

Design and validation of a sustainable marketing model based on consumer behavior management

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Abstract

The present study was conducted with the aim of designing and validating a sustainable marketing model based on consumer behavior management in the automotive industry. In terms of the purpose of this study, it is an applicable-developmental research, and based on the method of data collection, it is also considered a cross-sectional survey. In order to achieve the goal of the research, an exploratory mixed research design was used. The community of participants of the qualitative section includes theoretical experts (marketing professors) and experimental experts (automotive industry managers). Purposeful method was used for sampling, and theoretical saturation was achieved after 17 interviews. The statistical population of the quantitative part includes the managers and experts of the marketing and sales department of the automotive industry. The sample size was estimated to be 131 people using Cochran's formula, and sampling was done by cluster-random method. Thematic analysis was used to identify the categories of sustainable marketing model based on consumer behavior management. The partial least squares method was used to validate the model. Data analysis was done by Maxqda20 software in qualitative phase; and Smart PLS software in quantitative phase. Based on the research findings, 298 codes were identified in the open coding stage. Finally, 5 overarching themes, 11 organizing themes, and 55 basic themes were obtained through axial coding, and the results showed that environmental factors, organizational factors, and customer factors affect sustainable infrastructure. Sustainable infrastructure leads to sustainable consumption behavior by influencing sustainable consumption strategy and social responsibility. Sustainable consumption behavior also leads to sustainable marketing by influencing environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social sustainability.

Keywords:

Sustainable Marketing, Consumer behavior Management, Automotive industry

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Consumer behavior is a critical success factor in the implementation of marketing strategies, especially new marketing topics in the field of social and environmental issues, which is referred to as sustainable marketing. Sustainable marketing is a method of marketing that emphasizes market-oriented efforts to achieve business profitability while respecting society's rights and protecting the environment (Yadav et al, 2024). In the last two decades, the integration of sustainability in marketing research has grown rapidly and widely. According to a McKinsey Institute survey, companies have actively integrated sustainability principles into their business plans in order to contribute to society and the environment in addition to economic benefits (Rastogi et al, 2024). Now the concept of marketing and its underlying philosophy has undergone a fundamental transformation. In today's era, the social responsibility of businesses is very important, and protecting the environment and preserving resources for the future generation is at the center of human thought. Therefore, companies try to use sustainable marketing as a key strategy to introduce their products and services (Fuxman et al, 2022). This approach includes efforts to create and facilitate exchange processes to respond to the needs and demands of customers in such a way that satisfying the needs and demands of customers brings the least negative consequences for society and the environment (Machado et al., 2023). The goal of sustainable marketing is to meet the needs of consumers in the best possible way and to serve the long-term interests of customers and society. In this approach, profitability and obtaining economic benefits of business should be done by adhering to environmental requirements and respecting the social rights of the entire society (Trang et al, 2023).

On the other hand, the automobile industry of the country is one of the basic industries that play a significant role in creating employment, public welfare, and economic development of the country, so in the path of industrial development, the automobile industry of the country should not be neglected. In fact, the current condition of the country's automobile industry is very challenging and worrying for a wide range of people, especially policy makers (Sheikh et al, 2023). Automotive industry has the largest contribution to the country's economic growth in the industrial sector and ranks sixth among the 20 largest companies in the country. The largest amount of national GDP in the industry sector is related to automobile manufacturing, which has grown faster in recent years (Arjamandi et al, 2023).

Therefore, the automotive industry has created a very large market; one of the main pillars of its success depends on the management of consumer behavior. Analyzing the buying behavior of consumers is one of the basic principles in analyzing market opportunities in the automotive industry. The importance of this issue is to the extent that today the field of marketing is based on the principle of consumer priority. Consumer behavior is a process. Most marketers have recognized that consumer behavior is a continuous process, not something that happens at a moment, and based on which people buy the goods and services they need through money or credit cards (Martin & Peattie, 2021). In general, it can be said that the country's automobile industry is one of the basic industries that plays a significant role in creating employment, public welfare, and economic development of the country, so in the path of industrial development, one should not neglect the country's automobile industry. Government support, green human resources, and corporate social responsibility are the basic factors effective on sustainable marketing in the country's automobile industry, which plays a strategic role in sustainable marketing of these industries.

