

The impact of Sustainable Marketing techniques adoption on the global marketing strategy in car dealers from district of Porto – Northern Portugal

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Abstract - Today's consumer is better informed and has an enormous power to disseminate information. Sustainable Marketing emerges, in this context, as an innovative way to do marketing, creating an approach to new consumer demands. It involves long-term, sustainable strategies that truly add value to society, companies and the environment. The two main objectives of this study go through the analysis of Car Dealerships Sustainable Marketing Strategies and tries to identify the Sustainable Marketing-Mix adopted in the electrified vehicles (EV, PHEV and HEV) commercialization process. Therefore, the study seeks to understand if car dealerships in Porto district (Northern Portugal) incorporate a sustainable strategy consistent with the sustainable offerings that they have (EV, PHEV and HEV). The study is based on the adoption of a qualitative methodology with a non-probabilistic sample: a convenience sample. All the car dealerships involved in the investigation were selected based on the criteria of brand recognition as authorized dealers for their marketing and representation. All information collected from car dealerships was carried out through the technique of semi-structured interviews. The main conclusions found are that car dealerships, in different levels of involvement, have been introducing and developing sustainable practices and actions in their marketing strategies recognizing the importance of it. Due to the Marketing-Mix the car dealerships are very limited by the brands guidelines that they represent, however it's in the promotion aspect that they invest the most and where they are increasingly differentiating and betting, understanding the importance recognized by their customers regarding the adoption of sustainable marketing strategies.

General Terms - Sustainable Marketing; Marketing

Keywords - Car Dealerships; Sustainable Development; Sustainable Marketing; Sustainable Strategy and Sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to environmental concerns, society is attentive to the company's behavior and the effects it may have on society itself. Miralles-Quirós *et al.* (2017)[19] claim that the number of socially responsible companies has increased over the past ten years worldwide, particularly in Europe. This situation leads companies to start adopting a posture of social responsibility, internal and external, since it is expected, in some way, that companies contribute positively to the society development. This research seeks to understand how car dealers in the district of Porto (Northern Portugal) incorporate a sustainable strategy consistent with the sustainable products they offer. In order to respond to the objective of the investigation, it was defined as the main focus of the investigation to understand the impact that the adoption of Sustainable Marketing-Mix techniques could have on the global marketing strategy of car dealers in the district of Porto. This approach makes it possible to verify if dealers are following the sustainable concerns required by consumers.

The car dealers that participated in the study are located in the district of Porto and are dedicated to the

commercialization of passenger cars in the categories BEV (Battery Electric Vehicle), PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle) and HEV (Hybrid Electric Vehicle).

The concern around sustainability issues is transversal to all sectors in the economy. An example of this are the various agreements signed between countries in order to establish environmental policies and practices. One of the industries most associated with environmental problems is, without a doubt, the automotive sector. Due to its negative impact on the environment, the automotive sector is under pressure to adjust its conduct, production processes and even its provision of services. We are witnessing a compelling rethinking of the business strategies implemented in this sector in order to adjust to the new sustainable market requirements. Marketing needs to keep updated with these requirements.

The commitment with the development and commercialization of electrified vehicles by car manufacturers was one of the solutions found to promote sustainable mobility. A cleaner mobility that is less harmful to the environment. Ajanovic (2015)[1] states that these types of vehicles can contribute to the reduction of gases and pollution, and that in the last ten years the

interest in purchasing these vehicles has increased considerably in Europe. According to data from the Automobile Association of Portugal (ACAP, 2018)[2], Portugal has followed this trend. The number of sales of EV (Electric Vehicles), PHEV and HEV has been gradually increasing since 2014 (from 189 vehicles in 2014 to 1640 in 2017).

