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## Sustainable Marketing in the Communication Practice of a Higher Education Institution as Exemplified by the Humanitas Academy

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Submitted 12/09/24, 1st revision 10/10/24, 2nd revision 20/10/24, accepted 15/11/24

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The main objective of the paper is to discuss the assumptions of sustainable marketing as well as the tools used therein on the example of the non-public higher education institution, the Humanitas Academy in Sosnowiec marketing strategy.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** In order to present the topic and make research findings, there were used the literature research method and the monographic method, the essence of which was a detailed case study of a specific institution. On the basis of the monographic method and the Academy's marketing activity, the author analyzed internal documents, including internal legal acts, advertising brochures, reports and statements as well as media coverage and the website content. Research interviews with the Academy staff were the supplement to the presented scientific techniques.

**Findings:** The concept of sustainable marketing assumes that marketing should become the main source and the focal point of an organization's interest in the sustainable development of the external and internal environment. It was confirmed that this concept has been successful in market activities implemented by organizations of various types, including higher education institutions. The example of the Humanitas Academy showed that the implementation of sustainable marketing assumptions could include all instruments of the marketing mix - from market research and designing a marketing strategy, through educational products, a distribution network of the educational offer to promotional communication.

**Practical Implications:** Practical business implications focus primarily on the possibility of using results by higher education marketing managers when designing and implementing marketing strategies in educational services markets.

**Originality/Value:** There was presented an innovative approach in creating a comprehensive marketing strategy of a higher education institution that is focused on sustainable and responsible activities in relation to ecological and climatic, social, cultural, legal and political challenges.

**Keywords:** higher education, sustainable marketing, marketing management, promotion, education.

**JEL Classification:** I2, M3.

**Paper type:** Research article.

**Acknowledgements:** The author would like to thank all employees of the Humanitas Academy who provided research materials and conducted research interviews.

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## **1. Introduction**

Dynamic and rapid changes of attitudes, models of behavioral and consumer preferences, growing challenges towards organizations from society, growing social awareness of global threats and challenges with their increasing complexity, regulatory pressure of the state and European institutions, growing markets competition, increasing share of the Generation Z representatives among organizations, development of new information and communication technologies – these are just some of the factors determining the currently observed change in marketing models, both in enterprises and public institutions.

Currently, marketing explores not only the sphere of recognizing and satisfying needs and desires of market participants, but it constitutes an increasingly important instrument for researching, creating, transmitting and disseminating values, both in commercial and social relations, between an organization and its stakeholders.

Autotelic values and social ideas associated with them constitute an important part of normative and symbolic subsystems of enterprises' organizational cultures, not only due to their role in creating the organization's internal identity; defining its specificity or setting the framework for the self-definition of market entities but also because of the growing need to declare and confirm continuously the specific axio-normative code of an organization in its relations with the external world.

Organization stakeholders, especially including representatives of the Generation Z, expect companies and institutions, with which they enter into relationships (not only market relationships), to provide transparent, open and continuous communication provided in the language of values and about values, communication which is necessary in order to assess an organization in terms of compliance of its activities with its own axiological system, and in consequence, to make consumer, employee, business, decisions.

Numerous studies have shown that when contemporary organization stakeholders decide to benefit from an organization offer or to establish cooperation, they validate and then take into account those elements of this organization's identity that refer not only to its offer but also include features that constitute the company's extraordinary values at the level of ethics, social ideas, attitudes and opinions concerning important problems of public life.

Values act as criteria useful for selecting aspirations of people who create the organization regarding the nature, durability and quality of relationships with a given organization. They appear as the integration standard of an individual with a company. They differentiate the social sphere of market activity. This fundamentally influences the nature of an organization's marketing activities, their areas, operation methods and models.

## **2. Main Assumptions of Sustainable Marketing**

In the sphere of a company communication in the market, it is no longer enough to offer goods and services that are ideally suited to the needs of a specific target group. Products and services should provide spiritual fulfillment and an organization should contribute to the improvement of the world. All these factors are intended to ensure that the organization's marketing and activities have to inspire customer trust and gain credibility. An organization's primary goal is to provide solutions to social problems (Dutkiewicz, 2019 pp.149-161).

The development of values and sharing them with the organization's stakeholders should not be limited to activities related to improving products or services; pricing; improving distribution channels or customer "service"- market values. They must also enter the sphere of general social values and ideas, must reach much further than just the organization's target groups that are understood in categories of sales.

