

Integrating Sustainability into an Organizational Marketing Strategy: A Systematic Literature Review [†]

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Abstract: Sustainability is an increasingly significant component of organizations across multiple industries. However, research in the field of digital marketing and its connection to sustainability is very scarce. Moreover, the relationships between sustainability and the concepts of organizational culture, digitization, and business strategy have not been thoroughly examined. The purpose of this study is to analyze the above topics, using the technique of systematic, bibliographic review (PRISMA) based on academic literature from 2010 to 2023, and to develop conclusions, insights, and fruitful suggestions for organizations' development. The results reveal that organizational culture and social media are seen as important elements in sustainable business strategy, while digital marketing can make a positive impact on influencing wide and diverse audiences.

Keywords: sustainability; digital marketing; business strategy; organizational culture; digitization; social media



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1. Introduction

Sustainability emerges as a critical imperative for contemporary organizations in response to the escalating prominence of global environmental concerns [1]. Within the realm of marketing, sustainability is delineated as a multifaceted process encompassing strategic planning, execution, and oversight of product development, pricing strategies, promotional endeavors, and distribution channels in alignment with the exigencies of clientele, corporate objectives, and environmental preservation [2]. This paradigm underscores the imperative of integrating sustainable methodologies across the entire supply chain continuum, commencing from the procurement of raw materials to the phases of manufacturing and distribution [3]. Moreover, this approach encompasses disseminating consumer knowledge and awareness regarding the ecological and societal advantages intrinsic to the products or services offered [4].

Illustratively, the adoption of sustainable practices entails the utilization of eco-friendly materials, waste reduction initiatives, advocacy for recycling endeavors, advancement of energy-efficient processes, and championing equitable labor practices [5]. These endeavors collectively epitomize a forward-looking marketing vision wherein organizations acknowledge their fiduciary responsibility to present and future cohorts of consumers [5].

Large corporations generally invest in CSR initiatives and publicize their values, but they do not still seem to be prepared to embrace a new “model, friendly to sustainability” [6]. Businesses that care about sustainability need to outline how they plan to change their objectives and operations to meet this goal [7]. To direct new product development initiatives, they need to establish more expansive standards, allocate more funds for recycling and reuse, and persuade all parties involved—including suppliers, investors, and staff—to embrace numerous challenging adjustments [8]. As a result, businesses should alter their executives to better balance objectives related to sustainability and overall growth [9].

At the same time, in today's world of digital marketing and social media, organizations should ensure that their messages are authentic and original, as well as consistent and aligned with their objectives. Digitalization has revolutionized the way organizations communicate with their audiences, and sustainability is a new challenge for organizations [10]. In this regard, digital marketing can enhance comprehension of consumer purchasing behavior [11]. This can lead to the development of digital marketing strategies and effective communication, as well as the development of knowledge and environmental awareness through social media platforms [12].

However, it is still unclear what precisely sustainability means in terms of marketing, both inside and outside the industry [13,14]. The conflicting nature of sustainability and marketing is at the center of business discussions, with many researchers arguing that marketing, as it exists today, cannot genuinely be sustainable given that it is predicated on an unrealistic ideal of unrelenting consumption despite the ecological constraints imposed by development [15]. Therefore, the relationship between marketing and sustainability seems to be controversial for organizations [16]. Overconsumption is still a problem, and it is believed that replacing products with green products does not effectively address the problem of limited resources [17]. The answer to sustainable consumption is not just turning to 'green' consumption. The primary objective should be focused on transforming today's consumer behavior and shaping effective communication strategies around sustainability [18].

According to Diez-Martin et al. [10], although great progress has been made in the areas of marketing and sustainability, there is still a significant gap between the beliefs of society and markets about sustainability, as well as the ability of organizations to understand and manage these trends. Moreover, the relationships between the concepts of organizational culture, sustainability, and digitization have not been thoroughly investigated [19].

In addition, research in the field of digital marketing and its link to sustainability is very rare [12]. Based on the existing literature, the effectiveness of digital marketing and sustainability strategies is challenged by customers' orientation regarding business value proposition, digital consumer behavior, digital green marketing, concepts of competitive advantage, supply chain, and organizational capabilities [10]. Therefore, this research examines the available literature on sustainability as a goal through digital marketing strategies from 2010 to 2023 and develops conclusions, insights, and fruitful suggestions for organizations based on the above-stated criteria. This paper can contribute to the development of research in the field of digital marketing and in relation to sustainability by identifying various challenges for this field as well as related proposals. The research questions are stated as follows:

RQ1: What is the role of modern marketing in achieving sustainable organizational strategies?

RQ2: How can modern organizations understand and adopt the concept of sustainability at the level of digital strategy?

