

Chapter 24. Sustainable Marketing and Sales Management

24.1. COURSE SUMMARY

Table 24–1

Audience and level of studies	Students (Bachelor)	
Group size	51–75	
Course duration	15 weeks	
Credits	3 ECTS	
Workload	Presence: 42 h (teaching) + 18h (seminars) Self-study: 30 h	Total: 90 h
Contents/primary topics	• Product development • Sustainable production • Sustainable marketing mix	
Main course objectives	• Strengthen sustainability related aspects in product/service design, marketing strategies and sales management	
Main teaching approaches	• Active learning • Experiential learning • Collaborative learning	
Main teaching methods	• Group discussion • Case studies • Sustainability-related research project	
Learning environment	Classroom (face-to-face learning)	
Link to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG 4 Quality Education Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure Build infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	

Table 24–2

Impact assessment	(None) Low/ Medium/ High	Explanation
1. Degree of student participation / activeness	High	Students work on an own project throughout the whole class students and experiences through group discussions and debates.
2. Degree of student collaboration / group work	High	Students participate in a team project and need to work together to gain synergies.
3. Degree of student emotional involvement	Medium	Students get emotionally involved by sharing their own interests, personal views and backgrounds. They also get examples of real environment-related cases, which increases emotional links.
4. Degree of inter-/trans-disciplinarity	Low	Students benefit from team members' different backgrounds.
5. Degree of student (self-) reflection	Medium	Students need to openly share their personal characteristics (e.g., hobbies) and experiences with colleagues.
6. Degree of experience of real-life situations	Medium	Students hear in class cases of companies with a social and environmental purpose and they need to create ideas which would have a real application (sustainability-related research project).
7. Degree of nature-related experiences	None	Teaching and learning happens in classroom only.
8. Degree of stakeholder integration	Low	Stakeholders are considered when students hear cases and when they create their own ideas.
9. Degree of integration between theory and practice	High	Practical examples of organizations that have generated a sustainable business model are presented by young entrepreneurs that are invited to the classroom and serve as inspiration for the students. In class, students are given the opportunity to work on disruptive business ideas and need to base on real examples to create their own ideas usually based on theoretical inputs provided by lecturers.

24.2. COURSE INTRODUCTION

Today's world is facing new challenges and approaching sustainability is certainly one of them. Education is one of the pillars upon which the change is built. In this regard, Education for Sustainable Development (EDS) is a lifelong learning process directing individuals to act in a sustainable manner (Rieckmann, 2018). EDS plays a major role in proactively making the change happen.

The course is framed in the business field. The main objective of the course is to provide students with a basic training that will enable them to structure and analyse marketing and commercialization problems and thereby formulate sustainable product, price, distribution and communication policies.

Lecturers need to focus on today’s students as they will be tomorrow’s business leaders. Nowadays, sustainability is one of the key areas which affects — to a greater or lesser extent — almost all business decisions generally speaking, some of which are compulsory but many others are voluntary (Castillo-Apraiz, 2021a,b). Hence, the well-known 4Ps of Marketing mix (Mc Carthy, 1971) need to develop accordingly so that they respond to emerging problems. In fact, scholars acknowledge that sustainability-related practices have a positive impact on performance in terms of marketing mix strategies (Duffett et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2020).

Students have to develop a business idea based on a product or service that generates social-environmental value. They must define the target and a specific market, design the distribution and communication strategy, and establish the appropriate pricing strategy according to the target market. In order to stimulate practical application in the projects, entrepreneurs/start-ups involved in sustainability field are invited to present their socio-environmental entrepreneurship projects face-to-face in the classroom. This serves as inspiration for students, and this way sustainable entrepreneurship support programmes of different universities as well as stakeholders can be integrated into the course to bring students closer to reality. Subsequently, in a simulated context, the groups are asked to create video content (in an audio-visual format of no more than three minutes) about their business idea. They should follow the Social CANVAS Model (Daou et al., 2020; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), using the *Elevator Pitch* methodology (Margherita & Verrill, 2021).