Therefore, by emphasizing on sustainable marketing in the automotive industry of the country, the behavior of the consumers of this industry can be shaped. Meanwhile, so far, the independent study has not examined all the elements of sustainability in the market-oriented

efforts of the automotive industry in a single whole. In other words, what has been neglected from the point of view of researchers is the conceptualization of sustainable marketing in the context of consumer behavior, and the present studies are an effort to fill this research gap. In this regard, the dimensions of sustainable marketing based on consumer behavior will be identified first. Then the causal relationships between the dimensions will be identified, and at the end, the validation of the final model of sustainable marketing based on consumer behavior will be presented. The present study answers the key question: what is the sustainable marketing model based on consumer behavior management?

Theoretical framework

-Sustainable marketing

The term sustainability was proposed for the first time in 1986 by the World Committee for Environmental Development under the title of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the resources of the future generation to meet their needs, and this concept is expanding until today. One of the areas affected by this movement is marketing, and now sustainable marketing has become a dominant approach in market management and communication with customers (Siano et al, 2022). Based on a general definition, "sustainable marketing" is the efforts and activities of a business to introduce and sell environmentally friendly products and services. This method of marketing is in line with the goals of sustainability and sustainable development, which ultimately brings a sustainable competitive advantage to the organization (Yadav al et, 2024).

-Management of consumer behavior

Consumer behavior management is all the activities that people engage in when choosing, buying, using, and disposing of disposable goods in order to satisfy their needs (Mowen & Minor, 2022). Based on another definition of consumer behavior, with the aim of meeting the needs and desires of different individuals and groups, they examine effective processes during the selection, purchase and use of products, services, ideas and experiences (Raji et al, 2024). The consequence of fierce competition in the market is the ever-increasing power of the customer. With the increase in the power of customers, their expectations from production and service organizations have also increased. Organizations have to offer the most valuable products and services at the most appropriate price. As a result, organizations are constantly looking for new methods and innovation in creating and providing value for customers. Due to the complexity of customers' needs and demands and their deep inner motivations, acquiring information and knowledge in the field of customers' demands, mental perceptions, purchases, and purchasing behavior is of fundamental importance for marketers (Barbe et al., 2023).

Research methodology

This study is an applicable-developmental research and based on the method of data collection, it is also a non-experimental (descriptive) research that was conducted with a cross-sectional survey method. In order to achieve the goal of the research, a mixed exploratory research design (qualitative-quantitative) has been used.

The community of qualitative sector participants includes theoretical experts (professors of marketing management) and experimental experts (managers of the country's automotive industry) who have sufficient experience in the field of sustainable marketing system. Sampling was done with a purposeful method, and theoretical saturation was obtained with 17 interviews. In the quantitative part, the statistical population includes managers and experts of the marketing and sales department of the country's automobile industry, numbering 131 people.

In the qualitative part, the theme analysis method (TAM) was used with the proposed approach (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

In the quantitative part, partial least squares method was used in Smart PLS software to validate the model.

Research findings

In the open coding phase, 298 codes were identified. Finally, 3 overarching themes, 11 organizing themes, and 68 basic themes were obtained through axial coding.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the qualitative part of the research; 68 sub-themes were classified in the form of 11 main themes including organizational factors, customer factors, environmental factors, sustainability infrastructure, social responsibility, sustainable consumption behavior, sustainable consumption strategy, sustainable marketing, environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social sustainability category. Based on the results, it was determined that environmental factors, organizational factors, and customer factors affect sustainable infrastructure. In the study of Wang & Udall (2023), it was also shown that moral self and group identity encourage sustainable consumption behaviors. Altruistic values predict self and group moral identity, and the relationship between altruistic values and sustainable consumption behaviors is fully mediated by moral self and group identity. Also, the results showed that sustainable infrastructure leads to sustainable consumption behavior by influencing sustainable consumption strategy and social responsibility. In the results of the study of Gong et al., (2023), it was also determined that a useful tool for long-term purchase intention is interaction with customer, and the company's social responsibility plays an important role in strengthening consumers' intention to make sustainable purchases in the automotive industry. Finally, it was found that sustainable consumption behavior leads to sustainable marketing by influencing environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social sustainability. In the results of the study of Peterson et al, (2021), it is also mentioned that "... in the philosophy of social marketing, the goal is to respect the social rights of individuals in addition to the economic interests of companies. In addition to this issue, the efforts of environment activists and public awareness about the importance of the environment caused respect for nature to be placed on the agenda of companies and business owners."