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.**

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\(^1\) Sustainable Brands Research

\(^2\) BCG Analysis
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

Where we focus:
- Drive sustainable choices
- Marketing such that collective customer behavior leads to sustainable outcomes

Most guidelines focus here:
- Make sustainable claims
- Marketing using a sustainability benefit as the primary message
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
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-centricty 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% 1.3B
Increase in sales of Tide Hygienic Clean New loads washed in cold

2B 1B
Earned media impressions 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.