

Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals into Higher Education Institutions'

Marketing Curriculum

Abstract

The 21st century's growing societal and environmental challenges are ubiquitous. The combination of knowledge, values, mindsets, and abilities needed to address these challenges requires educating society about the simultaneous pursuit of economic, environmental, and social goals, as advocated by the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research aims to review the academic literature on how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) incorporate the SDGs into the marketing curriculum. In this regard, the expected outcome is to assist marketing academics in developing a curriculum aligned with the SDGs. An integrative literature review including 40 articles led to three core themes: Integration, Transformation, and Leadership. Building on these themes, the paper contributes to marketing education through the 3Es framework (Engage, Expand, Enact) for embedding the SDGs in the marketing curriculum: 'Engage' integrates sustainability knowledge into the existing marketing curriculum by fostering debates and reflection around the SDGs. 'Expand' transforms values and attitudes among marketing students and staff using transformative and experiential pedagogical tools. This leads to 'Enact' with leadership and partnerships within and outside the university, which leads to collaborative actions aligned with the SDGs.

Keywords: SDGs, Marketing Curriculum, Marketing Education, Pedagogy, Sustainability, Sustainable Development

Introduction and Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), proposed by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, is a roadmap for action for policymakers, organisations, and related stakeholders to

address the world's economic, social, and environmental grand challenges (UN, 2015; deRuyter *et al.*, 2022). This Sustainable Development (SD) agenda includes 17 SDGs and 167 targets agreed upon by 193 nations to achieve a sustainable and equitable future for all people and the planet by 2030 (UN, 2015). This agenda relies on the following widely adopted SD definition (UN, 2015): "*Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987, p.16). Despite the SDGs' recognition and commitment to SD, it is widely acknowledged that more needs to be done to meet the 2030 goals.

Progress towards achieving the SDGs has been slower than hoped, particularly as the positive trajectories of change have been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been a real setback (UN, 2022). The UN promotes inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4), consumer awareness and empowerment towards sustainable choices (SDG 12), and collaboration between individuals across societies (SDG 17) as essential points for achieving the SDGs (UNESCO, 2022). Education has the potential to provide individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to understand the grand societal challenges addressed by the SDGs (Sterling, 2016). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should function as convenors for education and collaborations for higher societal impact (Owens, 2017; Purcell *et al.*, 2019). The inclusion of SDGs in education is still nascent (Weybrecht, 2021). Still, it has been taught in universities since 2015 as part of a focus on education for sustainable development (ESD). Business schools have inherited this focus on education for SD since 2007 as part of the UN's Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) (Morsing, 2022; Storey *et al.*, 2017). Through PRME, topics such as ethics, social responsibility, and SD have been routinely offered in dedicated modules within business schools at the undergraduate (Avelar *et al.*, 2019) and postgraduate levels (Gómez *et al.*, 2015; Doh & Tasman, 2014).

The marketing discipline has been slower to embrace these topics due to a comparative lack of critical approaches to marketing within research and scholarship (Davies *et al.*, 2020; Donthu *et al.*, 2021; Voola *et al.*, 2022). The need to align marketing courses to the SDGs is high, given that marketing is often seen as part of the problem rather than the solution to sustainability issues (Jones *et al.*, 2018). This is still witnessed in the marketing practices of several companies, which continue to encourage or perpetuate unsustainable consumption patterns (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2021). The business world is nevertheless shifting rapidly: corporate social performance grows as a key performance indicator (Janani *et al.*, 2022), and businesses now demand marketing graduates to address these sustainability challenges in practical, targeted ways as they enter their professional careers (Peterson, 2022). Therefore, emphasising the role that responsible marketing plays in shaping society and the environment through the SDGs is important, particularly for the future of the marketing profession (Wieland *et al.*, 2021), leading to a growing conversation for marketing educators to incorporate sustainability approaches into their curriculum (deRuyter *et al.*, 2022).

The integration of SDGs into the marketing discipline is underway, and the significance of this brings the discipline back to relevance (i.e. Jones *et al.*, 2018). However, little literature explores what and how the SDGs are integrated into the marketing curriculum, with a few notable exceptions (Voola *et al.*, 2022; Rosenbloom, 2022; Bolton, 2022). Voola *et al.*'s (2022) work primarily consists of individual reflections rather than empirical data. While Rosenbloom's (2022) research aligns closely with the subject matter, it primarily pertains to scholarship rather than education. Similarly, Bolton's (2022) article appears to revolve around marketing practice rather than education. In summary, these studies centred around marketing scholarship and practice rather than curriculum development with direct implications for pedagogy.