Growing consumer awareness, changes of attitudes and behaviors of the organization stakeholders, especially including representatives of the Generation Z, force companies to include values the customers identify with, into their organization strategies. It results in brand recognition and loyalty as well as openness to shaping the brand multi-level relationships, not only consumer ones.

Modern recipients expect organizations to focus not only on achieving business goals but also on creating companies identity and standing out on the market through professed and openly declared values. Products offered by organizations and activities undertaken should not only bring profits but they also should provide solutions to the most serious social, economic and environmental problems (Praczyk, 2023). Organizations are required to:

- popularize values and social ideas through activities in the fields of public relations, advertising and online communication activities,
- get involved and support social movements, activities and campaigns promoting values included in a company's mission,
- cooperate actively with non-government organizations and other third sector entities that promote similar values in order to support and disseminate socially important initiatives,
- enable employees to participate in volunteering, charity events or social campaigns related to company's values,
- get involved in educational activities raising awareness of important social issues,
- focus on transparency expressed in regular publication of reports on company activities and goal achievements related to professed values,
- implement product and service innovations that directly correspond to values embedded in a company's identity, e.g., ecological or inclusive solutions.

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In addition to implementing the generally understood marketing concept, which is based on the value marketing, more detailed marketing, PR or communication orientations and concepts that are characterized by a clear axiological tendency and that include sustainable development marketing, can also play their role in order to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

Sustainable development is considered in both scientific and journalistic literature. It is treated as a development that enables to meet current needs without threatening possibilities of meeting future generation necessities (Our Common Future, 1987, p. 43). According to Robert Repetto, this concept refers to a development strategy that manages all resources, such as human, natural, financial and physical in order to ensure strategic growth as well as long-term prosperity and wealth.

At the same time policies, tactics and activities supporting current living standards through destroying the foundations of functioning economies are rejected. The aspect of sustainable development should focus not on leaving future generations with fewer prospects and opportunities (Pearce, Markandya, and Barbier, 1989).

The concept of sustainable marketing is based on objectives of business activity and aims at integrating the ecological, social and economic dimensions of the organization functioning. This concept has emerged and developed together with the growing consumers', public administration and business interest in environmental and social problems.

It has constituted a response to global megatrends such as climate change, environmental degradation, growing shortages, global competition for resources, accelerating technological changes, changes in the global economy power and in geopolitical situation, devaluation of human rights and democratic values (e.g., due to the growing importance of populist movements in political systems), changes in structures and preferred models of family life, crossing the boundaries set by gender stereotypes and equality aspirations.

Sustainable marketing focuses on meeting the needs of an organization's current customer. However, preferences and desires of an organization future generation stakeholders as well as opportunities to meet these needs in a multi-generational perspective are also taken into account. The consequence of such an approach is the necessity to change the behavior of all entities included in the value chain in order to achieve goals focused on three areas: ecological (environmental), social (equity) and economic (economic). This is referred to as the 3E paradigm (Kotler and Lee, 2005).

On one hand, it is worth noting that the 3E approach is nothing new in the marketing concept. For Wroe Alderson, the forerunner of the systemic approach to marketing, marketing activities were considered as an organized system of behaviors defined as an ecological system that was composed of groups connected with the environment in which they were functioning.

In connection with the concept of Jean J. Boddewyn, marketing was perceived as a set of communication processes that allowed a specific structure of managerial activity to implement market functions in relations with the social environment and for the benefit of this environment (Kamiński 2019, pp. 3-15). In turn, in the late 1960s, William Lazer postulated that *"one of the roles of marketing was to encourage consumers to the increased expenses and time dedicated to social, intellectual and moral development [...] and to encourage to establish new consumption standards, including a resignation from the acceptance of self-indulgence, luxurious surroundings and useless products"* (Lazer, 1969, pp. 3-9).

However, on the other hand, it has been only sustainable marketing that has based its assumptions on this aspect of the organization management and communication with external stakeholders. Participants of marketing activities have been ordered not only to take into account but also to treat the general social and universal perspective as a priority in relation to the interests of an organization. Moreover, this perspective should be perceived on a multi-generational scale, which was not specified this way in previous marketing concepts.

