

Succeeding with Responsible Marketing a Framework and Three Short Cases



Myriam Ertz  and Batiste Michelet

Learning objectives

- Understanding the historical evolution of different forms of marketing and their progressive integration of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.
- Determining the key differences between various forms of marketing involving responsibility.
- Identifying the key tenets and principles of responsible marketing.
- Understanding the components of the responsible marketing mix called “the 4Cs” in contrast to the conventional marketing mix of the “4Ps.”
- Examining the implications of responsible marketing for stakeholders such as organizations, the State, and consumers.

1 Introduction

“Profits are like happiness in that they are a byproduct of other things. Happiness, for example, can stem from having a strong sense of purpose, meaningful work and deep relationships. Those who focus obsessively on their own happiness are usually narcissists—and end up miserable. Similarly, companies need a purpose that transcends money: they need sustainability strategies that recognize that you can make money by doing good things rather than the other way around.” (Tata et al., 2013).

M. Ertz (✉)

LaboNFC, University of Quebec in Chicoutimi, Saguenay, QC G7H 2B1, Canada
e-mail: Myriam_Ertz@uqac.ca

B. Michelet

Sports Management School, 75019 Paris, France
e-mail: batiste.michelet1@uqac.ca

Marketing, as we have known it for several decades, based on the acquisition of new customers, is experiencing “growing pains” (Kotler, 2017). This function is more and more expensive and less and less effective, and for those reasons it needs to be anchored in new perspectives and new paradigms (Grönroos, 2004, 2006). Over the years, several authors have argued that this new perspective for marketing can be found in a broadened perspective of the function in which its responsibility is enlarged to comprise not only strategic objectives, but also social, environmental, and ethical ones (Kotler & Lee, 2008; Kotler & Maon, 2016; Kotler et al., 2012; McKenzie-Mohr et al., 2011). Marketing is incidentally highly instrumental in conveying a responsible corporate image but contributing marketing to reach sustainability does not happen in a vacuum and remains a challenging endeavor.

As emphasized by Gbadamosi (Gbadamosi, 2019) marketing mediates between society and the organization by bringing information about consumers and markets to organization; it mediates also between the organization and society by framing the offering of a company in a specific manner. Yet, how ethical marketing is, both in the organizational and the social systems, has often been a fertile ground for criticism and debates. A few points of contention refer to the following (Gbadamosi, 2019): (1) unethical product management (i.e., marketing of faulty, harmful, or planned obsolescence products) (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Kuppelwieser et al., 2019); (2) lack of attention and protection of disadvantaged consumers (i.e., exploiting the base-of-pyramid, student, unemployed, homeless, elderly, low-wage, single parents, or disabled consumers) (Fyfe, 1994; Hamilton & Catterall, 2005); (3) high-pressure selling (i.e., “ingratiatory tactics and undue pressure” for selling products to consumers) (Gbadamosi, 2019, pp. 194–195); (4) cultural relativism in international marketing (i.e., lowering ethical standards in foreign markets) (Madichie & Opute, 2019; Svensson & Wood, 2003); (5) unethical pricing (i.e., false promotions and excessive pricing compared to the value obtained) (Gbadamosi, 2019); (6) unethical marketing communication (i.e., the early form of greenwashing in which marketers’ claims exaggerate the true value of the product, and also marketing to children) (Gbadamosi, 2019; Munjal, 2016); and (7) unethical marketing research (i.e., exposure to harm, lack of informed consent, coercion, invasion of privacy, deception, breach of confidentiality, inducement to commit acts diminishing self-esteem, and breach of agreement) (Gbadamosi, 2019; ICC & ESOMAR, 2016; Ryen, 2011). Other dubious marketing practices have been documented idiosyncratically using case studies in Murphy et al. (2016) and many other authors have made thorough and comprehensive reports of misconduct in business (Ertz et al., 2019), or unethical marketing practices (Ingram et al., 2005; Leonidou et al., 2013). Even apparently unharmed practices such as nudge marketing (Lin et al., 2017) or big data analytics (Nunan & Domenico, 2013) have been subject to closer scrutiny for their alleged lack of ethics.

