



Integrating National Development Plan 2030 Objectives into South African Marketing Strategies to Foster Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how South African businesses can align their marketing strategies with the National Development Plan (NDP), which emphasizes sustainability, inclusivity, technological innovation, and community engagement. Using a desktop research approach, secondary data were gathered from scholarly databases and reports to identify best practices and challenges in integrating NDP goals into marketing. Findings reveal that businesses can advance the sustainability goal through initiatives such as sustainable sourcing and carbon reduction, although the risks of greenwashing undermine credibility. Inclusivity can be promoted by tailoring marketing efforts to underrepresented groups, but tokenistic approaches risk alienating them. Technological innovation enables personalized consumer engagement and supports e-commerce; however, digital exclusion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and disadvantaged communities perpetuates inequality. Community engagement through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can strengthen business–society relations, but one-off events and symbolic gestures limit long-term impact. The discussion highlights the need for authenticity, equitable access to digital resources, and regulatory support for SMEs to overcome barriers. Recommendations include adopting measurable sustainability practices, investing in long-term community development, ensuring culturally sensitive inclusivity, bridging the digital divide, and fostering cross-sector collaborations. The study concludes that success in marketing must go beyond profit maximization to include social and environmental impact, positioning businesses as partners in national development. By embedding NDP 2030 goals into their strategies, companies can enhance competitiveness, foster consumer trust, and contribute to socio-economic transformation. This research contributes to scholarship by providing a framework for integrating policy-driven development objectives into marketing practice within a developing economy context.

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of sustainability into South Africa's marketing and development landscape presents an extraordinary opportunity to align commercial ambitions with societal progress. At the heart of this agenda lies the NDP 2030, which envisions a prosperous and inclusive society by emphasizing sustainability, inclusivity, technological innovation, and community engagement. This framework provides businesses

a pathway to adopt transformative marketing strategies, although its realization requires navigating complex economic, social, and environmental dimensions with both innovation and commitment. As Okitasari and Katramiz highlight, the interconnectivity principle of the NDP ensures that progress in one area supports rather than undermines others.¹

The South African marketing environment, shaped by diverse consumer behaviours, regulatory frameworks and rapid technological change, provides fertile ground for this alignment. Consumer expectations are shifting towards sustainability and accountability; however, structural inequalities and uneven access to resources hinder meaningful implementation.² Ethical consumerism and digital purchasing have become dominant trends, but bridging the digital divide between urban and rural consumers remains a major challenge.³ Companies that embed authentic sustainability into operations are more likely to gain trust, while superficial practices like greenwashing risk reputational harm.⁴ Technological tools, such as artificial intelligence and data analytics, enhance personalization and efficiency, yet overreliance on these innovations can exacerbate disparities for SMEs with limited digital access.⁵

Despite these challenges, opportunities exist for businesses to align marketing with the NDP's objectives. Inclusive practices and community-focused initiatives not only foster consumer loyalty but also advance socio-economic development. However, as Dukas cautions, symbolic or once-off gestures fail to create lasting impact.⁶ Case studies, such as Woolworths' *Good Business Journey* and Shoprite's *Act for Change*, demonstrate how sustainability and social inclusion can be integrated into business strategies, while also revealing limitations in accessibility and scalability. Similarly, localized sourcing and CSR programs demonstrate the potential of businesses to balance profitability with social responsibility.⁷

Therefore, this study critically examines how South African businesses integrate NDP 2030 goals into their marketing strategies, analyzing sustainability, inclusivity, technological innovation, and community engagement.⁸ By reviewing secondary data and case studies, it identifies best practices, challenges, and gaps, offering actionable insights for policymakers, businesses, and communities. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to scholarship by bridging the gap between policy aspirations and marketing practice, providing a holistic framework for fostering a more equitable and sustainable marketing landscape in South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Driving Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is championed by the NDP, which adopts an integrated approach to addressing socioeconomic challenges, emphasizing the interplay between economic, social, and environmental dimensions. According to Okitasari and Katramiz, the NDP approach underscores the critical importance of interconnections, ensuring that progress in one area does not come at the expense of others.⁹ Myeki states that this integration is reinforced by a commitment to infrastructure investment and educational reform, which are essential for long-term, equitable growth.¹⁰ However, he also argues that despite its

¹ Mahesti Okitasari and Tarek Katramiz, "The National Development Plans after the SDGs: Steering Implications of the Global Goals towards National Development Planning," *Earth System Governance* 12 (2022): 100136.

