the lack of information and education on the subject.

Given marketing's power to encourage consumers to purchase a product, companies must take on the role of harmonizing the relationship between consumption and the environment, positioning themselves as educators for environmental protection through responsible consumption practices. Both companies and consumers must undergo changes, and according to the academic article "The Responsible Perspective of Marketing and Conscious Consumption: A Necessary Interaction Between Companies and Consumers" (Silva et al., 2012), marketing is the function that best represents the organization-consumer interaction and should therefore address issues such as sustainability to drive change.

The research problem addressed in this study is: "How can marketing assume a role in educating consumers about sustainable consumption?" Its primary objective is to analyze which marketing strategies can be adopted by companies to educate their consumers about sustainable consumption. To aid in answering this question, three secondary objectives were defined: to identify cases of companies that adopt marketing approaches aimed at educating sustainable consumption habits; to investigate how the marketing mix is used by companies that position themselves sustainably; and to highlight best practices that can be replicated by companies seeking to use marketing as a tool to educate their audience about sustainable consumption.

To understand the marketing strategies that companies can adopt in this regard, some assumptions were established: strategies that adopt an educational approach focusing on the benefits of sustainability may be more effective than those emphasizing the negative impacts of its absence; and companies whose core business is centered on sustainability and whose purpose is directly linked to this cause have greater ease in educating their consumers about conscious consumption.

As a justification, according to Exame magazine (2022), a global advocacy group fighting for climate justice in the fashion industry reported that 80% of waste generated by the sector is either landfilled or incinerated. It is evident that products present in everyday society are deteriorating the planet. Although they may seem essential for survival, alternatives already exist in the market that offer the same items in more sustainable ways. The issue lies in the fact that sustainability is not among the population's priorities—despite this being a matter that could be addressed through education on the topic.

The methodological approach used was qualitative and exploratory, based on multiple case studies involving three companies: one specializing in sustainable sandals, another in absorbent underwear, and a third in vegan cosmetics. These companies were chosen as representative cases of brands that position themselves as sustainable to their consumers.

This study is structured into five parts: Introduction; theoretical review on consumption, marketing, and sustainability; methodological approach; results and discussion; and conclusion.

## **2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS**

A study conducted in partnership between Google and Mind Miners in 2023 indicated that in 1973, the first crisis involving a natural resource, oil, occurred. As a result, the world was put on alert, necessitating economic reorganization. In 2001, in Brazil, an environment of uncertainty emerged with the water crisis, prompting the population, businesses, and government to rethink their habits and actions. In September 2023, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, used the term "global boiling" to describe the current state of the planet concerning global warming, categorizing it as an emergency. A 2021 CNN report highlighted that landfills in Brazil emit approximately 27 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. Increasingly present in the media, these reports indicate that the root cause of these issues is linked to contemporary consumption patterns, making it essential to rethink them in favor of sustainability to minimize their environmental impact as much as possible.

It is important to examine consumption to understand the role of businesses in environmental deterioration. According to the Akatu Institute (2010), consumption will not

cease to exist; however, with the worsening scarcity of resources, it must become increasingly conscious. The consumer should strive to minimize the negative impacts generated by their consumption, following the principles of sustainability.

According to the United Nations, sustainability consists of development that meets the needs of the present generation while ensuring the capacity to meet the needs of future generations. O. C. Ferrell and Michael D. Hartline (2016) state that "sustainability includes the evaluation and improvement of business strategies, economic sectors, labor practices, technologies, and lifestyles, all while preserving the natural environment." Furthermore, the authors note that many companies are striving to increase their positive impact on society through activities that involve socio-environmental responsibility and ethics.

## **2.1 Consumption, Marketing, and Sustainability**

Assisted by marketing, many companies seek to understand consumer needs to shape their strategies, aiming not only to inform but also to persuade and create perspectives that satisfy consumers when purchasing a product. Based on this logic, marketing follows various approaches to convince customers that they need to buy products. As consumers enter this cycle of stimulation and satisfaction, the harmful act of consumption gains momentum.

It is evident that ceasing consumption is not an immediate option; however, adopting more sustainable consumption practices over time can become a reality. A contemporary example is the slow fashion movement, which continues to meet the demand of the textile industry while advocating for the consumption of responsible brands that produce sustainably, pay fair wages, maintain production levels that do not harm the environment, and implement transportation strategies to reduce carbon emissions. This movement stands in opposition to fast fashion, which frequently produces excessive quantities, often under unhealthy and exploitative labor conditions akin to modern slavery.

Companies must adopt environmentally positive practices to combat the rampant consumption resulting from years of governmental incentives to stimulate economic growth. Marketing plays a crucial role in this strategy: rather than creating new "needs," it can adopt educational strategies to make consumers more aware of the impacts of their actions, thereby seeking a balance between personal satisfaction and the planet's sustainability.

### **2.1.1 The Role of Companies in Creating Responsible Chains**

To adopt sustainable marketing strategies, value chains and marketing mix must align with the promoted principles. In this context, *greenwashing* (a term that identifies companies that falsely claim to be "sustainable" as a strategy to attract more consumers) must be avoided. To achieve this, value chains should be reconsidered, incorporating sustainability at all stages of production.

According to Gonzaga (2005), a challenge for organizations that wish to use marketing to convey the idea that they consider environmental responsibility in their production chains is the ability to operate with environmental practices while maintaining product quality and competitive pricing. The author states that to overcome this obstacle, companies must invest in communication strategies that enhance public awareness regarding environmental characteristics, reinforcing campaigns that raise public sensitivity to this cause. Beyond contributing to sustainability, companies themselves can benefit from these decisions in various ways, such as improved stakeholder relationships, cost reduction, enhanced brand reputation, and access to special credit lines, among others (Castro, 2009).