Meanwhile, although it is increasingly more complex for marketers to sort out the good and the bad, the moral and immoral, and the ethical and the unethical, tremendous progress has been made on various issues. By embracing a “more responsible marketing mix,” marketers tend to ensure ethical products (e.g.,

durable, healthy, recyclable, reusable, compostable, repairable, with reduced packaging), prices (e.g., transparency in value, discount, premium pricing for responsible products, and taxes), and communication (e.g., green advertising, ethical sales, public relations, eco-labeling, promotions, and social media activities). Some issues remain, though, such as marketing to children, marketing of junk food, and addictive or immoral products (e.g., pornography, gambling, prostitution, violent games/movies/series/books/music, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, opioids) (Mishra & Sharma, 2014; Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001). However, great efforts have been undoubtedly made to increase the availability of products for all consumers through e-marketing, integrated transportation systems, and stakeholder approaches toward channel members. Marketers improved also marketing to base-of-the-pyramid markets and to other disadvantaged consumers (Pal & Altay, 2019), while making giant leaps in marketing and entrepreneurship in subsistence marketplaces (Weidner et al., 2010). And it is almost certain that such endeavors will only continue and improve in the future.

Those positive evolutions in marketing have often been categorized under one or the other following labels: social marketing, societal marketing, green marketing, environmental marketing, corporate social/societal responsibility, environmental/social/governance (ESG) criteria, ethical marketing, marketing ethics, sustainable marketing, sustainability marketing, or responsible marketing. While each can be squarely defined, we shall make a case in emphasizing the concept of responsible marketing. The concept will be contrasted and compared to the other concepts that are nomologically close as well as defined more particularly in comparison to the notions of ethics, deontology, and sustainability. The chapter then presents an overview of a few cases of Canadian and French companies that have implemented such responsible marketing in various ways. Finally, we will analyze the role of the state and consumers, before considering the prospects for the future.

2 The Emergence and Meaning of Responsible Marketing

2.1 *A Genesis and Dimensions of Responsible Marketing*

Responsible marketing is now on everybody's lips but it has come a long way of emerging out as a marginal sub-area of marketing closely associated to niche markets and grassroot civil movements, to a full-fledged concept with substantial theoretical and empirical underpinnings that is now deployed on a large and global scale. Several forms of marketing have nonetheless preceded advent of responsible marketing. The following discussion is based on Belz and Peattie's (2009, 2012) as well as Katrandjiev's (2016) and Ertz' (2021) work.

Societal marketing. Is about making marketing decisions that take into account not only the immediate needs and demands of consumers, but also their long-term interests and those of society (Crane & Desmond, 2002; Kotler, 1972). In that sense,

societal marketing opposes the libertarian perspective, stipulating that individuals have the right to consume as they wish, with the sole condition that it be legal. In fact, societal marketing claims that these choices, when they are not judicious, may create negative consequences on society, health, and the environment (e.g., cigarettes, old diesel cars). Societal marketing is often confounded with social marketing (or “cause marketing”), although the latter goes much further. Social marketing consists of sending messages to society in order to spur social change for the benefit of all (McKenzie-Mohr et al., 2011). Social marketing is widely used by associations, NGOs, governments, and institutions to “nudge” individuals into changing their behavior for the greater good (e.g., public health, road safety) (Cheng, Kotler, & Lee, 2011). Recently, it has been used by private companies who supported the Black Lives Matter movement in their branding and communications to demand social justice and non-discriminatory practices. Governments made also heavy use of social marketing to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The main issue though with both forms of marketing is who defines what is good and bad for society and for consumers? And who is in an authority to enforce it? Libertarian philosophers will further argue that imposing an equivocal and relativistic normativity goes against the freedom and liberty of individuals.

Ecological marketing. Takes its name from the ecological crisis that has followed mass production and consumption. As such, it primarily focused on the impacts of marketing on the environment. With rising consumption and production levels, ecological marketing seeks to remedy environmental issues such as overexploitation of limited resources, use of hazardous substances, pollution, and recycling, among others (Fisk, 1974; Henion, 1981; Henion & Kinnear, 1976). However, it remains limited to a few most urgent issues for the environment and is confined to a limited set of industries, typically the most impactful ones such as mining, oil, manufacturing, or transportation.

Green marketing. Green marketing, also known as “environmental marketing” promotes the green positioning of a brand or product and makes it one of its main selling points (Peattie, 1992, 1995). It is also used to promote the environmental actions carried out by the company, with the aim of improving its brand image (Ottman & Humphrey, 1993). In contrast to ecological marketing in the 1970s, green marketing is not only concerned with pollution and non-renewable resources depletion but extends to much broader environmental issues such as biodiversity loss or ecosystems destruction, and social issues including poverty and child labor, in any industry (Belz & Peattie, 2009, 2012). Green marketing lies at the confluence between ecological marketing and societal/social marketing merging both streams into a unifying whole. But, as emphasized by Peattie and Crane (2005), green marketing has been undermined by the lack of functional or utilitarian value in many “green product” as well as the challenge to define what greener products or consumers actually are. Green companies also face sclerosed institutional settings that do not necessarily accompany the transition toward greener offering. Off-shoring and uncontrollability over partners as well as international competition unrestrained by environmental considerations further undermined green ventures.

