

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY-SUSTAINABLE MARKETING STRATEGIES AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This manuscript contributes to international marketing by integrating research on environmentally-sustainable marketing strategies and developing a research agenda to test its findings in light of the rapidly changing global marketplace. Leveraging the 3 Ps framework, the findings from 331 articles suggest that many firms recognize the need to address environmental issues, and yet are challenged by consumers' receptivity towards ecologically-friendly offerings. Furthermore, consumer demographics and social factors are useful adoption predictors. Finally, such strategies can be profitable—especially, when they involve waste reduction and operational efficiency improvements. These findings set the stage for research examining the nexus of these two domains.

Keywords: Environment, Sustainable, 3 Ps, Marketing Strategies, International Marketing

### **INTRODUCTION**

Academic interest in environmentally-sustainable marketing strategies (ESMS), which are defined as those designed to create and distribute environmentally-sound goods and services, has burgeoned in recent years, furnishing practitioners and theorists with a seemingly endless supply of knowledge on the topic. While significant strides have been made to understand the development, implementation, and effects of this approach to conducting business, research efforts, for the most part, have been undertaken in the industrialized world, thus potentially limiting the scope of their findings (Sheth, 2011). For example, consider that whereas research suggests that demographic and psychographic characteristics play a central role in the consumer adoption of environmentally-friendly offerings (Brown & Wahlers, 1998), the wisdom of generalizing this finding to countries beleaguered by poverty could be called in to question, as indigence has been shown to represent a substantial barrier to the adoption of such products (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2002).

In light of the fact that the current knowledge base on ESMS has been largely assembled in the industrialized world and since such findings may lack external validity to circumstances in less developed nations, the purpose of the research presented is threefold. First, it seeks to broadly explore and partition what is currently known about ESMS by conducting a large scale literature review that integrates over 600 marketing, and marketing related, articles. This segmented compendium is then analyzed to determine how its findings might be challenged by the issues found in the highly dynamic global environment, in which the only constant is change. Finally, this analysis is used to develop a research agenda, with the hopes that by making this body of knowledge more sensitive to the new global realities, business, governmental, and non-governmental leaders will benefit from the ensuing roadmap which outlines techniques ensuring the successful implementation of such strategies.

In the sections that follow, an analysis of the classified articles is presented, with a discussion section that expounds on some of the challenges posed by the turbulent global environment. As such, the paper provides a foundation for an analysis of what is currently known about ESMS and what needs to be learned. In addition, it discusses how stakeholders can capitalize on this information and where opportunities for future research lie. The data collection and methodological approach used in this review is presented next.

## **METHOD**

A multistage process was used to gather the articles found in this review. First, a rigorous search of the literature using an academic database, EBSCO™ Business Source Complete, was undertaken. Keywords, such as ‘sustainable,’ ‘marketing,’ ‘business,’ and ‘environment,’ guided the initial search. Over 600 articles were uncovered, with those dealing with unrelated topics, such as a ‘sustainable competitive advantage’ or the competitive environment, eliminated from the analysis. This narrowed the total number of articles down to 331, which were subsequently grouped by multiple criteria, including their primary subject matter, business sub-discipline, and methodological approach. With this sizable dataset of articles classified, an additional winnowing process was conducted. Specifically, closely related or replication studies were eliminated from consideration, as the goal of the review was to capture the major findings related to ESMS. The research findings were, furthermore, grouped by how they affect and are affected by three key actors, the 3 Ps: The planet (or the natural environment), people (consumers, customers, employees, and managers), and profits (firm performance measures).

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY-SUSTAINABLE MARKETING STRATEGIES**

Although a variety of definitions of ESMS are found in the literature, the vast majority of definitions center on the firm operating in an environmentally-responsible manner (Baker & Sinkula, 2005; Menon & Menon, 1997). The definitions suggest that firms embarking on these strategies should operate in such a way as to minimize their impact on society and its eco-systems, while simultaneously providing goods and services that are in demand (Hart, 1995). The following discussion addresses how such strategies affect, and are affected, by three major stakeholders.

