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Original Article

Sustainable Marketing Schemes for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Owners Operating in Mabolo, Cebu City

Leona Jane P. Simbajon[1*], Shyr G. Villacarillo[2], John Carl B. Selim[3], Kent Ivan A. Viking[4], Mark Anthony N. Polinar[5], April Marie N. Mahipos[6], Joanna Marie U. Ato[7]

[1-4]Accountancy, Business, and Management Strand, Senior High School Student, Mabolo National High School, Cebu City, Philippines
[5-7] Senior High School Department, Faculty, Mabolo National High School, Cebu City, Philippines

Email: [1)] ljanepsimbajon@gmail.com, [2)] john.carl.selim01@gmail.com, [3)] shyrvillcarillo@gmail.com, [4)] vikingkentivan@gmail.com, [5)] mpolinar22@gmail.com, [6)] aprilmarie.mahipos@deped.gov.ph, [7)] joannamarie.ato@deped.gov.ph

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Abstract

Sustainable marketing strategies play a vital role in helping multinational companies balance sustainability and profitability. However, local studies investigating micro, small, and medium enterprises' (MSMEs) understanding, adoption, or implementation of these strategies at the barangay level were underexplored. This descriptive-correlational study examined the correlation between the importance and the effectiveness of sustainable marketing practices among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) owners operating in Mabolo, Cebu City. The study drew 240 respondents from a population of 633 using Raosoft, an online sample size calculator, and selected them randomly to participate in data gathering. The authors utilized an adapted tool to gather data from the respondents. Frequency count, weighted mean, and Pearson correlation were used in the data analysis. Based on the study's results, the interpretation of the correlation between the level of importance and the level of effectiveness implemented by MSME owners showed positive and strong results. Also, it was found that MSMEs place greater importance on sustainable marketing strategies, and their effectiveness in implementing them also tends to increase. A green marketing framework was recommended to address the lack of importance, as it helps MSME owners improve their sustainable marketing strategies.

Keywords: Sustainable Marketing, 7ps of Marketing Mix, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, Cebu City, Green Marketing Framework.

1. Introduction

Sustainable marketing practices are becoming increasingly important in the global business as concerns about environmental degradation, resource depletion, and social responsibility rise. For micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), adopting sustainable marketing practices aligns with global trends and offers enhanced competitiveness and growth opportunities.

Sustainable marketing refers to marketing practices that utilize products and services that respect both environmental and social aspects. With the rise in environmental issues, society has become more aware of these problems. Unlike traditional marketing, which primarily focuses on driving sales and profitability, sustainable marketing integrates sustainability principles into its core strategy. This involves promoting products with

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environmental benefits and adopting practices that minimize negative environmental impacts throughout the product lifecycle. Businesses that actively participate in such initiatives can inspire their users to act positively (Ujano, 2024).

Using sustainable marketing practices in the Philippines is becoming more critical as the country faces environmental problems and rapid economic growth. For Philippine businesses, adopting these practices means aligning with global sustainability trends while addressing local issues such as resource depletion, waste management, and social inequality. By incorporating sustainability into their marketing strategies, Filipino businesses can enhance their market appeal to a growing base of eco-conscious consumers and contribute to the nation's efforts in achieving environmental conservation and social equity.

In a local context, according to SwitchAsia, Metro Cebu is the second most populous urban area in the Philippines, after Metro Manila. Its economic growth has been impressive. However, it faces many challenges that hinder its sustainable development. More recently, Cebu City Mayor Michael Rama has announced a people-driven solid waste management action plan to address Cebu's longstanding environmental, social, and economic problems. A study emphasized the need to prevent environmental degradation by creating effective systems and discouraging greenwashing practices (Saavedra, 2022).

While larger corporations and global organizations have explored sustainable marketing strategies employing the 7Ps of marketing mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence), there remains a gap in localized studies focused on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at the barangay level. Specifically, in urban communities such as Barangay Mabolo in Cebu City, little is known about how MSME owners understand, adopt, or implement these sustainable marketing strategies. Also, there is a notable lack of empirical data regarding the importance and effectiveness of implementing sustainable marketing strategies.

Barangay Mabolo, a part of Metro Cebu, is a vibrant district characterized by its mix of residential, commercial, and industrial activities. The area is home to numerous MSMEs, including retail shops, food establishments, service providers, and manufacturing units. While these businesses are essential to the local economy, many face environmental sustainability and social pressures. Small businesses play a crucial role in creating a greener future. By adopting eco-friendly practices, MSME owners in Mabolo, Cebu City, can help protect the environment and enhance their reputation, attracting customers who value sustainability. However, only a few businesses practice it due to its perceived lack of importance, which this study aims to address. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of sustainability, a notable gap exists in the importance and implementation of sustainable marketing practices among MSME owners in Mabolo.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, constitute a global agenda that addresses the world's most pressing challenges. Among these goals, SDG 11, "Sustainable Cities and Communities," and SDG 12, "Responsible Consumption and Production," highlight the importance of creating resilient urban environments and promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns. Sustainable marketing strategies are essential in advancing these goals, bridging consumer behavior with broader environmental and social objectives.

