

# **INTELLIGENCE-ENABLED SUSTAINABLE MARKETING IN SDG-DRIVEN MARKETS: INTEGRATING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to reconceptualize sustainable marketing in the context of SDG-driven markets by integrating sustainable marketing theory, digital transformation (DT), and Competitive Intelligence (CI). The paper addresses the limitations of predominantly normative sustainability approaches by advancing a strategic, intelligence-based perspective on how firms navigate sustainability under conditions of uncertainty and digital acceleration.

This study adopts a conceptual and theory-building approach. Drawing on literature from sustainable marketing, Competitive Intelligence, digital transformation, and governance, the paper develops an integrative conceptual framework grounded in a societal evolution lens distinguishing between information, knowledge, and organizational consciousness.

The paper proposes that sustainable marketing effectiveness does not arise directly from digital capabilities alone, but from their mediation through Competitive Intelligence and their governance through strategic autonomy. This interaction produces organizational consciousness – defined as system-level awareness of the economic, social, and environmental consequences of market action – enabling durable competitive advantage in SDG-driven markets.

The paper contributes to sustainable marketing theory by positioning Competitive Intelligence as the central mediating mechanism between digital transformation and sustainability outcomes. It introduces organizational consciousness as a governance-level strategic outcome and reframes marketing as an intelligence-enabled coordination function within sustainability governance systems.

The framework offers guidance for managers seeking to embed intelligence capabilities into sustainable marketing strategies and to align digital infrastructures with long-term sustainability objectives.

By linking intelligence, governance, and sustainability, the paper highlights how marketing can contribute to more accountable, transparent, and socially responsive market systems aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

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## 1. Introduction

Organizations increasingly operate under heightened pressure to align market strategies with global sustainability imperatives. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have emerged as a dominant institutional framework shaping expectations regarding corporate responsibility, transparency, and long-term value creation across industries [1]. For marketing functions, this shift represents more than a normative adjustment; it challenges the foundational logic through which value is defined, communicated, and governed in markets characterized by growing social, environmental, and regulatory complexity.

Sustainable marketing has developed as a response to these pressures by extending traditional market orientation to include environmental and social considerations alongside economic objectives [2]. Research suggests that sustainability-oriented marketing practices can enhance brand reputation, stakeholder trust, and organizational legitimacy, particularly in contexts marked by regulatory scrutiny and societal visibility [3]. However, despite its normative appeal, sustainable marketing scholarship has been criticized for offering limited insight into how firms can strategically navigate sustainability under conditions of uncertainty, institutional volatility, and competitive imitation [4]. Much of the literature emphasizes *what* firms should do, while paying less attention to *how* they can anticipate, interpret, and respond to evolving sustainability demands.

At the same time, digital transformation has profoundly reshaped marketing practice. The widespread adoption of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and platform-based infrastructures has expanded firms' capacity to collect market information, personalize offerings, and optimize performance in real time [5]. While these technologies enhance efficiency and scale, they also tend to privilege short-term performance metrics and predictive accuracy, often reinforcing extractive or growth-centric logics that sit uneasily with the long-term, systemic orientation implied by the SDGs [6]. As a result, digital marketing systems may exacerbate tensions between sustainability commitments and market execution rather than resolve them.

This tension foregrounds the strategic relevance of Competitive Intelligence (CI). Traditionally understood as the systematic collection and analysis of information about competitors and markets, CI has evolved into a broader strategic capability concerned with environmental scanning, sensemaking, and anticipatory decision-making [7]. In sustainability contexts, CI offers a mechanism through which firms can move beyond reactive compliance and toward proactive alignment with emerging stakeholder expectations, regulatory trajectories, and societal norms. Yet, despite its relevance, CI remains under-theorized within sustainable marketing research, and its role in mediating

between digital transformation and sustainability outcomes has received limited scholarly attention.

The convergence of sustainability imperatives, digital transformation, and intelligence capabilities suggests the emergence of a new marketing paradigm in SDG-driven markets. To conceptualize this shift, this paper adopts a societal evolution lens that distinguishes between information, knowledge, and organizational consciousness [8]. While information- and knowledge-based perspectives emphasize data accumulation and learning, SDG-driven markets increasingly require organizations to develop second-order awareness of the systemic economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions [9]. In this paper, such organizational consciousness is framed not as an individual psychological state, but as a governance-related capability that emerges through sustained intelligence processes.

