

Leveraging Agenda 2063 for Sustainable Marketing: Innovation, Social Impact, and Economic Growth in Africa



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ABSTRACT

Sustainable marketing has become increasingly relevant in the development context of Africa. Agenda 2063 focuses on fostering inclusive economic growth, enhancing social welfare, and promoting environmental sustainability across the continent. Despite the promising opportunities outlined by Agenda 2063, businesses across Africa face significant challenges in developing sustainable marketing strategies that align with the economic, social, and environmental goals of the framework. There is a lack of widespread adoption of sustainable marketing across the continent. Therefore, this study aimed to explore how sustainable marketing strategies can support the economic, social, and environmental goals of Agenda 2063, further identifying challenges and opportunities for African businesses in aligning these strategies with both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. This was achieved by using a desktop research method where secondary data was collected through publications on electronic databases using keywords that were relevant to the study. It was found that sustainable marketing strategies can support the economic, social, and environmental goals of Agenda 2063 through innovative and socially responsible marketing initiatives; technological advancements; sustainable marketing strategies; and promoting environmentally sustainable products and services. Furthermore, the challenges, identified by this study, were resource constraints, poor governance, and poor infrastructure. The opportunities were collaboration, investment in infrastructure, and adherence to the principles of Agenda 2063. It was recommended that companies seeking to enter or expand into African markets while adhering to the goals of Agenda 2063 must prioritize sustainability by adopting innovative and socially responsible marketing strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its history as global economic growth and transformation accelerate. The rich resources, youthful population, and growing markets of the continent present immense potential, but harnessing this potential requires a strategic approach. Agenda 2063 is a comprehensive framework that aims to propel Africa into a world powerhouse by 2063.¹ According to Mosala, it is designed to

¹ Kaitlyn DeGhetto, Jacob R Gray, and Moses N Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research," *Africa Journal of Management* 2, no. 1 (2016): 93–116.

ensure that African development is rooted in long-term investments, which promote unity, self-determination, and collective prosperity in line with the vision of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance.² The goal of the agenda is to drive significant socio-economic transformation across the continent over the next five decades, positioning Africa as a major player on the global stage.

Central to the vision of Agenda 2063 is the emphasis on enhancing infrastructure, agriculture, and resource management while improving access to healthcare and education.³ This comprehensive approach seeks to empower Africans to realize their full potential by fostering democratic governance, human rights, and peace, all of which are crucial for social and economic progress. Moreover, investing in various sectors such as transportation, renewable energy, and technology will catalyze growth, industrialization, and innovation, thus elevating the standard of living across the continent.⁴ This holistic approach aligns with the broader goals outlined in the literature, such as those articulated by Varadarajan who emphasized sustainable innovations in marketing strategies to foster economic and social development in Africa.⁵

As the global economy undergoes significant shifts, the world is witnessing new economic powerhouses emerge. The role of Africa in this changing landscape has become more pronounced, with its untapped resources, dynamic workforce, and expanding markets positioned to drive global economic growth.⁶ If properly harnessed, Africa has the potential to reshape economic patterns and advance sustainable development on the global stage. South Africa, in particular, stands out due to its industrial economy and strategic geographic position, playing a critical role in implementing Agenda 2063.⁷ This positions South African businesses as critical drivers of both regional development and national economic prosperity, demonstrating the interconnectedness of local and continental goals.⁸ This linkage between South African objectives and Agenda 2063 underscores the relevance of aligning business practices with this visionary framework, as discussed in the theoretical framework of sustainable marketing.

At the global level, Agenda 2063 provides Africa with a unique opportunity to redefine its economic and geopolitical stance. The evolving global trade design demands that African nations pursue integration strategies aligned with both continental and national goals.⁹ This aligns with the literature's emphasis on fostering sustainable and inclusive growth through initiatives that reduce reliance on commodity exports and strengthen intra-African trade, as noted by Mhangara et al.¹⁰ This strategic positioning allows African businesses to leverage the synergies between Agenda 2063 and their own growth strategies, contributing to the long-term economic resilience of the continent.

To achieve this transformative vision, African businesses need to adopt sustainable marketing practices that reflect the core principles of Agenda 2063 which are equitable growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Agenda 2063 emphasizes long-term, inclusive economic growth with a focus on poverty reduction and shared prosperity.¹¹ Royo et al. state that businesses that align their marketing strategies with these objectives can not only boost profitability but also play an integral role in the development of Africa.¹² These companies can utilize sustainable demarketing to shift consumer

² Seshupo Mosala, "Pan-Africanism and the Right to Development in Africa: A Critical Analysis of Agenda 2063.," *African Renaissance* (1744-2532) 21, no. 2 (2024).

³ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

⁴ Godwell Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa," *Sustainable Development* 25, no.3(2017):227-41.

⁵ Rajan Varadarajan, "Innovating for Sustainability: A Framework for Sustainable Innovations and a Model of Sustainable Innovations Orientation," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 45 (2017): 14-36.

⁶ Margarita Garfias Royo et al., "Linking the UN Sustainable Development Goals and African Agenda 2063: Understanding Overlaps and Gaps between the Global Goals and Continental Priorities for Africa," *World Development Sustainability* 1 (2022): 100010.

⁷ Ismail Bilgi, Lyudmila Mihaylova, and Emil Papazov, "Internal Control Activities in Small Turkish Companies," *Management: Journal of Contemporary Management Issues* 22, no. Special Issue (2017): 69-83.

⁸ Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa."

⁹ Faizal A Ismail, "Advancing Regional Integration in Africa through the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)," *Law and Development Review* 10, no. 1 (2017): 119-46.