Although we don't have a widespread offer of electrified vehicles by all brands, it appears that the future of mobility involves the introduction of a greater number of electrified options. "Dieselgate" and increased restrictions on the circulation of diesel vehicles contributed to the paradigm shift in mobility. There is an effective redirection towards investing in the development of products capable of providing sustainable mobility, allowing brands to combine their profits with sustainability. It is up to marketing to find more sustainable approaches to company communication, products and market entry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Corporate Sustainability

There is a growing interest in the implementation of sustainable strategies by companies. Companies are beginning to look for strategic solutions that will reconcile economic prosperity with environmental protection and improving the life quality for current and future generations. This is reflected in the increase in companies that incorporate sustainability in their strategic plans, in their communication and in their annual reports (Placet *et al.* 2005[23]; Obermiller *et al.* 2008)[20]. Elkington is the first author to suggest that evaluating the success of a business should cover three dimensions: economic, environmental and social. It is through this line of thought that he develops the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) or triangle of sustainability, breaking with the traditional thought that the success of a business depends only on the economic dimension (Savitz, 2006)[29].

The TBL can be defined as the result of the organization activities, which demonstrates the organization's ability to make its business operations viable without negatively affecting any social or ecological system, capturing the essence of sustainability when measuring the impact of activities of an organization in the world. A positive TBL reflects an increase in the company's value, including an increase in profitability, an increase in shareholder value and an increase in human, social and environmental capital (Savitz, 2006[29]; Smith & Sharicz, 2011)[32].

Each dimension of the Triple Bottom Line incorporates a set of indicators. For the economic dimension, the creation of business opportunities for the company and stakeholders, the generation of jobs and monetary flows can be considered. Regarding the environmental dimension, the quality and protection of resources and the effectiveness of resources can be considered. Finally, the social dimension concerns labor practices, improving employee's life quality, the impact on the community and

product responsibility (Placet *et al.* 2005[23]; Savitz, 2006)[29]. True sustainable development must incorporate real interaction and the satisfaction of the needs of the three dimensions developed simultaneously. A very solid economic base will contribute to an investment in the environmental and social dimensions. We can also state that the investment in the development of these two dimensions will contribute to the increase of profits and economic growth (Placet *et al.* 2005[23]; Danciu, 2013)[8].

Sustainability is assumed by society as a fundamental principle of intelligent business management. Companies are responsible for all their direct and indirect actions that underline the principles of sustainability, from production to the choice of suppliers. There is greater pressure from society in general for companies to respect the principles of sustainability. The government also assumes a preponderant role in defining norms and regulatory mechanisms for the preservation of natural resources and quality of life (Wilkinson *et al.* 2001[34]; Savitz, 2006)[29].

Managers must recognize the principles of sustainability as an economic and competitive opportunity. Those who anticipate the incorporation of these principles in their strategies will have greater benefits and will be closer to ensuring a strategic advantage over their competitors. In addition, they send a strong message to their stakeholders about the importance of preserving society and the ecosystems around them. Sustainable marketing is an internal and external opportunity for companies to achieve a competitive advantage through differentiation and business development. It is desirable that companies promote more efficient consumption of resources and waste management (Porter & Linde, 1995[25]; Obermiller *et al.* 2008[20]; Papadas *et al.* 2017[22]; Simão & Lisboa, 2017)[31].

Taking into account the way in which they communicate sustainability, organizations can be grouped into four different groups: (1) Opaque Organizations: They bet on a strategy of sustainable appearance, that is, sustainability is not part of the main objectives of the organization's strategy, only intend to convey a company image with sustainable concerns. They use sustainability as a marketing tool, manipulating information and promoting the concept of greenwashing. They do not incorporate the principles and values of sustainability; (2) Translucent Organizations: They do not consider sustainability as a strategic element, but rather as a moral duty. They prefer not to disclose their commitment to sustainability to avoid accusations related to greenwashing. They opt for a more discreet and quiet position; (3) Transparent Organizations: They recognize the importance of taking a sustainable stance and have detailed and transparent communication about their actions. Sustainability is seen as an opportunity to achieve competitive advantage and is a fundamental criteria in the decision-making process within the organization itself (selection of suppliers, production methods, products, worker rights, among

others); (4) Black Organizations: Organizations with low sustainability performance due to lack of knowledge and inertia in relation to sustainability issues. This position can be very damaging to the business, as its thinking is out of step with market thinking (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016)[3].