Against this background, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to integrate sustainable marketing, digital transformation, and Competitive Intelligence into a unified framework suitable for SDG-driven markets. Specifically, the paper advances three core contributions. First, it reconceptualizes sustainable marketing as an intelligence-enabled governance capability rather than a predominantly normative orientation. Second, it positions Competitive Intelligence as the mediating mechanism through which digital transformation translates into sustainability-aligned marketing outcomes. Third, it introduces organizational consciousness as a higher-order strategic outcome that reflects firms' capacity to internalize systemic consequences and align market behavior with societal goals.

By articulating a set of theoretically grounded propositions and an integrative conceptual framework, this paper responds to calls for more strategic, system-level approaches to sustainable marketing. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates on sustainability, digital transformation, and intelligence-based strategy, while offering a foundation for future empirical research on marketing in SDG-oriented institutional environments.

## **Key Contributions**

This paper offers three main contributions to the literature on sustainable marketing, Digital Transformation, and Competitive Intelligence in the context of SDG-driven markets:

### **1. Reconceptualization of Sustainable Marketing as an Intelligence-Enabled Governance Capability**

The study reframes sustainable marketing from a predominantly normative or ethical orientation toward a strategic governance capability grounded in intelligence processes. Rather than treating sustainability as a static commitment or reputational objective, the paper conceptualizes sustainable marketing as a coordinated decision-making system that integrates digital infrastructures, intelligence analysis, and institutional awareness. This perspective advances the literature by positioning marketing as an anticipatory governance

mechanism capable of aligning corporate strategy with evolving sustainability expectations in complex regulatory and societal environments.

## **2. Identification of Competitive Intelligence as the Mediating Mechanism Between Digital Transformation and Sustainability Outcomes**

The framework introduced in the paper establishes Competitive Intelligence (CI) as the missing operational link connecting digital transformation to sustainability-aligned marketing strategies. While digital technologies enhance data collection and analytical capabilities, the study argues that these capabilities translate into sustainable outcomes only when mediated by CI processes that interpret signals, anticipate regulatory trajectories, and contextualize market dynamics. This contribution extends digital transformation research by emphasizing interpretive mediation and strategic foresight rather than technological determinism.

## **3. Introduction of Organizational Consciousness as a Higher-Order Strategic Outcome in Marketing Systems**

The paper introduces the concept of **organizational consciousness** as a system-level outcome emerging from sustained intelligence capabilities. Organizational consciousness is defined as second-order awareness of the economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions. By integrating insights from sensemaking theory and sustainability governance, the study proposes that intelligence-enabled marketing systems can evolve beyond knowledge accumulation toward reflexive and system-aware strategic decision-making. This conceptualization expands marketing theory by linking intelligence capabilities to long-term legitimacy, trust, and durable competitive advantage in SDG-driven markets.

## **Literature Review**

This paper integrates three complementary theoretical domains –sustainable marketing, digital transformation, and Competitive Intelligence (CI) – to reconceptualize marketing strategy in SDG-driven markets. To structure this integration, the section adopts a societal evolution lens that distinguishes between information, knowledge, and organizational consciousness. This lens provides a coherent foundation for understanding how marketing functions evolve under conditions of sustainability governance, technological intensification, and institutional complexity.

### **1.1. Sustainable Marketing in SDG-Driven Markets**

Sustainable marketing extends traditional marketing logic by embedding environmental and social considerations into value creation, communication, and exchange processes. Drawing on stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainable marketing emphasizes long-term value for multiple stakeholders rather than short-term transactional efficiency [2] [10]. Empirical research suggests that sustainability-oriented marketing practices can enhance brand reputation, stakeholder trust, and organizational legitimacy, particularly in contexts characterized by high regulatory scrutiny and societal visibility [3].

Despite these contributions, the sustainable marketing literature remains largely normative. Much of the research focuses on ethical intent, alignment with sustainability principles, or post hoc performance outcomes, offering limited insight into how firms strategically navigate sustainability-related uncertainty [4]. In SDG-driven markets, sustainability expectations are dynamic and contested, shaped by evolving regulatory regimes, stakeholder activism, and competitive imitation. These conditions expose the limitations of sustainability approaches that rely on static standards or reactive compliance. Consequently, sustainable marketing increasingly requires anticipatory capabilities that enable firms to sense, interpret, and respond to emerging societal and institutional demands.