## **2.2 Sustainability in Marketing**

According to Philip Kotler in his book *Marketing 3.0*, since the massive introduction of technology in society and the era of social networks, where brands are constantly exposed, the

“third phase” of marketing—centered on values—is taking place. This so-called *Marketing 3.0* is a model used to sell ideas and behaviors that contribute to solving social problems. In this regard, Kotler et al. (2010) argue that sustainability is one of the pillars of this approach. More than simply meeting consumers' functional and emotional needs and desires, brand professionals also seek to engage the human aspect through their products and services, focusing on ethical, environmental, and social issues.

Marketing 3.0 (2010) is a *Social Marketing* strategy that generates a positive impact on social issues and problems. This concept was first defined by Philip Kotler in 1970:

“Social Marketing is a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to change the behavior of a target audience in a way that benefits both society and individuals. It is a strategically oriented discipline based on creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offers with positive value for individuals, customers, partners, and society.”

Green marketing emerged from social marketing, specifically focused on environmental issues. According to Polonsky (2008), *Green Marketing* comprises a set of activities aimed at producing and facilitating the commercialization of products and services that satisfy consumer needs and desires while minimizing environmental impact. This is achieved through product design and packaging modifications, changes in production processes, and even adjustments in advertising strategies. *Green Marketing* develops environmentally friendly products that consume less energy, generate less waste, use fewer raw materials, are easier to maintain, and are sold in eco-friendly packaging (Gonzaga, 2005).

### **2.2.1 Education for Sustainable Consumption**

According to Efig and Resende (2015), the existence of educational programs that inform the population about the negative environmental impacts of their consumption habits is essential for fostering conscious consumption that contributes to sustainable development. Mattia and Becker (2021) further emphasize that only education on sustainable consumption will effectively drive consumer behavioral changes.

Among the 104 countries with available data participating in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, only 39 have initiatives to educate the population about sustainable consumption. The institution also asserts that governments should guide companies and encourage sustainable production and consumption. At the same time, businesses have a role in providing the market with sustainable options and informing consumers about the socio-environmental impacts of their choices. According to the research report by UNEP (United Nations Environment Program), better-educated consumers tend to: 1. opt for sustainable products; 2. Reduce waste; and 3. pressure companies to adopt more ethical practices (UNEP, 2023).

### **2.2.2 The Role of Marketing in Educating Consumers on Sustainable Consumption**

According to a study by Akatu and GlobeScan, Brazilian consumers perceive businesses and the media as allies in pursuing a sustainable lifestyle and as key influencers of conscious consumption. Based on these findings, the study concluded that since companies are regarded as trustworthy by the public, they hold great potential to create opportunities to encourage and educate consumers about sustainable consumption. Given this level of trust, marketing serves as a bridge for behavioral changes through education on responsible consumption. Table 1 presents examples of retail sector initiatives aimed at educating consumers.

**Table 1 – Retail Actions for Consumer Education**

Initiative	Description	Example
Reverse Logistics and Recycling Programs	Retailers implement collection points and recycling initiatives to educate consumers on proper waste disposal.	Magazine Luiza: a collection of electronic devices; Tramontina: recycling stations.
Conscious Consumption Campaigns	Educational marketing campaigns encourage conscious consumption and the selection of sustainable products.	Pão de Açúcar: 'Caixa Verde'; Veja: 'Responsible Fashion'.
Adoption of Sustainable Labeling	Companies adopt informative labels highlighting the environmental footprint and sustainability criteria of products.	Natura: vegan product certification; Decathlon: sustainability index.
In-Store Workshops and Educational Experiences	In-store workshops and events promote learning about sustainability and responsible practices.	Leroy Merlin: sustainability workshops.
Digital Tools and Online Education	Digital platforms and online content educate consumers about sustainable practices and the circular economy.	Grandene: platform with content on conscious consumption and circular economy; Americanas: digital campaigns.
Partnerships with NGOs and Social Programs	Partnerships with NGOs and social programs reinforce awareness and promote positive environmental and social impact.	Walmart: food waste reduction initiatives; Grupo Boticário: biome conservation programs.

Source: Adapted from Gallardo *et al.*, (2017).

According to Table 1, some alternatives for educating consumers involve campaigns for conscious consumption, sustainable labeling, in-store or digital education, and social programs with NGOs (Gallardo et al., 2017). In 2019, the International Chamber of Commerce revised its Code of Advertising and Marketing Communication and included a chapter that highlights environmental aspects in marketing communication. This communication must be conducted transparently and truthfully, generate a positive impact, reference the product's life cycle and components, and address waste management.

The results must be measured to understand whether marketing strategies to educate consumers on sustainable consumption effectively influence behavioral change. To achieve this, several scales found in academic articles can be applied. The first is the *Consumer Consciousness Behavior Scale* (ECCB) (Roberts, 1996), which assesses consumers' level of awareness regarding their purchasing behavior. It includes personal choices, societal influences, and logical and emotional decision-making. This scale can help professionals understand the decision-making process before purchase, identify individual differences in consumer awareness, and analyze how this awareness impacts purchasing behavior.

### 3 METHOD

An exploratory study with a qualitative approach was conducted using a multiple-case study method based on in-depth interviews with marketing professionals, including managers, executives, and directors of companies known for their sustainable positioning.

