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Marketing of Sustainable Development in Educational Institutions of Ukraine in the Context of Cooperation with the EU (against the background of military circumstances)

Abstract: *Introduction.* The armed conflict in Ukraine calls into question the achievements in sustainable development, environmental safety and international cooperation of European countries. Educational institutions are responsible for promoting sustainable development in all areas of their activities and society. Given Ukraine's aspirations to integrate European standards of quality of life and implement the principles of sustainable development, it is of particular importance to study the long-term and successful experience of the European Union with its further adaptation to the national economic context. *The purpose of the article* is to identify sustainable development marketing initiatives in higher education institutions of Ukraine. The methodological basis of the study is the analytical and empirical principles, which involve synthesis, modelling, historical and logical analysis methods. *The methodology* is based on an empirical review of scientific developments on marketing issues and cultural initiatives for sustainable development. *The results of the study* confirm the hypothesis that marketing of an educational institution has a positive impact on sustainable development in the country. *The scientific novelty* of the research results is that this study contributes to the growth of the sustainability discourse in the academic community and provides practical recommendations for educational institutions seeking to improve their marketing strategies in line with environmental and social responsibility goals. This article contributes to the literature by expanding the understanding of sustainability marketing in higher education and providing practical recommendations for Ukrainian higher education institutions seeking to improve their

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marketing strategies in line with sustainability principles. The study highlights the link between sustainable marketing, student perceptions and the performance of higher education institutions. It aims to promote positive changes towards a more sustainable future in public higher education institutions.

Keywords: sustainable development marketing, ecology, stakeholder, management, EU, international support, higher education institutions, students.

1. Introduction

The problem formulation. The military conflict in Ukraine, triggered by the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in 2022, is not only a regional catastrophe but also a global challenge with far-reaching consequences. The loss of human lives, destruction of infrastructure and economic destabilisation are apparent. Still, the long-term environmental and systemic risks that extend beyond the war zone remain much less visible but no less critical.

The armed aggression against Ukraine has a significant destructive impact not only on the economy and the environment, but also on the education sector, which is one of the key elements of sustainable development. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2022), more than 1,200 educational institutions were damaged or completely destroyed as a result of hostilities. Given the challenges of the times, the educational process is carried out mainly remotely, but not all higher education students have the proper conditions to receive educational services: some are in dangerous regions, others are deprived of technical means or stable Internet connection. This is compounded by regular air raids and power cuts, which make it impossible to continue the educational process. Thus, the war negatively impacts the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in terms of ensuring quality and accessible education for all. Given the above, the relevance of sustainability marketing in Ukrainian educational institutions is undeniable. At the same time, military circumstances highlight the need to rethink approaches to ensuring the sustainability of systems in the context of conflict threats. As a result, there is a danger of a new era of global instability, which requires in-depth scientific analysis. Implementing sustainability standards in education by universities complicates partnerships: European universities consistently integrate sustainability into their curricula. At the same time, double degree programmes create opportunities to share best practices in implementing education for sustainable development. Quality assurance policies and pro-

cedures should be adjusted to ensure such cooperation occurs and meets the partner's requirements. The question of how the implementation of international partnerships between HEIs, particularly within the framework of double degree programmes, contributes to the dissemination of sustainable curricula and relevant approaches to quality assurance in higher education remains poorly understood. For Ukrainian universities, this issue is complicated by the conditions of war. The question arises to what extent domestic universities retain the potential for cooperation and development, as the implementation of double degree programmes requires significant efforts to harmonise approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, as well as to revise international policies and procedures.

State study of the problem. Domestic scientific developments raise the issue of sustainable development marketing in all spheres of human activity. In particular, O. Khanova and S. Skibina (2017), M. Ruda and M. Mazuryk (2021), O. Kalantaievska (2021), Yu. Dovhan and L. Serednytska (2023) study the long-term and practical experience of the EU in implementing the concept of sustainable development marketing. Dovhan and Serednytska (2023) point out that sustainability marketing is not only useful for environmental protection and social justice, but also profitable. According to them, by implementing this marketing format, institutions have the opportunity to create a mutually beneficial relationship between their own business, consumer needs, the interests of society and environmental preservation (Dovhan & Serednytska, 2023).