### **1.2. Digital Transformation and the Limits of Data-Centric Marketing**

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped marketing practice through the widespread adoption of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and platform-based infrastructures. Digital marketing systems enable firms to collect vast quantities of market data, automate customer engagement, and optimize performance in real time [5]. These capabilities have been associated with improvements in efficiency, scalability, and personalization across industries.

However, digital transformation also introduces structural tensions with sustainability objectives. Data-driven marketing systems are typically optimized for short-term metrics such as engagement, conversion, and growth, which may reinforce extractive or efficiency-centric logics that conflict with long-term social and environmental goals [6]. Moreover,

increasing reliance on external platforms and proprietary algorithms raises concerns related to transparency, accountability, and data governance [11]. These tensions suggest that digital transformation, while necessary, is insufficient on its own to support sustainable marketing in SDG-driven markets.

### **1.3. Competitive Intelligence as a Dynamic Capability**

Competitive Intelligence provides a theoretical bridge between sustainable marketing and digital transformation. Traditionally defined as the systematic collection and analysis of information about competitors and markets, CI has evolved into a broader strategic function concerned with environmental scanning, sensemaking, and anticipatory decision-making [7]. Contemporary CI scholarship emphasizes the role of intelligence in reducing uncertainty and enabling proactive strategic responses in complex and volatile environments.

### **1.4. From Knowledge to Organizational Consciousness**

To integrate these domains, this paper adopts a societal evolution lens that distinguishes between information, knowledge, and organizational consciousness. In an information-oriented logic, marketing focuses on data dissemination and communication efficiency. In a knowledge-oriented logic, emphasis shifts toward learning, expertise, and market orientation [12]. However, SDG-driven markets increasingly demand a further evolution toward organizational consciousness.

In this paper, organizational consciousness is conceptualized as second-order organizational awareness of the systemic economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions. Consciousness does not replace knowledge; rather, it builds upon it by integrating ethical reflexivity, system-level perspective, and long-term consequence evaluation into strategic decision-making [9]. This framing avoids psychological interpretations and instead positions consciousness as a governance-related capability emerging from sustained intelligence processes.

Competitive Intelligence plays a central role in this transition by integrating heterogeneous sources of information – market data, regulatory signals, stakeholder expectations, and societal trends – into coherent strategic interpretations. Through CI, marketing functions move beyond knowledge accumulation toward a more reflexive, accountable, and sustainability-aligned orientation.

### **1.5. Strategic Autonomy and Sustainability Governance**

Finally, the theoretical foundation recognizes strategic autonomy in digital infrastructure as a critical contextual condition. As firms become increasingly dependent on digital platforms and external data ecosystems, their ability to govern intelligence processes and align them with sustainability objectives may be constrained [11]. Strategic autonomy – often

discussed in terms of digital sovereignty – refers to the capacity of firms to control data, technologies, and analytical systems in accordance with regulatory and societal expectations [13].

In SDG-driven markets, strategic autonomy enhances firms' ability to ensure transparency, accountability, and ethical alignment in marketing practices. It also conditions the effectiveness of Competitive Intelligence by shaping how data is accessed, interpreted, and deployed. As such, strategic autonomy constitutes an essential element of the governance environment within which intelligence-enabled sustainable marketing operates.

## **2. Model Propositions and Conceptual Framework**

Building on the theoretical foundations of sustainable marketing, digital transformation, and Competitive Intelligence (CI), this section advances a set of formal propositions and introduces the conceptual framework that structures the paper's argument. The propositions articulate how intelligence capabilities mediate and condition the relationship between sustainability imperatives and digital marketing systems in SDG-driven markets.

### **2.1 Sustainable Marketing and Competitive Intelligence**

Sustainable marketing extends traditional market orientation by incorporating environmental and social considerations into value creation and exchange processes [2] [10]. However, much of the existing literature conceptualizes sustainability primarily as a normative or ethical orientation, offering limited guidance on how firms can anticipate and respond to evolving sustainability expectations under conditions of uncertainty and institutional change [4].