The selection of cases was based on the sustainability actions these companies had already implemented. The interviews were conducted via Google Meets platform, recorded, and transcribed. The collected data were analyzed through content analysis following Bardin (2015), where analytical categories were identified, and data were tabulated in Excel.

Companies' websites and podcasts featuring their sustainability initiatives were also analyzed to triangulate the data.

Specific categories were established to better understand the topics covered. Based on these categories, a cross-reference matrix was developed, incorporating theoretical concepts and interview questions. This matrix served as the foundation for interpreting each of the analyzed items.

Table 2 – Cross-Referencing Matrix

Category	Theoretical Framework	Interview Guide
Marketing	Kotler e Gary Armstrong (2023) Instituto Akatu (2010) Kotler et al (2010) Polonsky (2008) Efing e Resende (2015) Mattia e Becker (2021) Akatu e o GlobeScan, (Jones et al., 2008) Roberts (1996)	How can marketing educate consumers about sustainable consumption?
		What are your company's best marketing practices and strategies to educate consumers about sustainable consumption? Can you cite some successful examples? How do you measure the results?
		How does sustainability influence the development of your products? Consider characteristics, certifications, production stages, and how you communicate the sustainability-related benefits of the product.
		How does sustainability affect the pricing of your products? Are your consumers willing to pay more? How do you justify the higher price and build perceived value?
		Which distribution channels do you believe are most effective for selling sustainable products? How can these channels be managed also to encourage consumers to practice sustainable consumption? How does the location of physical stores or points of sale influence consumer perception of the brand's sustainability?
		What communication strategies does your company use to educate consumers about sustainable consumption? What type of approach and messaging is most effective?
		How can a sustainable company gain market share when competing with well-established traditional brands that offer the same benefits but without sustainability as a core value?
Education	(Silva et al., 2012) Efing e Resende (2015) Mattia e Becker (2021) Akatu e o GlobeScan (Jones et al., 2008)	What are your company's biggest challenges in educating consumers about sustainability?
		Regarding sustainability communication, how do you perceive the difference between companies that have sustainability embedded in their core business (such as your company) and those that want to adopt a sustainable approach but do not necessarily have it ingrained in their entire structure?
Sustainable Consumption	Gonzaga (2005) Castro (2009)	What main factors motivate consumers to adopt sustainable consumption habits?
		We know that only a very specific segment of the population is genuinely concerned with sustainability and conscious consumption. In your opinion, how can companies reach individuals who do not hold this belief or habit?

Source: Authors (2024).

The interviews were conducted between August and September 2024 with professionals working in the marketing departments of the selected companies.

## **4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section analyzes three case studies involving sandals, reusable underwear, and cosmetics companies. All these companies are representative due to their sustainable positioning.

### **4.1 Case 1 – Company A**

Company A, a mid-sized business founded in São Paulo in 2018, is a brand specializing in sustainable and vegan sandals. Its purpose is environmental respect, from which it has developed an ethical, sustainable, comfortable, and timeless product.

The product mix includes various colors of a single sandal model made from expanded ecological PVC, sold through its online and physical stores and in hundreds of retail locations across Brazil. The brand's commitment to sustainability is evident throughout its production and communication chain. Across all consumer touchpoints, the company strives to raise awareness about environmental issues and the importance of conscious consumption. Additionally, Company A supports various causes through partnerships with NGOs. The interviews were conducted with two marketing professionals responsible for Branding Coordination and Brand Management.

#### **4.1.1 Marketing as an Educational Tool for Sustainable Consumption**

The interviewees' statements emphasized the company's importance to sustainability. They emphasized that for marketing to take on an educational role, the brand itself must first understand where sustainability fits within its priorities. Sustainability presents a challenge due to its complexity and the difficulty it is for the general public to incorporate it into daily routines.

Company A has a strong digital presence and highlighted the difficulty of capturing people's attention on this topic. This is where education plays a role in communicating sustainability. The brand aims to provide in-depth content backed by research and credible sources, ensuring transparency and minimizing doubts. Their approach focuses on education, as many consumers still lack awareness on the subject.

At Company A, sustainability is not yet a decisive purchasing factor for consumers less engaged with the cause. In the fashion industry, interviewees noted that purchase decisions are primarily driven by aesthetics and product attributes, with sustainability often being discovered only after purchase. Therefore, the brand seeks to highlight other product features while ensuring sustainability remains integral to its messaging.

Regarding existing strategies, sustainability was considered from an environmental perspective and social and economic presence across different brand touchpoints, including Instagram, newsletters, partnerships, and events. Sustainability often serves as a determining factor for the company's choices:

"If we collaborate with another brand, the partnership will only happen if that brand has at least some alignment with us regarding sustainability. This applies to our partnerships, the content we share, the causes we advocate, and the organizations we support."

Another key strategy is consistently disseminating sustainability-related content across all channels so that consumers encounter the sustainability message regardless of their interaction with the brand.

One noteworthy example is how Company A approaches Black Friday. While the event is crucial for the company's financial sustainability, marketing faces the challenge of encouraging purchases while emphasizing the importance of conscious consumption. Transparency plays a critical role in this process, with the brand explaining its participation in



the event and educating consumers about avoiding impulsive purchases while making the most of the discounts only when necessary.

Measuring the impact of these strategies on consumers remains challenging, as it involves assessing behavioral habits. Interviewees indicated that they gauge effectiveness through consumer inquiries about materials, product life cycles, and reverse logistics initiatives, indicating a growing consumer awareness level. Additionally, the company conducts personal research, using surveys and in-depth interviews to understand customers' knowledge levels and priorities.

The challenges associated with educating consumers on sustainability include the perceived remoteness of the issue, lack of attention to the topic, skepticism, distrust, and the low prioritization of sustainability in consumers' daily lives.