¹⁰ Paidamwoyo Mhangara et al., "Towards the Development of Agenda 2063 Geo-Portal to Support Sustainable Development in Africa," *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information* 8, no. 9 (2019): 399.

¹¹ Victor H Mlambo, Xolani Thusi, and Sbonelo Gift Ndlovuand, "The African Union's Agenda 2063 For Africa's Development: Possibility Or Ruse?," *Prizren Social Science Journal* 6, no. 3 (2022): 64-74.

¹² Royo et al., "Linking the UN Sustainable Development Goals and African Agenda 2063: Understanding Overlaps and Gaps between the Global Goals and Continental Priorities for Africa."

behavior towards eco-friendly products and services, an area highlighted by Varadarajan as essential for fostering a sustainable business environment.¹³

Moreover, Agenda 2063 complements the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both of which aim to improve global living standards and ensure sustainable development. While the SDGs provide a global framework, Agenda 2063 tailors these goals to the African context, emphasizing the importance of cultural and economic adaptability.¹⁴ This dual alignment presents African businesses with an unparalleled opportunity to craft marketing ideas that resonate with environmentally conscious consumers, thereby increasing brand loyalty and customer engagement.¹⁵ The intersection of sustainable marketing and consumer behavior is key to achieving the long-term goals outlined in Agenda 2063.

This study seeks to explore how marketing strategies can be crafted to not only drive business success but also contribute to the broader socio-economic objectives outlined in Agenda 2063. It will delve into the core aims and goals of Agenda 2063, evaluate the current marketing landscape in Africa, and identify the key challenges businesses face in aligning their marketing efforts with the development framework of the continent. By doing so, this research aims to fill a critical gap in the literature, providing practical insights into how sustainable marketing practices can drive Africa's transformation. It will also examine successful case studies of businesses that have already aligned their strategies with Agenda 2063, offering lessons on best practices for leveraging local culture, social dynamics, and technological innovation to create impactful marketing strategies.

Despite the growing body of research on Agenda 2063, gaps remain, particularly in terms of industry-specific challenges and scalable marketing strategies.¹⁶ This study addresses these gaps by analyzing the effectiveness of current marketing frameworks and exploring the potential for sustainable marketing to advance Africa's development goals. By examining the role of sustainable marketing in Africa's development, this research will provide valuable insights into the ways in which businesses can align their strategies with the continent's transformative vision, ultimately helping to propel Africa towards long-term socio-economic growth and sustainability.

The need for businesses to adopt sustainable marketing practices is particularly critical considering Agenda 2063's emphasis on equitable growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability.¹⁷ By adopting these practices, businesses can contribute to poverty reduction and shared prosperity, thus aligning themselves with the broader goals of the African Union.¹⁸ Sustainable demarketing, for example, offers a means to influence consumer behavior toward eco-friendly choices, which is essential for creating a sustainable business environment in Africa.¹⁹ Furthermore, Agenda 2063's alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) creates a unique opportunity for African businesses to craft marketing strategies that resonate with environmentally conscious consumers, fostering brand loyalty and long-term customer engagement.²⁰

The study will be organized into several key sections. First, it will review the literature on sustainable marketing, particularly focusing on its application in Africa and its alignment with Agenda 2063's objectives. The second section will outline the research methodology, detailing how the data will be collected and analyzed. Following that, the study will present the findings, highlighting the opportunities and challenges businesses face in implementing sustainable marketing strategies. The discussion will explore the implications of these findings for businesses and policymakers, offering best practice recommendations. Finally, the study will conclude by summarizing key insights, proposing areas for future research, and providing practical recommendations for advancing sustainable marketing strategies that contribute to Africa's development goals.

¹³ Varadarajan, "Innovating for Sustainability: A Framework for Sustainable Innovations and a Model of Sustainable Innovations Orientation."

¹⁴ Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa."

¹⁵ Ismail, "Advancing Regional Integration in Africa through the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)."

¹⁶ Mhangara et al., "Towards the Development of Agenda 2063 Geo-Portal to Support Sustainable Development in Africa."

¹⁷ Mlambo, Thusi, and Ndlovuand, "The African Union's Agenda 2063 For Africa's Development: Possibility Or Ruse?"

¹⁸ Royo et al., "Linking the UN Sustainable Development Goals and African Agenda 2063: Understanding Overlaps and Gaps between the Global Goals and Continental Priorities for Africa."

¹⁹ Varadarajan, "Innovating for Sustainability: A Framework for Sustainable Innovations and a Model of Sustainable Innovations Orientation."

²⁰ Ismail, "Advancing Regional Integration in Africa through the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA)."

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Conceptual Context

Sustainable marketing has been outlined as a process that balances profitability with social responsibility and environmental stewardship. Varadarajan raises that demarketing for sustainability can drive changes in consumer behavior, encouraging more sustainable consumption patterns.²¹ This view is critical, especially when aligned with the ambitions of Agenda 2063, which aims to reshape the economic development of Africa while addressing poverty and inequality.²² However, while the conceptual grounding seems theoretically sound, the practical application of these sustainable marketing strategies in the African context remains complex and requires further scrutiny.

While sustainable marketing offers a promising blueprint, its actual implementation in Africa is filled with contradictions. Many initiatives prioritize economic growth without adequately balancing environmental and social objectives.²³ Varadarajan introduces the concept of "sustainable innovations," framing it as a critical building block for crafting marketing strategies that align with Agenda 2063.²⁴ Yet, without an integrated approach that accounts for local challenges, the conceptual underpinnings of sustainable marketing may falter when tested in diverse African markets.