In SDG-driven markets, sustainability requirements are dynamic, shaped by regulatory evolution, stakeholder activism, and competitive imitation [1]. Competitive Intelligence provides the strategic mechanism through which sustainable marketing can move from reactive compliance toward anticipatory alignment. By systematically scanning and interpreting signals from markets, competitors, regulators, and stakeholders, CI enables firms to identify emerging sustainability-related trends before they materialize as formal constraints or reputational risks [7].

**Proposition 1 (P1):** *Firms that integrate Competitive Intelligence into sustainable marketing practices exhibit higher anticipatory alignment with SDG-related stakeholder and regulatory expectations than firms that rely on reactive sustainability approaches.*

### **2.2 Digital Transformation and the Mediating Role of Competitive Intelligence**

Digital transformation has reshaped marketing practice through the widespread adoption of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and platform-based infrastructures [5]. These technologies expand firms' capacity to collect and process market data, enabling real-time optimization of customer engagement and performance outcomes. However, digital transformation alone does not ensure alignment with long-term sustainability objectives.

Data-driven marketing systems are often optimized for short-term efficiency and growth metrics, reinforcing extractive or efficiency-centric logics that may conflict with sustainability goals [6]. Competitive Intelligence mediates this relationship by introducing interpretive judgment, contextual awareness, and temporal depth into digitally enabled marketing systems. Through CI, firms translate raw digital data into strategic foresight, distinguishing transient market signals from structurally significant sustainability trends.

**Proposition 2 (P2):** *Digital transformation enhances sustainable marketing effectiveness only when mediated by Competitive Intelligence capabilities that translate data into forward-looking, system-level insight.*

### **2.3 Competitive Intelligence and Organizational Consciousness**

Beyond its instrumental role, Competitive Intelligence contributes to the development of organizational consciousness. In this paper, consciousness is conceptualized as second-order organizational awareness of the systemic economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions. This conception builds on sensemaking theory, which emphasizes how organizations construct meaning under conditions of complexity and ambiguity [9].

CI facilitates this transition by integrating heterogeneous sources of information – market data, regulatory signals, stakeholder discourse, and societal trends – into coherent strategic interpretations. As intelligence capabilities mature, marketing functions increasingly operate with reflexivity regarding their broader societal impact, aligning value propositions with SDG objectives rather than narrowly defined market metrics.

**Proposition 3 (P3):** *Higher levels of Competitive Intelligence capability are positively associated with the development of organizational consciousness in marketing, reflected in greater systemic awareness and reflexivity in strategic decision-making.*

### **2.4 Strategic Autonomy as a Moderating Condition**

The effectiveness of intelligence-driven sustainable marketing is conditioned by firms' degree of strategic autonomy in digital infrastructure. As marketing becomes increasingly dependent on external platforms, proprietary algorithms, and data ecosystems, firms may face constraints on data governance, transparency, and regulatory compliance [11].

Strategic autonomy – often discussed in terms of digital sovereignty – enhances firms' ability to govern intelligence processes and align them with sustainability objectives [13]. Firms with greater control over their digital infrastructures are better positioned to ensure accountability, adapt to regulatory change, and maintain stakeholder trust. Strategic autonomy thus moderates the relationship between CI and sustainable marketing effectiveness.

**Proposition 4 (P4):** *Strategic autonomy in digital infrastructure strengthens the positive relationship between Competitive Intelligence and sustainable marketing effectiveness.*

## **2.5 Intelligence-Driven Sustainable Marketing and Competitive Advantage**

Sustainable marketing initiatives can generate reputational benefits, stakeholder trust, and organizational legitimacy [3]. However, these benefits are fragile when sustainability claims lack coherence, credibility, or consistency with organizational practice. Competitive Intelligence enhances the robustness of sustainability outcomes by enabling continuous verification, monitoring, and adaptation to evolving societal and regulatory standards.

From a resource-based and dynamic capabilities perspective, intelligence-driven sustainable marketing constitutes a difficult-to-imitate strategic capability [14] [15]. Organizational routines for sensing and interpreting sustainability-related change become embedded within marketing governance structures, contributing to long-term resilience and durable competitive advantage.