N. Ushenko and A. Tupika (2025) analyse the adaptability and competitiveness of Ukrainian cities, particularly Kyiv, in the context of war. They focus on the trajectory of resilient development, which implies high resilience to risks and threats (Ushenko & Tupika, 2025, pp. 354–363). H. Kapinos and K. Larionova (2023) examines the problems of managing Ukraine's sustainable development through the prism of war conditions. The authors analyses different approaches to defining the concept of sustainable development and notes that they all contain a common idea of meeting the current generation's needs while considering future generations' interests (Kapinos & Larionova, 2023, pp. 93–103). S. Ulanova in her article 'Sustainable Development Against the Backdrop of the War in Ukraine' (Ulanova, 2023, pp. 250–252) and H. Myskiv and I. Pasinovych in their article 'Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility under war conditions in Ukraine' (Myskiv & Pasinovych, 2023, pp. 21–36) outlined the impact of the war on the goals of sustainable development and con-

sidered the position of social responsibility actors in responding to the military aggression against Ukraine.

Important theoretical aspects of sustainable development in education are the basis of research by many scholars (Casarejos et al., 2017; Aleixo et al., 2018; Fuchs et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020; Budihardjo et al., 2021). In particular, Latvian scientists I. Degtjarjova, I. Lapina and D. Freidenfelds see the effectiveness and improvement of the quality of education in project marketing, taking into account the challenges of time and addressing sustainable development (Degtjarjova et al., 2018; Arbula Blecich, 2024).

The theoretical basis for students as the main direct users of services in higher education institutions is based on the stakeholder theory presented in the research of M. Sandmaung and D. Ba Khang (2013). Students are seen as the main stakeholders and direct users of services in higher education institutions, and their needs and preferences should be taken into account when developing and implementing sustainable initiatives and programmes (Pedro et al., 2020).

Particular attention should be paid to the experience of cooperation between Ukrainian and British universities in wartime, considered in the publication by I. Skliar, M. Kostel, O. Melnyk and K. Bliumska-Danko (2025), as well as the transformation of the work of internally displaced higher education institutions, covered in the publication (pp. 86–99).

Having analysed the historiography of the studied issues, it is worth noting that the issue of marketing sustainable development in Ukraine's educational sector (considering current challenges and realities) has not yet received proper theoretical analysis. Since sustainability is an important issue worldwide, the integration of sustainability principles into the marketing strategies of educational institutions is becoming an urgent need.

Unresolved issues. Despite the growing importance of sustainability marketing in various sectors, there is a notable gap in the research literature on applying sustainability marketing practices in public higher education institutions. It has been found that the existing scientific literature contains only a minimal number of studies on the application of sustainability marketing in public higher education institutions, despite its recognised importance. As a result, in the modern field of domestic socio-cultural research, the issue of sustainable development marketing in the educational sphere has not had a full-fledged theoretical articulation. Accordingly, there is a need to improve the existing scientific and methodological approaches to conceptualising and defining the main

modern tasks of sustainable development marketing in Ukrainian educational institutions. This study aims to help fill this gap.

2. Purpose and methods

The purpose and objectives of the study. *The purpose of the article* is to identify sustainability marketing initiatives in higher education institutions of Ukraine. By studying this research problem, the study aims to fill a gap in the literature and provide empirical evidence of the positive impact of sustainability marketing on the activities of higher education institutions in terms of service quality.

In order to achieve this goal, the study aims to solve the following main *tasks*:

1. To analyse the current theoretical and methodological approaches to sustainable development in the educational sphere.
2. To study the experience of cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union in implementing the principles of sustainable development in the activities of economic entities in Ukraine.
3. To assess the impact of the war in Ukraine on the national system of sustainable development and environmental safety.
4. Consider the post-conflict reality to identify potential areas for adapting European practices to Ukrainian conditions.
5. To develop recommendations for integrating the principles of sustainable development into the strategy of Ukraine's educational trajectory.

Methodology and research methods. The methodological basis of the study is, first of all, a comprehensive principle that includes methods of analysis and empiricism, modelling, historical and logical methods, and statistical analysis.

Research information base. The study is based on theoretical and empirical information obtained from reliable sources. The results of previous studies conducted by the most famous scientists in marketing, political science, management and global governance were used as theoretical data. The materials of the documents of the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Geneva (Switzerland), 'Strengthening the Youth Education Platform for Sustainable Development', the development and implementation of educational programmes and trainings on the SDGs, sub-grant programmes for youth initiatives, the National Youth Forum, etc. were used. The empirical data on the subject of the study are based on the authors' observations and expert opinions of specialists in this field. The chronological boundaries of the study cover the last decade, with a small forecast for the next one.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Marketing of sustainable development in higher education

Education for sustainable development aims to acquire knowledge and skills that contribute to forming a new environmentally conscious society, forming new worldviews, attitudes, values, and promoting socially desirable, economically viable and environmentally balanced development (*Osvita*, n.d.).