As Van Dam and Apeldoorn accurately expressed, sustainable marketing is based on the conviction that companies' market activity can be both a source of modern world global problems and a means of these problems solving (Van Dam and Apeldoorn, 1996). Due to resource depletion, marketing-driven, constant consumption growth is one of the threats to human existence.

Culture of consumerism and "fast fashion" generate huge amounts of waste that contribute to the degradation of the natural environment. Socially irresponsible advertising campaigns and other promotional activities may encourage to environmentally harmful behaviors, such as excessive use of cars, uncontrollable plastics production or consumption of highly processed food.

Also the sphere of marketing connected with the uncontrolled production and distribution of goods on a mass scale causes the destruction of ecosystems. In turn, in the scope of persuasive and ideological instruments and through psychological manipulation of consumers' behaviors, marketing may negatively influence emotions and purchasing decisions. These factors promote excessive and irrational use of goods.

Marketing activities that perpetuate cultural stereotypes and discriminate specific social groups as well as campaigns focusing on social status and prestige, which deepen inequalities, also pose a threat. However, it should be remembered that due to the ability to organize networks of communication and exchange as well as the possibility to shape attitudes, convictions and social opinions, marketing can actually contribute to reducing global threats. In fact it has the potential that is able to:

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- popularize and encourage the use of ecological, ethical and socially responsible solutions and products,
  - shape pro-ecological consumers, employees and organization business partners' attitudes,
  - support the circular economy through the promotion of the idea of recycling, reusing, repairing and sharing goods,
  - create the image of companies as entities taking action for sustainable development,
  - inform about companies' projects and initiatives in the CSR area and inspire other organizations to take similar, socially and environmentally desirable actions.

The concept of sustainable marketing assumes that marketing should become the main source and focal point of a company's interest in the sustainable development of its external and internal environment. It is regardless of whether marketing might be perceived as a philosophy of a company's market functioning or one of the functions of an organization, which is strongly involved in relationships between the market entity and its environment (Rudawska, 2013, pp. 75-88).

Tasks of organizations, which are considered as participants of the general social system, currently include actions connected with creating the safe, stable and sustainably developing society. Appropriate marketing orientation, which is based on autotelic values and which applies tools focused on achieving socially useful goals - *pro publico bono*, are meet these assumptions (Niedzielska, 2014, pp. 213-219).

In the framework of this marketing orientation, it is assumed that all activities aiming at preparing, producing, promoting and selling goods as well as maintaining relationships with customers, should combine the aspect of company's profitability and competitiveness with the social and ecological usefulness focused on improving quality of life (Brzustewicz, 2014, pp. 2-8).

Therefore, sustainable marketing constitutes the whole range of processes referring to creating, communicating and delivering values to consumers in such a way as to protect and strengthen the natural environment and a society living in it. Sustainable marketing also should promote and strengthen values and ideas beneficial to a society.

These values and ideas are expected to be good, valuable, desirable and worthy of human wishes and choices, accepted by all or at least by the majority of community members. On the basis of them people may reach consensus, maintain dialogue and undertake positive cooperation for the common good (Martin and Schouten, 2012, pp. 10; Piwowarski 1996, p. 24). Organizations that have adopted the orientation consistent with the assumptions of sustainable marketing promote environmentally and socially friendly products, services and business practices.

With reference to marketing communications, these companies emphasize ecological and social aspects of offered solutions: at the level of products, services, distribution channels, personal, financial and organizational activities, including implemented projects.

### **3. Sustainable Marketing in Strategies of Higher Education Institutions**

Sustainable marketing is being adapted in the practice of managerial activities by various types of organizations, both commercial and public. Among them, there are also higher education institutions that seem to be particularly predisposed to demonstrate this type of orientation in their market operations.

Despite the initial skepticism regarding the application of marketing in higher education, nowadays there is no doubt that these institutions can and should adopt marketing orientation, consciously; can and should communicate with their environment; can and should intentionally create their reputation and image; can and should consistently manage trust. Initially, this type of an approach was connected with perceiving the image-building, sales or communicational activities as incompatible with the significance of science and higher education institutions' authority.

However, competitiveness of the academic market, its internal complexity, multitude of tasks and goals, pressure of demographic trends or possibilities of developing the portfolio, which are limited by the normative framework, have become some of the factors facilitating the development of marketing in higher education.