Theoretical Context

The use of sustainable development models in analyzing the alignment of Agenda 2063 with marketing strategies is robust, but perhaps overly simplistic. Alwago suggests that gender inclusion is a critical factor in advancing sustainable marketing strategies, an assertion supported by the focus of Agenda 2063 on women's empowerment.²⁵ However, this viewpoint neglects the broader systemic issues that challenge gender inclusion in the continent, such as patriarchal structures and limited access to education for women. Focusing solely on gender inclusion as a driver of sustainable marketing overlooks the intersectionality of gender with other barriers like class and ethnicity. Moreover, literature anticipates an increase in research on the application of Agenda 2063 in marketing strategies.²⁶ While this is a necessary evolution, the theory must extend beyond the surface of economic transformation to incorporate deeper analysis into regional political and social complexities that may impede the accomplishment of Agenda 2063's goals.

METHODOLOGY

This study explores how leveraging Agenda 2063 for sustainable marketing can serve as a pathway to innovation, social impact, and economic growth in Africa. By aligning business practices with the strategic goals of Agenda 2063, this study addresses the broader objectives of promoting inclusive economic development, enhancing market access, and fostering sustainable growth across the continent. A secondary data approach was employed, utilizing existing literature and research findings to explore the potential impacts of integrating sustainable marketing strategies within the Agenda 2063 framework, rather than conducting primary research in specific industries.²⁷ As noted by Rassel, Leland, Mohr, and O'Sullivan, this method enables a comprehensive synthesis of prior studies to build a deeper understanding of how sustainable marketing practices can bridge the gap between traditional business models and modern economic demands.²⁸

²¹ Varadarajan, "Innovating for Sustainability: A Framework for Sustainable Innovations and a Model of Sustainable Innovations Orientation."

²² Agaptus Nwozor, Onjefu Okidu, and Solomon Adedire, "Agenda 2063 and the Feasibility of Sustainable Development in Africa: Any Silver Bullet?," *Journal of Black Studies* 52, no. 7 (2021): 688–715.

²³ Mhangara et al., "Towards the Development of Agenda 2063 Geo-Portal to Support Sustainable Development in Africa."

²⁴ Varadarajan, "Innovating for Sustainability: A Framework for Sustainable Innovations and a Model of Sustainable Innovations Orientation."

²⁵ Wycliffe Obwori Alwago, "A Partial Least Squares Analysis of Gender Inequality, Occupational Segregation, and Economic Growth: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa," *Regional Science Policy & Practice* 15, no. 6 (2023): 1299–1317; DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

²⁶ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

²⁷ Nigel Martin Healey, "Reflections on the Value of Insider Research as a Qualitative Research Methodology," 2017; Peter Koehn, *Refugees from Revolution: US Policy and Third World Migration* (Routledge, 2019).

²⁸ Gary Rassel et al., *Research Methods for Public Administrators* (Routledge, 2020).

The secondary data collection focused on reviewing past research to explore how incorporating sustainability into marketing strategies can support businesses in Africa, enhance their market reach, and promote long-term economic development. This review included examining the impact of blending innovative marketing techniques with digital tools, value-added services, and collaborative strategies within frameworks such as regional trade agreements, CSR, and public-private partnerships (PPPs). To gather relevant academic publications, electronic databases like Google Scholar, Science Direct, ResearchGate, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal online library were systematically searched using terms such as "sustainable marketing," "Agenda 2063," "regional integration," "corporate social responsibility," and "African business strategies."

This approach provided valuable insights into the ways Agenda 2063 can transform traditional marketing strategies to better align with the needs and aspirations of businesses and consumers in Africa.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Agenda 2063

Economic transformation

The vision of Agenda 2063 for economic transformation hinges on industrialization and reducing Africa's dependency on raw commodities. The emphasis on manufacturing and value addition is valid, however, the reality presents a far more intricate scenario.²⁹ Several African nations continue to struggle with underdeveloped infrastructure, skill gaps, and weak institutions that impede industrial growth. While initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are publicized as game-changers for regional trade, they are not immune to the effects of entrenched political and economic disparities across the continent.³⁰

While AfCFTA and other efforts at intra-African trade integration are firm, the lack of regulatory harmonization and infrastructure presents major bottlenecks.³¹ Investments in energy and transportation, although critical, face enormous delays and funding shortfalls. The focus of the agenda on economic diversification and regional cooperation is commendable, but without addressing the historical dependency on foreign direct investment, Africa's economic resilience remains fragile.³²

Social Development

The social development focus of Agenda 2063, particularly on education and health, is crucial for the progress of Africa. The agenda's call for expanded access to education at all levels is important, yet the pervasive quality issues in many African educational systems cannot be ignored.³³ Investment in vocational training is often highlighted, but whether these initiatives genuinely align with the demands of the labor market is questionable.

The emphasis of the agenda on improving healthcare access is equally significant. However, the discussion around healthcare tends to ignore the systemic failures that exist in most African healthcare systems, particularly regarding infrastructure, funding, and governance³⁴. Furthermore, Agenda 2063's social inclusion goals face substantial challenges in addressing deep-rooted inequalities across gender, class, and geography, making the accomplishment of inclusive societies far from guaranteed.³⁵

Governance and Institutional Development

While Agenda 2063 rightly emphasizes governance as a cornerstone of economic development, its reliance on African states to foster transparency, accountability, and the rule of law presents a paradox.

²⁹ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research"; Olga L Kupika et al., "Impacts of Climate Change and Climate Variability on Wildlife Resources in Southern Africa: Experience from Selected Protected Areas in Zimbabwe," *Selected Studies in Biodiversity*, 2017, 1–23.

³⁰ Ernest Tooche Aniche, "African Continental Free Trade Area and African Union Agenda 2063: The Roads to Addis Ababa and Kigali," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 41, no. 4 (2023): 377–92.

³¹ Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa."

³² DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

³³ Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa."

³⁴ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

³⁵ Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa."