² Pumla Qamisa Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050," 2021.

³ Vitaly Kaftan et al., "Socio-Economic Stability and Sustainable Development in the Post-COVID Era: Lessons for the Business and Economic Leaders," *Sustainability* 15, no. 4 (2023): 2876.

⁴ Bongwiwe M Zulu and Shanta B Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030," in *African Development and Global Engagements: Policy, Climate Change, and COVID-19* (Springer, 2023), 7–29.

⁵ Mandisi Matyana and Xolani Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions," *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 12, no. 6 (2023): 212–26; Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050."

⁶ P. R. Dukas, "Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementation Targets by South African Companies" (North-West University (South Africa), 2021).

⁷ K. Chabalala, "South Africa's Foreign Policy Aspirations and the National Development Plan (NDP 2030): The Role and Impact of Trade and Investment on the State's Political Economy" (n.d.).

⁸ NDP, *Our Future: Make It Work: National Development Plan* (Pretoria: National Planning Commission, , 2030).

⁹ Okitasari and Katramiz, "The National Development Plans after the SDGs: Steering Implications of the Global Goals towards National Development Planning."

¹⁰ Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050."

strengths, the effectiveness of the NDP may be hindered by insufficient implementation frameworks, particularly in areas lacking robust monitoring systems.

Furthermore, Okitasari and Katramiz explain that the focus of the NDP on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensures adaptability to public demands and contextual shifts.¹¹ They assert that this adaptability is pivotal in maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of policies in dynamic social and economic environments. Nevertheless, it is contended that these mechanisms often fall short in addressing deeply entrenched structural inequalities, which remain a barrier to genuine inclusivity and sustainability.¹²

Marketing Landscape in South Africa

South Africa's marketing landscape is characterized by complex dynamics, including regulatory frameworks, technological innovations, and evolving consumer behaviours. According to Matyana and Thusi, the regulatory environment poses a significant challenge for businesses, as compliance with laws such as the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) demands substantial resources.¹³ Okitasari and Katramiz emphasize that although regulatory compliance ensures consumer protection, it also creates barriers for smaller businesses, which may lack the capacity to navigate such complexities effectively.¹⁴

Furthermore, Matyana and Thusi assert that increased market competition forces businesses to adopt innovative marketing approaches to stay relevant.¹⁵ However, they also argue that this competitive pressure can lead to homogenization, where businesses imitate successful strategies instead of fostering genuine creativity. This concern is echoed by Okitasari and Katramiz, who explain that companies must balance technological adaptation with authenticity in their brand messaging to build meaningful connections with their audiences.¹⁶

Consumer behaviour trends

The consumer behaviour in South Africa has undergone a significant transformation, influenced by social dynamics, technological advancement, and economic pressures. Kaftan et al. state that the rise of digital purchasing, driven by convenience and accessibility, reflects a broader global trend towards e-commerce.¹⁷ They explain that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, forcing many businesses to prioritize their online presence. However, Hui, Seefeldt, Bare, Sanifu, Jackson and Dilahunt also argue that this digital shift has deepened the divide between tech-savvy urban consumers and underserved rural populations, who face barriers to accessing online platforms.¹⁸

Moreover, ethical consumerism has gained prominence, with consumers increasingly prioritizing sustainability and CSR. De Araujo, Priadana, Paramarta and Sunarsi assert that businesses must align their values with those of their customers to maintain relevance.¹⁹ However, they also warn that superficial commitments to sustainability, commonly referred to as "greenwashing", can undermine consumer trust, leading to reputational risks.

Technological advancements

Technological progress has revolutionized marketing strategies in South Africa, enabling businesses to personalize interactions and streamline operations. Myeki, explains that data analytics and artificial

¹¹ Okitasari and Katramiz, "The National Development Plans after the SDGs: Steering Implications of the Global Goals towards National Development Planning."

¹² Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

¹³ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

¹⁴ Okitasari and Katramiz, "The National Development Plans after the SDGs: Steering Implications of the Global Goals towards National Development Planning."

¹⁵ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

¹⁶ Okitasari and Katramiz, "The National Development Plans after the SDGs: Steering Implications of the Global Goals towards National Development Planning."

¹⁷ Kaftan et al., "Socio-Economic Stability and Sustainable Development in the Post-COVID Era: Lessons for the Business and Economic Leaders."

¹⁸ Julie Hui et al., "Community Tech Workers: Scaffolding Digital Engagement Among Underserved Minority Businesses," *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 7, no. CSCW2 (2023): 1–25.