Sustainability marketing in higher education is a strategic approach to promoting sustainability principles and practices in academic institutions to contribute to a more environmentally conscious, socially responsible and economically sustainable future for all stakeholders (Fuchs et al., 2020; Budihardjo et al., 2021; Meštrović et al., 2021).

Sustainability marketing in higher education encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at promoting sustainability principles, practices and initiatives in academic institutions. This approach recognises the unique position of higher education institutions as catalysts for social change and innovation that can influence their operations and wider societal attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable development. Sustainability marketing in higher education recognises the central role of students as key stakeholders in promoting sustainability initiatives. As a business and management function, marketing should improve organisations' management processes by aligning products and services with the needs of target markets, future generations and society.

Educational institutions are crucial in promoting sustainable development and equipping students with the knowledge and skills to address social, environmental and economic challenges (Hübscher et al., 2022). Higher education institutions use different strategies to engage stakeholders and demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development (Shawe et al., 2019).

These include integrating sustainability into academic programmes across all disciplines, promoting interdisciplinary research collaboration on sustainability-related topics and sustainability issues (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017).

3.2. Corporate social responsibility of students as a component of sustainable development in higher education

The focus of this study is to investigate the relationship between sustainability marketing and HEI performance through service quality from the perspective of students as direct users of services. Students represent an important stakeholder group whose perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability

marketing initiatives can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact on the overall success of higher education institutions. Therefore, further research raises the issue of students' social responsibility as an important group of stakeholders in the educational process.

Higher education institutions must put students' interests first and design their programmes, services and policies to meet their diverse needs and expectations (Jongbloed et al., 2008). Increasingly, higher education institutions are integrating sustainability considerations into their strategic plans, governance structures and operations to address environmental challenges and meet stakeholder expectations (Aleixo et al., 2018).

The introduction of sustainable marketing practices in higher education reflects a broader trend towards corporate social responsibility (Arena et al., 2018). Students play an important role in shaping institutional policies, practices and culture. As consumers of educational services, they influence enrolment decisions, tuition fee revenues, and the institution's reputation. Consequently, educational institutions should adopt a customer-centric approach and focus on providing high-quality services that meet or exceed student expectations (Širola & Mihaljević, 2016). When evaluating higher education institutions, they attach great importance to environmental responsibility, social justice, and ethical leadership. Thus, students' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable development significantly impact institutional decision-making and strategic planning.

3.3. Marketing cases for Ukrainian higher education students

On 29-31 May 2024, the 19th meeting of the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) took place in Geneva, Switzerland. The agenda addressed the challenges and achievements in implementing sustainable development marketing at the national level. The participating countries reported on the results of implementing sustainable development. They discussed strategies for educational activities in 2025 and action plans for the next period, developed an action plan to strengthen cooperation with other organisations and processes at the regional level, and discussed other issues.

Particular attention was paid to the military conflict in Ukraine as a tool for destroying national sustainable development. V. Kyrychenko, member of the UNECE Youth Platform on ESD, presented Ukraine's achievements in implementing education for sustainable development in 2023-2024, focusing on national priorities regarding the importance of sustainable development in the country. She noted the importance of international technical assistance pro-

grammes and projects to implement sustainable development and other related areas. Several best practices were presented in the following areas:

- Sustainable recovery, security and ESD;
- Non-formal education, youth leadership and EDC;
- WASH and EDC;
- Mental health and EDC.

Among the best practices, some initiatives coordinated by the Partnership Network ‘Education for Sustainable Development in Ukraine’ and its member organisations were noted (*19-te zasidannia*, n.d.).

According to the concept of sustainable development of Ukraine, strategies have been identified to ensure safety standards (availability of shelters and other important premises, restoration of buildings), flexibility of the educational process and reform of the educational system following EU requirements, support for the integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and other vulnerable groups (*Progress in implementing*, 2024, p. 5).

Curricula and educational resources related to strategic planning and financing the Sustainable Development Goals in Ukraine are constantly reviewed. An important component of the sustainable development trajectory is foreign training courses in strategic planning and financing for achieving the SDGs (*Progress in implementing*, 2024). Trainings for educators covering mental health and ESD are regularly held (*Progress in implementing*, 2024, p. 5).

Of the 32 educational components of the Ukrainian-language curricula reviewed, the majority (69%) were non-systemic, i.e., conducted on a one-time basis. The remaining 31 per cent of programmes are available on an ongoing basis on various online platforms (United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

Finally, the youth educational platform for sustainable development is being strengthened through the co-organisation of the National Youth Forum.