The persistent issues of corruption, political instability, and weak democratic institutions in several African countries pose a significant risk to the success of this vision.³⁶ Although there are efforts to promote regional cooperation, such as through peace and security frameworks, these initiatives often falter due to competing national interests and insufficient institutional capacity.³⁷ Additionally, the focus on peace and security, though crucial for attracting investment, does not sufficiently address the root causes of conflict in Africa. The oversimplified connection between governance and economic growth in Agenda 2063 assumes that economic progress will naturally follow improved governance, an assumption that overlooks the intricacies of Africa's postcolonial political economies.³⁸

Key Benefits of Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 offers significant potential for businesses to develop sustainable marketing strategies; by aligning their marketing efforts with the goals of this continental framework, companies can enhance their brand reputation, increase consumer loyalty, and tap into new market segments, however, this potential is not without its complications. While alignment with the SDGs may enhance the credibility of a company, implementing such initiatives requires substantial financial investment, which many African businesses lack. This raises critical questions about the feasibility of widespread adoption, especially for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Regional integration and economic growth under Agenda 2063 are presented as catalysts for market expansion, but the complexities of regional disparities and infrastructural gaps are downplayed.³⁹ The agenda's advocacy for social inclusion and gender equality is also essential, yet adopting these principles in marketing strategies requires a more nuanced understanding of cultural and social contexts.⁴⁰

Challenges to Implementing Agenda 2063 for Sustainable Marketing

There are numerous and multifaceted challenges facing the implementation of Agenda 2063 in sustainable marketing. According to Ndizera & Muzee, the lack of financial resources and infrastructure is only the tip of the iceberg.⁴¹ Political instability and corruption present equally formidable barriers. Furthermore, the continent's vast diversity makes it difficult to develop a one-size-fits-all marketing strategy. Localized differences in culture, language, and economic conditions challenge any cohesive effort to align marketing strategies with the objectives of Agenda 2063.⁴²

The risk of "greenwashing" further complicates the marketing goals of the agenda. Companies that falsely advertise their sustainability credentials risk damaging both consumer trust and the larger push toward genuine sustainability.⁴³ External factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical crises, add additional layers of complexity to the already difficult task of adopting Agenda 2063 for sustainable marketing strategies.⁴⁴ ("SDG 2030, Agenda 2063, Russia-Ukraine War, Africa's Development Possibilities," 2023).

Overcoming Challenges to Sustainable Marketing in Africa

The successful implementation of Agenda 2063 for sustainable marketing in Africa is contingent upon addressing several significant challenges. DeGhetto et al., states that these include infrastructure gaps,

³⁶ Aniche, "African Continental Free Trade Area and African Union Agenda 2063: The Roads to Addis Ababa and Kigali."

³⁷ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

³⁸ Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa."

³⁹ Nhamo, "New Global Sustainable Development Agenda: A Focus on Africa."

⁴⁰ Alwago, "A Partial Least Squares Analysis of Gender Inequality, Occupational Segregation, and Economic Growth: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa."

⁴¹ Vedaste Ndizera and Hannah Muzee, "A Critical Review of Agenda 2063: Business as Usual?," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 12, no. 8 (2018): 142–54.

⁴² Nwozor, Okidu, and Adedire, "Agenda 2063 and the Feasibility of Sustainable Development in Africa: Any Silver Bullet?"

⁴³ Uwafiokun Idemudia and Kenneth Amaeshi, *Africapitalism: Sustainable Business and Development in Africa* (Routledge, 2019).

⁴⁴ Christian Kroll, Anne Warchold, and Prajal Pradhan, "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Are We Successful in Turning Trade-Offs into Synergies?," *Palgrave Communications* 5, no. 1 (November 12, 2019): 140, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0335-5>; I Ikubaje-Aina, "Women's Empowerment and Development in Africa: Strides and Tides," *Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063* (2015): 17–21; V.M. Zubok, "Myths and Realities of Putinism and NATO Expansion," in *Evaluating NATO Enlargement: From Cold War Victory to the Russia-Ukraine War* (Cham: Springer International Publishing., 2023), 145–59.

economic disparities, cultural and linguistic diversity, and regulatory and legal complexities.⁴⁵ Infrastructure challenges, such as the digital divide and inadequate transportation networks, can hinder businesses' ability to reach customers and distribute products effectively.⁴⁶ According to Alwago economic disparities, including low-income levels and economic instability, can limit market demand and create uncertainty for businesses.⁴⁷ Cultural and linguistic diversity requires businesses to adapt their marketing strategies to accommodate different preferences and values while overcoming language barriers.⁴⁸

Regulatory and legal challenges, including complex regulations, corruption, and intellectual property protection issues, can create obstacles for businesses operating in Africa.⁴⁹ Additionally, Nhamo puts forward that the lack of skilled marketing professionals and the need for training and development programs to address skills gaps are significant challenges.⁵⁰ Drawing from this, a holistic and multifaceted approach is needed to overcome the countless challenges that stand in the way of Agenda 2063. Investments in infrastructure and targeted marketing strategies are essential, but they must be coupled with meaningful partnerships between businesses, governments, and civil society.⁵¹ Addressing economic disparities, cultural diversity, and regulatory hurdles is crucial for creating an environment conducive to sustainable marketing in Africa.

Sustainability and Social Impact: A Cornerstone of Agenda 2063

Sustainability and social impact are central to Agenda 2063, but their integration into business strategies is far from straightforward. The demand for eco-friendly products and services is growing, however, without adequate infrastructure and investment, the shift toward sustainable practices remains aspirational.⁵² Addressing environmental challenges such as water scarcity requires more than abstract efforts, it demands systemic change, which many businesses are ill-prepared to undertake.