### **Planet**

According to research, many firms are aware of the dangers presented by industrial output, the need for continuous revenue growth, and a mass consumption society (Kilbourne & Beckmann, 2002). Most firms acknowledge that they play a role in preventing further environmental destruction (Bansal & Roth, 2000). In fact, studies show that many large, publically-traded firms consider the natural environment when shaping their strategies (Crittenden et al., 2010). Of these, many evaluate their environmental performance as part of their company’s overall performance—compensating managers for compliance with environmental regulations (Russo & Harrison, 2005). Firms have in many cases developed collaborative relationships with watchdog groups in order to proactively address sustainability issues.

Despite these efforts, firms face obstacles in their attempts to protect the planet, as their ability to carry out a socially responsible mission hinges on sales revenues. In this regard, barriers such as consumer resistance and product availability hinder adoption (Oliver & Rosen, 2010). Also, even though the overwhelming majority of consumers in the US claim to be environmentally-sensitive—stating that they would purchase such offerings, they oftentimes do not act accordingly (Trudel & Cotte, 2009). This disparity has been attributed to the fact that consumers will not compromise on salient product attributes, such as quality, price, and convenience, for the sake of the planet (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004; Oliver & Rosen, 2010). Relatedly, research shows that consumers would be willing to adopt sustainable practices (e.g., recycling) if doing so were more convenient (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004). Unfortunately, the supply network may not be developed enough to facilitate adoption. Research, however, has also shown that the development of a sustainably-oriented supply chain, through collaboration amongst sustainably-oriented upstream and downstream partners, ensures the viability of the supply chain as a whole (Closs, Speier, & Meacham, 2011).

Would-be environmentally-sustainable firms also face uncontrollable external factors and organizational capability issues. For example, regulations such as labeling requirements, the risk of fines, and government subsidies play a prominent role in predicting sustainably-oriented consumption (Hart, 1995). With regards to the former, a firm’s management capabilities, financial position, and leadership approval are instrumental in promoting its environmental protection activities (Henriques & Sadosky, 1999). Moreover, economic, natural, and social influences undergird the development of sustainably-oriented organizational

behaviors. Lastly, in many cases, firms lack an organizational champion to promote its environmental-protection agenda (Bansal, 2003). In sum, although firms may genuinely desire to act with environmental-stewardship in mind, the literature suggests that they are prevented from doing so by a myriad of barriers (Hart, 1995). While these barriers are not insurmountable, they have proven to present a challenge. Thus, if firms aim to protect the environment, efforts must be made to circumvent these barriers.

#### *Consumers' impressions of firms' efforts to protect the planet*

Firms seeking to protect the planet through the implementation of sustainably-oriented marketing strategies are also challenged by consumers' receptivity to such efforts (Ramirez, 2013). Specifically, consumers are dubious as to the authenticity of a firm's purportedly sustainable activities and offerings (Mohr et al., 1998). Research suggests that in order for firms to overcome consumer skepticism, they should systematically strive to make all of their business activities more sustainable. Although this goal is easier said than done, the literature suggests that efforts at the 'greening' of a firm can be accomplished (Polonsky & Ottman, 1998). To this end, it discusses measures that firms have taken to use alternative and recycled materials in their production functions, to evaluate their organizational routines for environmental inefficiencies, and to transform themselves into service-oriented firms, which are less environmentally-taxing by nature (Sharma & Henriques, 2003). Firms can build credibility, as well as take a more active role in protecting the planet, by divesting environmentally-troublesome subsidiaries (Hall & Vredenburg, 2005). Furthermore, firms can enlist the assistance of unbiased third-party environmental auditors and watchdog groups to help guide them as they streamline their operational processes and develop new sustainably-oriented products (Porter & Van der Linde, 1995). The literature also indicates that environmental-sensitivity should be incorporated into product offerings' whole life-cycle (Russo & Fouts, 1997). In other words, firms should 'engineer' sustainability features into their products, considering their product's environmental impact from the production to the disposal phase (Grankvist, Dahlstrand & Biel, 2007).