Many of the challenges can be effectively met with the support of effectively conducted research on the internal and external environment, project and implementation activities that aim at the continuous development of the educational offer; expansion into new geographical markets, distribution of knowledge with the application of new technologies (distance learning); modern promotional campaigns, appropriate after-sales service, instruments for creating strategic relationships with graduates, business or public administration, etc.

All these factors cause that it is necessary to apply modern marketing strategies systemically and to use instruments related to value, trust, image and communication management in the process of managing and organizing the activities holistically in a higher education institution.

At the same time, it is possible to observe a clear shift towards the value marketing, including sustainable marketing, in the framework of academic institutions operations. It can be obtained with full consensus concerning the legitimacy for applying the marketing tools. This trend is not surprising. Higher education institutions, beside non-government organizations and public entities, seem to be the most natural participants in social activities that aim at developing (thanks to

research activities) and disseminating (thanks to the teaching and learning process as well as commercialization of knowledge) solutions that contribute to shaping the sustainable future resistant to the effects of disasters.

Simultaneously, coherence of three key elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection have to be ensured. Students, local communities and entities cooperating with higher education institutions in implementing academic projects expect that these institutions are able to conduct their activities in a responsible and sustainable way. These goals are particularly important for the Generation Z representatives, who include current high school graduates interested in continuing their education at a higher level and who act as customers of higher education institutions.

Therefore, actions promoting sustainable development can constitute a real competitive advantage in attracting candidates for higher education. Moreover, public institutions (e.g., Polish Accreditation Committee), local authorities and student organizations put pressure on higher education institutions to take actions for sustainable development, including supporting equality, anti-discrimination, pro-democratic and ecological solutions.

Investments in sustainable practices can also bring savings, e.g., in terms of energy consumption or waste management. It seems to be significant in the context of the rapidly deteriorating economic condition of Polish academic institutions (<https://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl>). It is also worth emphasizing that a positive image of these institutions, as ecological and socially responsible entities, can attract not only candidates but also economic partners.

This approach can provide the diversification of financing sources. Sustainable marketing requires undertaking a number of coherent activities for delivering additional values to stakeholders. It can be provided by creating ecological and social benefits throughout the entire cycle of academic activities, including services. For example:

- continuous monitoring of megatrends; social moods; global problems and phenomena, especially in terms of the social and ecological impact of academic institutions on the environment they operate in (Pabian 2013, pp. 12-17), and then continuous implementing of this monitoring outcomes in managerial practice in order to adapt the institution's strategy to modern challenges,
- products designing, manufacturing, using and disposing in a closed circuit system, without any waste and pollution. Additionally, products should be manufactured only from biological, biodegradable and technical materials, i.e. those that can be reused in the production process (Niedzielska 2014, pp. 213-219). This is particularly important in the case of technical universities, which, in the course of their research, development and implementation



- activities, process raw materials and often produce specific products that can be used, for example, in industry,
- designing and offering products and services that support socially responsible consumer decisions,
  - taking advantage of product lifecycle management systems that allow to integrate and organize processes and to accelerate the information flow throughout the supply chain. It contributes to achieving the expected value in each phase of the product lifecycle (pp. 213-219),
  - managing educational and research products and services at all levels with attention to public and environmental well-being (Brzustewicz 2014, pp. 2-8),
  - involving external stakeholders, including students, graduates and business representatives, in the processes of designing educational, research and implementation products and services, including their distribution systems, in order to take into account social ideas and expectations according to the open innovation model,
  - taking initiatives and organizing projects (social, cultural, educational) that focus on shaping social attitudes important for programming and implementing the sustainable development model,
  - conducting educational activities disseminating knowledge on sustainable development among all stakeholders.

#### **4. Humanitas Academy Marketing Activities for Sustainable Development**

The Humanitas Academy is a non-public higher education institution that was established on April 23, 1997 in Sosnowiec under the name of the Higher School of Management and Marketing. The Academy's founder is the philosopher and educational activist Aleksander Dudek, who currently is the Academy's Chancellor.

Pursuant to the decision of the Minister of National Education, the school was entered into the Register of Non-State Higher Education Institutions under the number 110. The Humanitas Academy was the first non-public academic institution in Sosnowiec and the second in the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region. Currently, the Academy offers: 11 bachelor's, master's and engineering degree programmes (in Polish, English and Ukrainian languages), numerous postgraduate studies as well as doctoral seminars and post-doctoral habilitation procedures in two disciplines: legal sciences and sciences of management and quality.