The agenda also calls for businesses to address social issues like poverty and unemployment. While Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives are growing, they are often insufficient in addressing the deep-rooted issues plaguing many African societies.⁵³ As businesses work to align with Agenda 2063, they must go beyond superficial efforts and engage in meaningful, sustainable practices that have a tangible impact on the lives of African citizens. Cilliers suggests that investing in community development projects or offering job training can have a positive impact on the local community.⁵⁴ Furthermore, addressing health issues like malaria, HIV/AIDS, and malnutrition is essential for improving overall well-being and creating a conducive economic environment. To address these issues and contribute to Agenda 2063's goals, businesses must implement innovative marketing strategies, invest in infrastructure development, and prioritize sustainability and social responsibility.⁵⁵ This approach can contribute to economic growth, job creation, and improved quality of life for Africans.

While Agenda 2063 offers a strategic framework for Africa's long-term development, its implementation, particularly in the context of sustainable marketing, is riddled with challenges. Companies like MTN, Dangote, and Jumia have made developments, but a critical analysis reveals that

⁴⁵ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

⁴⁶ Idemudia and Amaeshi, *Africapitalism: Sustainable Business and Development in Africa*.

⁴⁷ Alwago, "A Partial Least Squares Analysis of Gender Inequality, Occupational Segregation, and Economic Growth: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa."

⁴⁸ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

⁴⁹ Marijana Pantić et al., "Challenges and Opportunities for Public Participation in Urban and Regional Planning during the COVID-19 Pandemic—Lessons Learned for the Future," *Land* 10, no. 12 (2021): 1379.

⁵⁰ Kupika et al., "Impacts of Climate Change and Climate Variability on Wildlife Resources in Southern Africa: Experience from Selected Protected Areas in Zimbabwe."

⁵¹ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

⁵² V. Mlambo, "Living in the Dark: Load Shedding and South Africa's Quest for Inclusive Development," *International Journal of Social Sciences* 11, no. 2 (2023): 1–8.

⁵³ Haidy Amer, "The Impact of Renewable Energy Consumption on the Human Development Index in Selected Countries: Panel Analysis (1990–2015)," *Int J Econ Energy Environ* 5, no. 4 (2020): 47.

⁵⁴ Jakkie Cilliers, *The Future of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities* (Springer Nature, 2021).

⁵⁵ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

many of their efforts are still working in progress. The broader vision of a prosperous, integrated, and sustainable Africa remains within reach, but only if businesses and governments alike are willing to commit to the long-term, structural changes necessary to realize this ambitious agenda.

Case Studies of Businesses that have Effectively Adapted their Marketing Strategies

MTN Group

MTN Group has played a pivotal role in connecting Africa to the global digital economy. Cisse reports that providing affordable telecommunications services has opened doors for businesses to scale and individuals to access critical information.⁵⁶ Importantly, MTN's marketing strategy is deeply intertwined with the goals of Agenda 2063, focusing on enhancing digital inclusion and leveraging local cultural contexts to optimize customer engagement.⁵⁷ One notable aspect of MTN's marketing adaptation is its keen attention to cultural relevance. In Nigeria, for example, the company strategically collaborated with local celebrities to drive its "MTN Pulse" campaign, which targeted youth by aligning with their cultural values.⁵⁸ Drawing from this, this reflects a profound understanding that effective marketing in Africa must recognize diverse social dynamics. This strategy not only increased brand loyalty but also fostered a strong connection with the younger demographic, a key group in Africa's growing consumer base.

Furthermore, MTN's introduction of mobile money services reflects its response to socioeconomic challenges across the continent, notably financial exclusion. Its mobile money platform has proven transformative, especially in rural areas where traditional banking is scarce.⁵⁹ This adaptation to local needs, paired with its efforts in infrastructure development and the deployment of innovative digital services, demonstrates how businesses can evolve to meet both market demands and broader developmental goals like those outlined in Agenda 2063. MTN's environmental marketing initiatives, which highlight its renewable energy investments, serve as another example of aligning corporate priorities with sustainable development.⁶⁰

This case exemplifies how MTN's alignment with Agenda 2063 goes beyond merely providing cellular network services. By promoting digital inclusion, fostering economic growth, and advancing sustainability, MTN demonstrates that aligning business operations with regional visions can create a competitive advantage while contributing to Africa's long-term goals. As the company expands into underserved regions and invests in technology, it continues to support Agenda 2063's infrastructure and economic integration objectives, emphasizing the vital role of businesses in Africa's development.

Dangote Industries

Dangote Industries is another prime example of a business that has effectively aligned its strategies with Agenda 2063, with a specific focus on industrialization and economic diversification. The company has been instrumental in Nigeria's industrial growth, helping to reduce dependence on imports through significant investments in domestic production facilities.⁶¹ Unlike MTN, which focuses on digital connectivity, Dangote's strategy lies in infrastructure and industrialization, key pillars of Agenda 2063. The industrial projects of the company, such as the Dangote Refinery and various cement plants, aim to boost local production, reducing import reliance and fostering job creation. This resonates with the goal of regional economic integration, as these facilities enhance intra-African trade, strengthening the self-sufficiency of the continent.⁶²

Dangote's integration with local communities through CSR initiatives is equally critical. Scholarship programs, healthcare projects, and employment opportunities reflect Dangote's commitment to socio-economic development. These activities demonstrate an understanding of how businesses can

⁵⁶ Daouda Cissé, "Partnership for the Development of Africa's Telecommunications Sector Under Agenda 2063: African and Chinese Telecommunications Companies in Africa," in *Perspectives on Africa-China Infrastructural and Industrial Cooperation: Empirical Findings and Conceptual Implications* (Springer, 2023), 73–97.

