

# REVIEW

For the doctoral dissertation on : "*Sustainable digital marketing practices in the fashion industry-characteristics, corporate social responsibility and influence on purchase intentions*" (*Media and Communications - Media content management in audio-visual platforms*)

Elena Slavkova, PhD student at the Department of *Communication and Audiovisual Production* at the Faculty of Media and Media Studies of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the professional field **3.5. "Public Communications and Information Sciences"**.

**Scientific supervisor** : Prof. Dr. Teodora Petrova

**Author of the review** : Prof. Margarita Pesheva

## **1.Relevance of the chosen dissertation topic**

The dissertation is very topical due to the fact that sustainable digital practices are of great importance for the development and preservation of brands in a universally digitalized world, which today is increasingly developing with the participation of artificial intelligence, and with increasing competition at all levels. Sustainable marketing, also called *green marketing*, includes a variety of principles and practices that are entirely consumer-centric. These practices ensure ethical, responsible and transparent marketing efforts for the benefit of society.

*Green, eco-marketing*, in practice, integrates some basic principles of sustainability into various business practices. It involves promoting products, services and brands in a way that, according to PhD student Elena Slavkova : "*minimizes negative environmental and social impacts while delivering long-term value to consumers, society and the planet.. . At its core, sustainable marketing goes beyond traditional marketing objectives to drive sales and profitability*". The PhD starts from the core idea of sustainable marketing, which seeks to create value not only for customers but also for the environment and society as a whole. In this sense, the chosen topic for the dissertation is very topical- both in theoretical and practical- applied pan. The topic focuses a series of marketing efforts in improving the ecological balance of the planet, sustainable solutions and fashion brands that reduce the carbon footprint, and participate in the so-called "circular economy", which is the basis of CSR corporate social responsibility.

## **2.Structure and content of the dissertation.**

The dissertation is **194 pages** in length , and consists of an Introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, scientific contributions, a bibliography and an appendix. It contains **53 figures, 4 tables and 10 graphs**. The bibliography has **230 titles**, of which 130 are traditional research and 100 titles are online research.

**The first chapter** discusses some theoretical aspects of corporate social responsibility CSR, which includes various activities related to product positioning. Brands, by condition, have economic and social responsibility, they necessarily position their product range to satisfy the needs of their customers. Websites and online corporate profiles are now the main marketing channel that presents to consumers the main developments that relate to CSR.

The PhD rightly focuses on the integration of CSR into new digital marketing strategies. Its main objective is to promote new products and services through a variety of online channels- *social media, search engines, email correspondence, websites and mobile applications*. They are digital content generators whose goal is to attract more and more consumers who are loyal to a given brand and trademark. Digital marketing uses a variety of tools to promote and amplify CSR activities, which include: *green marketing, social media marketing and influencer marketing*. The introduction of so called *green marketing and social media marketing* has as its main objective the reduction of carbon emissions, the introduction of environmental standards in the so called *circular economy*, part of which is related to the expansion and enforcement of CSR practices.

**In chapter two, the PhD student professionally convincingly examines three major brands in global fashion-Chloe, Pangaia and H&M.**

**Chloe** actively uses social platforms to expand and stabilize its audience. This brand's core vision for 2025 is to reduce negative impacts on climate and biodiversity through reduced carbon emissions, water use, recyclable waste, and distinct animal welfare. This marketing strategy foregrounds the societal need to preserve the global ecological balance, and then the specific marketing objectives related to distribution and profit that a brand achieves. All of this is somewhat in line with Philip Kotler's long-standing concept of *lateral marketing* for the benefit of society.

**Pangaia** offers a social media marketing strategy that focuses on promoting its sustainable fashion line, and building a community of like-minded individuals whose primary goal is environmental conservation, preserving the planet's biodiversity.

**H&M** offers fashion products at affordable prices, demonstrating sustainability and responsible business behavior. The brand has an active presence on social media, its products use very high quality photography, fashion showcases and models are showcased on social platforms such as Instagram Tik Tok, to attract more youthful customers. This brand is increasingly targeting certain niche communities, based on common interests and sustainable behaviours towards specific fashion trends.

The PhD research shows that all three brands have a distinctly strong commitment to protecting the Earth, they have the same goal-to reduce carbon emissions to zero by expanding the recycling and reuse of some of their products, to expand animal welfare. Which goes to show that each of these global brands, whether it's fast, casual or luxury fashion, has as its primary goal the societal need to seriously improve life on the planet.

**In chapter three, the PhD student presents the results obtained from a survey she conducted among 600 respondents between July and August 2024. The main aim of the study is to investigate consumer attitudes in a digital environment towards purchasing goods from the fashion industry. The questionnaire is distributed in the online environment-Facebook groups, online forums, personal emails, Instagram, etc. The aim is to get the survey out to more consumers, but also to use environmentally friendly data collection that excludes the use of paper.**

The PhD student draws the following scientific conclusions-consumer awareness of sustainable practices has, at this stage, a small but significant impact on consumer behavior, and primarily on the use of eco-friendly materials. The conclusion is that companies need to

offer their customers persuasive advertising messages that are consistent with consumers' values and aspirations for sustainability, for ethical stewardship of the planet's resources. This inevitably involves focusing on the environmental and social benefits of products or services, offering sustainable options to preserve the global ecological balance, demonstrating positive change.