RQ3: What is the role of organizational culture, digital marketing, and social media on the above?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainability

The United Nations (UN) characterizes sustainability as the pursuit of development that caters to current needs while safeguarding the ability of future generations to fulfill their own requirements [20]. In more detail, sustainability entails crafting proposals that address the present generation's needs and aspirations without compromising the capacity of subsequent generations to fulfill their own necessities [21]. Considering the escalating global environmental challenges, sustainability emerges as a critical imperative for organizations [1]. The scientific community worldwide is in consensus regarding the urgent need for immediate action to avert catastrophic repercussions on the Earth's climate [22].

For organizations to achieve sustainability, they must strategically align with the market-oriented demands of customers' products/services and the concerns of various stakeholders across environmental, economic, and social realms, necessitating a holistic perspective [23]. However, the evolving landscape of consumer preferences and heightened demand for organizational transparency underscores the necessity for a renewed holistic viewpoint [24]. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the sustainability discourse, amplifying consumer expectations for traceability and ethical practices in product sourcing and manufacturing processes [21]. Moreover, consumers are increasingly empowered to engage in reviews, join consumer groups, and report on their experiences, urging producers to exercise greater scrutiny in production, distribution, and promotion strategies [23].

Consequently, organizations now confront a customer base inclined towards sustainable production methods and a burgeoning workforce, particularly Generation Z, seeking sustainable approaches to human resource management [25]. Young professionals aspire to actively participate in meaningful dialogs and contribute positively to organizational, societal, and environmental well-being [25]. Although large corporations often invest in corporate social responsibility initiatives, many remain hesitant to embrace a new sustainability-centric paradigm [26]. Sustainability-minded enterprises must articulate their revised objectives and operational strategies, introduce comprehensive criteria for product development, allocate resources towards reuse and recycling, and gain support from stakeholders for challenging transformations [24].

2.2. Organizational Culture and Sustainability

Sustainability encompasses an organization's strategies, processes, metrics, and environmental endeavors aimed at diminishing adverse impacts on the natural environment while augmenting positive effects, all within a unified organizational culture [19]. Definitions of organizational culture commonly highlight shared characteristics among organizational members [27]. Martin [28] delineated a field comprising two theoretical components concerning organizational cultures: integration perspectives and differentiation perspectives.

The integration perspective emphasizes the presence of a cohesive culture within organizations, positing substantial organizational consensus among employees regarding shared assumptions, values, and beliefs [28]. Considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the proposition that strong cultural cohesion, defined as the extent to which cultural values and beliefs are widely shared and strongly held throughout the organization, correlates positively with organizational financial performance [29]. Scholars have suggested that empowered organizational cultures, when aligned with strategic objectives and adaptable to evolving environmental conditions, are associated with enhanced performance levels [30]. However, cultures perceived as strong and pervasive but incongruent with organizational strategy may detrimentally impact firm performance [31].

The integration model, which posits a strong relationship between culture and performance, has gained traction in the literature associated with sustainability and the advancement of corporate environmental performance [29]. Principally, organizational leaders are encouraged to foster a comprehensive sustainability-oriented culture that unifies members, cultivating a shared sense of identity and commitment to corporate goals [30].

A sustainability-oriented corporate culture necessitates the alignment of environmental values and beliefs among individual employees and the organization [30]. These values, typically instigated by firm founders or top management and cascaded downward, are expected to be widely embraced across the organization [29].

Concerning the interplay between organizational culture and the adoption of corporate sustainability, the integration perspective posits two expectations: first, that employees across the organization share a common organizational culture, and second, that these employees espouse similar attitudes towards corporate sustainability. However, this notion of a single organizational culture has faced considerable critique in the scholarly arena [30].

Hence, for organizations to transition towards sustainable paradigms, leadership must transcend solely profit-driven models and strive for balance across social, economic, and environmental values. Some scholars argue that organizations should factor in their exposure to social and environmental events not just in the present but also in the future as a means of fostering sustainable value [31]. Within the integration perspective, leaders are seen as pivotal in cultivating and implementing sustainability-oriented organizational cultures [32].

Existing theories and models of corporate culture typically presume that sustainability-oriented values and principles propagated by top management permeate and are adopted uniformly across the organization [29]. However, the differentiation perspective challenges this notion, suggesting that values endorsed by top management may not uniformly disseminate throughout the organization. Studies have highlighted the presence of subcultures within organizations, impeding the diffusion of a sustainability-oriented culture [31,32].

To overcome such barriers, many organizations empower their staff to enhance organizational performance, given the observed positive relationship between empowerment and performance [27]. Empowerment can reduce centralization, hastening decision-making processes and facilitating cultural diffusion across departments. Furthermore, organizations foster cross-departmental collaboration to expedite sustainability strategies' implementation and drive meaningful outcomes while enhancing organizational resilience in the face of external pressures [33].