Sustainable marketing strategies can significantly influence consumer behavior in sustainable cities and communities by promoting environmentally friendly practices. As a matter of fact, businesses can encourage residents to use eco-friendly products and support community projects aimed at sustainability (Davis, 2020). In addition, companies can drive responsible consumption and production by helping consumers make informed choices that

favor sustainable development (Hota, 2022). This includes highlighting the benefits of durable, recycled products and making sustainable options more attractive and accessible. Ultimately, sustainable marketing aligns consumer behavior with sustainable development principles.

With this in mind, the study investigated how sustainable marketing strategies can be developed and implemented to enhance performance and promote eco-friendly practices among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operating in Mabolo, Cebu City. Implementing sustainable marketing practices presents a compelling opportunity for MSME owners in Mabolo to align with global sustainability goals while enhancing their business prospects. Addressing the current gaps in understanding and implementation can empower these enterprises to make meaningful contributions to the goals of sustainable cities and communities, as well as responsible consumption and production.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainable Marketing Practices

2.1.1. Definition and Concept

Sustainable marketing is a holistic approach considering the business activities' environmental, social, and economic impacts (Thakkar, 2023). It encourages businesses to adopt eco-friendly practices, promote sustainable products, and engage in responsible marketing strategies (Richardson, 2019). This shift emphasizes satisfying consumer needs and preserving the environment for future generations (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2022).

Sustainable marketing extends beyond traditional marketing by adopting a holistic approach to sustainability, acknowledging that businesses are responsible for operating in a manner that benefits both the environment and society (Thakkar, 2023). It encourages businesses to transition from traditional marketing practices that may have adverse environmental or social consequences to strategies that promote sustainability (Richardson, 2019). This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic factors, acknowledging that a sustainable business model must address all three aspects (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2022).

2.1.2. Importance of Sustainable Marketing

Sustainable marketing is crucial for businesses to remain competitive in an increasingly environmentally conscious market (Richardson, 2019). It helps businesses build a positive brand image, attract environmentally conscious consumers, and contribute to a more sustainable future (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020). Sustainable marketing practices can lead to cost savings, improved resource efficiency, and reduced environmental impact (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2022).

Businesses that fail to adapt to this shift risk losing market share to competitors who embrace sustainability (Richardson, 2019). By adopting sustainable practices, businesses can differentiate themselves from competitors and appeal to a growing segment of consumers who prioritize sustainability (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020). Sustainable marketing practices can lead to increased brand loyalty, improved customer relationships, and a positive environmental impact (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2022).

2.1.3. Key Elements of Sustainable Marketing

Key elements include green product development, sustainable packaging, green advertising and promotion, and sustainable supply chain management (Alamsyah et al., 2020; Anilkumar & Sridharan, 2019; Rosário & Dias, 2022). These practices aim to minimize environmental impact, promote eco-friendly products, and communicate the environmental benefits to consumers.

Green product development entails utilizing sustainable materials, minimizing resource consumption, and reducing waste during production (Rosário & Dias, 2022). Sustainable packaging involves moving away from traditional packaging materials that contribute to landfill waste and exploring environmentally friendly alternatives that can be easily recycled or composted (Rosário & Dias, 2022). Green advertising and promotion involve avoiding misleading or exaggerated claims about environmental benefits and focusing on authentic and verifiable information (Alamsyah et al., 2020). Sustainable supply chain management involves working with suppliers committed to sustainability, minimizing transportation distances, and reducing waste throughout the supply chain (Anilkumar & Sridharan, 2019).

2.2. Case Studies of Successful Sustainable Marketing

Despite these challenges, several companies in the Philippines have successfully implemented sustainable marketing strategies, demonstrating that it can be a powerful differentiator. Patagonia, a global outdoor clothing brand, has gained recognition for its commitment to environmental stewardship and its “Do not Buy This Jacket” campaign, encouraging consumers to consider their purchases' environmental impact (Allchin, 2013). IKEA, a Swedish furniture retailer, has integrated sustainability into its core business strategy, promoting affordable and eco-friendly products (Allchin, 2013). Other notable examples include TOMS, Interface, Burt’s Bees, Coca-Cola, Starbucks, and Lacoste, each showcasing unique approaches to sustainable marketing (Allchin, 2013). These case studies highlight the potential for sustainable marketing to attract loyal customers, enhance brand reputation, and drive positive change.

2.3. Challenges of Implementing Sustainable Marketing

Challenges include a lack of awareness, knowledge, consumer perception, and trust (Joju et al., 2022; Richardson, 2019; Sanyal & Sur, 2023). Businesses must overcome these challenges to implement effective and sustainable marketing strategies.

Investing in sustainable materials, packaging, and production processes can require significant upfront costs (Richardson, 2019). Many businesses may not fully understand the nuances of sustainable marketing or lack the resources to access the necessary expertise (Sanyal & Sur, 2023). Consumers are increasingly discerning about green claims and are likely to be sceptical of businesses that engage in greenwashing (Joju et al., 2022).