Interviewees noted that educating consumers on the topic feels natural and authentic for a company with sustainability embedded in its core business, allowing for greater depth in its efforts. In contrast, the challenge is greater for brands that do not have sustainability as a foundational pillar but wish to integrate it into their messaging. It requires structural adaptation across the brand's operations.

Finally, interviewees expressed their belief that sustainable brands will gradually gain market share as sustainability becomes a standard expectation rather than a differentiator. This shift will be driven by regulatory pressures, evolving consumer mindsets, and industry adaptation. However, reaching audiences lacking sustainability awareness remains challenging, as marketing and conscious consumption are often seen as contradictory. In this context, the interviewees affirmed that leveraging marketing as an educational tool is a logical path, extending from internal employee engagement to reinforcing product attributes before and after purchase. This includes providing clear information on product usage, durability, life cycle, and disposal, ensuring that consumers have access to these details when needed.

#### **4.1.2 Analysis of Company A's Marketing Mix**

To understand how Company A's marketing mix operates, the 4Ps were analyzed separately.

Regarding the product, several sustainability aspects influence its creation: the origin and type of raw materials (in this case, micro-expanded PVC, which is 100% recyclable); a timeless design that extends the product's life cycle; supplier traceability to ensure ethical production practices; and centralized production to reduce the carbon footprint. These aspects are communicated to consumers through packaging, tags, the website, emails, and influencers, serving as key content pillars for the brand.

Regarding price, the interviewees stated that the brand consistently emphasizes transparency by breaking down the cost structure:

"We break it down into percentages—how much goes toward raw material purchases, how much is allocated to marketing, product development, and supply chain remuneration. We are very transparent about this."

This transparency helps consumers perceive value in what they are paying for, even though the product is priced higher than other market alternatives due to factors such as the limited availability of sustainable raw materials.

Regarding place (distribution), the brand has a strong digital presence, which facilitates consumer education. However, for physical retail locations, the company carefully selects colors and textures for displays to convey its brand message and increase awareness effectively. Additionally, the sales team conducts periodic training sessions with store sales representatives to ensure they effectively communicate the brand's message.

Regarding promotion, the interviewees acknowledged that there is no definitive approach to communicating sustainability, so they adapt content based on the channel.

Company A prioritizes simple and direct language, avoiding complex terminology to translate its sustainability message clearly and foster an engaged community.

For example, on Company A's website, it explicitly positions itself as a sustainable brand, stating:

"The company believes that well-being and sustainability are interdependent. In other words, we can only live well when the planet thrives. That is why we aim to transform your habits so you can live a healthy life with the least possible environmental impact—starting with what you wear on your feet."

Presenting the topic light and accessible manner increases the likelihood of capturing consumer interest for longer periods. The brand also maintains a neutral stance, avoiding messaging that is either overly negative or excessively positive. Additionally, it emphasizes an inclusive approach, positioning itself on the same level as consumers to educate them about sustainability. This strategy fosters a sense of community and reinforces that sustainability is an ongoing journey in which the company continuously seeks more sustainable solutions.

**Table 3 – Company A's Sustainability and Consumer Education Initiatives**

<b>Marketing Mix</b>	<b>Sustainability and Consumer Education Initiatives</b>
<b>Product</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable raw material origin and type: Micro-expanded PVC.</li> <li>• Timeless design that extends the product's life cycle.</li> <li>• Supplier traceability ensures ethical practices in the production chain.</li> <li>• Localized production to reduce carbon footprint.</li> <li>• Demonstration through packaging and tags.</li> <li>• Digital channels: Email, website, influencers.</li> <li>• Sustainability attributes are communicated as central topics generating content for the brand</li> </ul>
<b>Price</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher pricing than non-sustainable competitors due to production conditions such as the limited availability of sustainable raw materials.</li> <li>• A transparent price breakdown is shared with consumers, detailing the percentages allocated to remuneration, marketing, raw materials, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong digital presence.</li> <li>• Physical retail locations.</li> <li>• Carefully selected colors and textures in-store displays to enhance messaging and awareness.</li> <li>• Sales staff training to ensure effective communication of the brand's values.</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple, direct, and neutral language to translate the brand's sustainability mission.</li> <li>• Community engagement is built on honesty.</li> <li>• Light and engaging explanations to capture consumer attention.</li> <li>• Positioning themselves as "equals" to consumers, portraying sustainability as an ongoing journey.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors (2024).

#### **4.2 Case 2 – Company B**

The second company, a mid-sized business based in São Paulo, has a diversified product portfolio, primarily focusing on reusable menstrual underwear that replaces disposable pads. The company is certified as a B Corporation (a global movement of businesses that integrate profitability with sustainability) and aims to generate a positive impact in all areas of sustainability. The brand contributes to reducing disposable pad waste in the country by offering alternative products, promoting freedom and comfort for women during their menstrual cycles, empowering women, and breaking the taboo surrounding menstruation. Beyond product sales, the brand also works toward these goals through donations and support for NGOs and projects related to the cause.

Based on the principles of the Circular Economy, an economic model focused on waste reduction, Company B develops durable products that do not require frequent replacement, thereby minimizing the environmental impact associated with production and disposal. Its products are sold through the company's website, physical stores, and partner retailers, offering customers an omnichannel experience. Additionally, the brand emphasizes using technology to educate the public about sustainability. This educational approach is applied across various channels, including blogs, YouTube, and other social media platforms, as well as in its brand guide, where the company states that its communication aims to be lighthearted, humorous, optimistic, and engaging to build a strong community.