Additionally, organizations must prioritize transparency and credibility in their sustainability attempts. A coherent strategy reassures customers and employees of the organization's commitment to sustainability values [29]. Clear and consistent messaging ensures that employees remain engaged and focused on sustainability, understanding how their individual contributions support the broader organizational objectives [31].

Firms having strong sustainability performance typically exhibit a distinct and structured organizational culture [33]. Culture-related dimensions, such as attitudes and norms, shape internal behaviors and identity, guiding the organization's impact on the natural environment or the adoption of transformative technologies [34]. Despite extensive research on each concept individually, limited attention has been paid to their interrelationships [34].

2.3. Sustainable Marketing

Sustainable marketing is characterized as the systematic process of strategizing, implementing, and overseeing product development, pricing, promotion, and distribution methods in a manner that aligns with the broader ethos of the business, fulfills customer needs, meets organizational objectives, and safeguards environmental well-being [1]. It embodies a comprehensive marketing approach that is environmentally conscious, sustainable, ethically driven, and relationship-oriented [35]. Organizations are advised to infuse their sustainability marketing strategies throughout the entirety of the organization to convey a unified and consistent message regarding their dedication to sustainability [36]. By prioritizing sustainability internally, organizations can ensure that all endeavors and initiatives resonate with this fundamental value [36]. Therefore, sustainable marketing aims to promote products and services in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental impacts, encompassing the adoption of sustainable practices across the supply chain, from material sourcing to manufacturing and distribution policies [37].

The concept of sustainability has evolved beyond mere rhetoric or appeals to niche consumer groups [35]. A growing number of consumers are urging brands to undertake more effective actions to mitigate the negative impacts of human activity on people and the planet. Consequently, sustainable marketing is assuming greater significance for contemporary brands [36].

A survey conducted by Cole et al. [37] revealed that 66% of respondents consider sustainability as a factor when making purchasing decisions. Customers increasingly gravitate towards brands that resonate with their values and priorities [36]. A brand that champions sustainability stands to differentiate itself from competitors, potentially

yielding substantial advantages and benefits. According to Story and Hess [38], consumers tend to exhibit greater loyalty and commitment to brands that espouse similar ethical values. Moreover, consumers are showing heightened interest in environmental, social, and managerial sustainability [39].

Organizations embracing sustainable marketing strategies should educate consumers about their company's mission, elucidating the significance of their mission and showcasing concrete steps taken to uphold it [35]. Educational content can engage prospective customers, aiding organizations in bolstering brand awareness by elucidating the environmental and social benefits of their products/services [38]. For instance, integrating sustainable practices such as utilizing eco-friendly materials, minimizing waste, promoting recycling, advocating energy efficiency, and supporting fair labor practices can form part of a forward-looking marketing vision, wherein organizations acknowledge their responsibility towards present and future generations of consumers [10].

Indeed, there has been a notable proliferation in "green" or environmentally friendly marketing efforts, focusing on promoting eco-conscious products and understanding consumer preferences in relation to environmental considerations and brand image [40]. Nevertheless, the precise definition of sustainability remains contentious, both within and beyond the realm of marketing [13,14]. Central to this debate is the apparent conflict between sustainability and marketing, with questions arising about whether contemporary marketing, centered on a model of perpetual consumption, can truly be sustainable in the face of ecological constraints [15]. Marketing is sometimes viewed as antithetical to sustainability [16].

The relationship between marketing and sustainability often sparks controversy within organizations. Critics within macromarketing and critical marketing circles, as well as those outside the conventional paradigm, argue that overconsumption remains a pressing issue and contend that replacing products with eco-friendly alternatives does not adequately address the challenge of finite resources [17]. In essence, the solution to sustainable consumption is not merely increasing green consumption; rather, it entails reducing overall consumption and fostering de-development as primary objectives [17]. Consequently, the marketing sector is frequently depicted as being at odds with sustainable development, as it is perceived as instrumental in encouraging consumption and serving corporate interests [41].

2.4. Digital Marketing and Social Media in Sustainable Business Strategies

Digital marketing has revolutionized organizations' methods of communication and engagement with their target audiences [10]. Presently, digital marketing represents a novel phenomenon amalgamating personalization with mass distribution and dynamics, fostering a new user-centric paradigm that is more measurable, pervasive, and interactive than ever before [42]. Companies increasingly rely on digital marketing techniques such as SEO, social media marketing, email marketing, and digital advertising, while also embracing digital strategies integrating algorithms to gauge audience response to their communications [12].

Unlike traditional marketing, characterized by one-way communication, digital marketing harnesses information and communication technologies to facilitate two-way communication and interactions with consumers [42]. This approach empowers consumers to participate in value creation by enabling them to share their experiences, needs, preferences, and expectations. Moreover, digital marketers leverage digital platforms to monitor and analyze consumer behaviors and actions, enabling the delivery of personalized and targeted marketing communications [43]. Consequently, digital marketing contributes to the comprehension of consumer buying behavior, facilitating changes at the level of purchasing behavior and culture [11].