This study is, therefore, the first attempt to address the SDGs agenda from a marketing education perspective, thus aiming to review the academic literature concerning embedding the SDGs within the marketing curriculum of HEIs. It particularly considers the following research objectives:

- To analyse the key concepts, theories, and tools within the marketing discipline that can support the integration of the SDGs in the marketing curriculum.
- To evaluate how the SDGs are integrated within the marketing curriculum through pedagogic approaches and tools relevant to the overall ESD discipline.
- To assess the processes used within the marketing discipline for integrating SDGs into the marketing curriculum.

The expected outcome of the research is to help marketing academics engage with the SDGs through a framework that allows their inclusion in the marketing curriculum alongside existing topics such as SD, social responsibility, and ethics. This outcome captures a growing demand for education for SD at the centre of the UN strategy, particularly reflected at the discipline level. Several terms are used in the literature to discuss SDGs, such as SD, sustainability, sustainability marketing, corporate social responsibility (CSR), social responsibility, and ethics. For consistency, the terms sustainability and SDGs are used interchangeably while referring to these approaches during the discussion.

Methodology

Literature reviews, foundational in academic work, serve as a research methodology, yet face criticism in business and management (Tranfield et al., 2003). They enhance research knowledge through synthesising the work of a range of authors, enabling the development of research frameworks (Snyder, 2019). As a research methodology and to ensure credibility and rigour, literature reviews must be structured, with a suitable approach adopted, to suit the

specific research purpose and outcomes (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). Choosing an approach from the various options available (e.g., systematic, semi-systematic, narrative, and integrative) requires informed and appropriate decisions.

Regarding the objectives of this study and the approach selected and adopted, two main options were available: a systematic literature review and an integrative review. When choosing the most appropriate approach, it was identified that systematic literature reviews are characterised by the logic and transparency of their process and method, which supports and assures replicability (Rojon *et al.*, 2021). Systematic literature reviews are used when analysing a wide range of material from within a specific area of study to synthesise current work and insights (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003; Rojon *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, integrative literature reviews aim to synthesise and integrate material and topics from a representative body of works across subject areas to generate new knowledge, frameworks, and perspectives (Torraco, 2005). Snyder (2019) notes that integrative approaches are not a valid instrument for synthesising the effect of a specific factor; in this case, a systematic literature review approach would be more suitable. Conversely, various authors support and promote integrative reviews when seeking to summarise or evaluate several research areas across a broad research field led by different communities of practice, as in the current study (Torraco, 2005; Snyder 2019; Cronin & George, 2020; Cho, 2022). A systematic review would therefore not be suitable for this study and could even impede the research process and outcome (Snyder, 2019).

With these insights in mind and a context, and with the objectives of this study as an important guide, it is identified that an integrative literature review is most suited. This reflects the ability of an integrative approach to support the study and analysis of existing literature and, importantly, the potential to synthesise representative literature on a topic (Torraco, 2005). This comes because it emphasises conceptual links across multiple streams of study and is considered effective when communities of practice work simultaneously on a special topic

(Cronin & George, 2020). For example, for this study, work related to ESD, SDGs, and marketing is in its infancy, and the role of SDGs in the marketing curriculum is loosely presented. The approach offers a unique opportunity to integrate reflections relevant to ESD, SDG, and marketing to create new knowledge and frameworks to support insight and action. The particular focus on the integration of SDGs into courses and the curriculum and, specifically, questions of what, how, and why (key characteristics of integrative literature review: Callahan, 2014) offers value to the synthesis of materials, not least because these questions have not currently been addressed within the subject of marketing and related subject literature (i.e., the role of systematic literature review: Bailey *et al.*, 2019; Cho, 2022). Embracing and exploring wider management and marketing literature to integrate thinking, reviewing empirical and theoretical literature, and research with varied designs support a better understanding of our topic and the ability to generate new insights and frameworks.

To set the scope of this study, three databases were used to conduct the review: EBSCO Host, Scopus, and Google Scholar, in conjunction with four main keywords (using a non-Boolean approach): ‘Marketing’, ‘Sustainable Education’, ‘Sustainable Development Goals’, and ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’. The commonly used Boolean approach for capturing all relevant literature (Hjørland, 2015) can restrict the search in certain cases where the research stream is already limited, as in the case of this study (Atkinson *et al.*, 2018; MacFarlane *et al.*, 2022).