24.3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Table 24–3

Learning objective dimension (UNESCO, 2017)	Operationalisation	Competency referred to (Rieckmann, 2018)
Cognitive	Identify and cluster significant environmental and social issues and major research related to product design sustainable development.	Systems thinking competency
Socio-emotional	Develop a professional oral communication and writing, in order to improve business and marketing vocabulary, specifically about green marketing and environmental business and management issues.	Collaboration and critical thinking competencies
Behavioural	Implement new solutions to solve sustainability problems and reduce potential product development related negative impacts.	Strategic and integrated problem-solving competencies

24.4. COURSE OUTLINE

Table 24–4

Structure		Session focus	Homework
Week 1	Project design (4,5 h)	INTRODUCTION • Introduction to the course • Talk about hobbies and previous experiences / backgrounds (soft skills development)	• Reporting interests-related information • List of concepts
Week 2	Project design (4,5 h)	PROJECT KICK-OFF • Subject content • Project definition • Examples • Creating team working groups (5–6 team members) for group tasks, discussion workshops and assignments • Team members will each receive a self-evaluation document and at the end of each meeting	• List of concept • Design
Week 3	Project development (4,5 h): unit 1	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Readings about Project Based Learning (PBL) methodology • Real cases MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Concrete examples; marketing channel • Incompatibilities between channels • Searching for examples (individually) to identify management processes	Examples sharing and choosing the best one
Week 4	Project development (4,5 h): units 1,2 & 3	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Working together • Application in the project MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Presentation of the chosen examples / processes • Visit two firms: choosing firms	Problem-based case

Structure		Session focus	Homework
Week 5	Project development (4,5 h): units 2 & 3	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Reading: product levels and classification • Discussion about the reading • Comparing characteristics with other competing firm • Puzzle: services marketing MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Dossier about visited firms	• Report about competitors • Dossier about visited firms: summary and differences (mandatory)
Week 6	Project development (4,5 h): units 2 & 3	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Test (individual) • Applying learnings into the project MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Test (individual)	
Week 7	Project development (4,5 h): units 2, 3 & 4	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Specialization in product portfolio • Meeting with experts • Searching for information about competitors' product portfolio MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS Retailing mix: video and map	Carrying out exercises about product (mandatory) • Exercise about concept map
Week 8	Project development (4,5 h): units 2, 3 & 4	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Comparing the information about competitors' product portfolio MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Buying experience	Completing a report about product portfolio.
Week 9	Project development and fine tuning (4,5 h): units 2, 3 & 4	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Oral presentations • Project implementation • Final activity: discussion about coherence MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Final activity: co-assessment and improvement proposals	Completing an exercise about product and submitting a co-assessment report.
Week 10	Project development and fine tuning (4,5 h): units 4 & 5	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Final project preparation MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Final project preparation	Working on the final project.

Structure		Session focus	Homework
Week 11	Developing further units (4,5 h): units 5 & 6	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Explanations of lecturers MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS	
Week 12	Developing further units (4,5 h): units 5 & 6	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Explanations of lecturers (price decisions related views) MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS	Working on the report and poster.
Week 13	Developing further units (4,5 h) units 5, 7 & 8	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Further exercises about prices. MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS	
Week 14	Developing further units (4,5 h): units 5 & 8	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Comparing price strategies of two competing firms MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS	
Week 15	Developing further units (4,5 h) : units 5, 6, 8 & 9	PRODUCT AND PRICE RELATED DECISIONS • Exam about price decisions MARKETING RELATED DECISIONS • Final activity: best project	

24.5. TEACHING APPROACHES AND METHODS

This course combines different types of teaching approaches, namely active learning, experiential learning and collaborative learning. Combining different approaches has proven to have a positive effect on students' perceptions and attitudes in management-related courses (Burton et al., 1991). The chosen approaches are oriented towards students' satisfaction and learning (Mesny et al., 2021). Furthermore, by applying a system approach, a more holistic and rational understanding of firms and the challenges they face is obtained (Kennedy et al., 2021).

Active learning is widely applied in sustainable education (Kalamas Hedden et al., 2017; MacVaugh & Norton, 2011). This course helps students shape the future by making them environmentally emancipated. This project-based course offers students the chance of challenging the status quo and address the complex nature of sustainability-related topics. For example, by brainstorming

in class, students learn to identify sustainability-related problems and identify potential solutions which would be reflected in a project.