As an increasing number of sustainable brands enter the market, it becomes imperative to enhance their reputation and ensure their sincerity. Sustainable digital marketing endeavors to align communication and promotional activities with sustainable practices and

missions, thereby upholding a positive reputation [44]. A positive reputation, cultivated through such actions, instills trust and reliability among customers [44]. E-marketing that espouses sustainability principles aids in aligning organizations with their values, distinguishing them from competitors, and maintaining a favorable reputation [45]. Marketing teams can champion these practices, while digital marketing disseminates corresponding messages to a diverse audience [43].

On the other hand, sustainable development seeks to ensure that businesses remain economically viable while fostering social well-being and environmental protection. Sustainable digital marketing encompasses all online methods of ethically and sustainably promoting eco-conscious organizations, thereby advocating for sustainable and ethical products or services and environmentally friendly practices for the long-term benefit of the organization, the planet, and people [46].

Digital marketing features and tools can be leveraged to support sustainable development [45]. For instance, companies can utilize their websites to offer educational materials and programs aimed at raising consumer awareness about climate change and global warming, as well as developing campaigns, among other initiatives [44].

Equally important is the analysis of user-generated content to glean insights into their perceptions and attitudes, as well as utilizing social media to positively influence the dissemination of environmental messages [12].

Figure 1 illustrates how social media can effectively enhance influence on ‘green’ consumer perceptions and behavior [47]. It underscores the importance of transmitting a series of effective signals (atmospheric, visual, ethical, social, informational, and safety-wise) in appropriate ways and combinations [43].

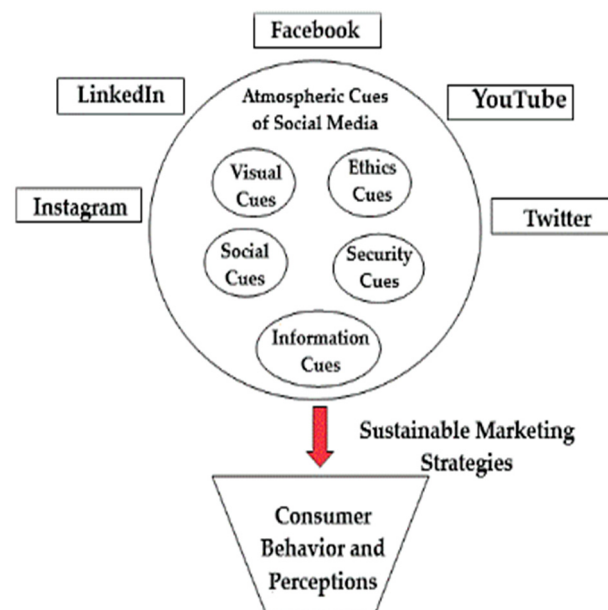


Figure 1. Influence of social media on users’ perceptions.

Creating digital marketing strategies through social media offers numerous opportunities for brands and organizations, as outlined by Piñeiro-Otero and Martínez-Rolán [48]:

1. **Enhanced Branding:** Web 2.0 platforms and services provide an excellent avenue for brand building due to their expansive reach, message saturation, and constant updates.
2. **Comprehensive Information Dissemination:** The capability to share information through links enables consumers to engage with organizations in a more comprehensive and personalized manner.
3. **User-Friendly Functionality:** Web 2.0 platforms offer intuitive and user-friendly interfaces, enhancing the overall user experience. Tracking user interactions enables the design of more seamless customer journeys and searches.

4. **Interactivity:** Organizations aim to cultivate long-term relationships with their audiences, and the internet facilitates conversation and interaction, creating conditions for positive brand experiences. Interactivity can influence product evaluations and contribute significantly to the overall customer experience.
5. **Visual Communication:** Digital marketing provides various tools for image and video-based communication, capturing audience attention and potentially converting it into valuable assets for organizations.
6. **Targeted Advertising:** The ease of segmentation and customization in Internet advertising maximizes its effectiveness by targeting relevant audiences.
7. **Social Connectivity:** The internet serves as a unique platform for connecting organizations with their audiences and fostering connections among users. Such connectivity enhances user experiences and strengthens relationships with products, brands, or organizations based on the development of social ties.
8. **Performance Measurement:** Online platforms excel in tracking user choices and evaluating results, enabling organizations to derive insights and draw conclusions effectively.

In conclusion, integrating sustainability into e-marketing strategies is crucial for organizations committed to adopting responsible practices, attracting customers with aligned values, providing transparency regarding product origins and environmental practices, and educating consumers about sustainability and their role in contributing to their purchases [47].