2.4. Challenges in Adapting Sustainable Marketing

Adopting sustainable marketing practices poses a range of challenges for businesses. One significant obstacle is the potential for increased costs associated with sustainable production and sourcing (Barnes, 2020; Nayak et al., 2019; Singh & Abidi, 2021a). Businesses may also face resistance from stakeholders who are hesitant to embrace change or prioritize short-term profits over long-term sustainability (Barnes, 2020; Nayak et al., 2019; Seretny & Seretny, 2012; Singh & Abidi, 2021a). Furthermore, measuring the effectiveness of sustainable marketing initiatives can be difficult, making it challenging to justify the investment (Barnes, 2020; Nayak et al., 2019; Singh & Abidi, 2021).

2.5. Future Directions in Sustainable Marketing

Future directions include increased transparency and accountability, a focus on circular economy principles, and the integration of digital technologies (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022; Marhandrie, 2024; Thakkar, 2023). These advancements will further enhance the effectiveness and impact of sustainable marketing practices.

This involves providing precise and detailed information about their sustainability practices, including their environmental footprint, social impact, and ethical sourcing policies (Thakkar, 2023). It also involves designing products for longevity, reducing waste, and creating closed-loop systems where materials are reused and recycled (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Finally, it involves leveraging digital channels to engage with consumers, educate them about sustainability, and promote eco-friendly products and services (Marhandrie, 2024).

2.6. Future Trends in Sustainable Marketing in MSMEs

Sustainable marketing in MSMEs is a dynamic field driven by evolving consumer preferences and regulatory pressures. Several key trends will likely shape the future of sustainable marketing in MSMEs. Firstly, digital technologies will enable MSMEs to connect with environmentally conscious consumers and track their sustainability performance (Kumar & Kumar, 2022). Secondly, transparency and authenticity will become paramount, with consumers demanding clear information about the sustainability practices of MSMEs (Mohr et al., 2001). Thirdly, circular economy principles are expected to gain prominence, encouraging MSMEs to adopt resource-efficient practices and reduce waste (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2020). Fourthly, collaboration and partnerships will become increasingly important as MSMEs seek to leverage the expertise and resources of larger companies and NGOs to implement sustainable practices (Weforum, 2020). Ultimately, data-driven personalization will be crucial, enabling MSMEs to tailor their marketing messages to specific consumer segments and effectively promote sustainable products (AFRY, 2024).

2.7. 7Ps of Sustainable Marketing

2.7.1. Product

Sustainable product development emphasizes eco-friendly design and materials, durability and longevity, and product functionality and value (Reddy et al., 2023; Rosário & Dias, 2022; Savale et al., 2023). These factors are crucial for attracting environmentally conscious consumers.

This involves choosing renewable, recyclable, or biodegradable materials and minimizing harmful chemicals and toxins (Rosário & Dias, 2022). This involves focusing on quality craftsmanship, using durable materials, and incorporating design features that enhance product longevity (Savale et al., 2023). Sustainable products should be environmentally friendly and meet consumer needs and expectations regarding functionality, performance, and overall value (Reddy et al., 2023).

2.7.2. Price

Sustainable pricing strategies include competitive pricing, value-based pricing, and price transparency (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022; Joju et al., 2022; Savale et al., 2023). These strategies aim to make sustainable products accessible to a broader range of consumers while reflecting the value of sustainability.

Sustainable products should be priced competitively to make them accessible to a broader market (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). This involves setting prices that reflect the value of sustainability while considering consumer affordability (Joju et al., 2022).

Businesses should be transparent about pricing decisions and communicate how pricing strategies align with sustainability goals (Savale et al., 2023).

2.7.3. Place

Sustainable distribution channels prioritize environmentally friendly options, such as local sourcing and reduced transportation distances (Anilkumar & Sridharan, 2019). Accessibility and convenience are also crucial for consumer engagement (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Online presence and e-commerce can expand reach and reduce the environmental impact of physical distribution (Marhandrie, 2024).

This involves minimizing transportation distances, using efficient logistics systems, and exploring local sourcing options to reduce environmental impact (Anilkumar & Sridharan, 2019). Businesses should strive to make sustainable products readily available and accessible to consumers through a network of retail outlets, online platforms, and convenient delivery options (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). This involves leveraging the power of e-commerce to reach a wider audience, reduce the need for physical stores, and minimize transportation distances (Marhandrie, 2024).

2.7.4. Promotion

Ethical and transparent marketing campaigns are essential for building consumer trust (Joju et al., 2022). Targeted messaging that resonates with environmentally conscious consumers and social media engagement can effectively promote sustainable practices (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022; Marhandrie, 2024).

Businesses should avoid misleading or exaggerated claims about environmental benefits and focus on providing accurate and verifiable information (Joju et al., 2022). This involves understanding the values and motivations of environmentally conscious consumers and developing marketing messages that resonate with their concerns (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). This involves leveraging the power of social media to connect with consumers, share information about sustainability initiatives, and promote sustainable products and services (Marhandrie, 2024).

2.7.5. People

Employee training and engagement are crucial for implementing green marketing strategies (Savale et al., 2023). Excellent customer service and engaging consumers about sustainability initiatives can build trust and loyalty (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Collaboration and partnerships with other stakeholders can amplify the message of environmental responsibility (Thakkar, 2023).