**Proposition 5 (P5):** *Firms that deploy Competitive Intelligence as a core component of sustainable marketing strategy are more likely to achieve durable competitive advantage through enhanced credibility, trust, and regulatory legitimacy.*

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 presents the intelligence-enabled sustainable marketing framework developed in this paper. The framework integrates digital transformation, competitive intelligence, strategic autonomy, and organizational consciousness to explain how sustainable marketing effectiveness is generated in SDG-driven markets. Competitive Intelligence is positioned as the central mediating capability through which digital transformation translates into sustainability-aligned marketing outcomes, while strategic autonomy in digital infrastructure functions as a moderating governance condition shaping the effectiveness of intelligence deployment.

The framework conceptualises sustainable marketing as an Intelligence–Governance–Consciousness mechanism rather than a static or descriptive model. Digital transformation constitutes a necessary informational and infrastructural condition, but does not, in itself, generate sustainability-aligned outcomes. Competitive Intelligence mediates this relationship by transforming digitally generated data into anticipatory, interpretive, and strategically actionable insight regarding stakeholder expectations, regulatory trajectories, and systemic sustainability risks [7] [15]. Strategic autonomy conditions this process by shaping the degree of control firms retain over data governance, transparency, and accountability [11] [13].

Through the interaction of mediated intelligence and governance conditions, organizational consciousness emerges as a higher-order strategic outcome. Organizational consciousness is defined as second-order, system-level awareness of the economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions, extending sensemaking beyond knowledge accumulation toward reflexive sustainability governance [9]. This mechanism underpins sustainable marketing effectiveness by enabling anticipatory alignment with SDG-related expectations and the development of durable competitive advantage grounded in legitimacy, trust, and regulatory coherence [14] [3].

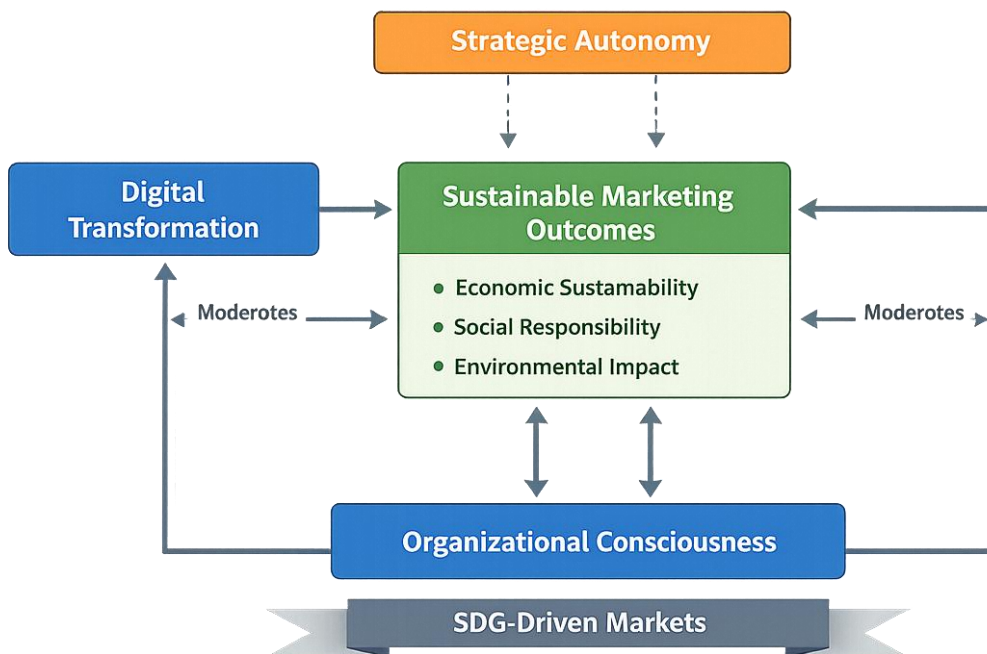


Figure 1. Intelligence-enabled sustainable marketing framework for SDG-driven markets<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Authors own work

## **2.6 Conceptual Integration**

The proposed Intelligence–Governance–Consciousness mechanism aligns with competitiveness research emphasizing that Competitive Intelligence functions as a strategic capability rather than a purely informational activity. Prior studies show that intelligence capabilities support strategic coordination, anticipatory decision-making, and long-term competitiveness under conditions of uncertainty [16].

Research on internal marketing and strategic alignment further indicates that sustainable competitive positioning depends on the internal coordination of values, intelligence, and governance structures, rather than on isolated marketing actions (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006). These insights reinforce the argument that sustainable marketing effectiveness emerges through governance-level integration rather than normative intent alone.