Wersun *et al.* (2021) recognise the importance of identifying key search terms when reviewing the integration of sustainability within business schools and programmes, whereby each business school should identify the most relevant and useful terms in reviewing their activities and establishing a baseline. ‘Marketing’ is a chosen keyword as the work focuses on marketing programmes and courses. The term ‘Sustainable Education’ captures what the authors sought to explore regarding contribution to knowledge (i.e., focus on curriculum rather

than marketing scholarship or practice where various terms are used such as ‘Sustainability’, ‘Sustainable Marketing’, ‘Sustainability Marketing’ etc., which go beyond the scope of literature reviewed by the authors that corresponds to the boundaries of the topic of this study). The term 'Sustainable Education' is preferred over 'Sustainability Education'; this is because 'Sustainable Education' focuses on transformation through education and the educational process, whereas the educational focus of 'Sustainability Education' is the state or quality of sustainability. 'Sustainable Development Goals' is used as a core ESD framework, as highlighted by the QAA (2021), therefore chosen as central in this study. 'Corporate Social Responsibility' is a key term that relates to the activity of organisations and businesses, highlighting their engagement with sustainability and the strategic marketing response to an organisation's ethical responsibilities. (Bolton, 2022).

Additionally, we conducted a further integrative search on marketing journals (listed below) focusing on education for SD, guaranteeing a minimum level of quality, i.e., ABS1*.

- Marketing Education Review
- Journal of Marketing Education
- Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education
- Journal of Marketing for Higher Education

We further searched through other Journals (listed below) that include topics relevant to ESD debates within the business school affecting marketing departments. These journals regularly publish on the role of sustainability in higher education, offering a wider view of different communities of practice and their perspectives and increasing the robustness of the current research. Once again, guaranteeing a sufficient level of quality was considered, i.e., ABS1* or impact factor 4 or above.

- Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management

- Journal of Global Responsibility
- Journal of Cleaner Production
- Journal of Business Ethics
- International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education
- Academy of Management Learning & Education

The literature review spans from 2007 to the present, a duration of 16 years. The year 2007 was chosen for its significance as the inception year of the PRME initiative (Morsing, 2022). Subsequently, the ensuing years hold considerable importance for business schools, scholars, and educators, given the substantial influence of PRME on the incorporation of ESD into the curriculum of business schools, with inevitable implications also for the SDGs inclusion in the curriculum (Morsing, 2022; Wersun *et al.*, 2021). Although 2007 precedes the launch of the SDGs (2015), the pedagogical approaches advocated by PRME offer insights that can guide this review focused on the integration of the SDGs within the marketing curriculum.

This sequential and integrative search process identified 132 potentially relevant articles, which were screened for eligibility. To ensure unbiased study selection, the key inclusion criterion was whether the articles focused on curriculum development. Those that did not mention the topic (even partially) were excluded. However, articles discussing university strategy or research environment, indirectly informing curriculum development, were also included. Some studies discussing sustainability in the business school curriculum were also considered if they covered unique aspects not addressed in marketing-specific articles, like systemic integration in sustainability curriculum development. Two authors assessed these articles separately to match the review's scope, resolving doubts through discussion. This yielded a final sample of 40 articles (14 quantitative, 13 qualitative, 11 conceptual/literature review papers, and 2 mixed methods). More details on selected studies can be found in Table 1.

An inductive thematic analysis was manually conducted for data analysis. This analytical method was chosen because it allowed for the data-driven identification of themes, aiming for a more objective interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To improve the data quality and trustworthiness of the analysis, two team members thoroughly reviewed, coded and synthesised each document independently. When conflicts occurred, the researchers returned to the topics, looked up relevant literature, held talks to resolve them, and improved the analysis until an understanding was obtained. Selected themes are presented in Table 1. The Table is organised with the 40 articles selected in rows, and the themes are mapped against the three columns, highlighting how each theme was developed through the articles' coding.

Findings

Three core themes emerged from the thematic analysis: 1) Integration, which focuses on theories encouraging integration into the marketing curriculum of concepts and principles linked to sustainability, CSR, and ethics to facilitate embedding the SDGs. 2) Transformation, which considers changes in pedagogic approaches, teaching methods and tools, and related materials relevant to embedding SDGs within the marketing curriculum. 3) Leadership for collaboration considers processes needed to facilitate collaboration with partners, including students, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, for embedding SDGs in marketing education. Table 1 provides a summary of these themes.