⁵⁷ Jake Bright and Aubrey Hruby, *The next Africa: An Emerging Continent Becomes a Global Powerhouse* (Macmillan, 2015).

⁵⁸ Benedict Oramah, "Africa's Trade & Economic Development Priorities: The Road to Agenda 2063," *Development Finance Agenda (DEFA)* 3, no. 4 (2017): 4–7.

⁵⁹ Oramah, "Africa's Trade & Economic Development Priorities: The Road to Agenda 2063."

⁶⁰ Bright and Hruby, *The next Africa: An Emerging Continent Becomes a Global Powerhouse*.

⁶¹ Bruce Byiers, Karim Karaki, and Jan Vanheukelom, "Regional Markets, Politics and Value Chains" (The West African Cement Discussion Paper No. 216). <https://ecdpm.org> ..., 2017).

⁶² Oramah, "Africa's Trade & Economic Development Priorities: The Road to Agenda 2063."

contribute to sustainable development not just by creating economic value, but by fostering social cohesion and community growth, which are essential elements of Agenda 2063.⁶³ Connecting this to MTN's case, while both companies share the goal of economic integration and inclusive growth, Dangote's approach is more infrastructure centric. This underscores the multifaceted ways businesses can support Africa's growth by focusing on different areas, whether through technology or industrialization, both are integral to the long-term development of the continent.

Jumia

Jumia, a leading e-commerce platform, represents a different model of marketing adaptation, one that hinges on digital commerce and cross-border trade. Jumia has capitalized on the increasing penetration of mobile internet in Africa by providing a platform for local vendors to sell to a regional market, thus fostering economic integration as envisioned by Agenda 2063.⁶⁴ The success of Jumia lies in its ability to tailor marketing efforts to local dynamics. For instance, during regional festivals, Jumia launches culturally sensitive advertisements that resonate with local customs, increasing customer engagement.⁶⁵ Furthermore, its mobile app, designed to function well in areas with limited internet connectivity, underscores the commitment of the company to digital inclusion, one of the core aims of Agenda 2063.⁶⁶

By supporting SMEs through its platform, Jumia contributes to the goals of economic integration and regional trade, offering local businesses the tools they need to expand their market reach. This makes Jumia not only a catalyst for e-commerce in Africa but also a critical player in advancing digital trade across borders. The distinction between Jumia and other case studies like MTN and Dangote is worth noting. While MTN focuses on digital infrastructure and Dangote on industrial growth, Jumia's approach lies in utilizing technology to boost commerce. All three strategies, however, converge on the central ideas of Agenda 2063, economic integration, inclusivity, and sustainable growth, illustrating how businesses can pursue different paths toward the same overarching objectives.

Integrating Sustainable Marketing Practices for Agenda 2063

Successful integration of sustainable marketing practices in line with Agenda 2063 is fundamental to Africa's future growth. Businesses must not only focus on profitability but also on contributing to the long-term sustainability goals of the continent, which include environmental protection, economic resilience, and social inclusivity.⁶⁷

Promoting environmental sustainability

Incorporating sustainability into marketing efforts requires businesses to focus on eco-friendly products and practices. Unilever's "Sustainable Living Plan" is a strong example of this, as it highlights efforts to reduce waste and carbon emissions while still providing consumer value.⁶⁸ MTN's renewable energy initiatives further demonstrate how businesses can use sustainability as a marketing tool to align with the environmental goals of Agenda 2063. The connection between environmental sustainability and economic development is becoming increasingly clear, especially as businesses are held to higher standards by both consumers and regulators. MTN's focus on promoting renewable energy aligns seamlessly with Jumia's efforts to reduce environmental impact through sustainable supply chains. Both cases exemplify how businesses across sectors can contribute to environmental sustainability and market themselves as leaders in responsible corporate practices.

⁶³ Byiers, Karaki, and Vanheukelom, "Regional Markets, Politics and Value Chains."

⁶⁴ Maxime Weigert, "Jumia Travel in Africa: Expanding the Boundaries of the Online Travel Agency Business Model," *Tourism Review* 74, no. 6 (2019): 1167–78.

⁶⁵ Weigert, "Jumia Travel in Africa: Expanding the Boundaries of the Online Travel Agency Business Model."

⁶⁶ Byiers, Karaki, and Vanheukelom, "Regional Markets, Politics and Value Chains."

⁶⁷ Donald L Sparks, "The Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: Implications for Economic Integration in Africa," *Research in Applied Economics* 8, no. 4 (2016): 45–73.

⁶⁸ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

Supporting economic development and local communities

For businesses to fully align with Agenda 2063, they must prioritize local sourcing and CSR activities that promote regional economic development. Dangote Industries' efforts in local sourcing and MTN's community-building initiatives, such as scholarships and health projects, exemplify how businesses can contribute to both economic growth and social welfare.⁶⁹ These efforts not only support local communities but also enhance brand loyalty and market position by showcasing corporate responsibility.

Fostering social inclusion and equity

Inclusive marketing is essential for businesses operating in Africa. Jumia's engagement with SMEs provides a platform for local entrepreneurs, aligning with Agenda 2063's social goals of economic integration and inclusivity.⁷⁰ Ethiopian Airlines' initiatives to empower underrepresented groups highlight how marketing efforts can also play a role in advancing social equity.⁷¹ The common thread linking these case studies is the realization that businesses must be adaptable and responsive to Africa's unique challenges and opportunities. Whether through technology, industrialization, or digital commerce, the future of Africa's business landscape will be shaped by companies that align with the continent's vision for sustainable and inclusive growth.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illuminate how sustainable marketing strategies can significantly support the economic, social, and environmental goals of Agenda 2063. The findings highlight the critical role of leveraging Agenda 2063 in supporting the development of innovative marketing strategies, promoting social responsibility, and contributing to the sustainable growth of African economies. The findings show that innovative and socially responsible marketing initiatives, when properly aligned with the pillars of Agenda 2063, can contribute to Africa's long-term development objectives. However, the practical application of these strategies presents several challenges, especially when considered in conjunction with the SDGs. African businesses, particularly SMEs, face considerable hurdles in balancing profitability with environmental stewardship and social responsibility, due to resource constraints and systemic issues like corruption and inadequate infrastructure.⁷² Nevertheless, the opportunities for growth, especially through innovation and technological advancements, remain abundant for businesses willing to make long-term investments.