To assess companies' commitment to sustainability, three stages can also be identified: (1) Reactive: The environmental issue is seen as an unnecessary expense for the company; (2) Preventive: Companies try to avoid environmental problems, it is preferable to anticipate and avoid these problems; (3) Proactive: Sustainability is part of the strategic management of companies (Jabbour, 2010)[12].

2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

According to the Green Paper of the European Communities Commission (2001), corporate social responsibility can be defined as the voluntary integration of social and environmental concerns by companies in their actions and interactions with stakeholders. It is intended that companies are able to contribute to a fairer society and a cleaner environment. Taking a posture of social responsibility implies that companies not only comply with their legal obligations but also invest in more human capital, in environmentally responsible technologies and business practices and in relations with their stakeholders and with the community itself. Carroll (1991)[5] mentions that corporate social responsibility must incorporate four fundamental aspects: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) must incorporate in its structure a pyramidal model based on four fundamental aspects: (1) Economic responsibilities: it is the basis of the pyramid, without this responsibility the other three would be irrelevant. Profit making is mandatory and essential for the survival of a business; (2) Legal responsibilities: They are the second most important layer of the pyramid. It is mandatory for companies to obey the laws of the community where they operate. There is social pressure for companies to comply with the law; (3) Ethical responsibilities: the third layer of the pyramid and concerns to the obligation of companies to do what is most correct and fair in addition to legal obligations; (4) Philanthropic responsibility: At the top of the pyramid is the commitment of companies to society, that is, its contributions to improving the communities life quality where they operate. All responsibilities must be interlinked and companies must make an effort to satisfy all these responsibilities (Carroll, 1991)[5].

The fulfillment of corporate social responsibilities can only be achieved through the combination of good business practices and sustainability. Companies must incorporate a long-term commitment to social responsibility in their strategies (Marín, 2004)[17]; Papada *et al.* (2017)[22]. Corporate social responsibility should not be defined only as a philanthropic concept, but as a strategy that seeks to achieve profit while maintaining a

responsible social and environmental posture. This strategy leads to an improvement in business performance and an increase in profits. Corporate philanthropy, marketing of causes, community support, support for minorities, socially responsible employment programs and the preservation of the environment are socially responsible actions of the company (Marques, 2012)[18]. Organizations can adopt six types of social initiatives that help to promote social welfare: (1) Promotion of Causes: provision of funds or resources to support a particular social project; (2) Cause Marketing: revert the profit or part of the profit of a given product to a specific cause; (3) Social Marketing of Organizations: support for the development and / or implementation of a campaign aimed at changing behaviors aimed at improving public health, safety, the environment or the well-being of the community; (4) Organizational Philanthropy: direct contribution to a charity or cause; (5) Community Volunteering: support and incentive for employees and stakeholders to participate in voluntary actions; (6) Responsible Social Practices: adoption and implementation of discrete business practices and investment in social causes to improve the well-being of the community and the environment (Kotler & Lee, 2005).

The following aspects can be identified as advantages of the adoption of corporate social responsibility (Gonçalves, 2007[11]; Oliveira, 2010)[21]: improvement of image and reputation; greater credibility; differentiation element of the company; attraction and retention of employees; reinforcement of marketing objectives; attraction and loyalty of new consumers; prevention and reduction of risks associated with the company's activities; more efficient resource management and cost reduction; innovation development; increased productivity; better working conditions; contribution to the development of the community where it operates; voluntary actions ensure greater confidence from the government.

Taking a responsible position by companies is a good way to achieve long-term success. It is wrong to think that the issue of responsibility as an extra cost for the company. Consumers are increasingly informed and demand greater transparency from companies in relation to their actions and behaviors that can affect society (Oliveira, 2010)[21].