*** Insert Table 1 here ***

Integration: Theories for embedding SDGs in the marketing curriculum

Due to a general lack of critical approaches in marketing scholarship (Voola *et al.*, 2022; Davies *et al.*, 2020), HEIs' marketing faculties face challenges in embedding the SDGs into the marketing curriculum. For example, inconsistencies in choosing between various terminologies relevant to the SDGs, such as sustainability, social responsibility, CSR, well-

being, and ethics (Rosenbloom, 2022; Brocato *et al.*, 2022; Hopkins *et al.*, 2021; Nicholls *et al.*, 2013). This can partly be justified by the ongoing tensions between the delivery of traditional content (a customer-focused approach that drives business profitability) and fostering an understanding of the SDGs among various stakeholders (Rountree & Koernig, 2015; Rosenbloom, 2021; Voola *et al.*, 2022). The work linking these debates to the SDGs is emerging in marketing (Rosenbloom, 2022). Marketing is now seen as a crucial tool in promoting SD (Rosenbloom, 2022), particularly concerning the ability to lift people out of poverty (i.e., SDG 1) and modify behaviours towards sustainable consumption, i.e., SDG 12 (Rosenbloom, 2022; Voola *et al.*, 2022). SDG 10, which focuses on reducing social inequality, is linked to diversity and inclusiveness promoted by marketing, which is consumer-centric (Rivera *et al.*, 2020), while SDG 9 promotes innovation and technologies, whose introduction is often overseen by marketing departments (Shapiro *et al.*, 2021). Finally, SDG 17 should help reflect on the role of marketing in building communities and partnerships (Watson *et al.*, 2021).

Similarly, many conflicting concepts, such as sustainable marketing and sustainability marketing, exist in theory and practice (Rountree & Kerning, 2015), with various meanings and approaches to sustainability. The debate regarding the meaning of sustainability is also present in marketing scholarship, and it affects the topic of marketing education (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020; Davies *et al.*, 2020; Rosenbloom, 2021). Sustainable marketing, widely defined as the alignment of multiple stakeholders interested in the triple bottom line, is considered inapt to deliver the transformative changes advocated by the SDGs (Bolton, 2022). Often, these definitions rely on the weak sustainability concept of the triple bottom line, advocating a balance between the economy, society, and the environment (Rosenbloom, 2021), where marketing scholarship emphasises economic rationality and profit maximisation (Panayiotopoulos & Lichrou, 2022; Davies *et al.*, 2020).

Although there are conceptual distinctions between sustainability marketing and other terms like social marketing, macro-marketing, and green marketing (Wilhelm, 2008; Bolton, 2022), practitioners and educators frequently use terms such as *sustainable*, *sustainability*, *green*, or *environmental marketing* interchangeably (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020; Kemper *et al.*, 2020; Peterson, 2022). This is because such sub-disciplines are all advocated as candidates to advance critical approaches to marketing for embracing the SDGs. These critical discourses have a societal orientation for marketing in common, which can help to reframe the marketing discipline away from unbridled traditional paradigms of growth (Bridges & Wilhelm, 2010). A societal orientation can help for a broad understanding of the marketing eco-system, thus delivering better value for all societal stakeholders (Perera & Hewege, 2016), in a debate that has populated the marketing literature even before the emergence of the SDGs (Voola *et al.*, 2022). Consumer culture theory and transformative consumer research can provide insights into promoting sustainable lifestyles and behaviours by exploring the cultural values and beliefs that shape such consumption practices (Shapiro *et al.*, 2021). Exploration of alternative consumption models should be central within the marketing discipline (Davies *et al.*, 2020), such as de-consumption (Bridges & Wilhelm, 2010) and sustainable consumption (Rosenbloom, 2021), aligned with SDG12. Social marketing can support such behavioural change through programmes applied to students in HEIs, advocating for them to be social change agents, thus aligning with various SDGs (Hubscher *et al.*, 2021).

Conversely, green marketing promotes green credentials and innovation, aligned with SDG 9. At the same time, macro-marketing adopts a broader look at the larger system of marketing institutions and relationships, for example, unearthing issues related to marketing channels or public policy (Shapiro *et al.*, 2021; Peterson, 2022; Watson *et al.*, 2021). Ideally, all these critical approaches should lead and culminate in the reconceptualisation of marketing, which can lead to a deeper understanding of marketing in light of sustainability discourses.