Sustainable marketing. Sustainable marketing is also known as “sustainability marketing” and is radically different in that it “accepts the limitations of a market orientation and acknowledges the necessity of regulatory alternations to the marketing mechanism” (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995) in 30, p. 28]. Sustainable marketing is therefore a macromarketing concept that goes beyond the narrow perspective of the firm (Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996). It further extends the “economy or social/environment” dichotomy by seeking to balance the triple bottom line (3BL) of sustainable development including economic, environmental, and social issues. As such, it subsumes the social focus of social/societal marketing and the environmental emphasis proper to ecological/green/environmental marketing into an integrated framework which also values long-term perspectives, relationship-orientations marketing practices, and the necessary role of institutions and politics to enact change. With such a sophisticated and all-encompassing framework, it is no surprise that sustainable/sustainability marketing has been embraced by a vast majority of scholars and practitioners (e.g., Fuller, 1999; Gordon et al., 2011; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; Martin & Schouten, 2012; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014).

However, despite the advent of such a sophisticated framework as sustainable marketing, the 2000s have still been fraught with systemic issues in which marketing played a key role such as the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2007–2008, the fast fashion phenomenon, the planned obsolescence issue (e.g., Apple), and privacy concerns especially in relation with “Big Tech” companies. Some corporate scandals also occurred at Enron (2001), BP (2010), Volkswagen (2015), Wells Fargo (2016) Equifax (2017), and many others (see IG 2018 for a review). These various examples of manifest unsustainability point at deeper issues that pertain not only to lack of corporate social responsibility (CSR), of balancing the triple bottom line, of inclusion to all stakeholders, of prioritizing long-term over short term, or of favoring relational over transactional. Rather, they result from a sense of “irresponsibility” and unwillingness or incapacity to do what is right because of heavy systemic forces (e.g., debt and pressure to growth). Besides, sustainability is often implemented extrinsically to avoid coercive regulation or sanctions or as a means to increase financial performance, develop competitive advantages, or build stronger brand equity (Funk, 2003; Grubor & Milovanov, 2017; Laszlo & Zhexembayeva, 2017). Instead responsibility thus emphasizes a systemic transition that involves firms and institutions and where companies are responsible for their deeds while acting proactively to better themselves even though the legislation does not compel them to do so.

Responsible marketing. Conceptually the notion of responsible marketing (RM) has been connected to socially responsible marketing and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Maignan et al., 2011; Sirgy & Lee, 1996). However, it goes way beyond that by internalizing stronger ramifications with ethical marketing (Laczniak & Murphy, 2006; Murphy et al., 2016). While the foundational premises of RM do not differ much from sustainable marketing (i.e., threefold mission of sustainable development [economic, social, and environmental], institutional involvement, long-term and relational perspectives), subsuming them in a cumulative and progressive

endeavor, RS takes a normative perspective underpinned by the notion of “responsibility” which needs to be understood in the sense of “responsiveness,” and “proactiveness” and more broadly in ethical and deontological marketing. RM means that the organization is fully responsible for everything it does and answers for its deeds, while seeking to proactively do more or better than what the law or society requests. As such, it is deeply anchored in ethical marketing as theorized by Murphy et al. (2016) through their basic principles and tries to implement what McIntyre (MacIntyre, 1981, 2007) traditionally disentangled: applying the notion of pursuing personal ethics and virtue (at an individual level) to organizations, to create organizations striving to be ethical and virtuous.

In fact, in addition to the core tenets of sustainability marketing, RM draws largely on the seven basic perspectives (BP) of ethical marketing which have the advantage of offering a practical framework for deploying ethical marketing (Laczniak & Murphy, 2006; Murphy et al., 2016; Sirgy, 2001) in complement to the classical more descriptive one [e.g., Ferrell & Gresham, 1985; Hunt & Vitell, 1986]. More exactly, the seven basic principles (BP) subsume squarely the key axes of sustainable marketing such as long-term orientations, relationship-based perspectives, and stakeholder approaches (Belz & Peattie, 2009, 2012) which is manifest in (BP6).¹ In addition, they emphasize putting the interest of others first (BP1),² proactively doing more than what the law requires (BP2)³ (which is also a resultant of BP4),⁴ and showing benevolence in all actions (BP3).⁵ However, in contrast to sustainability marketing, the role of regulatory action as an extrinsic tool to enforce sustainability should be considerably lowered due to enhanced internalizing of ethical principles at the firm level in an intrinsic approach. In fact, RM integrates the crucial belief in having to answer for every corporate action either when confronted by stakeholders/authorities or not, i.e., self-willingly with the company punishing itself for going out of line. This vital aspect of responsibility (from the Latin *respondere* or “to respond to something,” “reply,” “answer to”) overlaps tangentially with BP3 and benevolence. Besides, what would be “going out of line”? It would refer to going against the core set of ethical principles (BP5),⁶ and the ethical decision-making protocol (BP7)⁷ articulated by the firm itself, which should in any ways be superior to what the institutions and