This case study of Company B was developed through an interview with a marketing professional, an analysis of the company's sustainability report, and podcasts featuring insights from the company's CEOs.

#### **4.2.1 Marketing as an Educational Tool for Sustainable Consumption**

According to the interviewee, selling reusable menstrual underwear means encouraging consumers to change their habits by shifting away from disposable products. This transition, while challenging, is actively promoted by Company B through consumer education, using a simplified, humorous, and light approach. The company explains the functional aspects of its product and highlights the reasons behind its creation, its significance in the market, and the brand's mission. Additionally, the interviewee emphasized the importance of identifying and addressing consumer barriers to habit change, demonstrating to women the relevance of conscious consumption.

When discussing factors that motivate the brand's audience to consume sustainably, the interviewee explained that when consumers understand the mutual benefits for themselves and the planet when choosing Company B's products, it can trigger a mindset shift. In her view, the brand must clearly communicate this balance to its customers.

In general, the interviewee shared that the brand's strategies include a strong social media presence, leveraging the dynamism of these platforms. The brand's community-building efforts create closer ties with consumers, facilitating education on sustainable consumption and allowing for direct engagement, where questions can be quickly and easily answered. This interaction strengthens brand loyalty, improving performance and customer retention.

To measure results, the interviewee mentioned the following key metrics:

- Product Sales.
- Media coverage and press appearances.
- Brand awareness.
- Being considered a "top of mind" brand in its category.

According to the interviewee, the main challenge in educating consumers about sustainable consumption is "Getting people to understand that what we offer is progress, not a step backward."

In other words, the company must change consumer habits. The brand addresses this challenge by highlighting its benefits and leveraging its strong alignment between sustainability and brand purpose, which makes communicating the topic much easier. This ease of communication is key in helping sustainable brands gain market share. The interviewee noted that effective communication encourages consumers to try Company B's products—and once they do, it is rare for them to return to their old habits.

Ultimately, the brand's goal is to empower consumers by showing them that they have the power to choose and that their choices can create a positive impact, both for themselves and for the planet.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis of Company B's Marketing Mix

Regarding the product and its entire production chain, the interviewee stated that the brand holds certifications that ensure sustainability throughout the process and traceability at all stages. Company B constantly seeks new ways to guarantee the safety and compliance of its processes. According to the company's sustainability report, all suppliers respond to annual surveys to measure their environmental impact and identify improvement strategies related to governance, working conditions, and environmental sustainability.

This commitment to sustainability is communicated to consumers through certifications and various forms of content shared via social media, with more detailed information available in the company's sustainability report. The podcast analyzed as a source explained that since the launch of the first product, the primary focus has been to replace disposable items, and the brand continuously conducts research to improve products and processes concerning sustainability. According to the interviewee, the product is already a differentiator, developed through listening and engaging with the brand's community.

Regarding price, the podcast also revealed that the brand offers different product categories with both lower and higher price points, balancing affordability across the portfolio. Due to the product's functional requirements (such as absorption levels) and the use of sustainable materials, the brand has developed multiple product lines to make sustainable alternatives more financially accessible. The interviewee explained that biodegradable fabric is more expensive, and products made with this material fall into a premium category for consumers willing to pay more. She emphasized that it is the brand's responsibility to communicate the differences between product lines. Once consumers understand the long-term benefits of replacing disposables with longer-lasting alternatives, price becomes a secondary concern. In summary, effective communication ensures that consumers perceive the price as justified by the product's benefits.

Regarding place (distribution), the interviewee stated that no single channel carries more weight than others—it is equally important to be present across multiple channels so that consumers absorb the significance of sustainable products and integrate sustainable consumption into their habits. A noteworthy sustainability initiative in distribution, highlighted in the sustainability report, is the use of solar panels at the company's distribution center.

Finally, concerning promotion, the interview highlighted the need to educate consumers on avoiding excessive consumption. Company B ensures product accessibility while simultaneously educating consumers about mindful consumption, as stated by the interviewee:

“If you are excessively consuming sustainable products, you are still overconsuming. That does not mean you are doing good, it means you are doing less harm, but not necessarily good, you know? I think it is all about education.”

The brand's communication strategy disseminates all the previously mentioned initiatives as well as additional actions, such as:

- Carbon offset programs;
- Carbon footprint measurement;
- Circularity programs;
- Reverse logistics;
- Recycled packaging;
- Selection of responsible producers.

To triangulate the data, evidence from Company B's website was analyzed, which includes details of its Environmental Certifications and their significance. For example, the company is certified by the B Corporation System, a global certification that evaluates socio-environmental impact and sustainability initiatives:

“We take responsibility for all our actions and continuously work on improvements,” states Company B’s website.

The interviewee emphasized the importance of strategically positioning the brand in locations that reach diverse audiences. Education is crucial for consumers new to sustainability. Accessing reliable information quickly acts as a catalyst for adopting sustainable habits.

The podcast also highlighted that, for Company B’s marketing strategy, content creation is viewed as a product, representing a significant investment due to its potential to deliver value to consumers.