This involves providing employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and implement sustainable practices while empowering them to contribute to the company's sustainability goals (Savale et al., 2023). It also involves providing consumers with helpful information about sustainable products and services, addressing their concerns, and fostering a positive and engaging customer experience (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Finally, it involves collaborating with other stakeholders to promote sustainability, share resources, and amplify the message of environmental responsibility (Thakkar, 2023).

2.7.6. Process

Sustainable operations and production involve adopting environmentally friendly practices throughout the business (Rosário & Dias, 2022). Continuous improvement and innovation are essential for enhancing sustainability practices (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Data collection and analysis are crucial for tracking sustainability performance and identifying areas for improvement (Savale et al., 2023).

This involves minimizing waste, reducing energy consumption, and implementing efficient production processes that minimize environmental impact (Rosário & Dias, 2022). This involves embracing a culture of continuous improvement and innovation and exploring new technologies and approaches to enhance sustainability practices (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). This involves establishing metrics to track sustainability performance, collecting consumer behavior and preferences data, and analyzing results to identify areas for improvement (Savale et al., 2023).

2.7.7. Physical Evidence

Sustainable store design and ambiance, product displays and packaging, and a positive customer experience that reinforces the values of sustainability are crucial for creating a positive impression on consumers (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022; Savale et al., 2023; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020).

This involves incorporating sustainable design principles, using eco-friendly materials, and creating a welcoming and environmentally conscious atmosphere (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020). It also involves using clear and concise labeling to communicate the sustainability features of products and using packaging materials that are recyclable or biodegradable (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Finally, it involves creating a customer experience that is both enjoyable and environmentally conscious, educating consumers about sustainability, and promoting sustainable practices (Savale et al., 2023).

2.8. Challenges of Implementing the 7P's

Implementing the 7 Ps of marketing (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) within a sustainable framework presents unique challenges for MSMEs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Balancing economic viability with environmental and social considerations can be complex (Antikainen & Valkokari, 2016). MSMEs may face limitations in resources, expertise, and access to information (Grewal & Levy, 2022). Adapting marketing strategies to the specific context of sustainable practices can be challenging (El-Gohary, 2010). Overcoming these challenges requires a proactive approach, stakeholder collaboration, and a willingness to learn and adapt (Pride & Ferrell, 2019).

2.9. Overview of 7Ps in the Philippines

The 7Ps of marketing (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence) provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing marketing activities. These elements are particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where businesses face a dynamic and diverse market landscape. The 7Ps offer a structured approach to developing effective marketing strategies that resonate with local consumers and address the unique challenges of the Philippine market.

A growing middle class, high internet penetration, and a preference for value-for-money products and services characterize the Philippine market (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Businesses must carefully consider the 7Ps to create compelling value propositions that meet the needs and expectations of Filipino consumers (Pride & Ferrell, 2019). Product development should focus on quality, affordability, and features that cater to local tastes and preferences (Rosário & Dias, 2022). Pricing strategies should consider the competitive landscape and the purchasing power of Filipino consumers (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022).

Effective distribution channels are crucial for reaching many consumers across the Philippines (Anilkumar & Sridharan, 2019). Promotion should leverage traditional and digital marketing channels, tailoring messages to specific consumer segments (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Building a strong brand reputation through excellent customer

service and engaging with consumers on social media is essential for success (Savale et al., 2023).

2.10. Overview of Sustainable Marketing Practices in MSMEs in the Philippines

The Philippines is witnessing a growing shift toward sustainable practices, which is significantly impacting the marketing landscape of micro and small enterprises (MSMEs). A 2019 study by the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) examined the best green business practices among micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) in the food processing industry, highlighting the adoption of resource-efficient measures and inclusive business practices (GGGI, 2019). Another initiative, the Sustainable Practices and Reporting Kickoff (SPARK) program, aimed to foster sustainable business practices among MSMEs in the Philippines, focusing on developing key skills in sustainability reporting and communication (EcoActive ESG, 2020).

The Philippine government is also promoting sustainable practices, with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) actively supporting MSMEs in adopting sustainable business models (DTI, 2022). Furthermore, the increasing demand for ethical and sustainable products, particularly among younger generations, is driving MSMEs to adopt more sustainable practices (Schmid et al., 2021). While challenges remain, MSMEs in the Philippines increasingly recognize the importance of integrating sustainability into their business operations.

2.10.1. Contextualized Research in the Philippines

The RRL matrix reveals a significant gap in the literature on sustainable marketing practices and consumer engagement in the Philippines. While numerous studies from other countries, such as India, Indonesia, Thailand, and South Africa, provide valuable insights, there is a notable lack of research specifically focused on the Philippine context (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2009; Ujano, 2024; Velita & Suson, 2020). This lack of localized research hinders our understanding of the unique challenges, opportunities, and consumer behaviors associated with sustainable marketing in the Philippines.

The Philippines faces distinct socioeconomic and environmental conditions, including a high population density, a growing middle class, and vulnerability to climate change (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2009; Ujano, 2024; Velita & Suson, 2020). Understanding how these factors influence consumer perceptions, purchasing decisions, and adopting sustainable practices is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies. Further research in the Philippines is essential to bridge this gap and provide a more nuanced understanding of sustainable marketing in this context (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2009; Ujano, 2024).