¹ BP6: Adoption of a stakeholder orientation is essential to ethical marketing decisions (Laczniak & Murphy 2006, p. 157).

² BP1: Ethical marketing puts people first (Laczniak & Murphy 2006, p. 157).

³ BP2: Ethical marketers must achieve a behavioral standard in excess of the law (Laczniak & Murphy 2006, p. 157).

⁴ BP4: Marketing organizations should cultivate better (i.e., higher) moral imagination in their managers and employees (Laczniak & Murphy 2006, p. 157).

⁵ BP3: Marketers are responsible for whatever they intend as a means or ends with a marketing action (Laczniak & Murphy 2006, p. 157).

⁶ BP5: Marketers should articulate and embrace a core set of ethical principles (Laczniak & Murphy 2006, p. 157).

⁷ BP7: Marketing organizations ought to delineate an ethical decision-making protocol (Laczniak & Murphy 2006, p. 157).

society expects (see also BP2). This conceptualization is unique and while unheard of, worthy of further conceptual and empirical refinements.

Table 1 summarizes the three concepts while the next subsection explains in more details the responsible marketing mix.

Table 1 Summary and historicity of the different forms of marketing for responsibility

Dimensions	Period	Core focus	Issues
Social marketing	1960s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create social change for the greater good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authority to determine the good and the bad for consumers and for society - Restrictions on liberty and freewill
Societal marketing	1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seeking to align: - Organizational goals, - Consumer goals - Societal goals 	Same issues as for social marketing
Ecological marketing	1970s–1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental issues: - Pollution - Non-renewable resources depletion - Environmentally impactful industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited on environmental issues - Limited set of environmental problems - Limited set of industries
Green/environmental marketing	1980s–1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental and social issues: - All environmental issues - Many social issues - All industries - Change via markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of functional utility in green products-Definition of green products - Identification of the green consumer and the green market - Micromarketing orientation (company only)
Sustainability marketing	1990s–2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triple Bottom Line of sustainable development to align: - Economic issues - Social issues - Environmental issues - Stakeholder-based, long-term, and relationship-focused perspective - Macromarketing orientation (change via both markets and institutions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extrinsic approach to sustainability - Avoid sanctions and regulations - Make economic and strategic gains - Limited scope (lacks a systemic perspective)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Dimensions	Period	Core focus	Issues
Responsible marketing	2000s now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Triple bottom line of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental issues) – Business perspective anchored in ethics and morality (virtue) – Proactive change via markets, institutions, and the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Intrinsic approach to sustainability – Sustainability as a mean and an end in itself – Practical implementation

Sources: (Belz & Peattie, 2009, 2012; Fuller, 1999; Martin & Schouten, 2012)

2.2 The Responsible Marketing Mix

Responsible marketing draws on the notion of the responsible marketing mix developed in the framework of sustainable marketing and which posits that the conventional marketing mix of the “4Ps” consisting of modulating product, price, place (distribution), and promotion (communication) should be replaced by an alternative framework of “4Cs,” that is, contribution, costs, convenience, and communications (Belz & Peattie, 2009, 2012).

Contribution. In responsible marketing, there is a mention of contribution instead of product since the notion of contribution is larger and refers semantically to the need to “contribute,” ideally positively, to the economy, society, and so on. Therefore, the contribution refers to goods and services whose positioning indicates to the consumer a form of additional added value in the form of economic, environmental, and social benefits.

Costs. The notion of costs refers to two core aspects in responsible marketing. The first refers to the total costs during the total consumption process. A consumer may incur a variety of costs throughout the total consumption process: before the purchase, during the purchase, during the consumption phase, and at the post-consumption phase (i.e., disposal). However, the price only refers to the amount of money needed for the purchase at the purchase phase and as such does not accurately reflect the total costs that a consumer will disburse during the period of time during which she will use a contribution. Emphasizing costs instead of price of contributions is a way to promote responsible offers because it often happens that responsible offers incur comparatively lower costs than their non-responsible counterparts. For example, the price listed for an electric car may be higher than for a gasoline car. Yet, during the use phase that increased price will be offset by the lower expenditures in energy needed by the electric car in contrast to the gasoline car.