However, incorporating sustainability into e-marketing strategies may encounter challenges, as highlighted in the literature [48]. These challenges include increased costs, heightened complexity, difficulties in measuring ventures, resistance or concerns from investors or shareholders regarding the transition to sustainable practices due to apprehensions about profit reduction, potential supply chain issues, and the need to navigate complex regulatory frameworks [46].

3. Methods and Materials

During the research phase, a comprehensive review of pertinent literature and expert opinions was undertaken. This critical appraisal facilitated an appreciation of the intrinsic depth and complexity inherent in the issue at hand. The nexus between sustainability and digital marketing portends significant structural ramifications. It extends beyond the mere incorporation of sustainability within organizational digital marketing strategies, encompassing structural differentiations pertaining to organizational values and strategic decision-making processes. Consequently, an in-depth exploration of organizational culture was deemed imperative. While the concept of resistance to change may offer utility, practical constraints, notably word limitations, precluded its exhaustive examination, thus constituting a research limitation. The crux of this endeavor lies in the formidable challenge of delineating clear propositions concerning the long-term, optimal equilibrium of stakeholder interests encompassing consumers, corporations, and society at large.

The review conducted transcends a simplistic regurgitation of extant studies, prioritizing critical evaluation. Distinguishing it from conventional literary reviews, the systematic approach eschews the explicit delineation of employed methodologies and tactics [49]. The term ‘systematic review’ connotes the application of methodological frameworks for assessing extant knowledge, necessitating the formulation of precise research inquiries and methodical retrieval of relevant literature, adhering to rigorous protocols. While imbued with elements of objectivity and systematicity, such reviews may adopt a critical, reflective stance, as evidenced in the present study (Appendix A).

Citation frequency, though indicative of scholarly impact, was not singularly employed as a criterion for secondary data selection. Emphasis was placed on inclusivity to accommodate diverse perspectives, thus mitigating the risk of overlooking valuable yet non-mainstream viewpoints. Keywords such as sustainability, digital marketing, organizational culture, SMEs, and digital strategy were systematically utilized. Initial literature scrutiny was complemented by insights gleaned from practitioner discourse, thereby in-

forming the formulation of a comprehensive conceptual framework. This iterative process, underscored by expert insights, facilitated the articulation of specific research objectives and inquiries, which were subsequently addressed through critical examination of scholarly literature and synthesis of findings.

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines serve as a methodological compass for optimizing transparency and rigor in systematic review methodologies. These guidelines encompass a structured framework delineating key review components, including research question formulation, selection criteria clarification, study selection process elucidation, bias assessment, and result synthesis [50].

PRISMA's utility lies in enhancing research transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor, thereby bolstering research quality. However, its applicability beyond clinical trial contexts may be limited, potentially impeding research flexibility and holistic inquiry. Mitigating this limitation necessitates a balanced approach that incorporates qualitative nuances alongside quantitative analyses, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under scrutiny.

Despite these caveats, PRISMA remains a valuable tool for systematic review optimization [51,52]. While embracing PRISMA's tenets, this study endeavors to uphold methodological rigor while acknowledging the imperative of creative and qualitative dimensions in research inquiry.

Researchers are encouraged to consult the official PRISMA statement for detailed guidelines elucidating each review stage. In this study, notwithstanding inherent limitations, efforts were made to align with PRISMA principles to the greatest extent feasible.

Secondary data collection entailed systematic querying of Scopus and Web of Science databases, supplemented by Google Scholar and ResearchGate searches to capture practitioner perspectives. This comprehensive approach aims to mitigate academic bias and enhance the inclusivity of practical insights.

Article selection criteria included a focus on sustainability, digital organizational strategy, and business experiences, publication between 2010 and 2023, and English language. The thematic domains for the article search encompassed Digital Marketing and Advertising, Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship, Environmental Sciences and Practices, Social Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility, and Technology and Innovation. The selection options for publication formats included scholarly articles (referred to as "papers"), conference papers, and book chapters. Articles lacking specificity, exhibiting subpar content and language quality, or lacking sufficient validity were excluded. Consequently, 27 articles underwent scrutiny, with 7 being excluded based on criteria [53].

4. Results and Discussion

Figure 2 illustrates the framework adopted in this study. Initially, a multitude of articles have been examined. Notably, all articles underwent evaluation without any exclusions, as there were no practical impediments encountered. Ultimately, a total of 27 scientific articles were subjected to scrutiny, with 7 articles excluded based on criteria elucidated in the methodology chapter.

An important topic observed throughout the study pertains to the pivotal role of organizational culture. While organizations may opt to enact changes, such as integrating sustainability within their overarching strategy, they may confront substantial resistance if they fail to acknowledge the intricate dynamics inherent within intra-organizational relationships, often referred to as "hidden geometries".