The students are provided with an explanation of an inspiring real sustainable environmental case. Moreover, some papers are given to them to enable the understanding of the different concepts of the field. Those articles offer an introduction to basic concepts of ecological marketing such as circular economy, green marketing, reverse logistics, sustainability, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others.

Experiential learning is also applied. The students share their experiences — both in formal and non-formal settings — and engage in real-life problems and examples. This approach is often used when developing students' sustainability competencies (Savage et al., 2015). In this course, this approach is applied since the very first sessions, as it also works as an “icebreaker” and fosters collaborative group learning.

Collaborative learning is used to develop the specific projects. At this stage students participate in small-group activities and share their knowledge and experience in corporate sustainability tools and processes. In fact, within the education for sustainability framework, creating collaborative learning spaces is effective to bridge learning and action (Schnitzler, 2019; Wals, 2010).

Similarly, in this course a system of several teaching methods is suggested. As a warm-up, first the *flipped classroom* procedure is applied at some stages in order to explain some basics before the sessions begin. Some readings are provided so that students gain some basic notions. Flipped classroom is an effective way through which students take over their learning (find a review of its advantages and disadvantages in Akçayır & Akçayır, 2018). Furthermore, flipped classroom helps improving higher education students' satisfaction (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Martínez-Jiménez & Ruiz-Jiménez, 2020). This approach would be aligned with SDG 4 “education for sustainability”.

Since some students might already have some working experience, they have especially valuable information to share and to discuss with each other. That is why using *case studies* or short paper readings for promoting *group discussions* is a useful and effective method for management teaching (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003); students are provided information about business ethics issues, such as the different stakeholders' needs, management's decision-making principles and processes, and the relative importance of SDGs in several business sectors, among others.

For discussions and debates in-class role play is developed. Occasionally the *role playing* as a teaching method is also used to generate *debate* and get a 360° degree perspective and different approach to the same case in complex realities. Actually, some studies demonstrate that students taught using role-playing simulation activities achieve better marks (e.g., Barrera et al., 2021) and

higher levels of motivation, creativity and collaboration (e.g., Moreno-Guerrero et al., 2020) compared to students who do not. For example, one could use the stakeholder approach when discussing the appropriateness of building a road/highway, which clearly would generate for and against views.

24.6. EXERCISES

Personal Interest and Motivations

Students are asked to talk about their interests and describe what they do outside the university. The main goal of this exercise is knowing what students' starting point is. It is important to know students' previous experiences. Hence, creating an informal environment in which students share their initial views would be appropriate. This exercise helps getting in touch with students' motivations and to assess which are their personal interests. This way, lecturers get a general view of students, which allows a better alignment with their needs.

Real Case Development

During the first weeks of the course, before the group work begins, a real case of a company with a social and environmental purpose will be presented in class. This would be used as a food-for-thought for students. Preferably students would choose an organization that has had some difficulties before entering the market in order to really exemplify the complexity of entrepreneurship. If possible, alumni or people with links to the university will be involved. This task will be used as a reference and basis for the development of the project throughout the course. To this end, a session will be set up in which the case will be presented orally and students will be given the opportunity to interact with the speakers. In the next face-to-face session in classroom, a workshop will be set up in order to draw conclusions in small groups from the previous talk. This would lead to creating the guidelines to be used in the development of the projects.

Group Video Edition

Once the groups have been activated, each team is asked to describe its idea by editing a video that will be shown in the classroom. Beforehand, an example of a sustainable business case will be shown, also in video format. The *Elevator Pitch methodology* (Margherita & Verrill, 2021) will be presented in order to guide the editing of the videos and to establish a time limit, setting a maximum of three minutes. One of the sessions is designed for students to establish a draft

with the argument and the sequences to be recorded, while another session is designed to the recording, encouraging students to go outdoors to choose the best framework to represent their business idea.