#### *Typologies of environmentally-sustainable firms*

Research classifies firms by their level of environmental-stewardship. In this regard, three types of firms, including reactive, pollution preventative, and environmental-leadership types were found (Buysee and Alain 2003). A related study revealed five distinct clusters of firms on a continuum of environmental compliance, ranging from non-compliant to engaging in environmental excellence (Aragón-Correa, 1998).

### **People**

In addition to studying how businesses interact with the natural environment, research also focuses on people and their interactions with firms and the environment (Banerjee, 2002). Studies examine how environmentally-sustainable firms affect customers, managers, and employees. Research also considers how these parties impact firms' strategies. The bulk of this research revolves around consumers, while relatively few studies focus on business-to-business customers. Furthermore, this research also examines how employees and organizational leaders are affected by and affect firms' pro-environmental behaviors.

#### *Consumers*

Research examining consumer reactions to firms' sustainable behavior has a relatively long history (Choudhury, 1974; Kinnear & Taylor, 1973). Personal attributes (e.g., psychographic and demographic characteristics) have been shown to influence the adoption of sustainably-oriented goods and services (Balderjahn, 1988; Brown & Wahlers, 1998; Downs & Freiden, 1983). Such research also considers how businesses encourage consumer adoption through the use of positioning (e.g., advertising, labeling, and alliances) (Banerjee, Gulas, & Iyer, 1995; Kangun, Carlson, & Grove, 1991; Polonsky, 2001).

#### *Individual differences affecting adoption*

Seminal research investigating consumers' adoption of sustainable goods and services deals with their internal motivations. Sustainably-oriented consumers are classified by both psychographic (e.g.,

psychological constructs such as a consumer's relative level of concern for the environment or social rebelliousness) and demographic factors (e.g., a consumer's race or age) (Balderjahn, 1988; Murphy, Kangun, & Locander, 1978). With regards to the former, consumers' levels of ecological concern and their perceptions of their consumption's effectiveness at redressing environmental damage influenced their tendencies towards such consumption. In a study of 1,241 German consumers, Balderjahn (1988) found that attitudes toward pollution and ecologically-conscious living impacted consumption patterns (e.g., the purchase of home insulation, efforts at energy curtailment). Findings also indicate that consumers place a premium on convenience, and are thus unlikely to purchase products that place an undue burden on them. Consumer values were, additionally, found to be useful in explaining these behaviors (Bagozzi & Dabholkar, 1994). Regarding demographics, lower income consumers tend to shy away from such offerings, while higher income consumers embrace them. Generally, females demonstrate more ecologically-sound behaviors than do males; and, Caucasians were more apt to do so than were African Americans (Downs & Freiden, 1983; Murphy, Kangun, & Locander, 1978).

*Organizationally initiated factors that influence consumer adoption*

Organizationally initiated factors, when combined with consumer's individual differences, were shown to influence the adoption of sustainable offerings. In particular, studies suggest that 'green' advertising and labeling positively impacts adoption (Banerjee, Gulas, & Iyer, 1995; Easterling, Kenworthy, & Nemzoff, 1996). Third-party alliances between a firm and an environmental watchdog group (e.g., Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, etc.), in addition, appeared to affect consumers' evaluations of a firm and its offerings (Polonsky, 2001).

The effects of advertising on sustainable consumption patterns were evaluated. For example, Kangun, Carlson, and Grove (1991) scoured several publications (magazines and newspapers) to explore the proliferation of potentially deceptive green ads. A three category typology of such ads resulted. Consumers were able to distinguish from among misleading and genuine ads. Interestingly, vague ads resulted in negative impressions accruing to the advertiser, as such ads were construed of as deceptive. Product placement ads in movies were also shown to be impactful on consumption decisions. In short, consumers are affected by and yet seek truth in sustainably-oriented advertising, implying that advertisers must take care when touting their firm's environmental-sensitivity.

Research has also endeavored to determine the differential effects of advertising appeals (Obermiller, 1995). For instance, does an ad's framing (if it was stated in terms of 'losses' or 'gains') matter. The results suggest that positively framed ads significantly influence consumers to take part in environmentally-friendly behaviors. In a related study, Obermiller (1995) compared the effects of an ad's appeal stressing the importance of environmental issues with those suggesting that the viewer's action was needed to rectify the environmental problem. The results showed that the effectiveness of each appeal depends on its relevance to the consumer.