Second, costs refer also to the need to signal to consumers the responsible price which comprises all the economic but also environmental and social costs related to

the production of a contribution. In fact, not requiring payment of external socio-ecological costs sends a false message that hinders the functioning of market mechanisms (Fuller, 1999). This can be very harmful for society since current economic systems produce a lot of polluting goods and are also a source of waste. The products thus produced are, however, very inexpensive, as they do not include all of the ecological costs of their production or use (Shrivastava, 1995). The notion of responsible price thus overlaps with environmental full-cost accounting, full-cost accounting, or true-cost accounting which aim at tracing direct costs and allocating indirect costs by gathering and outlining information regarding the possible environmental, social and economic costs and benefits—the triple bottom line—or advantages for a given contribution (Schaltegger & Burritt, 2017). In principle, by following this form of accounting, organizations using child labor or cheap unregulated labor offshored to developing countries will bear a higher price in order to offset the social consequences entailed by their practices.

Convenience. A product is convenient for the consumer if it is available when and in the desired place, is intuitive and promotes comfort, and is adapted to his needs and desires. In addition, convenience can refer to a good, a service, or a type of store (shopping center, driving, supermarket, etc.), and it can be supplied at all stages of the consumption process: before and after purchase (after-sales service), but also during post-use (taken back by the company for repair, reconditioning, recycling, or upgrading discarded). While desirable, convenience is also particularly impactful from both an environmental and a social perspective. For example, 24/7 stores are highly convenient for consumers but require large energy consumption and submit workers to unregular working schedules (e.g., night shifts, weekends) which may impact their physiological and psychological well-being. Convenience is therefore a huge challenge from a responsible marketing perspective. How to ensure highly convenient offerings to consumers while ensuring that higher convenience does create harmful impacts for the environment and society?

Communication. Responsible marketing uses the same communication channels as traditional marketing. However, the messages conveyed are not the same. The objective of communicating responsibly needs to be done in a way that does not mislead consumers in any way such as by avoiding deceptive advertising, puffery, and obviously greenwashing. This is especially important in today's day and age since a single miscommunication can go viral through social media and modern communication networks. The organization needs therefore to be particularly careful about everything it communicates not only to its customers but to all its stakeholders (e.g., suppliers, wholesalers, retailers, government, press, local communities) as it will be scrutinized, saved, shared, and duplicated infinitely. The concept of an open, traceable, and decentralized database such as the blockchain may also offer promising solutions for organizations seeking to foster organizational credibility and trustworthiness around their business practices, such as responsible sourcing, green supply chain, fair trade, and so on.

3 Examples of Responsible Companies in Canada

In Canada, many companies invest in applying the principles of responsible marketing. In this part, we will see various and varied examples, from the textile industry, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, and the retail industry.

3.1 Message Factory

Message Factory is a textile company founded in 2005 by Julie Rochefort. The brand is distinguished by its local manufacturing (everywhere in Quebec) and its organic clothing made from organic or recycled cotton, hemp, recycled polyester, and bamboo. Orders are shipped in recycled packaging in order to reduce the environmental footprint related to the convenience of packaged goods. Besides, the brand integrates some principles of full-cost accounting since it donates 1% of its turnover each year to local organizations. Message Factory also supports Jeunesse Canada Monde, to which Julie Rochefort, participated in one of the programs in 1991. This organization's mission is to increase the capacity of young people to invest in the development of a fairer and more sustainable society.

3.2 Attitude

Attitude is a Canadian company present in 44 countries, it markets body care, for men, women, and babies, as well as for animal grooming. Household goods are marketed in the form of refills to preserve the environment. Its mission is to offer “natural products of superior quality, having a minimal impact on our families and our planet”: an eco-responsible and sustainable positioning. In addition, the company has made another commitment to the preservation of the planet, by engaging in reforestation. The organization has tried to integrate the notion of full-cost accounting by incurring the environmental cost of its manufacturing into its price and business practices. In fact, for each product sold, Attitude plants a tree.

3.3 Rachelle Béry

Rachelle Béry is a Quebec company that has been selling natural and organic food products for 30 years. It is present throughout Quebec, mainly in the region of Quebec and Montreal, and there is a store in Ottawa (Ontario) and Saguenay. In addition to offering eco-responsible and local products, Rachelle Béry grocery stores are involved in neighborhood life, for example, by donating unsold perishables to

associations and food banks. Rachelle Béry is also distinguished by its innovations to improve the convenience of its services with neighborhood eco-delivery. The concept is simple: each customer coming to do their grocery shopping on foot or by bike can leave empty-handed and their purchases will be delivered to their homes by a hybrid vehicle. Deliveries are made within 5 km, and cost \$ 4 with no minimum purchase, which is very inexpensive. In addition, they are free for people 65 and over. This eco-delivery is not yet available in all stores of the brand.