Within the proposed framework, organizational consciousness arises as a higher-order strategic outcome produced by sustained intelligence processes operating within explicit governance boundaries. Consistent with emerging perspectives on sustainable competitiveness, this form of system-level awareness enables firms to anticipate sustainability-related risks, align with evolving stakeholder expectations, and achieve durable competitive advantage [16] [3].

## **3. Discussion**

This paper advances the argument that sustainable marketing in SDG-driven markets must be reconceptualized as an intelligence-enabled governance capability rather than a predominantly normative or communicative function. By integrating sustainable marketing, digital transformation, and Competitive Intelligence (CI), the discussion interprets how firms can navigate sustainability under conditions of uncertainty, regulatory dynamism, and technological acceleration. The conceptual framework and propositions collectively illuminate a shift from reactive sustainability practices toward anticipatory, system-aware marketing strategy.

### **3.1 From Normative Sustainability to Anticipatory Marketing Strategy**

Sustainable marketing research has traditionally emphasized ethical intent, corporate responsibility, and stakeholder alignment [2] [3]. While these perspectives underscore the importance of sustainability commitments, they often treat sustainability as a static objective rather than a dynamic strategic challenge. In SDG-driven markets, sustainability expectations evolve continuously as regulations, stakeholder norms, and competitive practices change [1].

Proposition P1 extends sustainable marketing theory by positioning Competitive Intelligence as the mechanism through which firms can anticipate such change. CI enables

organizations to move beyond post hoc compliance by systematically monitoring weak signals related to emerging sustainability standards, stakeholder discourse, and competitor initiatives [7]. As a result, sustainability becomes an anticipatory strategic orientation rather than a reactive obligation. This reframing addresses calls within the sustainability literature to move from moral aspiration toward strategic integration under uncertainty [4].

### **3.2 Digital Transformation Requires Interpretive Mediation**

The discussion further clarifies the role of digital transformation in sustainable marketing. Digital technologies have expanded firms' ability to collect, process, and deploy market data at scale, enhancing efficiency and responsiveness [5]. However, Proposition P2 highlights that digital transformation alone does not ensure sustainability-aligned marketing outcomes.

Data-driven marketing systems are often optimized for short-term performance indicators such as engagement, growth, and conversion, which may conflict with long-term social and environmental objectives [6]. Competitive Intelligence mediates this relationship by introducing interpretation, contextual judgment, and temporal depth into digital systems. CI transforms data into foresight by distinguishing transient market noise from structurally significant sustainability trends. In doing so, it mitigates the risk of technologically deterministic marketing strategies that prioritize efficiency over societal impact.

### **3.3 Competitive Intelligence and the Emergence of Organizational Consciousness**

A central contribution of this paper is the conceptualization of organizational consciousness as an outcome of sustained intelligence capability. As articulated in Proposition P3, consciousness refers to second-order organizational awareness of the systemic economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions. This notion builds on sensemaking theory, which emphasizes how organizations interpret complexity and ambiguity through collective cognitive processes [9].

Competitive Intelligence facilitates the development of such consciousness by integrating heterogeneous information sources – including market data, regulatory signals, stakeholder expectations, and societal trends – into coherent strategic interpretations. Over time, intelligence-enabled marketing functions develop reflexivity regarding their broader societal role. This shift extends marketing theory beyond knowledge accumulation toward system-level awareness, suggesting that competitive advantage in SDG-driven markets increasingly depends on how firms interpret and internalize externalities rather than on information possession alone.

### **3.4 Strategic Autonomy as a Boundary Condition**

Proposition P4 introduces strategic autonomy in digital infrastructure as a critical boundary condition shaping the effectiveness of intelligence-driven sustainable marketing. As firms become increasingly dependent on digital platforms, algorithmic systems, and external data providers, their ability to govern intelligence processes may be constrained [11].

From a sustainability governance perspective, insufficient control over data and digital infrastructures can undermine transparency, accountability, and regulatory compliance. Strategic autonomy – often framed as digital sovereignty – enhances firms’ capacity to align intelligence systems with sustainability objectives and adapt to evolving governance regimes [13]. This insight situates sustainable marketing within broader debates on data governance and platform dependence, highlighting that sustainability outcomes are conditioned not only by intent and capability but also by infrastructural control.