Transformation: pedagogy for teaching the SDGs within the marketing curriculum

We reviewed relevant literature on key pedagogic concepts linked not only to the SDGs but also to related concepts such as sustainability, SD, CSR, and ethics; this is because these debates are only recently acknowledging the SDGs, but they recognise how the SDGs are a useful framework for content around the SD agenda and therefore can inherit the same pedagogical logic. A key debate in the literature is whether SDGs and other SD topics should be integrated into traditional degree courses (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020; Kemper *et al.*, 2022; Bridges & Wilhelm, 2010). For example, the more traditional topic of social responsibility is usually embedded in the principles of marketing courses (Hopkins *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, focused knowledge through elective modules that consider in-depth specific aspects of sustainability is becoming more popular in marketing faculties (Bascoul *et al.*, 2013; Watson *et al.*, 2021). This is because of the lack of space in the core curriculum, also known as curriculum overload, which affects the marketing discipline (Nicholls *et al.*, 2013).

The rationale for introducing sustainability and the SDGs within elective standalone modules is to allow students to gain a deeper and more critical understanding of sustainability through learning that goes beyond mere knowledge (Upadhyaya *et al.*, 2019; Pereira & Hewege, 2016), making use of the theories debated in the previous section which advocate for a deeper understanding of marketing in line with the SDGs (Voola *et al.* 2022; Bolton, 2022). However, these are frequently optional electives rather than core modules (Nicholls *et al.*, 2013); therefore, they are not fully integrated into the curriculum, as few students chose them (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020). At the same time, the industry's rapidly growing interest in these topics is driving the demand for integration within modules (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated that, in the long term, skilled faculty members, financial resources, and an undergraduate require sustainability knowledge (rather than being able to choose an elective), which is the precursor to creating standalone sustainability courses within the discipline

(Nicholls *et al.*, 2013). Authors argue that topics should not just be debated at the theoretical level within the discipline, in line with the academic tradition. Still, they should also be covered through systems thinking and interdisciplinary courses (Brocato *et al.*, 2022).

Marketing has the potential to achieve transformative societal changes, such as sustainable consumption behaviours among students (Rosenbloom, 2022). The active learning and critical thinking approach to learning can help develop a sustainable mindset needed for students and practitioners to reimagine the role of marketing in society aligned with the SDGs (Upadhyaya *et al.*, 2019; Voola *et al.*, 2022); key to this is a reflection on individual sustainable consumption (Borin & Metcalf, 2010). A combination of transformative, problem-based, and experiential learning can help foster critical thinking and systems thinking (Manna *et al.*, 2022), thus effectively promoting sustainable marketing practices among students (Grier, 2020). Experiential learning is also considered for embedding macromarketing principles in the broad curriculum (Peterson, 2022; Shapiro *et al.*, 2021). Other studies explored service-learning and critical reflection alongside design thinking, which increase sustainable consumption and production systems benefitting the environment (Manna *et al.*, 2022) and sustainability in marketing education through value co-creation (Rosenbloom, 2022). Authors advocate for critical thinking approaches for broadly reflecting on real-world implications of the role of sustainability and ethics in marketing practice, e.g., data ethics in digital communication channels, which are in growing demand among employers, aligned with SDG 12 (Borin & Metcalf, 2010; Walker & Moran, 2019).

Various authors further suggest specific experiential learning tools for organising classroom learning focused on SDGs; the criteria for embedding these tools focus on providing a reflective and critical experience around sustainability, ethics and CSR. Critical thinking should be supported by approaches such as controversy-fostering debate (Shapiro *et al.*, 2021) to develop higher-order problem-solving skills relevant to social responsibility issues of the

digital marketing profession (Dahl *et al.*, 2018). For example, marketing practitioners are frequently at the forefront of incorporating new technologies into their operations. It is important that students critically assess these implications of technological change, including negative effects on health and well-being, therefore tapping into SDG 9 and SDG 3 (Shapiro *et al.*, 2021). Service learning and macromarketing can help explore the bottom of the pyramid of target customers (e.g. market products and services to low-income consumers) and sustainable marketplaces, which are concepts aligned to SDG 1 (Rosenbloom, 2022). Other examples of experiential educational activities tapping into environmental outcomes aligned with the triple bottom line are visits to non-profit firms and social enterprises (Rountree & Koernig, 2015), experiential service-learning projects combining environmental studies and social marketing (Wiese & Sherman, 2011), assignments focused on environmental product development (Borin & Metcalf, 2010), and life-cycle assessment (Bascoul *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, to evaluate the level of behavioural change advocated by critical approaches to marketing introduced in the classroom, it is also important to design learning objectives relevant to sustainability, often inherited from the literature on sustainability education. Fink's (2013) taxonomy of significant learning is a framework for designing and assessing learning outcomes that promote deep and meaningful sustainability learning around six key dimensions (foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn), and can be applied in various forms to the marketing curriculum (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020; Rountree & Koernig, 2015).