The PhD student's conclusion that the more big brands align their actions with consumers' values, the more they create greater opportunities, can build stronger and more sustainable relationships with their audiences, and drive sustainable customer behaviour towards their products is correct. The development of corporate social responsibility in individual brands is a prerequisite for preserving the ecological balance of the planet, and then a prerequisite for their market success.

### 3. Abstract

**The abstract** has a very good structure, conceptuality and research arrangement. It includes all the necessary components-topic relevance, *subject and object of the dissertation, research thesis, main hypotheses, aims and objectives, research methodology, volume and structure of the dissertation by individual chapters, scientific contributions, scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation, bibliography*. The abstract presents relatively in full the main scientific theses formulated in the dissertation. It fully meets the legal requirements.

### 4. Scientific and applied contributions.

The dissertation is a topical and very interesting scientific study, which has its scientific and scientific-applied contributions.

**The first scientific contribution** is the theoretical analysis of *green marketing*, which is based on some sustainable digital business practices. The PhD offers a detailed theoretical framework and systematization of some leading concepts related to CSR. She analytically examines sustainability and green marketing practices that are considered in the context of the contemporary digital environment- social networks, online sites, email marketing, etc.

The main focus of the dissertation is on some specific concepts that are nowadays emerging in fashion industry practice. The PhD student proposes a fundamentally new approach to sustainability research-through a successful combination of traditional and digital marketing tools. In fact, she carries out a scientific analysis of three interrelated processes-sustainability, *digital technology and consumer behaviour*. The dissertation examines their integration in contemporary business practices, which is in favour of sustainability, ecological balance and green marketing. A very valuable contribution of the dissertation research is how digital marketing strategies can be used as a tool to promote multiple environmental and social initiatives. The PhD student specifically highlights the role of consumer participation, transparent communication and authenticity as key factors in achieving sustainability in marketing.

**The second scientific contribution** is the analysis of sustainability through examples from the fashion industry. The PhD student provides a detailed analysis of three global brands: **Chloe , Pangaia and H&M**, which are leaders in sustainable marketing. The PhD student conducts a specific research on their modern marketing approaches related to CSR and the enforcement of some sustainable initiatives in a digital environment. The comparative

analysis between their different approaches allows to see to what extent sustainability can be successfully integrated into digital marketing. The PhD specifically notes examples of successful marketing practices that can be applied to other brands in the fashion industry. This is valuable guidance for all companies looking to integrate green marketing into their business practice.

**The third scientific and applied contribution** relates to the results obtained from the survey conducted with 600 respondents. It explores the impact of sustainable marketing practices on consumer attitudes, respondents' purchase intentions, and brand loyalty. The results show that respondents' greater awareness of sustainable marketing practices plays a key role in their specific consumer decisions. The PhD student specifically highlights the great importance of communicating sustainable values, identifying the leading motivators for increasing consumer interest in eco-products-their *quality, transparency and social responsibility*. Consumers are introduced to the concept of sustainable marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour, which is a prerequisite for creating very effective communication strategies based on *green marketing*.

**The fourth scientific and applied contribution** is the methodology developed by the PhD student, which combines different research approaches-content analysis in social networks, surveys, web page research. This complex methodology enables a comprehensive examination of a range of sustainable practices, and their possible effect on users. The dissertation proposes a specific methodology that is fully applicable to the fashion industry, but it can also be applied to other sectors that analyse the interaction between sustainability and digital marketing strategies. The dissertation is an original research study that makes a theoretical and practical-applied analysis of some digital marketing practices in the fashion industry-most notably as key characteristics, corporate social responsibility and influence on consumer purchase intentions.

## **5. Publications on the dissertation topic.**

The PhD student has submitted 3 scientific publications on the topic of her dissertation, which fully meet the legal requirements.

## **6. Notes and recommendations**

The presented dissertation is an original scientific and applied research on the introduction of sustainable models and green marketing in the fashion industry. It investigates the development and change of consumer patterns due to sustainable development and new societal initiatives related to the development of green marketing. This research study is original, it directly links some consumption patterns in global fashion brands to some leading standards in environmental development and planetary balance.

It would be very useful if this research study were published after some editing. It will be of interest to different kinds of readers-researchers in digital marketing, social media and new digital practices of sustainability, experts in fashion industry-as-culture, communication and environmental standards, media and fashion brand specialists, enlightened readers.

The eventual publication of this innovative scientific study, which has its own theoretical and practical value, will be useful for the development of communication literacy in Bulgarian society and the enforcement of a sustainable policy of eco-equilibrium in the fashion industry.

## 7. Conclusion

The presented doctoral dissertation is an original research study on *sustainable digital marketing practices in the fashion industry-characteristics, corporate social responsibility and influence on purchase intentions*. The topic and scientific approach chosen by the PhD student are theoretically convincing, their scientific interpretation is supported by sound scientific arguments that relate to the introduction of *green marketing* in the fashion industry. The dissertation contains a theoretical and a practical-applied part, which proves the rightness of the theoretical analysis and the scientifically formulated conclusions through a sociological survey.

The dissertation is written with excellent language and style, it shows the professional maturity and competence of the PhD student, her strong knowledge about the introduction of sustainable models and green marketing in the fashion industry. Therefore, I recommend with full conviction to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Elena Slavkova for her dissertation on *Sustainable Digital Marketing Practices in the Fashion Industry-Characteristics, Corporate Social Responsibility and Influence on Purchase Intentions (Media and Communications-Management of Media Content on Audiovisual Platforms)*.

Sofia, 15 April 2025. Signature:

Prof. Dr. Margarita Pesheva