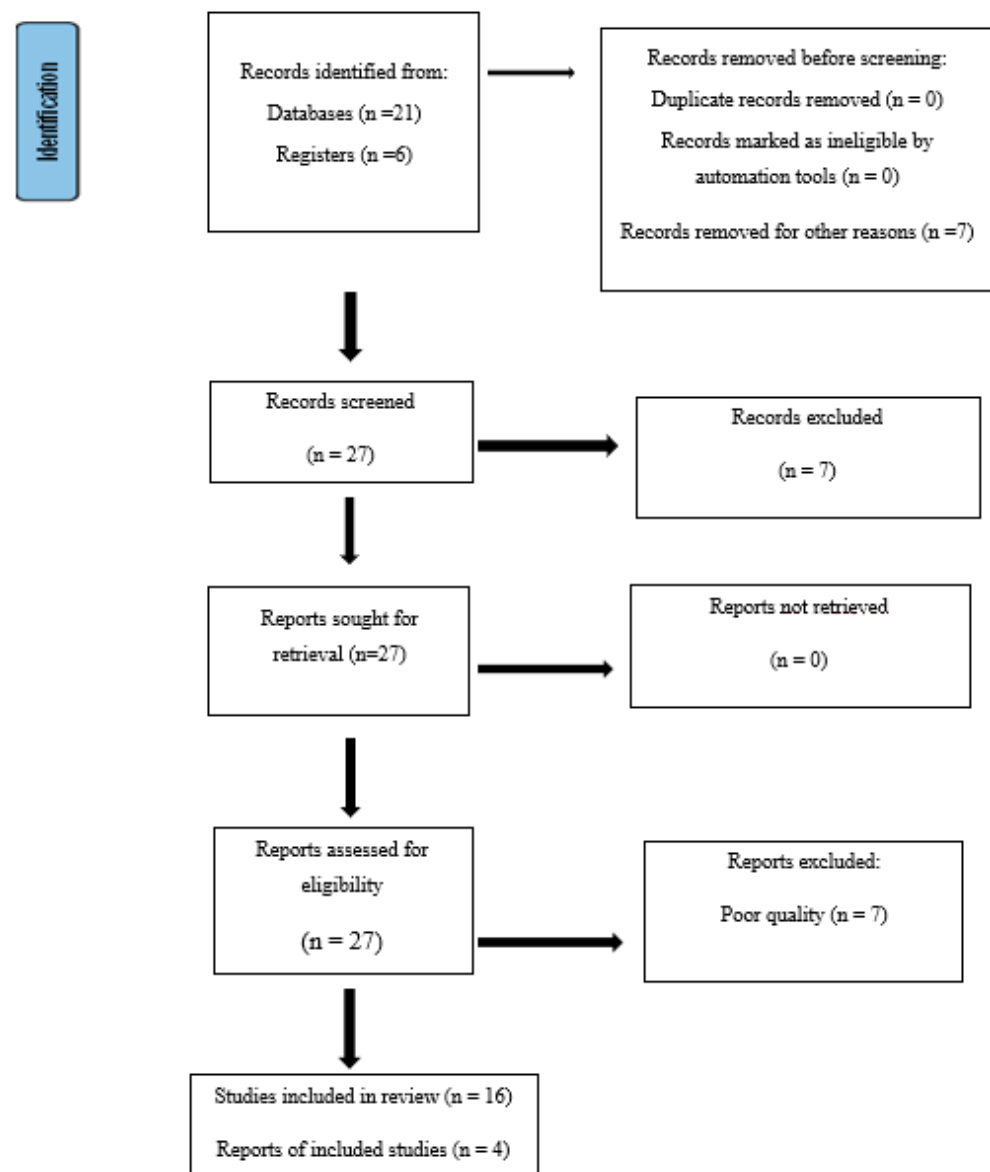


Figure 2. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (adopted by Page et al.) [54].

Integrating sustainability into the digital marketing strategies of contemporary organizations has become increasingly evident. This recognition, however, does not in itself generate a straightforward blueprint for action. The complexity of embedding sustainability within organizational frameworks suggests that there is no “magic formula” to guide this integration. Instead, the challenge lies in navigating the multifaceted dimensions of sustainable practices within digital marketing spheres.

Organizations today are increasingly acknowledging the necessity of incorporating sustainability into their core philosophies. Failure to do so not only risks rendering their marketing strategies irrelevant or outdated but also exposes them to potential long-term repercussions. This could manifest as severe backlash from consumers and stakeholders who are progressively more exposed to environmental and social governance criteria.

On the contrary, the superficial adoption of sustainability measures, commonly referred to as “greenwashing”, presents significant risks. Organizations that engage in promoting environmentally friendly images or practices through their marketing channels without substantiating these claims with real action may face credibility issues. Such discrepancies between marketed values and operational realities can lead to consumer distrust and reputational damage.