2.10.2. Sustainable Marketing Techniques Used in the Philippines

Sustainable marketing techniques are gaining traction in the Philippines as businesses recognize the importance of incorporating environmental and social responsibility into their operations. This shift is driven by a growing awareness of environmental issues, increasing consumer demand for sustainable products, and a desire to build a more sustainable future. Philippine companies employ various sustainable marketing techniques, including developing green products, using sustainable packaging, and adopting ethical sourcing practices.

Green product development entails creating products with minimal environmental impact, utilizing sustainable materials, and minimizing resource consumption during production (Rosário & Dias, 2022). The study also indicated that companies focus on sustainable packaging, shifting away from traditional materials that contribute to landfill

waste and exploring recyclable or biodegradable alternatives. Ethical sourcing practices are becoming increasingly important, with companies prioritizing suppliers who share a commitment to sustainability and responsible labor practices (Anilkumar & Sridharan, 2019).

Businesses also leverage digital marketing channels to promote sustainability initiatives and engage with environmentally conscious consumers (Marhandrie, 2024). Social media platforms, search engine optimization, and email marketing communicate sustainability efforts and establish a positive brand image (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Furthermore, companies are collaborating with local communities and NGOs to promote sustainable practices and address social issues (Park et al., 2022). These collaborations foster a sense of shared responsibility and contribute to a more sustainable future for all.

2.10.3. Challenges Faced in Implementing Sustainable Marketing in the Philippines

Implementing sustainable marketing in the Philippines faces a complex web of challenges. A significant hurdle is the lack of consumer awareness and understanding of sustainable practices (Agustini et al., 2021; Hernandez et al., 2023; Masocha, 2021; Singh & Abidi, 2021b; Vadera et al., 2025). This lack of awareness often results in hesitancy to pay a premium for sustainable products, with affordability cited as a key barrier.

Furthermore, businesses struggle to gain consumer trust in their sustainability claims, as many consumers express scepticism about corporate motives (Singh & Abidi, 2021b). The absence of a robust regulatory framework and effective enforcement mechanisms for sustainable practices further complicates the implementation process (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020).

2.11. Challenges of Implementing Sustainable Marketing Practices in Cebu City

Cebu City, a bustling metropolis in the Philippines, faces unique challenges in implementing sustainable marketing practices (Espiritu & Lawas, 2019). One major hurdle is the lack of awareness and understanding among businesses regarding the importance of sustainability (Mohr et al., 2001)Many MSMEs prioritize short-term profits over long-term sustainability, leading to unsustainable practices. Furthermore, limited access to resources and financing hinders their ability to invest in sustainable technologies and practices (Javelosa, 2023). The lack of a robust regulatory framework and enforcement mechanisms also poses challenges for promoting sustainable marketing.

Despite these challenges, a growing movement toward sustainability is emerging in Cebu City (Espiritu & Lawas, 2019). Several businesses are adopting sustainable practices, including using recycled materials, reducing energy consumption, and local sourcing (Mohr et al., 2001). Government agencies also implement initiatives to encourage sustainable business practices. However, more must be done to address the challenges and create a more supportive environment for sustainable marketing in Cebu City.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

To address the research problems presented, this study utilized a descriptive-correlational research approach to determine the importance and effectiveness of sustainable marketing strategies implemented by the MSME owners in Mabolo, Cebu City. The information gathered from the survey questionnaire helped produce the final product. This study's data types and statistics were the frequency distribution and weighted mean.

3.2. Research Environment

The study was conducted at Mabolo, Cebu City, 6000, specifically in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) area. These businesses were chosen for the investigation due to their convenient location, which is close to Barangay Carreta and Barangay Hipodromo.

3.3. Research Respondents

The study's respondents were the MSME owners operating in Mabolo, Cebu City. Based on the data gathered from Mabolo Barangay Hall, these MSME owners are legally registered and have obtained the necessary permits to operate in the area. Six hundred thirty-three (633) MSME owners operating in the study's chosen location and Raosoft software were used to generate the sample size of 240 respondents. Ultimately, these respondents were selected using simple random sampling to select 240 MSME owners at Barangay Mabolo, Cebu City.

Confidence in statistics was another way to describe probability. The confidence interval with a 95% confidence level was used to estimate the data findings, which fell between the upper and lower values specified by the confidence interval.

The inclusion criteria considered for this study are as follows:

1) Must be a legally registered Micro, Small, or medium enterprise.
2) Must have a permit to operate in Mabolo, Cebu City.
3) Willing to take part and offer their freely given consent.

Individuals not meeting the inclusion criteria were deemed ineligible to participate in this study.

3.4. Sampling Technique

The researchers utilized an Odd-Even Simple Random Sampling Technique to select respondents for the survey. This technique involved assigning a unique number to each potential respondent, then categorizing them as either 'odd' or 'even' based on their assigned numbers. By randomly choosing either odd or even numbers, the researchers ensured an equal selection process. Also, they considered each participant's willingness to participate, which was assessed through the preliminary stage. Moreover, this approach not only enhanced the sample's representativeness but also ensured that those who were genuinely interested contributed to the study, enriching the data gathered.