Table 2 summarizes the responsible marketing mix of each of those three Canadian companies using the 4C framework.

Table 2 Responsible marketing mix of three sample companies in Canada

4Cs	Message Factory	Attitude	Rachelle Béry
Contribution	Organic clothing made by hand from organic or recycled cotton, hemp, recycled polyester, bamboo	Natural body care, animal grooming, and household cleaning goods in the form of refills to preserve the environment	Retail chain selling natural, eco-responsible, local and organic food as well as beauty products
Costs	Integration of some full-cost accounting principles: the brand donates 1% of its turnover each year to local organizations	Integration of some full-cost accounting principles: for each product sold, Attitude plants a tree (reforesting)	Integration of some full-cost accounting principles: donating unsold perishables to associations and food banks
Convenience	Orders are shipped in recycled packaging Free delivery on online orders of \$75 and more Free returns except for items in promotion	Natural products are said to offer higher quality and benefits than their non-natural counterparts Free shipping on online order of 60\$ and more	For consumers coming by bike or by foot to the store, “neighborhood eco-delivery” by hybrid cars, in a radius of 5 km, no minimum amount of purchase, and free delivery for people aged 65 and over
Communication	No specific labeling but use of responsible fabric such as Tencel®, mention of manufacturing by hand, and local production in Quebec Online presence (social media + website)	Communication around the 4R (reduce, reuse, recycle, and reforest) Use of several eco-labels (EWG Verified™ [Environmental Working Group], hypoallergenic, animal cruelty-free and vegan, ECOLOGO, recyclable, made in Canada)	The retail chain has no specific eco-labeling since their contributions will bear many eco-labels The organization communicates heavily around the criteria of health, organic, and natural contributions

4 Implications for Future Responsible Marketing Agenda

4.1 *Company perspective*

We have seen previously that companies have obviously a very important role to play in the transition toward responsibility. However, since responsible marketing not only involves the market (i.e., organizations), but also society (e.g., individuals) and the State (i.e., institutions) for a systemic change (see also Table 1), it is imperative that individuals and policymakers be involved. This goes somewhat beyond the scope of this book but we believe it is necessary to make a systemic transition toward responsibility successful. Therefore, we will study individuals' and institutions' levers of action in the next sections.

4.2 *Consumer perspective*

It is important to realize that consumers have a central place in the process of responsible business management. Indeed, if there are no customers to buy the responsible goods, the effect is null. It has been historically difficult to define the responsible consumer (Gbadamosi, 2019) but a definition might read as follows: a consumer who tries to find an ethical meaning in her act of purchase. She can be qualified as a “consumer actor” for her thoughtful consumption approach, in relation to the social and environmental consequences of her purchases. Responsible consumers also seek to reduce their consumption, not only for environmental reasons, but also for economic reasons.

Each consumer has very different objectives depending on their own sensitivity and their own ethics. Some put forward the environmental side by favoring seasonal, organic, or ecological products. While others will highlight a socio-economic aspect by favoring short circuits and local goods. For example, by consuming local products, they think about the environment by avoiding bringing goods from the other side of the world. It is also complicated to define responsible consumption with great precision. It is specific to each person, however the common point between all responsible consumers is awareness of the economic, social, or even environmental consequences of their purchase, at all stages of the process (e.g., manufacturing, transport, logistics, purchasing) and the willingness to act so that consumption is positive. In Quebec, the most popular ways to consume responsibly are recycling and buying used products.

The responsible consumer also has an external role, she can act as a “marketing partner” for the responsible company by sharing her experience with those close to her, on her social networks. Consumers can also flag goods they don't like (for example, goods with too much packaging). The “consumer actor” must be active by doing her best to support the responsible business. This relationship must be reciprocal, it is important for a responsible company to see its customer not only as a

buyer, but also as a partner who can play an important role, especially when it comes to communication.

4.3 Regulatory And Governance Perspective

The state must of course put in place a legal framework that stimulates responsibility and ensure that it is respected. An interesting case study of this process occurred in France in 2001. At that time, the French government implemented the “NRE law” (Nouvelles Régulations Économiques [New Economic Regulations]) which required listed companies to publish information on their consideration of the social and environmental consequences of their activity (Favennec-Héry, 2009; Guibert & Laurencie, 2002). This law was extended in 2010 by the “Grenelle 2 law,” which added the societal aspect to the previous law and increased the number of companies subject to it (Holroyd, 2020). This law was further extended in 2017 to comply with European law. It now concerns public limited companies and limited liability companies (LLCs) (Holroyd, 2020).