2.3. Sustainable Marketing-Mix

The concept of Marketing and Sustainability are often pointed out as two incompatible concepts. The reason for this possible incompatibility is the fact that Marketing is identified as one of the main consumption drivers, while sustainability is concerned with meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the satisfaction of the needs of future generations. However, there is a concern and an increasing number of companies committed to developing a Sustainable Marketing Mix Strategy with their products and/or services. Only in this way it is possible to prove that both concepts can be

compatible and that the needs of present and future generations are not compromised. Therefore, it is essential to shape the needs and expectations of consumers and provide consumers with the options that best suit their needs. Marketers must lead the shift towards more sustainable consumption. Sustainable Marketing emerges precisely because of the need to find a balance between market capacity and resource capacity. Only in this way it is possible to move towards sustainable development. (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995)[30]; Jones *et al.* 2008[13]; Finney, 2014)[10].

The adoption of a sustainable marketing strategy can contribute significantly to the improvement of the business, to the relations with stakeholders and the world itself. It is a strategy that depends on the social and environmental sensitivity of companies (Danciu, 2013)[8]. The implementation of a sustainable marketing strategy leads organizations to join forces in order to ensure a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimension, ensuring long-term development with positive contributions to society and the attraction of new consumers (Sun *et al.* 2016)[33].

Companies must adopt a proactive stance in order to benefit themselves and society. The construction of a sustainable strategy involves the definition of the following aspects: (1) Re-use promotion: thinking about the impact of products since the manufacturing process until the sale. Marketeers must develop products that can be re-used for several generations and must educate the consumer to adopt a re-use posture; (2) Redefining consumers' needs and desires: marketers must change their consumers' consumption habits by directing them to more environmentally friendly products. (3) The re-orientation of the Marketing-Mix: it is important to rethink the marketing-mix, introducing sustainable aspects in its structure; (4) The reorganization of the organization's efforts: act in accordance with the three pillars of sustainability. In addition to this internal company's approach, it is important that the government where the companies are located, assume social and environmental concerns and meet conditions that enable the promotion of sustainable development (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995)[30].

The inclusion of sustainability in marketing strategies is no longer optional and has become a mandatory requirement, it is a necessary criterion for companies in the present context. However, formulating and implementing a sustainable strategy is a difficult task. This is because it is necessary to find a balance between profits and reduced impact on the environment and society (Kumar *et al.* 2012)[15].

The benefits inherent to the adoption of sustainable marketing can be considered: (1) Cost savings: long-term profitability; (2) Reputation: improved image and increased consumer confidence; (3) New markets: attracting new and more consumers; (4) Risk reduction: proactive companies gain a competitive advantage over their competitors; (5) Attracting and retaining employees:

it can be easier to recruit and retain employees and talents; (6) Leadership: the faster sustainability is anticipated, the greater the likelihood of gaining a competitive advantage (Reutlinger, 2012)[27].

2.4. Sustainable product

A sustainable product must incorporate social and environmental aspects throughout its value chain, being as ecological as possible. These products are expected to be economically competitive and successful over a long period of time. The impacts of the production process and the consumption of products must be evaluated. These products must be developed to satisfy the genuine needs of consumers and to minimize their negative impact on human health as much as possible (Charter *et al.* 2002[6]; Beltz & Karstens, 2010[4]; Pomeroy, 2017)[24]. One way to make products more environmentally friendly is to apply the following R's: Repair, Renovate, Re-make, Re-use, Recycle and Reduce (Prakash, 2002)[26].

2.5. Sustainable price

Price is a key element in sustainable marketing. Many of the environmental and social costs inherent in the production of a good are considered externalities, that is, they are not included in the final price or in the accounting of production costs (example: the pollution generated in the production process). However, there is greater pressure developed by stakeholders to include these externalities in the final price. The incentive to purchase this type of product would involve increasing traditional products or rethinking the price of sustainable products that do not necessarily need to be more expensive than traditional products (Charter *et al.* 2002[6]; Beltz & Karstens, 2010[4]; Pomeroy, 2017)[24].