¹⁹ Lizio Marcel de Araujo et al., "Digital Leadership in Business Organizations," *International Journal of Educational Administration, Management, and Leadership*, 2021, 45–56.

intelligence are integral to creating targeted marketing campaigns, which enhance customer engagement.²⁰ However, Myeki also highlights the ethical dilemmas associated with data usage, particularly regarding privacy concerns under the POPIA framework.²¹

Okitasari and Katramiz argue that e-commerce platforms and mobile apps have redefined consumer experiences, making accessibility and user-friendliness the crucial competitive factors.²² They further assert that businesses leveraging these technologies can gain a significant market advantage. However, it is contended that technological dependence can marginalize businesses and consumers who lack access to digital resources, perpetuating inequality in the marketplace.²³

Challenges

South African businesses face numerous challenges, ranging from economic instability to cultural diversity. Kaftan et al. argue that high unemployment and inflation highly impact consumer spending, compelling businesses to focus on affordability rather than innovation.²⁴ Furthermore, they explain that economic constraints often force consumers to prioritize essential goods, making it difficult for companies to sustain demand for luxury or non-essential products.

Myeki highlights the complexities of operating within a diverse sociocultural environment, where marketing strategies must cater to varying preferences and values.²⁵ While diversity offers opportunities for creative engagement, it also necessitates nuanced approaches that can strain resources. Moreover, Matyana and Thusi assert that smaller businesses are particularly vulnerable to these challenges because resource limitations hinder their ability to adopt sophisticated marketing practices.²⁶

Opportunities

Despite these challenges, the South African market provides significant opportunities, particularly for businesses aligning their strategies with the objectives of the NDP. Myeki asserts that emphasizing sustainability and social responsibility can enhance brand reputation and attract ethically conscious consumers.²⁷ Furthermore, Zulu and Singh explain that businesses focusing on inclusivity can tap into underserved markets, expanding their reach and fostering long-term loyalty.²⁸

Matekenya and Moyo argue that technological advancements provide opportunities for innovation, allowing businesses to create products and services that resonate with contemporary consumer demands.²⁹ They further emphasize that collaboration with governmental organisations and NGOs can amplify marketing efforts, fostering trust and enhancing visibility. However, Matekenya and Moyo also caution that these collaborations require careful alignment of objectives to avoid conflicts of interest.³⁰

Integration of NDP 2030 Goals in Marketing Strategies

South African businesses that aim to integrate the NDP 2030 goals into their marketing strategies demonstrate an understanding of the dual need to achieve commercial success while advancing societal objectives.³¹ This alignment requires deliberate efforts to incorporate sustainability, inclusivity, community engagement, and technological advancements into marketing practices. The following analysis critically evaluates the implementation of these strategies and highlights exemplary cases.

²⁰ Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050."

²¹ Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050."

²² Okitasari and Katramiz, "The National Development Plans after the SDGs: Steering Implications of the Global Goals towards National Development Planning."

²³ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

²⁴ Kaftan et al., "Socio-Economic Stability and Sustainable Development in the Post-COVID Era: Lessons for the Business and Economic Leaders."

²⁵ Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050."

²⁶ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

²⁷ Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050."

²⁸ Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

²⁹ W. Matekenya and C. Moyo, "Innovation as a Driver of SMME Performance in South Africa: A Quantile Regression Approach," *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies* 13, no. 3 (2022): 452–67.

³⁰ Matekenya and Moyo, "Innovation as a Driver of SMME Performance in South Africa: A Quantile Regression Approach."

³¹ NDP, *Our Future: Make It Work: National Development Plan*.

Emphasizing sustainability in branding and messaging

The integration of sustainability into branding and messaging is a critical strategy for aligning with the NDP 2030 objectives. According to Zulu and Singh, companies must not only adopt sustainable practices but also communicate these efforts effectively to consumers.³² This involves showcasing initiatives, such as sustainable sourcing, reducing carbon footprints, and participating in conservation programs. While these measures appeal to eco-conscious consumers, they also enhance a company's reputation as being responsible corporate entity.

However, the actual implementation often raises questions of authenticity. It is argued that some brands engage in greenwashing, where environmental claims are exaggerated or misleading.³³ This raises a critical point where, while sustainability messaging can strengthen brand loyalty, consumers are increasingly vigilant about verifying these claims. Companies that genuinely embed sustainability into their operations, rather than treating it as a marketing tactic, are more likely to gain long-term consumer trust.

