

An aerial photograph of a dense, vibrant green forest. A river flows through the center-right of the image, characterized by numerous brown, jagged rocks. The water is turbulent, creating white foam and rapids. A waterfall is visible at the bottom of the frame, where the river drops over a series of rocks.

CMO Sustainability Accelerator

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The Future is Mainstream Green

Introducing a New Growth Strategy



Introduction

This is a sustainable marketing guide that doesn't rely on a Patagonia reference. Don't get us wrong: they have been a positive business force and tremendous sustainability role model. But let's face it, not every brand is a Patagonia.

This is the guide to propel the rest of us forward. An action plan focused on taking green beyond niche, beyond obvious, beyond luxury, beyond a statement. To the mainstream. We call it **Mainstream Green**.

Mainstream Green is about driving sustainable choices by all consumers, not just those who are moved by sustainable claims. Because while 96%¹ of consumers try to live sustainably at least some of the time, less than 10%² consistently act and purchase on sustainability just to "save the planet".

To reach our collective climate ambitions, **we need massive consumer change**. This means new products, new services, new marketing, and new behaviors for all.

The CMO is well positioned to drive customer-centric change. They represent the voice of the customer across the whole organization. They have the knowledge and the platform to make it happen.

But it will mean **CMOs** bringing sustainability from the periphery to the center of the organization and **delivering a practical plan**.

So let's get started.