One critical aspect of the findings is the pivotal role of innovation in driving sustainable marketing strategies. For instance, the case of MTN's mobile money services demonstrates how technological innovations can promote financial inclusion and address socioeconomic disparities. This aligns directly with Agenda 2063's goals of fostering digital inclusion and promoting economic growth through innovation.⁷³ However, innovation alone cannot drive sustainable marketing if businesses do not integrate social responsibility and environmental sustainability into their core operations. While some companies, like MTN and Dangote, have demonstrated progress in these areas, many African businesses are still focused on short-term profit maximization at the expense of long-term sustainability goals. This imbalance between economic, social, and environmental objectives must be addressed to fully realize the potential of Agenda 2063.

Moreover, social responsibility emerges as a crucial component in the alignment of business strategies with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Businesses that effectively incorporate CSR initiatives, such as community engagement and educational programs, not only enhance their brand reputation but also contribute to broader societal goals. Dangote Industries, for example, has leveraged its industrial growth to reduce dependency on imports and create jobs, while also investing in social programs such as scholarships and healthcare initiatives.⁷⁴ However, while large corporations can afford to integrate such initiatives, SMEs often struggle with the financial and structural capacity to implement robust CSR

⁶⁹ Oramah, "Africa's Trade & Economic Development Priorities: The Road to Agenda 2063."

⁷⁰ Weigert, "Jumia Travel in Africa: Expanding the Boundaries of the Online Travel Agency Business Model."

⁷¹ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

⁷² Mlambo, Thusi, and Ndlovuand, "The African Union's Agenda 2063 For Africa's Development: Possibility Or Ruse?"

⁷³ Oramah, "Africa's Trade & Economic Development Priorities: The Road to Agenda 2063."

⁷⁴ Byiers, Karaki, and Vanheukelom, "Regional Markets, Politics and Value Chains."

programs. This dichotomy highlights the need for governmental and international support to help smaller businesses scale sustainable marketing practices.

Another key finding is the growing consumer demand for environmentally sustainable products and services, which presents both an opportunity and a challenge for African businesses. The increasing emphasis on environmental stewardship requires companies to innovate in ways that reduce their carbon footprint and promote sustainability in supply chains. For example, Unilever's "Sustainable Living Plan" serves as a model for integrating sustainability into marketing strategies without sacrificing consumer value.⁷⁵ Yet, the risk of "greenwashing" remains a significant concern, as businesses may exaggerate their environmental credentials to gain market favor. This could undermine both the consumer trust necessary for sustainable marketing success and the larger goals of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the findings highlight the need for businesses to engage with cultural and social contexts when formulating sustainable marketing strategies. Jumia's adaptation of its e-commerce platform to local dynamics, such as culturally sensitive advertisements and mobile apps designed for low-connectivity areas, showcases how businesses can effectively tailor their marketing strategies to regional conditions.⁷⁷ This adaptability is crucial for aligning business strategies with Agenda 2063's goals of social inclusion and economic integration. However, regional disparities in infrastructure and governance continue to impede the scalability of such initiatives, particularly in areas with weak institutional frameworks.

In conclusion, while the potential for sustainable marketing to support Agenda 2063 is evident, significant challenges remain, particularly around resource constraints, governance, and infrastructure. African businesses must not only innovate but also commit to long-term strategies that balance profitability with environmental and social goals. This necessitates a concerted effort from both the private and public sectors to foster an enabling environment for sustainable business practices. Through collaboration, investment in infrastructure, and adherence to the principles of innovation, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship, businesses can align their marketing strategies with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, thereby contributing to Africa's sustainable and inclusive development trajectory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, companies seeking to enter or expand into African markets while adhering to the goals of Agenda 2063 must prioritize sustainability by adopting innovative and socially responsible marketing strategies. To align with both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, companies should incorporate environmentally friendly practices such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and sustainable resource management. These efforts must not be limited to internal operations but should be prominently featured in marketing campaigns to demonstrate a genuine commitment to environmental stewardship. As evidenced by MTN's renewable energy initiatives, integrating sustainability into the business model not only fosters consumer trust but also aligns with Africa's broader environmental and economic goals.

Promoting renewable energy investments is another key recommendation, particularly in light of Africa's need for sustainable industrial growth. Companies can support this by investing in solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources, integrating them into their operations, and emphasizing these initiatives in their sustainability reports and marketing materials. The success of businesses like MTN, which highlights its renewable energy investments, shows that aligning corporate strategies with environmental goals can attract environmentally conscious consumers, contributing to both profitability and the achievement of Agenda 2063's environmental objectives.

Adopting circular economy principles is essential for sustainable growth in Africa. Businesses should focus on developing reusable, recyclable, or biodegradable products to minimize waste and improve resource efficiency. As seen in companies like Unilever, which reduces its carbon footprint while offering consumer value, this approach will help African businesses not only comply with Agenda 2063's environmental targets but also create a competitive advantage. Additionally, producing goods that

⁷⁵ DeGhetto, Gray, and Kiggundu, "The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, Challenges, and Opportunities for Management Research."