Research on organizationally initiated factors that combine with consumer individual differences considers the effect that environmental labeling has on purchasing behaviors (Grankvist, Dahlstrand and Biel, 2007). Third-party certifications that ensure a minimal environmental impact have proven to catalyze sustainably-oriented product adoption (Grankvist, Dahlstrand & Biel, 2007). Company-developed environmental labeling efforts, however, are generally met with skepticism. Consumer identification with the environmental movement, however, must be paired with such efforts for them to work. It should also be mentioned that labeling in conjunction with third-party alliances increased their effectiveness (D'Souza et al. 2006).

Research in this vein, additionally, indicates that third-party alliances positively influence consumer perceptions of a firm's sustainability efforts. Joint ventures with watchdog groups, such as Greenpeace, have been shown to reduce consumer cynicism (Prendergrast & Thompson, 1997). In fact, such an alliance

was shown to assuage Australian environmentalists' fears regarding the potentially damaging effects of the Olympic Games on Sydney's eco-system (Polonsky, Garma, & Chia, 2004). Therefore, the evidence suggests that alliances represent a powerful antidote to negative consumer impressions (Polonsky, 2001).

Although organizationally initiated pro-environmental behaviors can influence consumer behaviors and despite the growing demand for such offerings, consumers have grown increasingly skeptical towards firms' environmental claims, suggesting that consumers' disregard sustainability initiatives are attributable to their perceptions of the firm's authenticity (Carlson, Grove, & Kangun, 1993; Newell, Goldsmith, & Banzhaf, 1998; Peattie & Crane, 2005). Thus, a firm's ability to build consumer trust is instrumental in influencing product purchases (Osterhus, 1997). Naturally, perceptions that a firm is 'green-washing' (i.e., disingenuously portraying itself as environmentally-friendly) can severely damage its reputation (Kangun, Carlson, & Grove, 1991). Additionally, consumers' trust can be damaged when they perceive that a purportedly sustainably-oriented firm is more concerned with increasing its profit margins than with protecting the environment (D'Souza et al., 2006; Prendergrast & Thompson, 1997). In summary, it is crucial that consumer trust be activated in order to influence sustainable consumption behaviors (Osterhus, 1997).

#### *Employees*

Employees have been found to exert pressure on the firm to 'go green' (Henriques & Sadorsky, 1999). In fact, employees' ethics, ecological-responsibility, and environmental-consciousness motivate their involvement in their firm's sustainability initiatives (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Prendergrast & Thompson, 1997). Organizational factors (e.g., managerial support and organizational subcultures) influence an employee's propensity to spearhead an environmental initiative (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschum, 2008). Furthermore, environmentally-sensitive firms tend to attract high quality employees (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschum, 2008).

#### *Managers*

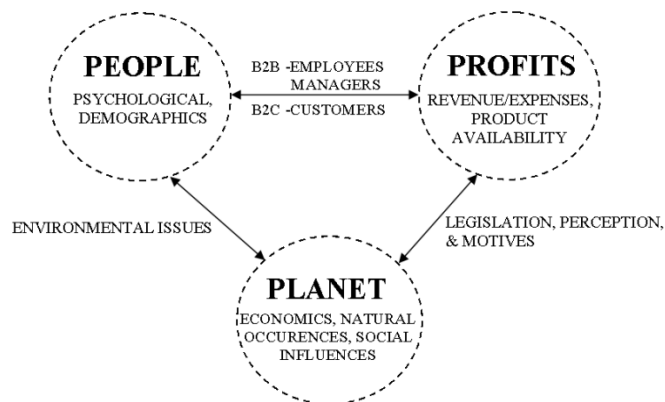
Organizational leaders have been found to influence their firms' adoption of such strategies (Sharma & Henriques, 2003; Ramirez, 2013). Since sustainably-oriented marketing strategies traditionally have been associated with escalating costs, one might assume that organizational 'greening' may lie in opposition to managers' overarching goals (Walley & Whitehead, 1994). However, studies suggest that many managers have taken a long-term approach to profitability (Porter & Van der Linde, 1995; Russo & Harrison, 2005). Although the development of new sustainable offerings or the use of environmentally-sensitive inputs in operations usually results in additional expenses, organizational leaders occasionally place the wellbeing of the planet above profits (Porter & Van der Linde, 1995). Research, however, suggests that such behaviors may not be rooted in altruism, as managers are increasingly incentivized to protect their organization's environmental performance (Russo & Harrison, 2005).