Targeted community engagement initiatives

Targeted community engagement is another strategy for integrating NDP 2030 goals. According to Zulu and Singh, businesses that engage in job creation, skills development, and education initiatives not only address societal issues but also create emotional connections with their consumers.³⁴ This can be noted in marketing campaigns that feature personal stories of community impact resonate deeply with audiences, fostering brand loyalty.

However, Dukas critiques the superficiality of some initiatives that prioritize visibility over substance.³⁵ This can be noted in how one-off donations or photo-op events fail to create lasting impact and may even invite public scepticism. The most successful community engagement strategies are those embedded in long-term partnerships and measurable outcomes, demonstrating a genuine commitment to societal upliftment.

Inclusive marketing practices

Inclusive marketing practices reflect the NDP's emphasis on social inclusion by addressing the diverse needs of South Africa's population. As Zulu and Singh explain, this involves culturally sensitive messaging, accessible marketing channels, and tailored products for underrepresented groups. By adopting these practices, businesses can enhance consumer trust and loyalty.³⁶

Nevertheless, there are complexities in executing inclusive marketing. While inclusivity fosters brand loyalty, it also demands a nuanced understanding of cultural and social dynamics, which many brands fail to achieve. Tokenistic representation or missteps in cultural appropriation can alienate audiences rather than engage them.³⁷ Therefore, inclusive marketing must be rooted in genuine respect and understanding of the communities it seeks to serve.

Leverage technology for sustainable practices

Technology plays a transformative role in promoting sustainability within business practices. According to Zulu and Singh, data analytics enables companies to optimize supply chains, minimize waste, and improve energy efficiency.³⁸ By incorporating these advancements into their marketing narratives, businesses can reinforce their commitment to environmental sustainability.

Critically, however, the use of technology raises issues of accessibility and equity. While large corporations may have the resources to adopt cutting-edge solutions, SMEs often lack such capabilities,

³² Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

³³ de Araujo et al., "Digital Leadership in Business Organizations."

³⁴ Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

³⁵ Dukas, "Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementation Targets by South African Companies."

³⁶ Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

³⁷ Nazerath Sithara Novak and Josephine Hannah Palmeholt-Letchumanan, "The Unveiling of Consumer Perceptions' A Qualitative Study on How Consumers View Racial Representation by Iconic Brands," 2023.

³⁸ Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

creating a disparity in the market.³⁹ Policymakers and industry leaders must address this imbalance to ensure that technological innovations benefit the broader business ecosystem.

Utilizing digital platforms for a broader reach

Digital platforms are important for increasing the impact of marketing campaigns aligned with the NDP 2030 goals. As Matekenya and Moyo assert, social media, content marketing, and targeted online advertising allow businesses to communicate their sustainability and inclusivity initiatives to diverse audiences effectively.⁴⁰ Digital platforms also enable real-time engagement, fostering a sense of community among consumers.

However, digital marketing strategies are not without challenges. Zulu and Singh caution against the potential for misinformation and the misuse of consumer data, which can erode trust.⁴¹ Moreover, the digital divide in South Africa means that not all consumers can access these platforms, limiting the reach of such campaigns. To address these challenges, businesses must adopt ethical data practices and strive to make digital campaigns accessible to marginalized populations.

Exemplary Case Studies in Aligning Marketing with NDP 2030 Goals

Unilever South Africa

The commitment of Unilever to sustainability is exemplified by its Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, which integrates eco-friendly practices into its marketing campaigns. Chabalala (n.d) explains that initiatives, such as biodegradable packaging and sustainable sourcing methods, not only reduce environmental impact but also resonate with eco-conscious consumers. Furthermore, programs like Clean Future, which focus on creating products with less plastic, demonstrate the proactive approach of Unilever to reducing plastic waste. However, it is argued that the scale of Unilever's operations creates an inherent conflict between profit-driven expansion and sustainability.⁴² Although the efforts of the company are commendable, there is a need for greater transparency in balancing these competing priorities.

Shoprite

The marketing strategies of Shoprite highlight its commitment to economic development and social inclusion. According to Bosiu and Vilakazi, initiatives like the Shoprite Community Network support local farmers and suppliers, thus promoting local economies.⁴³ Additionally, the Act for Change campaign addresses hunger and food insecurity, aligning with NDP goals. Dukas critiques the scalability of such initiatives, noting that their impact may be limited to specific regions.⁴⁴ For Shoprite to fully align with NDP 2030, it must ensure that these efforts are consistently implemented across all operations.