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize the role of top-down messaging in facilitating or hindering the genuine adoption of sustainable practices. Leadership and commitment at the highest levels are vital to ensuring that sustainability is not merely a marketing façade but a core component of the organizational ethos and operations.

In conclusion, while there is no one-size-fits-all solution to integrating sustainability into digital marketing strategies, the commitment must be deep-rooted and authentic. Organizations must move beyond mere recognition of the importance of sustainability to the actual implementation of effective and transparent measures. This transition is essential for maintaining their relevance and competitive advantage in an increasingly environmentally conscious market landscape. In the contemporary digital marketplace, where consumers quickly assimilate information, it is important for organizations to align their marketing strategies with actual sustainable practices. The shift towards sustainability is not only a response to consumer awareness but also an organizational necessity that transcends mere marketing. Theoretical analyses suggest that a key challenge in embedding organizational values of sustainability is the presence of subcultures within the organization. These subcultures, if not acknowledged and integrated, can lead to significant and enduring internal conflicts that undermine collective goals [55].

Acknowledging these subcultures is not about validating their viewpoints but rather recognizing their existence and influence within the larger organizational framework. This recognition is crucial as it shapes the strategies for integrating sustainability into the organizational culture. Without this acknowledgment, there can be significant barriers to fostering an inclusive approach to sustainability, potentially leading to internal resistance and a lack of cohesive organizational identity.

Moreover, fostering a culture that supports sustainability can be instrumental in achieving broader organizational goals. This involves several strategic actions: commitment and support from leadership towards sustainable values, fostering partnerships that enhance sustainability, developing metrics to monitor the implementation of sustainable practices, and enhancing employee engagement through training and empowerment. According to Dhlamini [55], these strategies are not only fundamental in promoting sustainability but are also vital in attracting and retaining talent, particularly in competitive labor markets where organizations vie for skilled individuals who prioritize values as much as valuations.

Therefore, for organizations to genuinely adopt sustainability, it is essential to move beyond superficial marketing messages and implement deep structural changes that reflect these values. This process requires a holistic approach involving leadership, acknowledgment of internal diversity (subcultures), and strong mechanisms for integrating sustainable practices. These steps collectively foster a resilient and sustainable organizational culture that aligns with both consumer expectations and long-term organizational health.

Transitioning businesses towards genuine sustainability practices represents a formidable challenge, often perceived as a betrayal of traditional methodologies and relationships that have historically driven value creation. This complex transformation is largely influenced by consumer preferences. Progress towards sustainability is contingent upon consumer support for products from organizations that adopt green practices.

Research in this area underscores the critical role of digital marketing in promoting sustainability. Arantes [11] reveals that 84% of participants either agree or strongly agree that sustainability should be communicated through digital marketing channels. For the development of digital marketing strategies, he also advocates that by supporting sustainability initiatives with digital campaigns, there is a higher possibility of creating incentives for consumption [11].

Similarly, Hidayat et al. [21] emphasized that sustainable business practices should aim to satisfy customers over the long term while still generating shareholder profit. The rise on the Internet and digital platforms has augmented the importance of organizations' social responsibility, highlighting the influence of user-generated content and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the efficacy of digital marketing strategies [20].

Exploring the relationship between sustainable supply chain management and organizational performance, AbdElaal [56] concludes that digital marketing can act as a mediator, enhancing the impact of sustainable practices on the performance of producers. He suggests that digital marketing is not merely a tool for communication but also a strategic asset in linking sustainable practices with enhanced business performance [56].

Given the vast capabilities of digital marketing, organizations have significant opportunities to leverage this medium and build impactful brands centered on sustainability. Authenticity, transparency, and honesty in digital communications can help organizations thrive in a competitive market, enabling them to compete effectively with larger entities. Furthermore, real-time data analysis and digital metrics offer organizations avenues to gauge and enhance their market strategies dynamically.

The concept of sustainability also deeply influences brand equity, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Research by Dumitriu et al. [57] highlights the challenges in quantifying the connection between a brand's value and its sustainable practices. Demonstrating commitment to sustainability can mitigate perceived risks and improve stakeholder perceptions, thus elevating brand value over time.

Erdil [58] and Oliveira and Sullivan [59] study how sustainability enhances customer perceptions and trust in brands, which are crucial for achieving a positive brand image. Sustainable brands are often regarded as more trustworthy, providing real value to customers, and guiding them towards more sustainable lifestyles. This not only generates positive environmental and community impacts but also secures future profits and stakeholder loyalty, thereby increasing brand value.