**Table 4 – Company B’s Sustainability and Consumer Education Initiatives**

<b>Marketing Mix</b>	<b>Sustainability and Consumer Education Initiatives</b>
<b>Product</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability certifications and production chain traceability.</li> <li>• Environmental impact assessment and improvement suggestions for suppliers.</li> <li>• Consumer communication through certifications, social media content, and sustainability reports.</li> <li>• Focus from the first product launch: replacing disposable items.</li> <li>• Ongoing research to make products and processes more sustainable.</li> </ul>
<b>Price</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering different product options across various price ranges;</li> <li>• Functionality and sustainability applied across multiple product lines to ensure financial accessibility;</li> <li>• Brand takes responsibility for justifying the price through its benefits.</li> </ul>
<b>Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence across multiple channels is essential for consumers to understand the significance of the products, the sustainability cause, and sustainable consumption;</li> <li>• Solar panels installed at the distribution center.</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educating consumers to avoid excessive consumption: providing access to products while promoting conscious consumption;</li> <li>• Dissemination of sustainability initiatives: carbon offset programs, carbon footprint measurement for each product, circularity programs, reverse logistics, recycled packaging, and responsible sourcing;</li> <li>• Strategic placement in key locations to reach diverse audiences;</li> <li>• Delivering value through educational content.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors (2024).

### **4.3 Case 3 – Company C**

Company C, a small business founded in 2020 in São Paulo, was created to offer self-care products, specifically natural and vegan cosmetics for body care. The company's positioning statement on its website reads:

“A truly natural and vegan cosmetics brand, founded on aromatherapy, that not only cares for the body, mind, and soul but also prioritizes environmental responsibility.”

The brand's key pillars include sustainability and conscious consumption. All products are packaged in aluminum, paper, and glass, with glass playing a central role in the brand's reverse logistics program. This initiative encourages consumers to return used glass packaging in exchange for discounts on future purchases, allowing the company to reuse the materials and minimize environmental impact.

Sales are conducted through the website, WhatsApp, and temporary fairs, and all products are developed in collaboration with dermatologists and healthcare professionals to ensure efficacy. The brand implements sustainable consumption education strategies through its products, social media content, and a blog covering topics ranging from body health to technical information on products and sustainability.

The case study was developed based on an interview with the founder and creative director and an analysis of the brand’s communication channels.

#### **4.3.1 Marketing as an Educational Tool for Sustainable Consumption**

Company C leverages social media platforms to maximize reach and educate a broad audience. Through informative content and a humanized tone, the brand educates consumers on sustainability by using strategies that informally encourage reflection. The interviewee emphasized the importance of education in motivating habit changes, explaining that greater exposure to information leads to increased awareness of sustainability:

“When you show consumers all the benefits and explain why they need to be sustainable, it gives them a more solid understanding of what they should or should not do, and why they need to be more conscious.”

The brand adopts this approach to spark curiosity among consumers and visitors to its social media pages—even those who have not yet developed sustainable habits.

Regarding the marketing strategies used to promote sustainable consumption, the interviewee outlined two broad approaches:

1. Create content on social media, providing information and education about sustainability-related news in the media while reinforcing the importance of sustainable production and consumption chains.
2. Product-focused communication highlights key attributes such as vegan formulations, sustainable packaging, and the reasons behind specific choices, such as avoiding plastic packaging.

The interviewee acknowledged that measuring the effectiveness of these strategies is challenging. However, the brand evaluates success through social media interactions, engagement levels, consumer testimonials, and feedback.

The founder also discussed the main challenges in educating consumers about sustainable consumption:

- Encouraging participation in the reverse logistics program, which reduces environmental impact and lowers company costs.
- Helping consumers incorporate sustainability into their daily lives.

#### **4.3.2 Authenticity in Sustainability Communication**

Regarding the communication of sustainability efforts, the interviewee emphasized that sustainability must be practiced authentically before being promoted:

“Any company that tries to talk about sustainability without truly integrating it into their business will struggle to communicate it genuinely, seriously, and competently. When it is not authentic, consumers can tell.”

According to the interviewee, the population's shifting mindset is already helping the brand gain market recognition. Although many cosmetic brands promote natural and vegan products, it is less common for brands to integrate sustainability with eco-conscious packaging as a central theme. Company C sees this as its key differentiator, believing that authentic sustainability messaging attracts consumers.

The interviewee reinforced that addressing sustainability is challenging, but education and information are essential for reaching unfamiliar audiences. When marketing educates and highlights the benefits of switching from conventional cosmetics to natural alternatives and communicates the importance of sustainability, it can convince consumers to rethink their habits and contribute to a more sustainable future.

#### **4.3.3 Analysis of Company C's Marketing Mix**

Focusing on the marketing mix, the interviewee explained how each component is developed sustainably and serves to educate consumers on conscious consumption.

Regarding products (which are neither derived from nor tested on animals), the brand sources raw materials from ethical producers. The company monitors its entire production chain to ensure it is free from exploitative labor practices. Material sourcing does not harm the environment, thus maintaining a responsible and ethical supply chain.

The cosmetics are packaged in glass, paper, or aluminum, avoiding plastic. The values reflected in the products align with the sustainability messages conveyed through the brand's communication strategies.

Regarding pricing, the brand is committed to democratizing access to high-quality, natural, and vegan products, something the interviewee noted as rare in the market. To achieve this, the company chose to reduce its profit margin. As she explained, consumers in the natural cosmetics industry understand that these products are more expensive than conventional industrialized alternatives, and natural and vegan attributes add value to the product. Additionally, plastic packaging can be more expensive than the alternatives chosen by the company, and the reverse logistics program helps lower costs by allowing for glass container reuse.

Regarding distribution (place), the interviewee emphasized the brand's strategic approach to selecting sales channels that align with sustainability values. These include online marketplaces for sustainable products and physical fairs attracting environmentally conscious consumers. In addition to sustainable packaging, orders are shipped in recyclable materials, such as corrugated cardboard and reusable bags. The company continuously evolves its sustainability practices, and transitioning from cardboard boxes to reusable bags was a deliberate choice to reduce environmental impact.