¹ Sustainable Brands Research

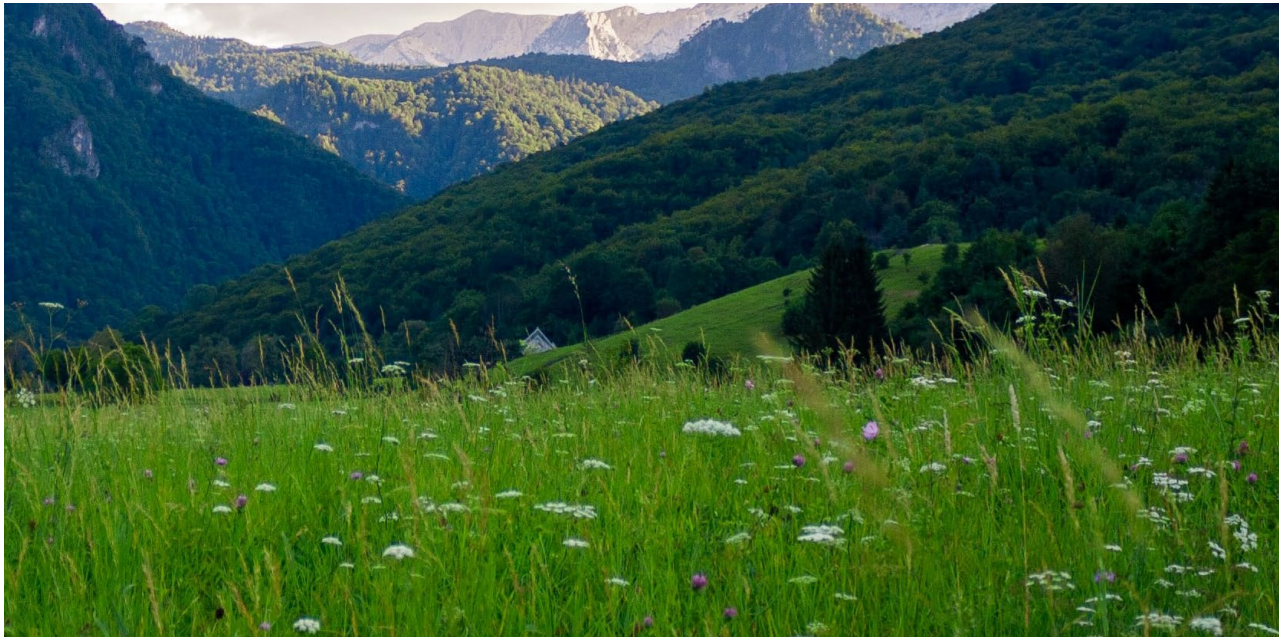
² BCG Analysis



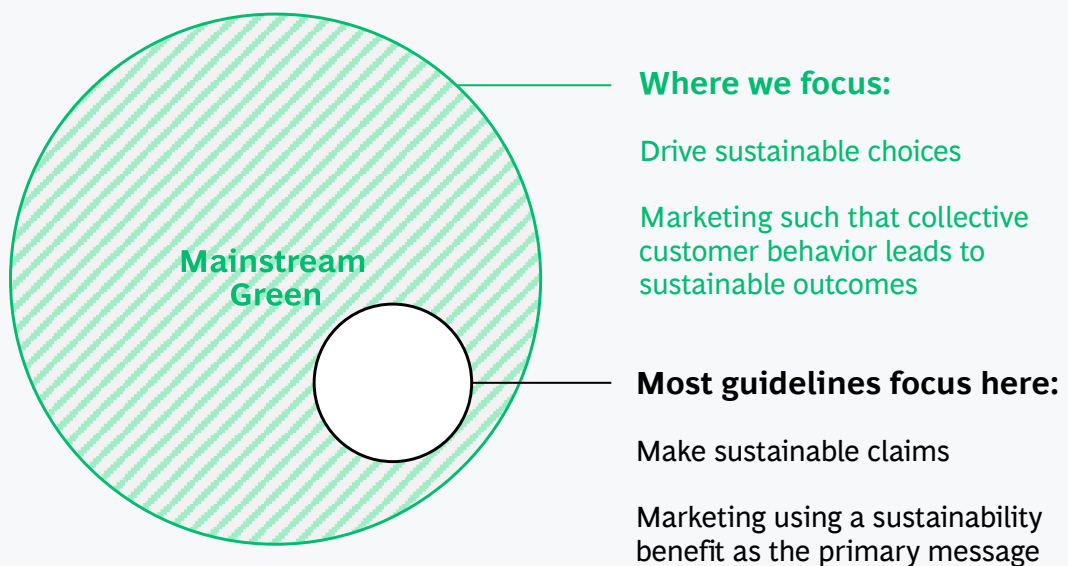
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By identifying how consumer needs intersect with the sustainability that they also want, brands have a unique opportunity to drive growth and impact at the same time. *The Future is Mainstream Green* Action Plan is the tool marketers need to better align their business objectives with a more sustainable future, and to make superior brand performance that's sustainable a more mainstream part of consumer choice.

– Marc Pritchard, Chief Brand Officer, P&G



Achieving Mainstream Green is a key opportunity for marketers



There is a tremendous opportunity for customers to be at the center of the CEO's sustainability agenda

...and CMOs provide that critical unlock

Case study

How understanding the customer perspective unlocks carbon reduction goals



Company with ambitious carbon reduction goals realized that supply chain optimization was only projected to achieve 1/4 of the target



Product itself was key driver of emissions and needed to be changed, while delivering on customer needs and overcoming perceived barrier that more sustainable products equated to lower quality products



Collaborative “win-win” product innovation put company on track to achieve 100%+ of CO₂ reduction goals, with marketing to show customers that new product is objectively better—only possible by including customers and their needs in the strategy

Source: BCG experience

Marketers can achieve Mainstream Green by centering on the customer

Understand drivers of choice

Identify the needs that drive choice and barriers that hinder sustainable choices

Create a sustainable offering

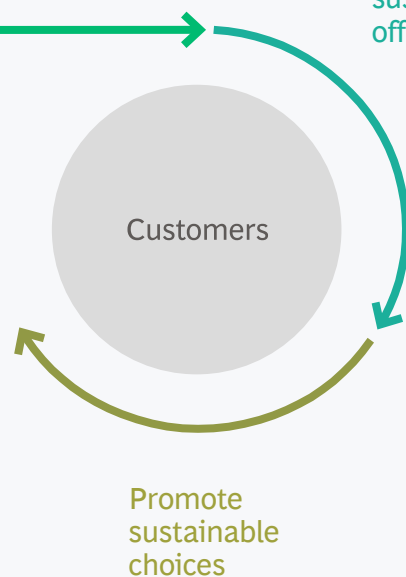
Shape the products and services that drive sustainable choices and remove *real* barriers to adoption

Promote sustainable choices

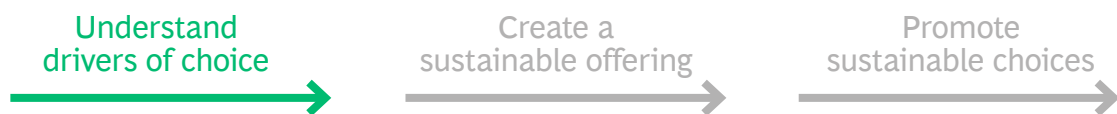
Remove *perceived* barriers by marketing products so that collective customer behavior leads to sustainable outcomes

Understand drivers of choice

Create a sustainable offering



Mainstream Green starts with understanding customers' drivers of choice



Why it matters

Identifying customer needs and barriers/enablers is a critical first step that helps marketers know where to focus on Mainstream Green