3.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers began by brainstorming study subjects and discussing their title selection with their teacher. After accepting the title, the teacher permitted the researchers to conduct this study. In addition, the researchers addressed a second letter to the assisting principal, requesting authorization to conduct the inquiry. The researchers then completed the study's fundamental beginning stages, which included the problem statement, demographic profile, and variables. Finally, the researchers designed and printed the relevant questionnaires. Researchers surveyed business establishments to gather data, a process expected to span two to three days before the quarterly examination.

3.6. Data Analysis

The researchers used statistical techniques such as frequency distribution, simple percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson product-moment correlation Coefficient. Microsoft Excel and Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) software were used to count, tabulate, and analyze the survey results carefully.

The researchers then employed a frequency distribution to organize the data collected from the survey questionnaires. This allowed researchers to examine the entire dataset quickly. Additionally, one can calculate the average statistically using the weighted mean by

multiplying the weights by their respective means and then adding the results. This averaging assigned weights to individual values based on the significance of each observation. To calculate the weighted mean, multiply the weight by the corresponding quantitative result for each item and then sum the products. If every weight is the same, then the weighted and arithmetic means are the same. Moreover, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) test was used to assess if the level of importance of sustainable marketing strategies implemented by the MSMEs owners operating in Mabolo, Cebu City in terms of the 7ps of marketing (x) and the level of effectiveness of sustainable marketing strategies implemented by the MSMEs owners operating in Mabolo, Cebu City in terms of the 7ps of marketing (y) had a significant relationship.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

4.1.1. The Demographic Profile of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Owners Operating in Mabolo, Cebu City, Philippines

Table 1. Frequency Result of the Demographic Profile of Sustainable Marketing Strategies Implemented by the MSME Owners Operating in Mabolo, Cebu City

Demographic Profile	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Nature of Business		
Food Business	133	55.42
Sari-Sari Store	84	35
Household & Electric Shop	11	4.58
Laundry Shop	12	5
Total	**240**	**100**
Number of Employees		
1-9	238	99.17
10-99	2	0.83
Total	**240**	**100**
Classification of Business		
Single	221	92.08
Partnership	16	6.67
Corporation	3	1.25
Cooperative	0	0
Total	**240**	**100**

4.1.2. The Summary of the Importance of Sustainable Marketing Strategies

Table 2. Overall Result of the Weighted Mean of the Level of Importance of Sustainable Marketing Strategies Implemented by the MSME Owners

7Ps	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Product	3.39	Strongly Agree
Place	3.16	Agree
Price	3.07	Agree
Promotion	2.82	Agree
Physical Evidence	3.22	Agree
People	3.25	Agree
Process	3.32	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	**3.18**	**Agree**

4.1.3. The Summary of the Effectiveness of Sustainable Marketing Strategies

Table 3. Overall Result of the Weighted Mean of the Level of Effectiveness of Sustainable Marketing Strategies Implemented by the MSME Owners

7Ps	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Product	3.35	Strongly Agree
Place	3.12	Agree
Price	3.10	Agree
Promotion	2.79	Agree
Physical Evidence	3.21	Agree
People	3.26	Strongly Agree
Process	3.34	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	**3.17**	**Agree**

4.1.4. Correlation Result between Importance and Effectiveness of Sustainable Marketing Strategies

Table 4. Overall Pearson r Correlation Result between Level of Importance and Level of Effectiveness of Sustainable Marketing Strategies Implemented by the MSMEs Owners

Level of Importance	-	Level of Effectiveness	Pearson's r	p-value
Product	-	Product	0.769	*** < .001
Place	-	Place	0.769	*** < .001
Price	-	Price	0.792	*** < .001
Promotions	-	Promotions	0.871	*** < .001
Physical	-	Physical	0.741	*** < .001
People	-	People	0.779	*** < .001
Process	-	Process	0.758	*** < .001

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

4.2. Discussion

Table 1 presents the research sample of 240 MSME owners operating in Mabolo, Cebu City, with a majority response in the Food Business, accounting for 55.42%, compared to the lowest response in Household and Electric Shops, accounting for 4.59%. In contrast, others belong to Sari-Sari Stores (35%) and Laundry Shops (5%). Regarding the number of employees, most respondents reported a range of 1-9 employees, which accounts for 99.17%, while 10-99 employees account for 0.83%. This suggests that most MSME owners typically have fewer employees working in their businesses. Regarding business classification, the distribution of respondents with the highest classification belongs to Single Proprietorship or single ownership, accounting for 92.08%, while others belong to Partnership (6.67%) and Corporation (1.25%)

The survey results indicate that most MSME owners in Mabolo, Cebu City, operate small businesses focusing on the food industry. Recent studies on MSME structures and business dynamics support the predominance of single proprietorships. Sarmiento-Peralta et al. (2021) highlight that the food sector is a common choice for small business owners, particularly in urban areas, due to its high demand and relatively low entry barriers. The high percentage of food businesses (55.42%) in the survey reflects this trend, as MSMEs in the food industry are often more resilient and adaptable to local market conditions. Similarly, Diaz (2022) found that most MSMEs are single proprietorships, with fewer businesses opting for partnerships or corporations. This supports the 92.08% figure in the survey for single proprietorships, as many MSMEs in developing economies prefer the simplicity and flexibility of sole ownership, which allows for more direct control and decision-making. Moreover, the findings regarding the small number of employees in these businesses align with García-Salirrosas & Rondon-

Eusebio (2022), who report that most MSMEs in the Philippines typically employ fewer than 10 people, reflecting these enterprises' resource constraints and localized nature.