24.7. ASSESSMENT

Team Project

Student teams are asked to develop and present a project which will be assessed afterwards. The project must have a positive impact on society and will be assessed according to its contribution to generating social and environmental value. The concepts and theoretical knowledge about green marketing (Arseculeratne & Yazdanifard, 2014; Calomarde, 2000) acquired during the course must be used in an applied way throughout the project. SDGs will be used as a framework of analysis and reference to approach the work. During the course students have the chance to get better and learn by achieving a set of different milestones. This will allow and guide the development of the group work, the basis of which lies in the generation of a solution to a previously detected socio-environmental problem. The team project weights 60 % of the overall mark. Students need to write and present a report of the project. Both the written part (75 % of the mark) and the oral part (25 % of the mark) are assessed both form and content wise.

Case Application

There is an additional assessment based on an examination of sustainable marketing concepts applied to real cases previously explained in the classroom thanks to the case development methodology. The theoretical concept application weights 20 % of the overall module mark. When assessing the case, lecturers need to take into account the theoretical soundness of the concepts and their applicability to real life.

Oral Presentation

Oral presentation of the workshop results will be held at the end of the course. Students create digital presentations using video editing software and share the presentations with the class using a video platform. This project development approach creates a space for autonomous and creative learning. In this way, the groups will have the opportunity to discuss and structure the projects. The assessment is based on the ability to apply the theoretical concepts studied

throughout the course and the ability to present the results obtained orally. The oral presentation weights 20 % of the overall module mark.

24.8. PREREQUISITES

- Required prior knowledge of students:
 - Basics of business management and marketing: main concepts, characteristics of products/services, theories, frameworks and techniques³⁵.
 - Basics of sustainability related concepts (e.g., 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals).
 - Familiarity with the following concepts is advisable: circular economy, design thinking, green marketing and reverse logistics.
- Required instructors and their core competencies:
 - Lecturers: subject content and related topics.
 - Teachers: soft skills for facilitating group work and previous experience with Project Based Learning (PBL) methodology to guide project work³⁶.
 - Industry expert: real-life business expertise.
- Required tools
 - Online education platform (e.g., Moodle) and communication platform (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex Meeting)
 - Video editing software (e.g., Filmora) and video sharing platform (e.g., YouTube)

24.9. RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Soft skills:

- Caggiano, V., Schleutker, K., Petrone, L., & Gonzalez-Bernal, J. (2020). Towards identifying the soft skills needed in curricula: Finnish and Italian students' self-evaluations indicate differences between groups. *Sustainability*, 12(10), 4031.

35 Hutt and Spet (2021) propose a methodological guide for the integration of these concepts as a framework for business marketing management.

36 A book specifically designed to apply the Project Based Learning (PBL) methodology can be recommended. Besides theoretical content, books offer suitable compilation of exercises and recommended readings to ensure the methodology's implementation in an efficient way.

- Deep, S., Salleh, B. M., & Othman, H. (2019). Study on problem-based learning towards improving soft skills of students in effective communication class. *International Journal of Innovation and Learning*, 25(1), 17–34.
- England, T. K., Nagel, G. L., & Salter, S. P. (2020). Using collaborative learning to develop students' soft skills. *Journal of Education for Business*, 95(2), 106–114.
- Vogler, J. S., Thompson, P., Davis, D. W., Mayfield, B. E., Finley, P. M., & Yasseri, D. (2018). The hard work of soft skills: augmenting the project-based learning experience with interdisciplinary teamwork. *Instructional Science*, 46(3), 457–488.

Green marketing:

- Duffett, R., Edu, T., Haydam, N., Negricea, I. C., & Zaharia, R. (2018). A multi-dimensional approach of green marketing competitive advantage: a perspective of small medium and micro enterprises from Western Cape, South Africa. *Sustainability*, 10(10), 3764.
- Sáez de Cámara E, Fernández I, Castillo-Eguskita N. (2021) A Holistic Approach to Integrate and Evaluate Sustainable Development in Higher Education. The Case Study of the University of the Basque Country. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 392.

24.10. GENERAL TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Education for Sustainability (EfS) in the management field and marketing requires an upstream approach to address business decisions taking into consideration the limits of growth to meet the challenges of environmental sustainability in a rigorous way. In order to address these issues, it is suggested to consider the students in an integrated way, taking into account their hobbies, motivations and previous knowledge; in other words, students' life beyond the classroom is relevant. Teachers should, therefore, create a friendly working environment that fosters debate in the classroom while it allows working within small groups in a systematic way.

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