The Humanitas Academy also offers specialist trainings (for teachers, entrepreneurs, lawyers and public administration employees) and educational activities for children and seniors that are carried out as part of the Youth University and the University of the Third Age. In addition to didactic activities, the Academy in Sosnowiec also conducts scientific research, mainly in the fields of law, psychology, management and pedagogy ([www.humanitas.edu.pl](http://www.humanitas.edu.pl); Dudek, Kaczmarczyk, 2023, p. 23).

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From the beginning of the academic activity in the educational market, the Humanitas Academy has been strongly focused on actions for the benefit of its external environment, especially the local community. This has been strongly reflected in the marketing approach, taking into consideration all tools of the marketing mix. The Academy has expanded its offer with products that meet the needs of the local community and take into account the community's specificity (e.g., journalism focused on local media and elements of regional education).

The Academy also has been creating the educational offer with active participation of representatives of public institutions and enterprises from the Silesia Voivodeship and the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region (e.g., consulting all curricula at the preparation stage with local employers). The Academy has also been carrying out scientific research on local problems (e.g., study on the cultural identity of the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie region, study on the local labor market).

The Academy is involved in charity and sponsorship projects for the local community (e.g., strategic sponsor of the local volleyball team *Płomień Sosnowiec*). This institution constantly organizes activities in the field of regional education supporting the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie regional culture (e.g., organizing open concerts for the residents of the region or providing financial and material resources for local artists). At the same time, the Academy clearly emphasizes its ties with the region, its attachment to the Zagłębie Dąbrowskie traditions and the cultural values of the region.

In 2021, on the basis of the market activities existing model and on previously obtained experience, the Humanitas Academy redefined, updated and broadened its marketing strategy, which included sustainable development activities. These innovations were related to the adoption of the resolution on the new development strategy passed by the Academy's Senate on December 20, 2021 pursuant to the art. 28 section 1 point 3 of the Act of July 20, 2018 on The Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2023).

This strategy is currently the fundamental "point of reference" in the management of the Humanitas Academy. It is a source of knowledge about development intentions; expected outcomes of efforts undertaken by the Academy management or values and ideas constituting the organizational culture of the school.

The developed strategy actually helps the Academy concentrate its resources, create coherence of activities in the field of management and organization as well as promote innovation and development.

At the same time, the strategy enables to provide the successful monitoring of progress and effectiveness evaluation, so that the management and implementation of The Academy objectives can be proceeded properly (Dudek and Kaczmarczyk, 2023, p. 27).

This strategy has also set new goals for the Academy's marketing, which is focused on creating and promoting those values and ideas that seem to be significant in the development process, especially in relationships with the Academy stakeholders and which is strongly and clearly emphasized than before, under the previously applicable development strategy, which was adopted for the implementation in 2018.

The method of implementing these marketing innovations has been defined as the integration of social, economic and environmental goals taking into account the most important civilization challenges (sustainable development).

The Humanitas Academy new marketing strategy directs this institution towards the concept of social responsibility that is understood in accordance with the definition of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). The definition describes social responsibility as the commitment of economic environments to the active participation in sustainable development through cooperation with employees, their families, local communities and the society in order to improve people's quality of life (Geryk, 2010, pp. 271-287).

As Marcin Geryk rightly notes, according to the public opinion, a higher education institution is a knowledge centre whose opportunities should be widely used in the interest of the environment (Geryk, 2010, pp. 271-287). Perceiving its role in this way, in 2019 the Humanitas Academy signed the agreement of representatives of the academic community and the Ministry of Development. This initiative resulted in the development of the Academy's Social Responsibility Declaration.

Initially, the document was signed by 23 academic institutions. Two years later, another 60 higher education institutions, including the Humanitas Academy, joined the list of signatories. The declaration begins with the following sentence: *"Special role of an academic institution, as a place of creating and transferring knowledge about the reality surrounding us, obliges it to take into consideration and apply the principles of social responsibility in all areas of activity as well as to disseminate these principles among stakeholders"*. This is a crucial element of the Humanitas Academy mission and a characteristic feature of its marketing orientation.