2.6. Sustainable distribution

The distribution of sustainable products has direct and indirect environmental impacts, so it is necessary to take into account all impacts generated throughout the distribution process. In addition to the concern of delivering the product at the right time, attention must also be focused on reducing the negative impacts on the distribution process. An alternative to reduce this negative impact would be to place greater importance on local production. Transport costs would be avoided and, consequently, we would see a reduction in the emission of polluting gases. Another solution would be to identify more environmentally friendly ways of supplying products to the market to meet consumer demands. Companies could look for stores that only sell environmentally friendly products or that respect the principles of sustainability. Careful and prudent management will allow companies to find solutions to reduce the negative impacts of distribution (Charter *et al.* 2002[6]; Reutlinger, 2012[27]; Ribeiro, 2017)[28].

2.7. Sustainable promotion

Innovation has generated new practices and more ecological communication tools. Sustainable promotion

must privilege electronic resources as a way to control and avoid waste (De Craecker & De Wulf, 2009)[9]. Promotion must always keep sustainability principles in mind and assume an educational role in making consumers aware of sustainability. It is essential that this communication is transparent, credible and true. Only in this way is it possible to establish a relationship of trust with consumers and avoid situations that could damage the company's image (Charter et al. 2002[6]; De Craecker & De Wulf, 2009[9]; Reutlinger, 2012[27]; Pomeroy, 2017)[24].

3. METHODOLOGY

The research developed was essentially descriptive and qualitative. Qualitative research encompasses a variety of methods that can be applied in a flexible way allowing individuals who respond to greater reflection and expression of their views or behavior, thus allowing a collection of feelings, experiences and behaviors in their own terms and context (Malhotra & Birks, 2006)[16]. In addition, it should be noted that qualitative research aggregates the psychological dimensions - considered as the most important dimensions - and social dimensions of the interviewees. This situation provides an holistic view of the world of the interviewees, enabling a greater understanding and description of the entire situation of interest (Malhotra & Birks, 2006)[16].

Therefore, the qualitative approach corresponds to the expectations of this investigation because it allows the collection of concrete information based on the interviewees' perceptions about the topic under analysis. As a research on a very specific and complex sector of activity (the Portuguese automotive sector), in addition to a topic that is also very particular and little explored, it is essential to have a more direct contact with the interviewees in order to achieve the defined objectives.

Thus, in order to obtain the answers to the proposed objectives, the qualitative research technique used was the semi-structured interview, a technique that allows interviewees to share their perspectives, stories and experiences about a certain social phenomenon observed by the interviewer. In the data collection process, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted.

In terms of the population for this study, all car dealers (duly certified and authorized by the brands they represent) in Porto district (Northern Portugal) that sell BEV, PHEV and HEV passenger cars were considered. All dealers not included in the list of authorized dealers that the brands make available on their digital platforms were excluded from the selection process. Considering this, 48 unique dealers were identified that represent 20 different brands at a local level and that have models within the parameters eligible for the present study. These also comprise a total of 16 groups of companies in the sector under analysis (16 different marketing directors)

Within each dealer, it was preferable to interview the person responsible for the marketing department and / or

the executive person in charge. The interviews were used to collect information regarding the strategy and dealer's practices, the marketing mix and their point of view in relation to sustainability and marketing.

Therefore, the investigation focused on a non-probabilistic sample by judgment. Thus, and considering their size, relevance and representativeness, the following dealers were included in the sample of this dissertation: Auto Sueco, BmCar, Caetano Auto, Cardan, Entrepasto, MCoutinho, Nasamotor and Sociedade Comercial C. Santos. For a better understanding of their relevance, it should be noted that the sample studied considers the 16 groups in question eligible due to the type of vehicles considered for the purposes of this investigation (BEV, PHEV and HEV cars). The data were collected between November and December 2019.