For physical store locations, the interviewee explained that the company prioritizes neighborhoods with consumers already engaged in sustainable consumption and collaborates with retailers with the same environmental commitment. This ensures that the brand connects with consumers already part of the sustainability movement.

Finally, the brand maintains a consistent and ethical messaging strategy regarding promotion. The interviewee cited Black Friday as an example, explaining that the company does not apply aggressive discounts: "We do not offer aggressive promotions because we do not encourage excessive consumption. When we address this topic, we also highlight the consequences of overconsumption of buying without necessity. It is a matter of brand positioning."

Additionally, she mentioned that this commitment to consistency in messaging strengthens customer trust and brand loyalty, as the company receives positive consumer feedback that reinforces these connections.

Company C primarily uses social media and a content page on its website to introduce consumers to conscious consumption practices. The brand adopts an approachable, inviting, informal, fun, and humanized tone, making sustainability topics easy to understand. It also shares informative content about both its products and broader sustainability-related issues.

**Table 5 – Company C's Actions**

Marketing Mix	Sustainability and Consumer Education Initiatives
<b>Product</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raw materials sourced from ethical producers.</li> <li>Full knowledge of the production chain to ensure ethical labor practices and minimal environmental impact.</li> <li>Glass, aluminum, or paper packaging, avoiding plastic.</li> <li>Information conveyed to consumers through product features, brand messaging, and educational content.</li> </ul>
<b>Price</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced profit margin as part of the brand's commitment to democratizing access to natural and vegan products.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers in this market segment already expect higher prices than industrialized alternatives.</li> <li>• Vegan attributes add value to the product.</li> </ul> <p>A reverse logistics program for packaging helps reduce costs.</p>
<b>Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales channels aligned with sustainability values: online (conscious marketplaces) and offline (fairs targeting sustainability-focused consumers).</li> <li>• Products are shipped in a recyclable bag in addition to sustainable packaging.</li> <li>• Strategic selection of neighborhoods and retail locations that cater to sustainability-minded consumers and businesses.</li> </ul>
<b>Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent messaging in brand positioning: does not apply aggressive discounts on Black Friday and highlights the consequences of excessive consumption.</li> <li>• Commitment to consistency fosters positive consumer feedback and brand loyalty.</li> <li>• Introduction of conscious consumption concepts through social media, using a friendly, inviting, informal, fun, easygoing, and humanized tone.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors (2024).

#### 4.4 Discussion of Results

Analyzing the topics covered in the interviews, it was possible to identify similarities and differences among the three case studies, which were compared both among themselves and with the authors cited in the theoretical framework of this research.

Regarding how companies perceive marketing as an educational tool for sustainable consumption, all three brands emphasized that it is essential in encouraging conscious consumption. This perspective aligns with studies from Instituto Akatu (2010), which established that marketing can adopt techniques to promote conscious consumption, balancing consumer satisfaction with sustainability. Informative content is the primary vehicle for educating consumers across the three brands. While Companies A and C opt for detailed and in-depth content, Company B uses a more straightforward approach. Companies A and B focus on integrating sustainability into consumers' daily habits, while Company C encourages consumer reflection.

This type of marketing can be classified as Marketing 3.0, which, as Kotler et al. (2010) suggest, extends beyond selling products to creating ideas and fostering behaviors that contribute to social causes. Within Marketing 3.0, previous studies indicate that Social Marketing employs strategies to change consumer habits, a concept exemplified by Company B's case study.

All three companies recognize social media and digital platforms as essential for building community engagement and strengthening consumer connections. Company A highlights the importance of disseminating content across multiple channels, Company B focuses on community-building for direct consumer engagement, and Company C stresses the need to promote conscious decision-making. This aligns with Instituto Akatu (2010), which explains that consumption will continue to exist but must evolve to be more conscious due to the planet's environmental challenges.

Companies A and C highlighted the difficulty of measuring consumer habits. They conduct persona and behavioral studies to assess consumer knowledge, collect feedback, and analyze social media engagement. To support these studies, the ECCB Scale (Roberts, 1996) can be used to evaluate consumers' awareness levels regarding sustainability and their consumption habits.

The marketing mix of all three companies consists of strategic choices aimed at sustainability, aligning with the Green Marketing concept. This approach involves production and commercialization activities that satisfy consumer desires while minimizing environmental impact (Polonsky, 2008).



All three companies emphasize sustainability in raw material selection and supply chain transparency, ensuring ethical and environmentally responsible practices. These sustainability efforts are communicated to consumers via packaging, product tags, certification labels, and social media content.

Companies A, B, and C acknowledge that their prices may be higher than those of non-sustainable competitors and have adopted different strategies to address this challenge:

- Company A communicates transparent price breakdowns, detailing cost allocations to consumers.

- Company B offers multiple product lines to provide affordable alternatives.

- Company C reduces its profit margin to make vegan products more accessible.

Additionally, Companies B and C justify their prices by emphasizing the added value of sustainability attributes.

All three brands sell products digitally, but they also implement varied offline strategies:

- Company A incorporates color-coded displays and trained sales representatives to convey sustainability messages.

- Company B emphasizes the importance of being present in multiple channels to enhance sustainability awareness.

- Company C prioritizes marketplaces and fairs that focus on conscious consumption.

All three companies share common promotional strategies. They prioritize simple, informal language to communicate with consumers effectively, promote responsible consumption, and reinforce the benefits of sustainable products.

Furthermore, all three brands emphasize sustainability initiatives and use educational content to balance business objectives with promoting conscious consumption.