The most important forms of marketing involvement in activities for sustainable development of the Humanitas Academy consist of:

- 1) including a group of goals related to increasing the Academy's impact on socio-economic development. These objectives, subsequently operationalized, refer to the following specific tasks: increasing the participation of the Academy staff in advisory and expert bodies operating at the level of government and local government institutions as well as within economic self-government structures; increasing the activity of employees in the scope of developing expertise, reports, strategic documents commissioned by entities from the socio-economic environment (including

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- documents relating to sustainable development issues); increasing the number of conferences, symposia and open meetings with the participation of academic experts for the benefit of the socio-economic environment representatives (including conferences on topics important for sustainable development, e.g., ecological, equality, anti-discrimination); including opinion leaders, who represent the socio-economic environment, in bodies operating within the Academy structure, such as councils, the senate, the patronage council, etc.; developing activities of organizational units responsible for the implementation of expert or research projects for the socio-economic environment; undertaking pro-ecological activities under the common brand "EkoHumanitas";
- 2) in the process of operationalization, including the development goals at the stage of defining performance indicators of the development strategy, i.e., setting measures that would enable to assess the degree of strategic goals achievement, to monitor progress in the strategy implementation, to assess the effectiveness of activities and to identify areas requiring improvement-sustainable development indicators, which cover social, environmental and economic aspects (e.g., participation of employees in trainings or the assessment of the Academy's impact on the local environment);
  - 3) creating study majors, (at all levels of academic education, including postgraduate studies) within which the Academy provides education in order to provide professions and specializations that are important for solving civilization problems and that counteract global threats. Considering these issues, the Humanitas Academy has provided studies in the fields as: *Sustainable Development Manager and ESG in Business* (delivering trainings for management specialists in accordance with principles of ESG and corporate responsibility; preparing students to effective implementation and management of sustainable development strategies in various sectors of the economy); *NCV Communication and Leadership – Nonviolent Communication* (delivering trainings for specialists in the scope of dialogue and social structures based on empathy); *dietetics* (study major covering, among others, the following content and issues: prevention of nutrition-related diseases; assessment of the mutual impact of pharmacotherapy and nutrition; quality control of food products, their storage and production conditions; assessment of diseases impact on the nutritional status and nutrition impact on results of diseases treatment; organization of individual, collective and therapeutic nutrition adapted to the age and health of patients; conducting nutritional education); *computer science* (study major covering education on, among others, artificial intelligence; data processing security management; cyber terrorism or the Internet of Things); *electroradiology* (study major offering academic education, among others, in the field of diagnosis and treatment of oncological diseases; prevention of lifestyle diseases as well as innovations in medicine);

- 4) including the content on sustainable development issues in the curricula of all fields of study. Aiming at preparing highly qualified staff able to perform managerial, theoretical and service tasks in various fields and segments of the socio-economic system, the Academy constantly adapts education to new challenges of the labor market. Interdisciplinary nature of sustainable development issues requires preparing students to be equipped with knowledge of three factors of sustainable development: respect for the natural environment; social progress and economic growth; knowledge in the scope of effects and challenges related to climate and social change as well as the ability to adapt to these global changes. For this purpose, in 2023, the Humanitas Academy introduced changes to the curricula in all fields of study. Selected general, field-specific and specialized courses were supplemented with learning outcomes and didactic content that allowed to transfer appropriate knowledge and develop skills referring to the adaptation to civilization changes. 36 syllabuses, i.e. curricula of specific academic courses such as: economy, political science, political systems, sociology, basics of management, ecology, and cultural anthropology were modified.
- 5) organizing didactic, cultural and social events whose aim is to shape pro-ecological attitudes; raise awareness of global challenges; promote climate, civic, equality or anti-discrimination education, etc. These projects are of a varied nature and they include, among others: social campaigns (e.g., the campaign under the slogan "Don't be stupid, go and take part in the election". This campaign presented a pro-turnout profile that had to encourage residents of the region to participate in the elections to the Sejm, Senate, local government and the European Parliament); implementations and ecological events (e.g., "Humanitas Flower Meadow". This project aimed at establishing flower enclaves around the Academy's premises; "Cleaning up the World with Humanitas". This event aimed at tidying up green areas in the center of Sosnowiec by the Academy employees); popularizing debates (e.g., pedagogical debate on the protection of bees organized in partnership with a non-public kindergarten and addressed to its children); scientific conferences (e.g., conference titled "Crisis of citizens' trust in the state and the law it establishes". This conference was organized by the Academy in the cooperation with: Association of Polish Judges "Iustitia"; Department of Administrative Law and Civil Society of the Pedagogical University in Krakow; "Law in Practice" Students Association of Law and Administration of the Humanitas Academy and Ombudsman Office. The conference was devoted to issues connected with building a civil society and strengthening the standards of the democratic state of law);
- 6) organizing contests promoting and rewarding people and institutions that have made a contribution to promoting values and ideas significant for sustainable development. Since 2021, the Humanitas Academy has been the organizer of the National Competition for the Golden Themis Award, which