4. RESULTS

The main qualitative results are summarized in Table 1
 Table 1. Interviews: Main results

Concern and Involvement about Sustainable Development	Types of Environmental Practices: avoid waste, sustainable partnerships, recycling and participation in sustainability events (more often); renewable sources and materials, waste management, training actions, awareness actions, auditing, commemorative days, consumption monitoring, sustainable projects, rationalize paper consumption and reduce plastic consumption (less often)
	Sustainable Intentions: Increase the supply of electrified vehicles (staff and consumers), better waste management, improve and adapting infrastructures, promote environmental awareness actions, develop sustainable projects and follow brands principles.
	Sustainability Opportunities: More visibility, proximity to consumers requirements and needs, financial sustainability, new sustainability paradigm in the automotive business, sustainable identity, reduction costs and consumption, battery recovery and development of sustainable projects.
	Sustainability Risks: Decrease in service provision, more costs, incidents with batteries, unsustainability of buildings and waste production.
	Approximation to Consumers demands: informed collaborators, offer of electrified vehicles, provision of charging points, sustainability publications, offer of sustainable gifts and campaigns (for electrified ones)

Corporate Social Responsibility	Encouraging sustainable behavior: Recycling practices, awareness actions, reward employees, internal communication, participation in sustainability actions and waste management
	Value Sustainability in Recruitment: Better business asset and active in society
	Community Participation: Tree planting, support to local families, to fire departments, to sports teams, social causes and promotion of sustainable issues.
Sustainable Marketing	Sustainable Marketing benefits: Notoriety, cost reduction, good citizenship, dealer's promotion and competitive advantage

One of the first conclusions evidenced by the results obtained was the degree of knowledge demonstrated by the dealers in relation to the concept of Sustainable Marketing. In general, dealers are familiar with the concept of Sustainable Marketing. The definitions presented are very close to the three pillars present in the TBL. It is important to note that we cannot separate the concept of Sustainable Marketing from the concept of Sustainable Development (both are very close). The preservation of the environment, social responsibility, sustainable consumption and financial sustainability were the main indicators obtained in the construction of the dealers' definitions. These indicators are in line with what is the construction of a Sustainable Marketing strategy. All of them assume that they have environmental concerns and put these concerns into practice through the implementation of environmental practices in their business strategies capable of contributing to economic profitability and to improving the environment. Recycling, environmental partnerships, avoiding waste and participation in sustainability events (internal and external) are the main practices enunciated by the dealers. Considering Jabbour (2010)[12], the dealers take a proactive stance in their commitment to sustainability. Sustainability starts to be part of the strategic management of the companies. It is the solution found to meet the requirements of the future, to generate innovation and reach new markets. Notwithstanding this fact, not all dealers had sustainable short / long term objectives to be implemented. In turn, those who have such objectives seek, gradually, to improve the infrastructure, increase the internal and external supply of electrified vehicles and continue to develop sustainable internal and external actions. From a sustainable point of view, it is desirable that companies promote consumption and the adoption of more efficient practices, opt for

efficient energy policies and ecological products and processes and spread green, internal and external practices (Simão & Lisboa 2017)[31].

In terms of opportunities offered by sustainability to dealers, the following were identified: greater visibility, approximation to consumer needs and requirements and financial sustainability (cost and consumption reduction). In turn, the risks encountered are the possible reduction in the number of traditional dealers as a result of the increase in electronic commerce, the unsustainability of buildings, incidents with batteries and the high costs associated with the implementation of sustainable practices and measures. Almost all dealers say they are aware of the socio-environmental requirements imposed by consumers on the market. This situation is verified through the increase in the supply of electrified vehicles and the demand to keep its employees informed about this new reality. The promotion of take-back campaigns and the offer of sustainable gifts, the publication of information on sustainability actions on social networks and the provision of charging points are also identified as monitoring indicators.

Not all dealers have environmental certification. None prepares and publishes sustainability reports. Only one of the dealers has a page dedicated to sustainability in its web site. Some of the dealers highlight the importance of communicating sustainability actions.

Regarding CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), internal and external, almost all dealers seek to inform and encourage their employees to act in a sustainable manner. The main incentives for adopting a sustainable posture are, above all, compliance with environmental practices included in the strategies of the dealers and awareness, awards and incentives to participate in sustainability actions. Only three dealers value participation in environmental and social sustainability actions in the recruitment process, demonstrate greater environmental and social awareness and facilitate the integration of employees in the business. All dealers ensure compliance with Human and Labor Rights. Externally, with the exception of one, there is a concern to establish partnerships with sustainable suppliers and are committed helping to develop the community where they operate. This commitment is based on sporting, social and environmental support, such as planting trees in places affected by fires. The fulfillment of companies' social responsibilities can only be achieved through the combination of good business practices and sustainability (Papadas *et al.* 2017)[22].