The project aims to promote the implementation of the UGP Youth Initiatives in Ukraine, supporting the activities of the Youth Advisory Group and disseminating best practices at the international level, including participation in the UNECE Sustainable Development Process. The project’s main objective is to develop the potential of young people, empower them and engage them in climate change action through training and implementation of their environmental initiatives in the field of education for sustainable development.

The project includes: a capacity building training campaign and a competition for youth environmental initiatives; support for several youth initiatives in local communities on climate change, sustainable urban solutions, sustainable

development, education for sustainable development; joint youth leader communication events; and international exchange of experience in education for sustainable development (United Nations Development Programme, 2022).

Sustainable marketing in higher education is becoming increasingly important in response to global environmental challenges and changing societal expectations. As institutions that educate and influence society, higher education institutions have a unique opportunity and responsibility to promote the principles of sustainable development (Casarejos et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2020).

3.4. Double degree programme as a component of sustainable development

Given the challenges of the times, domestic universities have been forced to reconsider their strategic goals, particularly internationalisation and the formation of sustainable development goals. As a result, international support from European universities has increased. Under these conditions, the initiatives have become an act of solidarity and compensating for lost potential.

This study is contextualised within the framework of the Twinning initiative, which, in partnership with British universities, has supported Ukrainian universities in various forms. The Business Administration in Organisational Transformation programme was implemented as part of the cooperation between Abertay University and Semen Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics. The Information Technologies for Sustainable Energy Engineering programme was implemented through the efforts of the University of London South Bank and Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas. The programme ‘Marine Engineering of River and Sea Transport’ was implemented within the framework of cooperation between the University of Plymouth and Kherson Maritime Academy, ‘Psychological Wellbeing and Mental Health’ – within the framework of cooperation between the University of Nottingham Trent and Lviv Polytechnic National University, ‘Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security’ – within the framework of cooperation between the Royal Agricultural University and Sumy National Agrarian University.

Starting 1 September 2023, the UK and Ukrainian partners are implementing six double degree programmes (Dlouhá et al., 2018, pp. 4263–4276). The main objective of these programmes is to contribute to the debate on the internationalisation of the higher education sector and the implementation of education for sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals in higher education establishments (HEEs).

It was found that, despite some differences between the procedures, the principles underpinning internal quality assurance in Ukrainian universities are consistent with those of their UK counterparts. I. Skliar, M. Kostel, O. Melnyk and K. Bliumska-Danko (2025) noted that the double degree programme is characterised by interdisciplinarity, one of the challenges that must be considered in the educational process.

An important result of the study was the analysis of how participants assess the needs for continuing professional development related to the successful implementation of double degree programmes.

These needs were identified through an assessment of education for sustainable development and the implementation of student-centred approaches.

Further research could study the impact of double degree programmes on sustainable development in the country. In addition, comparative studies of different educational systems and cultural contexts could provide a deeper understanding of the global applicability of the findings.

Conclusions.

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis that marketing of an educational institution has a positive impact on sustainable development in the country. Sustainable development marketing is a function of sustainable economic development, essentially a management tool. The empirical study has shortcomings and limitations related to the research approach and the processing and analysis of the collected data related to applying the quantitative approach. The study has limitations related to its implementation in only one state university and the inability to compare it with relevant previous studies, as it focuses mainly on the commercial sector and primarily covers only one of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

An important finding of the study was the analysis of how participants assessed the needs for continuing professional development related to the successful implementation of double degree programmes. Despite some differences between the procedures, the principles underpinning internal quality assurance in Ukrainian universities are consistent with those of their British partners. Skliar I., Kostel M., Melnyk O. and Bliumska-Danko K. (2025) noted that the double degree programme is characterised by interdisciplinarity, which is defined as one of the challenges that must be taken into account in the educational process. Since the results of research on the double degree programme are not considered in a time perspective, but only in the context of a given situation, and sus-

tainable marketing necessarily involves a long-term perspective, it is necessary to consider it in the future and to study the impact of sustainability marketing on the activities of higher education institutions over specific periods (longitudinal study). These needs are identified as assessment of education for sustainable development and implementation of student-centred approaches.

This article highlights the importance of sustainability marketing in higher education, focusing on students as key stakeholders. Further research could focus on the impact of the double degree programme on sustainable development in a country. In addition, comparative studies of different educational systems and cultural contexts could provide a deeper understanding of the global applicability of the findings.

By highlighting the importance of sustainable marketing in public higher education institutions, this study contributes to the growth of the sustainability discourse in the academic community. It provides practical recommendations for educational institutions seeking to improve their marketing strategies in line with environmental and social responsibility goals.

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