On the other hand, managers' personal views may drive them to encourage their organizations' 'greening' (Shrivastava, 1995). Managers' perceptions of their role in society, their ethics, and concern for their personal liability influence such behaviors (Sharma & Henriques, 2003; Shrivastava, 1995). Environmentally-sensitive managers possess dynamism and entrepreneurial flair allowing them to rally intraorganizational support for such initiatives (Menon & Menon, 1997). Described as an environmental champion, these individuals spearhead an organization's efforts to reduce waste, recycle materials, and reuse products, as well as to develop sustainably-oriented offerings (Hall & Vredenburg, 2005).

#### **Profits (and firm performance)**

Environmentalists and lawmakers have set aside their differences with firms, recognizing that industry should play a pivotal role in resolving the world's environmental problems. Although firms were once the object of environmentalists' scorn, they are now recognized by many as stakeholders in the environmental debate. Consequently, studies on the viability of a firm conducting itself in a sustainable fashion populate

the literature. Such research attempts to, first, define the quintessential sustainably-oriented firm (Menon & Menon, 1997). Second, the causal mechanisms underlying firms' efforts to engage in sustainable activities are explored (Clemens & Douglas, 2006). Here, firms' environmentally-sound operational activities and supply chain relations are shown to facilitate profitability (Closs, Speier, & Meacham, 2011; Cronin, Smith, Gleim, Ramirez, & Jennifer Martinez, 2011). Furthermore, multiple methods are used to assess the financial impact of engaging in such behavior (Mathur & Mathur, 2000; Russo & Fouts, 1997). Costs savings accruing to the firm are examined (Grove et al., 1996). Finally, the longer-term benefits, such as a firm's resulting competitive advantage, are investigated (Porter & Van der Linde, 1995).



**Figure 1: The figure demonstrates the interplay between the 3 Ps.**

#### *The Sustainably-Oriented Firm*

Research shows that firms have developed a growing awareness of their impact on the natural environment and thus have made strides towards the adoption of a sustainable orientation (Baker & Sinkula, 2005; Ramirez, 2013; Stone & Wakefield, 2000). Whereas definitions for such an orientation center on firms operating in a manner that provides consumers with needed goods and services, while minimizing environmental impact (Baker & Sinkula, 2005; Menon & Menon, 1997), the names used to describe this behavior vary. For example, consider that studies describe environmentally-oriented firms as those which combine a tendency towards intraorganizational entrepreneurship and environmental-sensitivity and view the environmental crisis as an opportunity to address this issue, while capitalizing on such efforts (Menon et al., 1999). Furthermore, environmental-management strategies include the specific actions undertaken by firms to protect the environment, labeled a reactive strategy, a pollution prevention approach, and a strategy based on environmental-leadership (Hart, 1995). A firm with an eco-orientation produces products and operates in such a way as to engender an enhanced environment (Miles & Munila, 1993). Firms with an environmental-orientation tend to behave in such a manner based on intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, with the latter concerning how doing so will affect stakeholders. Moreover, firms with a natural environmental orientation were entrepreneurial, concerned with corporate social responsibility, and committed to the environment. Finally, firms engaging in sustainable development were concerned with environmental-integrity, economic prosperity, and social equity (Bansal, 2003).

It should also be noted that the effects of the strategy have been tested. Firms adopting an enviropreneurial-orientation are likely to reap new product success and to enjoy positive changes in market share. Findings, furthermore, suggest that such behaviors positively impact a firm's profits. In summary, a firm-level

sustainable orientation has been found to have positive outcomes for the firm. This is a particularly noteworthy finding, as firms are disinclined to embark on unprofitable strategies (Walley & Whitehead, 1994).

*Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for the adoption of environmentally-sustainable behaviors*

Firms have been shown to adopt environmentally-sustainable behaviors for two primary reasons, which are ultimately related to profitability (Banerjee, 2002; Stone & Wakefield, 2000). First, firms are lured by burgeoning consumer demand or as a result of newly instituted environmental legislation (Porter & Van der Linde, 1995). Research has evaluated the financial impact of such behavior, showing that environmental protection laws can negatively impact profitability (Walley & Whitehead, 1994). However, firms may be incentivized by the prospect of sales and profit increases (Russo & Fouts, 1997). The following discussion highlights organizational motivations.

Firms are pressured by a variety of extrinsic motivators to adopt environmentally-sustainable behaviors, such as criminal and civil penalties for managers and owners of firms that are found to be in non-compliance with exacting environmental standards (Clemens & Douglas, 2006). Firms operating in multiple foreign countries are further challenged in complying with each individual country's environmental regulations, resulting in escalating costs. Moreover, firms investing in pollution prevention and recovery efforts are in essence subject to opportunity costs, whereby legislation forces firms to divert funding from potentially more profitable endeavors (Russo & Fouts, 1997). Lastly, firms demonstrate their environmental commitment to legislative bodies by voluntarily adopting environmental initiatives—and thus attempt to circumvent additional environmental legislation.

Pressure from customers represents another external motivator for firms (Bansal & Hunter, 2003). With respect to business-to-business transactions, this pressure may stem from channel partners seeking to maintain ISO 14000 certifications, or it may result from interactions with uncertified channel partners desiring to portray themselves as 'green' (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001). Here, certifications place limitations on the types of suppliers with which a firm can collaborate (Miles, Munilla, & Russell, 1997). This constraint forces firms to adopt a sustainable approach to conducting business and thus places pressure on would-be suppliers' profit margins. Furthermore, consumer demand for sustainably-oriented goods and services has recently ballooned, resulting in a strong derived demand, whereby consumers 'pull' these offerings through the supply channel, thus providing firms with a substantial incentive to adopt a 'greener' approach to doing business (Closs, Speier, & Meacham, 2011). Research also investigates intrinsic motivators, such as potential sales and profit increases (Menon & Menon, 1997).

Whether or not the implementation of ESMS results in increased profits is highly contested, as studies provide support for this, as well as for a countervailing, position (Russo & Fouts, 1997). On the one hand, firms have been sharply impacted by product failures, stock devaluations, and financially-taxing environmental regulations (Hall & Vredenburg, 2005; Mathur & Mathur, 2000; Peattie & Crane, 2005; Walley & Whitehead, 1994). On the other hand, firms have been shown to generate savings through the development of operational efficiencies (e.g., waste reduction, scrap material sales, and recycling efforts) and, as alluded to above, profits as a function of increased revenues (Grove et al., 1996). Additionally, firms can reduce costs by closing polluting and obsolete production facilities—hence, lessening the risk of exposure to potentially damaging consumer boycotts (Kassinis & Vafeas, 2009).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This integrative literature review provides a synopsis of what has been learned after more than four decades of empirical research on ESMS. The findings were categorized into the 3 Ps framework, reflecting the interests of each stakeholder to the environmental debate. Since the global business environment, by its very nature, presents firms with both opportunities and risks, research that illuminates the potential pitfalls associated with its interaction with the 3 Ps of ESMS is needed. In the following section, we outline three

issues that could spur future investigations, along with a description of how what is currently known about ESMS can be extended and how the findings might influence practice.