Linking sustainability to broader related needs can grow customers by 2–4x where sustainability is related to, but not a primary driver, of choice

Making sustainability a “bonus benefit” significantly expands the sustainable customer base to those for whom sustainability is not a driver of choice at all

How to get started

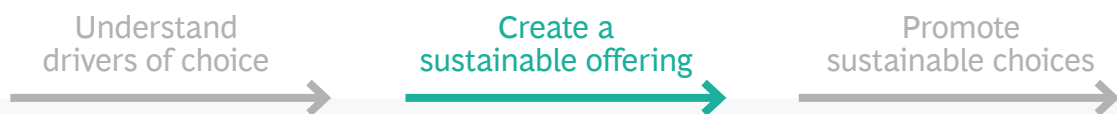
Understand customer needs

Analyze role of sustainability for each need (i.e., reason to believe versus trade-off)

Identify *real* and *perceived* barriers and corresponding enablers of sustainability adoption

Measure risks of inaction and opportunities to drive growth for the business

Next, customer-centric innovation can help overcome real barriers to Mainstream Green



Why it matters

Marketers can help prioritize the right approach to innovation by understanding which *real* customer barriers need to be removed

Innovation creates a win-win-win solution that makes sustainability an “and”, not an “or”

Customer-centricity elevates sustainability innovation for collaboration across functions and produces better outcomes

How to get started

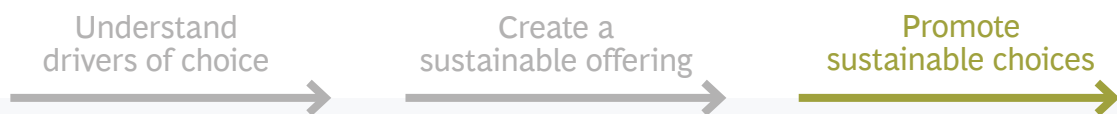
Hold multi-stakeholder ideation workshops to generate a diverse set of ideas

Prioritize ideas, considering sustainability and growth objectives, brand strategy and purpose, current product and service portfolio, and target segments

Build minimum viable products (MVPs) to collect customer feedback and provide continuous customer input

Launch new sustainability features, products, or experiences and prepare to scale the innovation

Removing perceived barriers through engaging marketing is the final step to catalyze Mainstream Green



Why it matters

Marketers have powerful tools and techniques to convert customers and accelerate the shift to sustainable choices

For early sustainability adopters, remove friction to purchase, strengthen customer connections, and amplify advocates authentically

For sustainability laggards, disrupt existing habits, and inspire and empower customers toward greener options

How to get started

Consider full customer engagement toolkit and select approach(es) to address *perceived* barriers

Tailor deployment to different customer archetypes (e.g., market, sustainability maturity, types of perceived barriers, step in the customer journey, etc.)

Test and gather feedback on tool effectiveness, adjusting as necessary



Case studies

How Tide successfully embraced Mainstream Green

Tide is an American laundry detergent brand and one of the best-selling detergent brands in the world. Customers desired a detergent that ensured clean clothing and hesitated to wash in cold due to:

- The perception that cleaning in warm water was more effective
- A lack of awareness of the environmental and financial benefits

Recognizing that 90% of energy usage came from heating water to wash, Tide innovated to increase product effectiveness in cold water

Tide promoted cold-washing as a sustainable choice by collaborating with sponsors and influencers to overcome lingering customer skepticism. They:

- Emphasized cost savings and increased clothing lifespan
- Convinced 15 NFL teams to #TurnToCold to overcome the perception of lower efficacy
- Published the environmental benefits of washing in cold to nudge customers towards sustainability

Results:

39%

Increase in sales of
Tide Hygienic Clean

1.3B

New loads washed in cold

2B

Earned media impressions

1B

Kg CO₂ saved

Source: P&G; Tide website; GreenBiz

Take the next steps toward Mainstream Green

Get started by reading the full length
[Action Plan](#), which includes:



More details on driving
Mainstream Green

- Data-driven customer insights
- Checklists to grow demand for sustainable products, services, and lifestyles
- Case studies from a variety of industries and business models



Broader context on actions marketers
can take to get the fundamentals right

- Overview of existing marketing guidelines to support making green claims
- Best practices for responsible marketing, including thought leadership from [Ad Net Zero](#)

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If your company would like to learn more about the research in this report or how to follow the action steps for Mainstream Green, please reach out to MainstreamGreen@bcg.com.

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