Leadership for collaborations to embed the SDGs in the marketing curriculum.

This section highlights the enabling processes facilitating the embedding of SDGs in marketing faculties; it primarily covers the concepts of leadership needed to facilitate the collaborations that are instrumental to realising the SDG agenda. Rushinko's (2010) original

framework for sustainability integration in HEIs emphasised the importance of embedding sustainability within a specific discipline at the curriculum and module level and through cross-disciplinary learning opportunities. Further frameworks focus on the connectedness to business, which helps develop capacity building, systemic thinking, and leadership (Painter-Morland *et al.*, 2016). This resonates with creating leadership and partnerships for sustainability. In particular, aligning the university's mission to a sustainability strategy can help enhance the leadership and credibility of business schools to generate these changes and bring staff to support them (Seto-Pamies *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, marketing educators are now advocating more collaboration with the industry as opportunities for embedding sustainability at the experiential level (Manna *et al.*, 2022).

Leadership, the internal view of what leads to sustainability transformation within the business school, is particularly important in tackling the barriers to such transformation. The barriers to incorporating sustainability into various marketing courses exist at institutional levels, such as organisational factors, including apathy, insufficient financial resources, and low appreciation of outreach activities (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020; Upadhyaya *et al.*, 2019). As such transformation involves the staff, other barriers are a lack of knowledge about SDGs and a lack of focus on the topic of sustainability among lecturers (Bascoul *et al.*, 2013; Peterson, 2022), as well as the personal values of the lecturers not being aligned with the SDGs agenda (Bridges & Whilhelm, 2010; Kemper *et al.*, 2022). Crucial to leadership is the role of sustainability champions in influencing such transformation within the business school (Winfield & Ndlovu, 2019). Otherwise, collaborations, focusing on theories or quality assurance, would become distractions and barriers. What leadership can do is define vision and values around sustainability; this enhances the possibilities for tackling these barriers by developing a sustainable mindset, including the staff and students (Voola *et al.*, 2022). Beyond values (Collier *et al.*, 2022), developing sustainability competencies among staff and

professional development opportunities to align values, i.e., creating positive nature experiences (Kemper *et al.*, 2020; Kemper *et al.*, 2022), should enhance the growth of success for business schools in embedding the SDGs (Thao *et al.*, 2022). Leadership is also needed to enhance research and partnerships for cross-disciplinary education, research, and collaborations (Leal Filho, 2020). Marketing scholarship for the SDGs should focus on alternative consumption models (Davies *et al.*, 2020) to promote awareness and knowledge about sustainability and to align values and behavioural change toward sustainability among staff (Kemper *et al.*, 2020; Kemper *et al.*, 2022).

Finally, numerous studies have examined how external stakeholders' requirements lead to marketing faculties adopting responsible management and sustainability (Doh & Tashman, 2014). Partnerships for the goals are recognised by SDG 17. The broader literature on cross-sector partnerships is fundamental to achieving such goals, and the role of HEIs is to facilitate these relationships (Leal Filho, 2020). Including these topics in accreditations is also promoted by networking bodies that represent the sector, which highlight the role of partnering, particularly considering how partnering is not only a pillar of SDGs but also a pillar of PRME. Despite many faculties being sceptical of certification to avoid prescriptive rules on pedagogic topics, certification can provide a framework for professional development and help ensure that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to teach effectively. It is clear from many certification guidelines that employers are interested in developing graduates' ethical decision-making skills (Nicholls *et al.*, 2013). Often, such partnerships tap directly into SDG 12, particularly as they raise awareness for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles in harmony with nature (Painter-Morland *et al.*, 2016).

On the other hand, partnerships with employers can help further explore, through marketing research based on alternative consumption paradigms, the role of the purpose-driven firm in society, which can tap into SDG 1, but potentially all SDGs (Rosenbloom, 2022).

Through partnerships with students, sustainability in the marketing faculty can be achieved by incorporating sustainability into promotional events, engaging students and through students' organisations and extracurricular activities (Rushinko, 2010). The introduction of the SDGs can aid in developing students' global competence and ability to become future leaders aligned with the SDGs (Nicholls *et al.*, 2013). Universities increasingly involve students in multi-stakeholder partnerships for the SDGs, with extracurricular activities beyond the classroom, to recognise the role of experiential opportunities (Zizka *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, fostering partnerships with governments and communities is gaining increased prominence as the very mission of universities is gradually moving towards achieving the SDGs (Leal Filho, 2020). Overall, such a long-term view, partnership-led and practice-based marketing research process, not solely focused on individuals but on various societal stakeholders, would lead to more meaningful marketing contributions to society (Davies *et al.*, 2020).