Furthermore, the UK Green Building Council [60] notes that integrating sustainability into business strategies not only improves a company's reputation but also fosters growth by attracting new customers and meeting the evolving expectations of stakeholders, including employees who increasingly demand environmentally and socially responsible behavior from employers.

In conclusion, the intersection of sustainability, digital marketing, and brand management forms a crucial area for future research and practice, where businesses must adapt to evolving consumer expectations and technological advancements to sustain long-term growth and trust.

5. Conclusions

The present research tries to examine the interrelation between the concept of sustainability and digital marketing within organizational contexts, addressing a notable gap as marketing departments traditionally lag in aligning with organizational sustainability efforts. Despite widespread belief among marketing executives globally that consumers expect firms to adopt proactive environmental stances, organizational marketing frequently falls short in fostering a positive impact on sustainability issues. This deficiency is critical as marketing wields significant influence, potentially shaping internal and external organizational perceptions and behaviors. However, resistance persists in embracing and actualizing the imperative to promote sustainable organizational policies.

A significant aspect of this research focuses on the coherence between brand messaging and organizational production processes concerning sustainability. Inconsistencies in this alignment can lead to substantial reputational and financial costs for organizations. It is vital that not only should the brand messages reflect sustainability, but all organizational processes should be synergistically directed towards this aim. The essence of brand messaging about sustainability suggests a deeper implication, contributing collectively to the creation of a strong brand image. Marketing departments, aware of the importance of message consistency, recognize that integrating sustainability into a digital marketing strategy necessitates profound organizational transformations. These transformations might often occur at the foundational business operation level, including changes to the business model, organizational values, culture, and leadership.

5.1. Limitations

To address these issues systematically, the research adopted a methodological approach of systematic bibliographic review, focusing on an in-depth examination of existing secondary data and leveraging findings from prior primary research. This methodological choice presents inherent strengths, such as the potential for novel insights through the recombination of existing data. Despite the many positive aspects of the above method, it also bears limitations, notably the challenge of managing and interpreting data within the constraints of primary research methodologies: quantitative and qualitative. PRISMA was developed mainly for use in systematic reviews involving clinical trials [61].

Moreover, while PRISMA provides guidance and guidelines, it may limit research flexibility, while at the same time, there is the risk of simplification and unilateralism at the level of research concentration [62]. Inadequate representation of consumers and the risk of excessive commitment to quantitative analysis can lead to neglect of the qualitative aspect of the concepts under study, limiting the full understanding [63].

This technical approach may have inherent strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are the enormous combinability of existing data/sources, which can lead to new combinations, new insights, and new propositions. On the other hand, the negative aspect concerns the need to manage the data and the ability to understand the limitations of the two central research methods (quantitative and qualitative) in terms of producing findings and combinatorial insights. The main limitation may be the difficulty associated with systematically reviewing such a complex issue. Moreover, A specific limitation of this study could be the challenge of systematically reviewing a topic as multifaceted as the nexus between sustainability and digital marketing strategy in organizations.

5.2. Further Research

Future research might benefit from quantitatively examining how organizational culture influences the successful adoption of sustainable digital strategies, particularly within small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, it is crucial to explore how these entities might integrate and manage diverse perspectives, potentially diverging from traditional leadership models, given that leaders in SMEs often focus primarily on survival and growth.

In conclusion, this paper not only elucidates the critical intersection of sustainability and digital marketing but also highlights the urgent need for marketing departments to evolve and embrace sustainable practices actively. The implications of this research are vast, urging organizations to rethink and realign their marketing strategies coherently with their sustainability commitments to effectively respond to the growing consumer expectations and global environmental challenges.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Research’s checklist [49].

Topic	Checklist
	Introduction
Concept//Objectives	The original rationale of this paper concerned the understanding of the role of marketing in achieving social sustainability. In the same context, an attempt was made to understand how modern digital marketing can be connected to the concept of organizational sustainability.
	Method
Eligibility Criteria/Data Sources/Data Collection/Risks of Bias in Studies	For the collection of secondary data, Google Scholar and ResearchGate were mainly used. The selection of the articles was made according to the following criteria: - Articles documenting and focusing on sustainability and its connection to digital organizational strategy. - Articles documenting business experiences (knowledge of practitioners)—Articles related to retail experience. - Articles published between 2010 and 2023. - Articles written in English. Risks of bias were minimized based on the researcher’s understanding of the limitations of each research method.
Results	The results revealed the inherent complexity of the issue under study. Emphasis was placed on the role of the media in promoting sustainability as a digital strategy. The role of culture was shown to be important, while digital marketing can make a positive difference through its new abilities to influence a wide and diverse audience.
Discussion	The role of culture and large organizations has been highlighted as entities that may not be able to support sustainability (for reasons that have been thoroughly analyzed).
Limitations	There are many limitations concerning the establishment of eligibility criteria, the reading of the research findings that were used, etc.

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