It is also up to the State to set the course to be reached in terms of sustainable development, through public investments and tax incentives that it gives to various economic agents, such as consumers (e.g., tax credit for sustainable renovations, for the installation of photovoltaic panels, or for the purchase of a hybrid or electric vehicle) but also to private organizations. In the latter case, administrations and public enterprises should set an example to the private sector.

Increasingly, the mission of the State is to ensure the advancement of the sustainability agenda set by supranational organizations such as the United Nations (U.N.). It should be mentioned that the debate remains regarding the legitimacy of a process through which unelected administrative bodies impose—even non-coercively—their agenda on democratically elected state representatives. In fact, such a process is not democratic per se and refers more squarely to technocratic governance. Yet, it appears that many frameworks including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), “decided” by the 193 member states of the United Nations, “should” further be achieved by 2030. While laudable, no country in the world is on track to achieve those objectives for 2030 (United Nations, 2021). Like many other countries, Canada tries to lead the way. In November 2018, the Canadian government launched a program to finance the sustainable development goals, offering up to \$100,000 to projects lasting up to 12 months and which aim at raising awareness of the 2030 agenda, improve research, and ensuring that Canada meets its goals by 2030. While the goals of sustainable development may not be achieved by many countries in 2030, it is important that states join forces to create a more responsible global economy.

The role of the State in promoting a responsible economy is manifold. First, by developing local solutions, especially in the construction sector by making local companies work with local materials, for public works, then with major investments in renewable energies to reduce the dependence on oil and on nuclear power, which should gradually contribute to reduce CO₂ emissions, especially through oil

consumption reduction. The State can also use social marketing to promote responsible behavior of both businesses and citizens, and promote the creation and then the development of local and community businesses while creating partnerships between the State, citizens, and these types of organizations.

Finally, Governments have a major role to play, as they have the power to set the tone and encourage businesses, but also citizens, to spur responsible production, distribution, and consumption.

4.4 The Way Forward for Responsible Marketing

Responsible consumption has greatly increased since the 2008 crisis. To try to anticipate what could happen in the future, it would be interesting to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on responsible consumption. This pandemic and, in particular, the period of confinement which lasted 2 months has modified our habits (e.g., wearing a mask, social distancing, closed shops, teleworking, distance learning) and has had a great impact on consumption. In the early days of the pandemic, there was an increase in overall consumption as people feared shortages of basic necessities. Then, when this frenzy subsided, there was an increase in local buying in Quebec (68% said they made this choice when they had the opportunity) (Trespeuch et al., 2020). However, in the meantime, widespread practices such as recycling or buying used products have regressed (Trespeuch et al., 2020). By analyzing the impact of the pandemic on responsible consumption in Quebec, we see that there are roughly as many positive points as there are negative points. In fact, two-thirds of Quebecers believe they consume less during this period, they take advantage of being at home to cook, tinker, and garden (Trespeuch et al., 2020). In addition, half of the population says they are more careful about food waste. However, the consumption of second-hand products is very low, which can be explained by social distancing and the closing of non-essential shops (Trespeuch et al., 2020). It can be assumed that the figures for second-hand products will return to normal when the health situation improves. On the negative side, we can see that half of consumers of bulk products have abandoned this type of product. In fact, around 40% of people who do their shopping with reusable bags have abandoned them (Trespeuch et al., 2020). This is certainly explained by the fact that cashiers were no longer allowed to fill reusable bags.

How can a crisis cause a lasting change in the way we consume? First, the authors of this research observed changes during the lockdown period. Then, a crisis, like any difficulty, pushes to question one's beliefs and values. This period of uncertainty and stress is a lifelong experience and can be a defining moment, as consumer behavior during the crisis can gradually become a habit over the long term. The pandemic has also demonstrated that governments can show great determination to fight a virus. Their actions during this crisis really contrast with their inaction against problems causing much more damage such as pollution, overconsumption, tax evasion or unemployment. However, if governments put as much determination to solve these

systemic problems as to implement strong measures to manage the health crisis there are good reasons to be optimistic.