⁷⁶ Idemudia and Amaeshi, *Africapitalism: Sustainable Business and Development in Africa*.

⁷⁷ Weigert, "Jumia Travel in Africa: Expanding the Boundaries of the Online Travel Agency Business Model."

are designed for reuse or recycling will further support a circular economy, which is integral to sustainable industrialization and economic diversification, two key pillars of the agenda.

Working with local businesses and communities is another critical strategy for businesses to create shared value and support social development. As demonstrated by Dangote's focus on local sourcing and community development projects, businesses can contribute to alleviating poverty and enhancing livelihoods by investing in rural development, supporting fair trade, and collaborating with local suppliers. This approach fosters economic inclusivity, which aligns with Agenda 2063's goals of reducing inequality and promoting regional economic integration.

Companies must also prioritize workforce development by promoting education, skill-building, and diversity programs. Sustainable growth cannot be achieved without a skilled and empowered workforce, and businesses should take an active role in empowering women and promoting gender equality. As highlighted in the findings, gender inclusion is critical to advancing sustainable marketing strategies. By fostering an equitable work environment, companies not only contribute to social cohesion but also enhance their ability to align with both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.

Finally, leveraging mobile technologies and social media is crucial for reaching a broader audience and promoting environmentally friendly products. As seen with Jumia's use of e-commerce and digital platforms to support regional trade, businesses can reduce waste and increase efficiency by adopting digital solutions. Moreover, conducting CSR initiatives that address social and environmental issues will strengthen community ties and boost brand loyalty. Monitoring progress and regularly reporting on sustainability achievements will also ensure accountability, enabling businesses to set attainable sustainability goals and continuously improve their performance, thereby solidifying their alignment with the sustainable development objectives of Agenda 2063.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings of this study, several avenues for future research emerge that can further deepen the understanding of the intersection between sustainable marketing, Agenda 2063, and the SDGs within the African context. Future research could explore the role of digital technologies in advancing sustainable marketing strategies across diverse African markets. As highlighted in this study, platforms like MTN and Jumia have successfully leveraged mobile technology and e-commerce to promote sustainability initiatives. However, the potential for digital transformation, particularly in rural and underserved regions, remains underexplored. Research could investigate how innovations such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics could enhance the effectiveness of sustainable marketing, particularly in addressing infrastructure gaps and fostering inclusive growth.

There is also a need for research that examines the effectiveness of localized marketing strategies tailored to the diverse cultural, social, and economic conditions across African nations. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of aligning marketing campaigns with local contexts. Future research could delve into how businesses can better navigate regional diversity and engage with local communities in a way that promotes both social inclusion and environmental stewardship. This would contribute to a deeper understanding of how marketing strategies can be customized to maximize impact across Africa's varied socioeconomic landscapes. Additional research could focus on the integration of circular economy principles within African businesses. While this study highlights the importance of developing recyclable, reusable, or biodegradable products, further research is needed to understand the operational challenges and economic viability of implementing circular economy practices in different industries across Africa. A comparative analysis between countries that have successfully integrated these principles and those that have not could provide insights into best practices and policy recommendations.

There is an opportunity for research to investigate the financial implications of sustainable marketing for SMEs. Given that SMEs form the backbone of many African economies, understanding the cost-benefit dynamics of adopting sustainable practices is crucial. Future research could explore how these businesses can balance sustainability with profitability, and how access to finance and investment might influence the adoption of sustainable marketing strategies. The role of governance and institutional frameworks in enabling or hindering the alignment of corporate strategies with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs is another critical area for further research. This study identified issues such as weak governance

and political instability as significant barriers. Future research could investigate how policy reforms, regional cooperation, and international partnerships can create a more conducive environment for businesses to adopt sustainable marketing strategies.

Lastly, future studies could also examine the long-term social and environmental impacts of CSR initiatives in African markets. As this study suggests, many businesses engage in CSR as part of their sustainable marketing efforts, but the long-term outcomes on poverty alleviation, education, and environmental conservation require more rigorous evaluation. Longitudinal studies assessing the impact of CSR projects in local communities would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of these initiatives in contributing to the broader goals of Agenda 2063. These research directions would contribute significantly to advancing both academic understanding and practical application of sustainable marketing strategies in alignment with Africa's developmental goals.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore a significant shift in Africa's trajectory over the past few decades, reflected not only in the continent's growing economic recognition but also in its commitment to sustainable development. Africa's rebranding from being labeled as a "bad continent" in 2000 to an "encouraging continent" by 2013 mirrors the evolving focus on inclusive growth and sustainability.⁷⁸ Agenda 2063 sets a clear vision for a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable Africa, and sustainable marketing is pivotal to realizing this vision. Sustainable marketing strategies that integrate financial viability with social and environmental responsibility are crucial for driving Africa's development. By aligning marketing practices with the goals of Agenda 2063, companies can not only promote eco-friendly products and services but also create shared value for local communities and protect the continent's natural resources. Such strategies offer businesses the opportunity to support inclusive growth by targeting diverse markets, including marginalized groups, and generating sustainable livelihoods that contribute to poverty reduction and social equity.

Moreover, companies adopting sustainable marketing practices will help safeguard Africa's environment by embracing ecological practices, reducing waste, and promoting sustainable consumption. These efforts directly contribute to the continent's resilience and long-term sustainability. Furthermore, by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, sustainable marketing can catalyze the development of new products and services, accelerating economic transformation. In conclusion, aligning corporate efforts with Africa's development priorities through sustainable marketing strategies not only supports the realization of Agenda 2063 but positions businesses as leaders in ethical and progressive practices. This synergy between sustainable marketing and the continent's growth objectives equips Africa with the tools for resilience, equity, and success by 2063, ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future.

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