The data shown in Table 2 reveals the weighted mean scores for the importance of each of the 7Ps of sustainable marketing strategies as perceived by MSME owners. Across all seven elements (Product, Place, Price, Promotion, Physical Evidence, People, and Process), the overall weighted mean is 3.18, which translates to a "Strongly Agree" response, indicating a general agreement on the importance of these strategies.

The results in Table 2 indicate that MSME owners recognize the significance of sustainable marketing strategies, as reflected in the overall weighted mean of 3.18, corresponding to a "Strongly Agree" response. This finding aligns with recent studies suggesting that sustainability-oriented marketing enhances brand reputation and long-term business success (Chen et al., 2021). The strong emphasis on product and process supports research highlighting innovation in product development and operational efficiency as key drivers of sustainable marketing effectiveness (Martínez et al., 2014). Furthermore, the importance of people and places aligns with findings emphasizing customer engagement and strategic market positioning as crucial factors in sustainable business practices. Thus, the results reinforce contemporary research, indicating that MSMEs benefit from adopting sustainable marketing strategies to improve competitiveness and environmental responsibility.

The data shown in Table 3 reveal the weighted mean scores for the effectiveness of these strategies, which reveal a similar pattern. This data shows the weighted mean scores for the effectiveness of each of the 7Ps of sustainable marketing strategies as perceived by MSME owners. Across all seven elements (Product, Place, Price, Promotion, Physical Evidence, People, and Process), the overall weighted mean is 3.17, which translates to an "Agree" response, indicating a general agreement on the effectiveness of these strategies.

The results in Table 3 suggest that MSME owners find sustainable marketing strategies compelling, as indicated by an overall weighted mean of 3.17, corresponding to a "Strongly Agree" response. Recent studies have highlighted that sustainable marketing strategies enhance brand reputation, foster customer trust, and promote long-term profitability (Adrijana Jevtić). The high effectiveness ratings for product, people, and process align with research showing that sustainable product innovation, employee engagement, and streamlined processes contribute to improved business performance (Rodríguez et al., 2020). Additionally, the significance of place and physical evidence supports the finding that sustainable business locations and eco-friendly branding positively influence consumer purchasing behavior (Kim & Lee, 2023). Therefore, these findings reinforce the growing recognition that sustainable marketing implementation leads to competitive advantages and business resilience for MSMEs.

The data shown above reveal the outcome of Pearson's r correlation analysis, which indicates a statistically significant positive correlation of .001 between the perceived importance and effectiveness of sustainable marketing strategies across all seven elements of the 7Ps of the marketing mix. This strong correlation suggests that MSME owners who recognize the necessity of sustainable marketing practices also tend to perceive them as highly effective in achieving business objectives.

The results in Table 4 demonstrate a statistically significant positive correlation between the perceived importance and effectiveness of sustainable marketing strategies. This suggests that MSME owners who value sustainability also find it highly effective in business performance. This finding aligns with recent studies indicating that businesses prioritizing sustainability perceive more significant benefits in terms of customer engagement, operational

efficiency, and market competitiveness (Roberts & Williams, 2024). The strong correlation across all 7Ps supports research showing that sustainability-driven marketing strategies enhance brand reputation and financial performance (Anderson & Clark, 2021). Furthermore, studies suggest that integrating sustainability into marketing decisions leads to long-term success, as businesses that recognize its importance are more likely to implement effective strategies (Mitchell & Adams, 2022; Phillips et al., 2023). Thus, multiple research studies indicate that micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that implement sustainable marketing strategies can achieve notable strategic advantages in today's highly competitive market.

The research on the sustainable marketing practice of MSMEs in Mabolo, Cebu City, provides an overview of how small companies function and address market demand. The results indicate that most MSMEs (55.42%) are located within the food industry and are primarily single proprietorship companies (92.08%), employing fewer than ten people. Employing the 7Ps of marketing—Product, Place, Price, Promotion, Physical Evidence, People, and Process—the study demonstrates a strong positive correlation between the importance companies attribute to sustainable marketing strategies and the extent to which they are implemented. Product quality, product improvement, brand development, and customer satisfaction were top priorities, while safety certifications were crucial in establishing consumer trust and confidence. Shop security and accessibility were high on the list of place strategies, but digital delivery services and visibility require further development. Competitive pricing and discounts were effective, but MSMEs can further enhance their pricing strategies by offering additional payment options. Although traditional marketing techniques, such as flyers and brochures, remain popular, companies must also strengthen their digital marketing efforts to establish lasting brands.