Certain companies have also particularly distinguished themselves during the health crisis. This is the case for the French sport retailer Decathlon, which provided the plans for its *Easybreath* diving mask, to create, with 3D printers, an adapter allowing it to be connected to respirators to limit the need for intubation (Sher, 2020). The mask has also served as a protective mask for the medical profession. The brand, present in 69 countries, has offered 30,000 masks in France and 7,000 in Canada, where the brand has been gradually establishing itself since 2018. The same reasoning can be used as for governments. If companies like Décathlon can take drastic measures “in times of war” as Jaylone Lee, marketing manager, declared, they can, if they put in the means, take effective measures to adhere to the principles of responsibility (Turner, 2020). However, we will have to wait and see how the economic sectors hardest hit by this crisis will recover. It is not impossible that there is awareness on the part of companies, but it would be better to wait until the end of the crisis and then see how the economic recovery is going, before claiming an improvement in responsible business practices.

5 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research has presented an overview of how to succeed with responsible marketing by illustrating the implementation of responsible marketing with the use of three short Canadian cases. The research was therefore focused on the North American context which is very specific and has certain characteristics that might differ from other world regions. Therefore, the insights of this chapter might primarily apply to developed or emerged economies. Future research might investigate the implementation of responsible marketing in other world areas. A particular emphasis could be put on the study of emerging economies where sustainability remains a major challenge due to the perceived restrictive nature of sustainability which might hamper development.

6 Conclusion

Marketing, as we have known it for several decades, based on the acquisition of new customers, is experiencing “growing pains”. This function is more and more expensive and less and less efficient. Consequently, an increasing number of companies are starting to question their *raison d’être* and their contribution to society. We therefore witness a growing trend toward the embracing of the sustainable development ethos within the marketing function. While this phenomenon is not new and could be traced back to the 1990s, it certainly reached an unprecedented scope and at an unmatched speed over the last two decades. Whether it is through corporate ethics,

corporate social responsibility, sustainable marketing, or responsible marketing, the diversity of concepts used to describe that shift only mirrors its growing popularity. In this chapter, we chronologically define and explain the dimensions leading to the notion of responsible marketing, including social marketing, ecological marketing, societal marketing, green/environmental marketing, and sustainable/sustainability marketing. Then, we examine a number of corporate cases using the responsible marketing framework. Finally, we analyze the role of the state and consumers, before outlining the prospects for the future of responsible marketing.

Lesson learned

- At the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there has been a fast-paced evolution of polymorphous forms of marketing committed to responsibility, especially with the integration of closely related concepts such as corporate philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development.
- There are key differences between various forms of marketing involving responsibility, including social marketing, societal marketing, ecological marketing, green/environmental marketing, sustainable/sustainability marketing, and responsible marketing. These are all normatively loaded with moral, ethical, and deontological principles.
- The key tenets of responsible marketing presuppose: a business perspective anchored in ethics and morality (virtue), a broadening of ethical marketing by the specification of key areas of intervention using the triple bottom line framework (economic, social, and environmental issues), a quest for proactive change via not only markets, but also institutions and the system (systematic or macromarketing approach). Finally, it is an intrinsic, non-instrumental approach to sustainability, considering sustainability as a mean but also an end in itself and which can be applied in practice.
- The responsible marketing mix of “the 4Cs” consists of “Contribution,” “Costs,” “Convenience,” and “Communication” in contrast to the conventional marketing mix of the “4Ps” (Product, Price, Place, Promotion).
- Responsible marketing remains a challenging task and, as a marketing approach oriented toward systematic shifts, it has profound implications for numerous stakeholders, especially organizations, the State, and consumers.

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Myriam Ertz is Associate Professor of Marketing at the University of Quebec at Chicoutimi, and a recent recipient of the *Social Sciences 2020 Young Investigator* award. Her research interests include responsible consumption and marketing, collaborative economy and technology. She has published over 80 research articles in top quality journals, including *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *Resources Conservation & Recycling*, *Business Strategy & the Environment*, *Science of the Total Environment*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Waste Management, Environment & Behavior*, or *Journal of Environmental Management* among

others. Professor Ertz has extensive editorial experiences, as a book editor, journal associate editor, and special issue guest editor for several journals, including *Sustainability*, *Frontiers in Sustainability*, and *Organisations & Territoires*. She edited a collective book on the reconfiguration of commercial exchanges (Presses de l'Université du Québec) and the *Handbook of research on the platform economy and the evolution of e-commerce* (IGI Global). As an author, she wrote the first book on responsible marketing (JFD Editions) in French language.

Batiste Michelet is an MBA graduate in sport marketing from the Sport Management School in Paris. His research interests consist in exploring the opportunities for introducing social responsibility and sustainable principles in sport, and more particularly in marketing of sport. He has already produced various research reports on related topics including a report on responsible marketing.