Discussion

This section discusses the findings that emerged in the previous section against the literature, highlighting how each finding addressed the corresponding objective of the paper. This research aimed to review the academic literature concerning how HEIs embed the SDGs within the marketing curriculum. Its first objective was to explore which concepts and theories are relevant for integrating the SDGs into the marketing curriculum of HEIs. The findings highlight difficulties around the integration of marketing and sustainability because of the theoretical conflict between these topics, linked to a lack of critical approaches in marketing scholarship, as well as a lack of clear pedagogy for sustainability in marketing (Watson *et al.*, 2021; Brocato *et al.*, 2022). Sustainability is a complex concept and may mean different things to different stakeholders, leading to different approaches to it by various stakeholders (Rosenbloom, 2021). The growing interest in the SDGs is partly linked to its broad remit across society, the environment, and the economy (UNESCO, 2022). Within marketing teaching and

scholarship, such focus advances the debate around the preferred term of sustainability within the marketing discipline, with conflicting concepts, such as *sustainable marketing*, *green marketing*, and *sustainability marketing*, all present in theory and practice (Lunde, 2018). Marketing has not yet fully inherited the broader debates around the preferred term of strong sustainability from environmental economics and its de-growth discourses (Press, 2021). These emerging discourses inherently carry a rejection of the triple bottom-line framework. Such a choice of definition profoundly influences how we teach and assess the SDGs. Creating these changes requires exploring sustainable consumption models within the marketing discipline.

The second objective was to highlight pedagogic approaches employed to introduce the SDGs in the marketing curriculum, leading to a broad discussion about the tools that can be used in the pedagogy of the SDGs. Such discourses often include a reflection on whether these pedagogic tools should be used across all modules or selectively in elective modules (Albinsson *et al.*, 2020). This fundamentally affects the underlying theories used to frame the concepts. Such discourses are particularly present at the broad level of the business discipline, and relevant to the design of programmes. In line with these debates, the QAA ESD guidance emphasises the importance of learner engagement and transformational change as central to ESD (QAA, 2021). Albinsson *et al.* (2020) acknowledge the work of Fink (2013) and the Higher Education Academy's emphasis on ESD transformation and change (Sterling, 2012) as core to this agenda. The focus on competencies in ESD supports wider outcomes through experiential and service learning. These approaches promote learner engagement, significant learning, and transformation (QAA, 2021). To achieve this, the first step should be a broad integration of these topics across key modules (Rushinko, 2010), making use of existing discipline theories, which resonate with the debate of core-module integration, whilst also introducing new theories particularly focused on SD (i.e., for marketing, examples seen are macro-marketing and social marketing). These deeper concepts and the specific theories

around sustainability/SDGs, together with experiential activities designed to support behavioural change, can help to achieve collective changes towards more sustainable consumption behaviours (Davies *et al.*, 2020). This is because the sustainable mindset underpinning behavioural change can be developed through an integration of critical reflection (for changing one's values) only when practice (i.e., skills for behavioural change) meets theory (knowledge for sustainability) (Rimanoczy, 2021). This integrative approach, informed by the sustainability pedagogy, should help advance the debate on better embedding the SDGs in the curriculum.

The third and final objective of the research was to highlight the best processes relevant to the ESD academic literature for integrating the SDGs into the marketing curriculum. The role of leadership within the university, particularly around partnerships with multiple stakeholders, was highlighted as a key finding. It is noted that cross-disciplinary learning opportunities, collaboration with industry, and partnership between students and the community can contribute to developing sustainability competencies and incorporating SDGs into marketing courses (Thao *et al.*, 2022). Developing staff competencies, values, and awareness aligned with sustainability is key. Teaching about the SDGs seems incompatible with the conventional principles of the business school, with its emphasis on economic rationality, profit maximisation, and utilitarianism (Panayiotopoulos & Lichrou, 2022; Davies *et al.*, 2020). Such a dominant paradigm does not lead educators to consider the role of marketing in its contribution to society and SDGs alignment (Bolton, 2022, Rosenbloom, 2022); it often leads to the misconception that marketing is fundamentally at odds with a sustainability perspective, which brings sustainability practitioners to futility (Voola *et al.*, 2022). The role of leadership in defining vision and values around sustainability, enhancing staff capabilities, and promoting research and partnerships for cross-disciplinary education and collaborations is indeed crucial (Seto-Pamies *et al.*, 2016; Painter-Morland *et al.*, 2016), as

there are many institutional barriers to incorporating sustainability and the SDGs into marketing courses. Certification, one of the key external factors highlighted, can provide a framework for professional development, and indeed, scholars are advocating for full recognition of the SDGs as a content framework to facilitate ESD strategies, particularly at the local level (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2019). Such partnerships should reach the university level, not just be limited or focused on students' transformation. As a result, the SDGs must be embraced by the entire university and fostered through partnerships with various stakeholders.