First, and perhaps most importantly, the vast majority of ESMS research is conducted in the industrialized world, and by authors living in this same, and somewhat homogenous, environment. In fact, 49 percent of the articles found in this review have at least one North American author, 33 percent of its authors were US based, and all except for one of the identified articles dealt with sustainability issues in less developed countries (cf. Nidumolu, Prahalad, & Rangaswami 2009). This present approach may not only allow biases to infiltrate research designs, but it may also influence the results of the research. Second, ESMS research could be enriched by evaluating the impact of globalization, the movement towards trade liberalization and open borders, on how firms engage in environmentally-sustainable behaviors (Cavusgil & Cavusgil, 2010). While the currently bleak global economic situation has had a dampening effect on attitudes towards trade, the world economy has become increasingly interdependent. As such, globalization has facilitated the development of global brands and products, with each possibly having an impact on environmentally-sensitive consumers. Third, while poverty levels have been argued to have a negative impact on sustainability initiatives, rising global incomes may have an opposite reaction. This raises interesting questions regarding the viability of ESMS, as evidence suggests that those living in wealthier countries are reticent to reduce current consumption levels and that the balance of the global population intends to emulate such consumption behaviors when they are capable of doing so (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2002).

Engaging in some form of sustainability-oriented behavior is rapidly becoming a necessity, as both consumers and employees reward firms for participating in such practices, while they tend to penalize environmentally-ambivalent firms. In this regard, researchers could continue to explore the factors that facilitate the successful adoption of ESMS. In particular, studies could attempt to determine if such factors are intrinsic to the firm, as implied by research on sustainability-oriented marketing communications (Newell, Goldsmith, & Banzhaf, 1998; Peattie & Crane, 2005), to the consumer, as suggested by research on consumer characteristics (Balderjahn, 1988; Brown & Wahlers, 1998; Downs & Freiden, 1983), or to a country's characteristics, as suggested by Prahalad & Hart (2002) when describing the aspiring poor who covet fashionable first world goods? In this regard, national, economic, organizational, and consumer behavior theories could be tested.

Despite sustainability-oriented firms' efforts to protect the planet, their ability to enact a pro-environmental stance appears to be contingent on the profitability of such efforts. This finding could be tested in newly industrialized and lesser developed countries, where cost structures would have to be dramatically altered in order to allow firms to profitably serve lower-income consumers (Prahalad & Hart, 2002). Furthermore, in an effort to resolve consumer dissonance with regards to adoption behaviors (Trudel & Cotte, 2010), insights gleaned from such efforts could be exported to industrialized countries. On a similar note, employees and managers have both been suggested to play an influential role in the adoption of sustainable marketing strategies. In fact, many employees are now demanding to work for ecologically-conscious firms. Moreover, managers are incentivized for environmental compliance, pointing to the need for firms to select well-educated and capable leaders, as well as the need to implement training programs that will provide the necessary background to navigate an increasingly complicated set of environmental laws. By adopting ESMS, firms will enjoy increased market share, which can result in increased profitability. Also, by implementing such strategies, waste can be minimized which will positively impact the planet, while driving down manufacturing costs. Finally, resource dependence theory could inform studies on the moderating effects of firm size, supply network integration, and channel conflict, for instance, on firms' adoption of ESMS (Connelly, Ketchen, & Slater, 2011).

With regards to the people component of the model, the findings indicate that consumers' demographics and attitudes affect their ability and desire to engage in environmentally-sustainable behaviors. In particular, Caucasian, higher income, and female consumers were found to be more prone towards



engaging in such behavior. Since these inferences are based on studies which used attitudinal surveys, however, they may contain a pro-environmental bias. This may explain the disparity that exists between what consumers claim that they will purchase and their actual purchases. Furthermore, given that public opinion regarding environmental issues has changed dramatically over the past forty years, the findings from research occurring during this period may no longer hold. Within this vein, whereas the current world economic crisis has resulted in a decrease in demand for environmentally-friendly offerings, targeting higher income consumers, whose incomes have recently increased, with products containing a price premium may still be a worthwhile strategy. And, in order to assess the relative value ascribed by consumers to particular product attributes, conjoint studies could be conducted (cf. Bloom et al., 2006).

In conclusion, the body of research supports the notion that ESMS can be beneficial to multiple stakeholders. However, it also suggests that many new and interesting questions remain unanswered. Specifically, replications across national contexts are called for to stretch the bounds of existing knowledge on the intersection of environmentally-sustainable marketing strategies and international marketing.

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