Another interesting conclusion to be drawn from this study was the ability of dealers to identify the main advantages associated with a sustainable marketing strategy, such as greater awareness and promotion of the dealer, cost reduction, competitive advantage and good citizenship.

The analysis model built reflects the main dimensions that were analyzed in the investigation. The elaboration of this model makes it easier to understand the variables

considered for the Sustainable Strategy and for the Sustainable Marketing-Mix. This model also facilitates the compression of the research purpose (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Sustainable Marketing-Mix Model



In relation to the Sustainable Marketing-Mix, it was quite evident the dependence of the dealers in relation to the guidelines imposed by the brands they represent, limiting their performance in the global management of the Marketing-Mix (see the main results on table 2).

Table 2. Sustainable Marketing-Mix – qualitative results

Product	Eco-Friendly (less pollution and less noise) Sub-brands creation Incorporation of environmentally friendly materials in vehicle production Provide a social-environmental awareness on consumers
Promotion	Social media, press communication and social events (more often) Outdoors and local Radio (less often) Test drive incentive Monthly promotion
Price	Dealers do not have interference in pricing (external factor)
Place	Dealers do not have any sustainable distribution channel

This is particularly true in the variables of product, price and distribution. On the other turn, promotion is the only dimension where dealers show greater autonomy. Dealers consider that the communication of sustainable products is already an indicator that reveals environmental concern. Social networks are the biggest means of communication for electrified vehicles. It is a more sustainable communication because it allows to avoid the unnecessary production of materials for specific purposes

and at the same time it is the most used medium in the contemporary market. It turns out to be a beneficial situation both for the dealer who is close to consumers, and for the environment with the avoidance of waste.

5. CONCLUSION

Taking into account the TBL, the number of dealers closest to a sustainable marketing strategy and corporate sustainability is reduced. Although they begin to introduce, develop and, in some cases, improve sustainable practices and actions in their marketing strategies, there is still a lot of work to do in relation to sustainability issues in this sector.

In general, this is contrary to the idea of Smith & Sharicz (2011)[32] that social and environmental dimensions are often ignored in detriment of a total focus on the economic dimension. Efforts by the dealers in the development of social and environmental dimensions were evidenced.

It is important to make it clear that betting on sustainability actions and practices is only possible through a solid and sustainable financial base. It is the financial support that will allow companies to bet on environmental and social sustainability at the same time. This bet will help the company's notoriety, adding value and increasing its profits. Corporate sustainability must be thought out and incorporated gradually so that it is possible to guarantee greater security for business success. The communication of sustainability must be internal and external, passing not only through external incentives for the consumption of sustainable products and services but also to the adoption and internal incorporation of behaviors consistent with the company's offer and with the image it intends to communicate to the market.

6. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of the research is related to the sample size, since it is a case study. This situation is very associated with the lack of openness and availability of car dealers in the district of Porto to participate in the investigation. Despite the efforts to obtain sustainability reports and / or the collaboration of all identified dealers, the lack of online information on this topic was a limitation for the research process. In addition, it is a study that only refers to passenger cars.

Thus, the use of the convenience sample immediately leads to the limitations related to this type of sample, such as the introduction of bias in relation to the total population, as it is not possible to use statistical tools such as the margin of error and the level of confidence to measure the accuracy of the results. It should be noted that, from the 20 brands in the Porto district that sell BEV, PHEV and HEV passenger cars, it was not possible to obtain a sample for the Volkswagen, Porsche, Renault and Tesla brands.

In addition to all the limitations indicated, there are limitations related to the time available and financial resources that may lead to some studies not being considered for the purposes of the literature review. There is also a limitation related to the geographic scope of the research applied to the district of Porto (Northern Portugal) and exclusively to authorized passenger car dealers (official brand's dealers) that commercialized the type of vehicles considered for the purposes of this study.

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