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- annually honors social activists and lawyers who have achieved success in building civil society, strengthening the standards of law-abidingness and judicial independence;
- 7) providing civic counseling for students, employees, graduates and residents. In the Humanitas Academy there functions Academic Law Counseling Office, which provides free legal support to people reporting problems of discrimination, violence, mobbing, violation of human rights, in particular, in the academic environment;
  - 8) implementing expert opinions in the area of sustainable development. Employees of the Humanitas Academy sit on advisory committees of Chancellery of the Prime Minister, Ombudsman Office, Minister of Development, Minister of Science and Higher Education and President of Sosnowiec, which deal with the following issues: organizations' social responsibility; demographic challenges or strategic management in local government units<sup>2</sup>;
  - 9) implementing technological solutions, standards and procedures aimed at reducing the consumption of raw materials, electricity, water, including carbon dioxide emissions - e.g., replacing sanitary equipment - installing touchless washbasin taps, including taps aerators; installing rainwater tanks for watering plants around the Academy premises; lowering the temperature of hot water in sanitary rooms; installing sensors controlling lighting; introducing an obligation to turn off all electrical devices to the standby mode; promoting such behaviors, also among students; limiting the number of materials stored on servers; introducing the principle of purchasing high energy-saving class electronic and optimal life equipment and devices; optimizing the air-conditioning system in rooms and common spaces in order to save energy and improve working conditions; giving up on electric hand dryers in sanitary rooms in return for ecological recycled paper; organizing one rest and refreshment room for The Academy employees; limiting the number of electrical devices in office spaces (kettles, coffee makers, microwave ovens); installing solar panels systematically; installing heat pumps; installing new radiator temperature controllers; exchanging lighting for the LED system; implementing recycling, e.g., eliminating waste bins in staff rooms and lecture halls for easily accessible segregation containers in common spaces of the building; introducing principles of the so-called *sharing economy*, which involves the reuse of excess or unnecessary material resources (Letter, 2023),

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<sup>2</sup>Research interviews conducted by the author on 10-12 August 2024 with Mariusz Lekston, Vice-Rector of the Humanitas Academy; Agata Dudek, Deputy Chancellor of the Humanitas Academy; Piotr Celej, Humanitas Academy Rector's Office employee; Ewa Kraus, Director of the Development Office of the Humanitas Academy, records in the author's possession.

- 10) sharing values and ideas of sustainable development in the framework of information and promotional campaigns, both in terms of content and forms of communication, through the following message: *"If you don't have to, don't print this document. Take care of the environment!"* introduced to e-mail footers; refraining from using foil and non-ecological materials in promotional activities and replacing them with advertising products made of reusable or recycled materials; developing online marketing communication; creating a virtual space that encourages academic community to share ecological ideas and that enables students, employees and external stakeholders to be actively involved in the sustainable development activities; sending periodic e-mail newsletters containing ecological pieces of advice and content devoted to equality, civic and anti-discrimination issues to employees and students; promoting ecological, civic and democratic attitudes via the Academy social media; organizing creative workshops for employees and students in the field of ecology, climate policy, human rights, etc.

## **5. Conclusion**

Implementation of sustainable marketing assumptions by the Humanitas Academy is manifested at the level of applying all instruments of the marketing mix.

It includes market research, designing marketing strategy, educational products, organizing the distribution network of the Academy's offer, marketing communication, intra-organizational processes or cultural projects that combine promotional and educational values.

The Humanitas Academy marketing strategy emphasizes its sustainable and responsible activity in relation to ecological and climate challenges as well as to social, cultural, legal and political ones. Therefore, it is a comprehensive and holistic approach, both in terms of instruments implemented in the framework of the Academy's strategy and its scope of content.

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