Conclusion and Practical Implications

The highlighted objectives contributed to the overall aim of reviewing the literature, culminating in the proposal of a 3Es framework for embedding sustainability and the SDGs in the marketing curriculum of HEIs (see Figure 1). This figure highlights the link between pedagogical approaches, theories, and tools that frame the marketing curriculum integrating the SDGs; it further highlights the stakeholders involved in such teaching/learning activities. First, the approach should generate knowledge about the SDGs in marketing (Engage), starting from traditional concepts to reflect on the challenges of such integration. Secondly, using critical theories of marketing and transformative pedagogies, values and attitudes of students and educators should move towards advocating for sustainability in marketing (Expand). Finally, a partnership-based approach to learning should lead to behavioural change and marketing actions aligned with the SDGs (Enact). The final column of Figure 1 highlights stakeholders involved in embedding such concepts into the educational experience (UNESCO, 2022). They include department heads, course teams, quality teams, employers, industry experts, and professional bodies who impinge on contributing to this partnership-based sustainability learning experience. Students are concurrently responsible for actively participating in discussions, completing assessments while questioning their values, improving self-awareness, and applying the knowledge and skills to become future leaders aligned with

the SDGs. The 3Es framework represents a potential contribution to enhancing the capability of marketing faculties in achieving SDG 4, therefore contributing to the Global Goals through quality education.

*** Insert Figure 1 here ***

Theoretical Implications

This article makes a dual contribution to academic knowledge. First, it advances marketing scholarship by advocating to reframe the marketing discipline to explicitly focus away from unbridled traditional growth models and towards exploring and developing alternative consumption models, so that marketing can “*reflect a parallel movement away from profit maximization as the dominant theory of the firm*” (Voola et al., 2022, p.105). The article contributes to this debate by highlighting that to overcome this major barrier of the perceived conflict between conventional marketing theories and the SDGs (Panayiotopoulos & Lichrou, 2022; Davies *et al.*, 2020), it is important to “Engage” knowledge relevant to the SDGs, by making use of critical marketing theories, with an overt societal and environmental orientation, which foster debates and reflection around the SDGs. This proposal is pivotal to extend marketing education beyond technocratic, skill-based methods, by linking it to social movements (Panayiotopoulos & Lichrou, 2022). This novel perspective, emphasizing marketing's role in fostering sustainability and behavioral change, will help to overcome the perceptual barrier mentioned above.

Secondly, the article contributes to academic theory on ESD by emphasising the importance of an experiential and collaborative partnership-led pedagogical approach to embedding the SDGs within the marketing discipline, linked to the practice-based nature of the discipline. In Figure 1, we recommend experiential learning opportunities, which Expand the learning by aligning values and attitudes to sustainability. Marketing departments can Enact

this change through partnerships with industry and the local community, the development of sustainability competencies among university staff, and leadership within the university to foster these partnerships and transformations. This proposal provides practical suggestions to bridge the gap between theory and practice in aligning marketing education to the SDGs framework, therefore clarifying the “*structural changes needed to modify marketing in the curriculum*” (Voola et al., 2022, p.105). This article acknowledges the university's role in promoting sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a collaborative approach to learning, thus emphasizes the responsibility of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in facilitating partnerships focusing on the goals, as advocated by SDG 4 and SDG 17 (UNESCO, 2022). Ultimately, the marketing discipline has unique potential to generate sustainable consumption behaviours across the university and beyond. Such transformative changes should not be limited to students but should be witnessed in the vision and values of all stakeholders involved in the university.

Limitations and future research

This work is based on an integrative literature review without empirical evidence. While the review has thoroughly assessed how universities address these issues in practice, the authors accept that not all practice is necessarily reported in the literature. The authors suggest that future empirical research should focus on capturing in practice how universities embed the SDGs in the curriculum, how universities develop sustainability competencies within marketing faculties, and how they measure student learning outcomes following the integration of the SDGs in the marketing curriculum.

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