#### Challenges in Educating Consumers

Across all case studies, companies reported difficulties convincing consumers due to factors such as detachment from the cause and resistance to behavioral change. All three brands agreed that for sustainability messaging to be effective, it must be deeply embedded in the company's purpose.

This aligns with Gonzaga (2005), who stated that one of the challenges in implementing Green Marketing is operating with environmentally friendly practices without compromising product quality and affordability. As a result, investment in communication strategies is necessary to raise consumer awareness.

#### The Future of Sustainable Brands in the Market

To ensure sustainable brands gain market recognition, Companies A and C emphasized that shifting consumer mindsets is an emerging trend that will enhance competitiveness for sustainability-driven brands.

Company B highlighted the importance of mastering sustainability communication to strengthen market positioning, while Company A suggested that legislation on sustainability could further drive market adaptation. The International Chamber of Commerce supports this, which added a chapter to the Advertising and Marketing Communication Code requiring that environmental aspects in marketing be transparently and truthfully communicated to create a positive impact.

#### The Role of Education in Sustainable Consumption

Mattia and Becker (2021) assert that education on sustainable consumption is the only way to drive long-term consumer behavioral change. This study's findings align with this claim, as all three case studies demonstrate that marketing is a powerful tool for educating consumers on sustainability.

By disseminating product-related and sustainability-focused information, companies play a critical role in helping consumers recognize that their choices directly impact society's

and the environment's future. This aligns with Efin and Resende (2015), who emphasize the importance of educational programs that teach consumers about the environmental impact of their consumption habits.

Based on a comparative analysis of the case studies and the theoretical framework, this research proposes, in Table 6, a set of marketing strategies businesses can adopt to educate consumers on sustainable consumption. The managerial model presented in Table 6 can serve as a guideline for companies with sustainable positioning that seek to implement consumer education strategies.

**Table 6 – Managerial Model**

Understanding whether value chain practices impacting the Marketing Mix are already being directed toward sustainability	Translating each of the 4Ps for consumers and transforming them into education strategies for sustainable consumption
<b>PRODUCT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raw material sourcing minimizes environmental impact.</li> <li>Design contributes to extending product lifespan.</li> <li>Supplier traceability ensures ethical production processes.</li> <li>Carbon footprint measurement in production.</li> <li>Packaging made from sustainable and reusable materials.</li> </ul>	<b>PRODUCT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Packaging, labels, certifications, seals.</li> </ul>
<b>PRICE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offering different product lines to ensure accessibility.</li> <li>Sustainable attributes as a means of adding value.</li> <li>Transparent price breakdown disclosure.</li> <li>Price justification through benefits for both consumers and the planet.</li> </ul>	<b>PRICE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disclosure of price break.</li> <li>Price justification through consumer benefits and to the planet.</li> </ul>
<b>PLACE (DISTRIBUTION)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online and offline sales channels.</li> <li>Logistics designed to minimize environmental impact.</li> <li>Sustainable materials chosen for physical points of sale (POS).</li> <li>Sales channels aligned with sustainability principles.</li> </ul>	<b>PLACE (ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offline: Incorporating sustainable elements in POS and training representatives and sales staff;</li> <li>Online: Making information widely available and distributing it across multiple sales channels.</li> </ul>
<b>PROMOTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainability is a central topic in communication.</li> <li>Balancing commercial sales data with conscious consumption messaging.</li> <li>Dissemination of the brand's sustainability initiatives.</li> <li>Delivering value through content.</li> <li>Ensuring coherence between communication and actual sustainability practices.</li> </ul>	<b>PROMOTION (ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable attributes are the primary communication focus (social media, website, product, etc.).</li> <li>Using a simple, light, transparent, and engaging language.</li> <li>Continuous learning and improvement approach.</li> <li>Community-building for education and customer loyalty.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors (2024).

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The primary objective of this study was to analyze marketing strategies that companies can adopt to educate consumers on sustainable consumption. As secondary objectives, the research aimed to: Identify case studies of companies that use marketing approaches focused

on education and encouraging sustainable consumption habits, investigate how the marketing mix is utilized by companies that position themselves as sustainable, and highlight best practices that can be replicated by companies seeking to use marketing as a tool to educate their consumers about sustainable consumption.

The results indicate that before using marketing to educate consumers, companies should analyze their value chain to determine whether they are operating sustainably. Only then can they effectively integrate sustainability into their marketing mix.

The theoretical framework discussed the necessity of conscious consumption due to the planet's environmental crisis. Additionally, it reviewed studies that identified marketing as the primary means of educating consumers about sustainability in their consumption habits. The case studies supported the investigation by providing insights into strategies used by sustainable brands, helping to identify how these companies structure their marketing mix, and overcome challenges in educating consumers.

This research's managerial contribution lies in the proposed model that companies with sustainable positioning can follow to implement marketing strategies that educate their audience on sustainable consumption.

This study faced several limitations, including:

1. Reaching sustainable brands was difficult due to time constraints for conducting interviews and developing case studies. As a result, the author's personal consumption preferences influenced the selection of brands.
2. The study lacked consumer segmentation, which could have provided more specific insights for targeted marketing strategies.
3. Limited geographic and cultural diversity among the selected case study companies. Since the study focused on companies within a single geographic region, their marketing strategies may require modifications when applied in different locations.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future studies, it is recommended that specific consumer segments be analyzed separately so that brands can tailor their strategies based on the findings. Additionally, future research should consider broader geographic and cultural factors when selecting companies for case studies. This would allow the managerial model to be adapted and replicated more effectively for sustainable brands operating in diverse markets.

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