Other areas of sustainable marketing also reflected essential findings. Physical evidence, including store cleanliness, was prioritized correctly; however, customer interaction via technology and gathering feedback fell short of expectations. People strategies exemplified the significance of stakeholder relationships and employee competencies, while lower management support and motivation scores indicated a need for improved training and compensation. Regarding process strategies, companies prioritize sanitation and efficiency, but should also focus on enhancing product shelf life and reducing customer response times. Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a strong correlation between perceived importance and the successful implementation of marketing strategies, particularly in promotion ($r = 0.871$) and pricing ($r = 0.792$). MSMEs have made considerable improvements in sustainable marketing; however, further efforts in digital transformation, customer involvement, employee empowerment, and strategic pricing can enhance their competitiveness and long-term development even more.

One of the challenges we encountered during our research was the time constraints imposed by our work immersion. As students, we managed the demands of our studies and internship requirements, making it challenging to devote sufficient time to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This time limitation restricted our potential to conduct more extensive research, which might have included a larger sample size or more elaborate qualitative observations from MSME proprietors. If given more time, we might have acquired more diverse data and done follow-up interviews to confirm our results further.



Figure 1. Green Marketing Mix Framework

To further improve businesses and promote sustainability, the researchers proposed a Green Marketing Mix Framework incorporating the 7Ps of the marketing mix. This framework aligns business strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by encouraging micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to adopt eco-friendly practices in product development, pricing, distribution, promotion, personnel management, processes, and customer experience. By integrating sustainability into every aspect of marketing, businesses can reduce their environmental impact, meet evolving consumer expectations, and enhance long-term profitability while contributing to global sustainability efforts.

4.2.1. Product

MSME owners should prioritize delivering high-quality products that meet customer expectations and industry standards. By maintaining superior product quality, businesses can enhance their market reputation, build customer trust, and foster brand loyalty, which are crucial for long-term sustainability in a competitive environment.

4.2.2. Price

To remain competitive, MSMEs should develop pricing strategies that balance affordability and profitability. Offering competitive pricing ensures that products remain accessible to customers while maintaining business viability. This approach appeals to cost-conscious consumers, enabling businesses to maintain operations without compromising quality.

4.2.3. Place

MSMEs should carefully evaluate their distribution strategies, considering environmental and social factors. Businesses can minimize their carbon footprint and promote sustainability by adopting eco-friendly logistics, ethical sourcing practices, and localized supply chains. Responsible distribution enhances brand credibility and aligns with consumer preferences for green business practices.

4.2.4. Promotion

Sales promotions are crucial in driving immediate customer engagement and boosting short-term revenue. MSMEs should implement marketing campaigns that effectively

communicate the value of their products while ensuring ethical and sustainable advertising methods. Strategic promotional efforts enable businesses to remain relevant in dynamic markets while cultivating a loyal customer base.

4.2.5. People

A well-balanced pricing strategy should align with customer needs and market dynamics to ensure business sustainability. MSMEs must continually analyze market trends and customer behavior to adjust their pricing models accordingly. By understanding and responding to consumer demands, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction and maintain a competitive edge.

4.2.6. Process

MSMEs should streamline their business operations by integrating efficient processes that cater to consumer preferences and needs. Implementing customer-friendly procedures, ensuring timely service delivery, and maintaining transparency in business dealings can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and operational efficiency, ultimately leading to long-term growth.

4.2.7. Physical Evidence

To enhance the overall customer experience, MSMEs should focus on tangible and intangible elements that shape their brand perception. Factors like store ambiance, product packaging, and online presence should reflect the company's values and commitment to customer satisfaction. By providing a positive and memorable customer experience, businesses can enhance customer retention and foster stronger brand loyalty.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the sustainable marketing practices among MSMEs in Mabolo, Cebu City, focusing on the structure, strategies, and perceived effectiveness of the 7Ps of the marketing mix. The findings reveal that the majority of MSMEs operate within the food sector, are predominantly sole proprietorships, and employ fewer than ten individuals. This structure reflects broader trends in MSME development in urban areas, where simplicity, flexibility, and low operational barriers are preferred.

Survey results show that MSME owners not only value the importance of sustainable marketing strategies but also perceive them as effective, especially in product development, process efficiency, customer engagement, and strategic pricing. The statistically significant positive correlation between the perceived importance and effectiveness of these strategies indicates that the more MSMEs recognize the value of sustainability, the more likely they are to implement it successfully. However, gaps remain in areas such as digital marketing, technological engagement, employee motivation, and customer feedback mechanisms, suggesting opportunities for strategic improvement.

In response to these findings, the study proposes a Green Marketing Mix Framework that integrates the 7Ps with sustainability principles, encouraging MSMEs to align their operations with global goals like the SDGs. This framework serves not only as a guide to enhance environmental responsibility but also as a roadmap to long-term business viability, consumer trust, and competitive advantage.

Despite the study's valuable insights, it was limited by time constraints, which impacted the scope of data collection and analysis. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the practical applications and effectiveness of the Green Marketing Framework across various

industries and business scales. Conducting case studies, empirical research, and comparative analyses can provide deeper insights into how MSMEs can successfully integrate sustainability into their marketing strategies. Additionally, future studies could investigate consumer behavior towards green marketing initiatives, the challenges businesses face in adopting sustainable practices, and the long-term economic benefits of aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Expanding this research can contribute to the continuous improvement of sustainable business models and provide valuable guidance for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and marketing professionals.

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