### **3.5 Intelligence-Driven Sustainability and Durable Competitive Advantage**

Proposition P5 integrates the preceding arguments by linking intelligence-driven sustainable marketing to durable competitive advantage. Prior research suggests that sustainability initiatives can enhance reputational capital and stakeholder trust [3], yet these benefits remain fragile when sustainability claims are inconsistent or weakly substantiated.

Competitive Intelligence strengthens sustainability outcomes by enabling continuous monitoring, verification, and adaptation of marketing practices to evolving societal standards. From a resource-based and dynamic capabilities perspective, intelligence-enabled sustainability constitutes a valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate capability embedded within organizational routines [14] [15]. As such, sustainability shifts from a cost or compliance burden to a source of long-term resilience and legitimacy when guided by robust intelligence systems.

### **3.6 Integrative Implications**

Taken together, the discussion highlights a broader transformation in the role of marketing within SDG-driven markets. Rather than functioning solely as a persuasive interface with consumers, marketing increasingly operates at the intersection of markets, technology, and governance. Competitive Intelligence serves as the connective tissue linking digital transformation to sustainability imperatives, enabling firms to move from knowledge accumulation toward organizational consciousness.

This integrative perspective contributes to sustainable marketing theory by specifying the mechanisms through which sustainability becomes strategically actionable. It also extends Competitive Intelligence research by situating CI within societal and governance contexts rather than limiting it to competitor analysis. Ultimately, the discussion positions

intelligence-enabled sustainable marketing as a foundational capability for firms seeking long-term competitiveness in regulated, data-intensive, and sustainability-oriented market environments.

#### **4. Future Research Directions and Implications**

The intelligence-enabled sustainable marketing framework developed in this paper is intended as a platform for future scholarly inquiry rather than a closed theoretical model. By integrating sustainable marketing, digital transformation, and Competitive Intelligence (CI), the framework raises several empirical, managerial, and institutional questions that warrant further investigation in SDG-driven markets.

##### **4.1 Future Research Directions**

**Firstly**, future research should empirically examine the mediating role of Competitive Intelligence in the relationship between digital transformation and sustainable marketing effectiveness. While prior studies have independently linked digital transformation to performance outcomes [5] and sustainability initiatives to reputational and legitimacy benefits [3], limited empirical work has examined how intelligence capabilities translate digital data into anticipatory sustainability-oriented marketing decisions. Longitudinal and mixed-method research designs could test Propositions P1 and P2 by analyzing how CI maturity influences firms' ability to anticipate regulatory change, stakeholder expectations, and sustainability-related market shifts over time.

**Secondly**, the construct of organizational consciousness introduced in this paper requires further conceptual refinement and operationalization. Consciousness has been defined here as second-order organizational awareness of the systemic economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions, extending sensemaking perspectives beyond knowledge accumulation [9]. Future research could develop and validate measurement scales capturing reflexivity, system-level interpretation, and ethical foresight in marketing decision-making. Qualitative approaches, including case studies and ethnographic research, may be particularly valuable in examining how such consciousness emerges through intelligence processes and governance routines.

**Thirdly**, comparative institutional research is needed to examine the moderating role of strategic autonomy and digital sovereignty. Firms operate within heterogeneous regulatory, technological, and institutional environments that shape data governance, platform dependence, and intelligence practices [11]. Cross-country and cross-industry studies could investigate how variations in data protection regimes, ESG disclosure mandates, and digital infrastructure control influence the effectiveness of intelligence-driven sustainable marketing strategies, thereby empirically testing Proposition P4.

**Finally**, future research should assess the long-term competitive outcomes associated with intelligence-driven sustainable marketing. While sustainability initiatives have been linked to trust, legitimacy, and reputational capital [2] [3], empirical evidence on their durability remains fragmented. Longitudinal studies connecting CI-enabled sustainability practices to resilience, adaptive capacity, and sustained competitive advantage would strengthen the dynamic capabilities perspective advanced in this paper [15], addressing Proposition P5.

## **4.2 Managerial Implications**

For managers, the framework underscores the need to reconceptualize marketing as a coordinating and governance-oriented capability rather than a purely communicative function. Sustainable marketing initiatives are most effective when supported by systematic intelligence processes that enable firms to anticipate societal expectations, verify sustainability claims, and adapt strategies proactively. Embedding CI within marketing decision-making can reduce the risks of greenwashing and reactive compliance while enhancing strategic alignment with SDG objectives.

The findings also highlight the strategic importance of digital autonomy. Managers should critically assess the extent to which their digital infrastructures, analytics platforms, and data governance practices support intelligence-driven sustainability initiatives. Investments in data transparency, ethical AI, and internal intelligence capabilities can strengthen both marketing credibility and strategic flexibility in increasingly regulated and data-intensive markets.

## **4.3 Policy and Governance Implications**

At the policy level, the framework suggests that sustainable marketing increasingly operates within governance-intensive ecosystems shaped by SDG reporting standards, ESG regulation, and data protection regimes [1]. Policymakers and standard-setting bodies should recognize the role of intelligence systems in enabling credible sustainability practices and consider how regulatory frameworks can support transparency, accountability, and data sovereignty without constraining innovation.

Moreover, the integration of CI and sustainable marketing has implications for public-private collaboration. Intelligence-enabled marketing systems may facilitate more effective partnerships around SDG implementation by aligning corporate strategies with societal objectives through shared metrics, interoperable data infrastructures, and stakeholder participation mechanisms. Such alignment could enhance the collective capacity of markets to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development goals.

In sum, by identifying empirical priorities, governance challenges, and strategic implications, it clarifies how intelligence-enabled sustainable marketing can guide both scholarly inquiry and organizational action in SDG-driven market environments.

## **5. Conclusion**

This conceptual paper set out to reconceptualize sustainable marketing in the context of SDG-driven markets by integrating insights from sustainable marketing, digital transformation, and Competitive Intelligence (CI). Responding to growing calls for more strategic and system-level approaches to sustainability, the paper advances the argument that marketing can no longer be understood solely as a communicative or normative function. Instead, sustainable marketing increasingly operates as an intelligence-enabled governance capability that mediates between market dynamics, digital infrastructures, and societal expectations.

By adopting a societal evolution lens distinguishing between information, knowledge, and organizational consciousness, the paper highlights a fundamental shift in how marketing creates and governs value. While digital transformation expands firms' informational capacity, it does not automatically yield sustainability-aligned outcomes [5] [6]. Competitive Intelligence provides the interpretive and anticipatory mechanisms through which digital data is translated into strategic foresight, enabling firms to sense emerging sustainability pressures and respond proactively rather than reactively [7] [15].

A central contribution of this study is the conceptualization of organizational consciousness as a higher-order outcome of sustained intelligence capability. Framed as second-order organizational awareness of the systemic economic, social, and environmental consequences of market actions, consciousness extends beyond knowledge accumulation toward reflexive, system-aware marketing governance [9]. This framing clarifies how firms can internalize sustainability imperatives and align marketing strategies with the broader objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals [1].

The paper further demonstrates that the effectiveness of intelligence-driven sustainable marketing is conditioned by strategic autonomy in digital infrastructure. As firms become increasingly dependent on platform-based systems and external data ecosystems, their capacity to govern intelligence processes and ensure accountability may be constrained [11]. Strategic autonomy enhances firms' ability to align intelligence systems with sustainability objectives, adapt to regulatory requirements, and maintain stakeholder trust, positioning digital governance as a critical component of sustainable marketing strategy.

Collectively, the propositions and conceptual framework developed in this paper contribute to marketing theory in three important ways. First, they specify Competitive Intelligence as

the missing operational link between sustainability commitments and strategic execution. Second, they extend digital transformation research by emphasizing interpretive mediation rather than technological determinism. Third, they reposition marketing as a coordinating function within sustainability governance systems rather than as a purely persuasive market interface.

In essence, the paper proposes that digital capability contributes to sustainable marketing outcomes only when mediated by Competitive Intelligence and constrained by strategic autonomy, emphasizing that digital transformation is a necessary but insufficient condition for sustainability.

While the paper is conceptual in nature, its implications extend to empirical research, managerial practice, and policy development. By articulating how sustainability imperatives, digital capabilities, and intelligence processes interact, the framework provides a foundation for future studies examining marketing strategy in increasingly regulated, data-intensive, and sustainability-oriented market environments. Ultimately, the paper suggests that firms capable of integrating intelligence into sustainable marketing are better positioned to achieve durable competitive advantage while contributing meaningfully to societal goals

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