Nedbank

The marketing strategies of Nedbank emphasize financial inclusion and literacy, particularly through initiatives such as the Greenbacks reward system. As Kilambo asserts, these programs empower marginalized communities by providing access to financial resources and education.⁴⁵ This aligns with the NDP's goals of reducing inequality and promoting economic participation. However, it is argued that such programs do not sufficiently address structural barriers to financial access, such as unemployment or systemic inequality.⁴⁶ While the efforts of Nedbank are a step in the right direction, they must be complemented by broader policy initiatives to achieve meaningful change.

³⁹ Matekenya and Moyo, "Innovation as a Driver of SMME Performance in South Africa: A Quantile Regression Approach."

⁴⁰ Matekenya and Moyo, "Innovation as a Driver of SMME Performance in South Africa: A Quantile Regression Approach."

⁴¹ Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

⁴² Dukas, "Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementation Targets by South African Companies."

⁴³ Teboho Bosiu and Thando Vilakazi, *Competition and Inclusive Regional Economic Growth in Food Production: Barriers to Entry and the Role of African Multinational Corporations* (WIDER Working Paper, 2020).

⁴⁴ Dukas, "Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementation Targets by South African Companies."

⁴⁵ Sixta R Kilambo, "Black Economic Empowerment Policy and the Transfer of Equity and Mine Assets to Black People in South Africa's Mining Industry," *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences* 24, no.1(2021): 1–14.

⁴⁶ Brigitte Rohwerder and Carolina Szyp, "The Risks and Outcomes of Getting Help for Marginalised People: Navigating Access to Social Assistance in Crises," 2022.

Woolworths

The Good Business Journey by Woolworths integrates sustainability and ethical sourcing into its marketing efforts. Zulu notes that campaigns highlighting initiatives such as the Plant-Based Range and community upliftment projects appeal to consumers who prioritize sustainability.⁴⁷ Despite these successes, Woolworths faces criticism for the premium pricing of its products, which may exclude lower-income consumers.⁴⁸ To truly align with the inclusivity goals of the NDP, Woolworths must explore ways to make its sustainable offerings more accessible to all consumers.

Case Studies and Best Practices

The following case studies highlight successful campaigns and initiatives by South African companies that have successfully matched their marketing strategy with the NDP 2030 goals.

Woolworths: The Good Business Journey

The Good Business Journey by Woolworths represents a compelling case of strategic alignment between corporate operations and the NDP 2030 goals. According to Das Nair, the initiative embodies a holistic approach to sustainability, emphasizing environmental stewardship, ethical sourcing, and community engagement.⁴⁹ Woolworths' emphasis on sustainable sourcing is particularly noteworthy. The company promotes its commitment to procuring products from suppliers adhering to sustainable practices. This strategy not only strengthens its ethical standing but also drives consumer trust, as evidenced by marketing campaigns that celebrate partnerships with local farmers and producers.⁵⁰

However, Pillai and Bayat argue that while these initiatives enhance brand reputation, they also risk being perceived as greenwashing if not substantiated by measurable outcomes.⁵¹ Woolworths mitigates this risk through transparent reporting and initiatives such as the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign, which actively educates consumers about reducing food waste. This campaign aligns closely with the NDP's objectives of promoting environmental sustainability and responsible consumption. Furthermore, Woolworths' ability to engage customers directly in sustainability efforts fosters a deeper connection between the brand and its audience, creating a feedback loop that reinforces consumer loyalty and ethical accountability.

Nevertheless, Woolworths' focus on high-end sustainable goods raises concerns about inclusivity. While its initiatives address environmental goals, it is argued that they may inadvertently alienate lower-income groups unable to afford premium-priced products. This underscores the need for broader accessibility strategies to ensure that sustainability becomes a universal rather than exclusive value proposition.

Shoprite: Act for Change

The Act for Change initiative by Shoprite is another exemplary case of CSR aligning with NDP priorities. Dukas explains that the campaign's focus on food security demonstrates a tangible commitment to addressing urgent societal challenges.⁵² By partnering with local non-profit initiatives to distribute food donations and promote food waste awareness, Shoprite directly contributes to reducing hunger, a critical issue identified in the NDP.

Additionally, Shoprite's emphasis on local sourcing is a strategic effort. As Bosiu and Vilakazi assert, prioritizing regional suppliers not only supports local economies but also enhances the resilience of the supply chain.⁵³ This dual impact supports the NDP's goals of economic inclusion and growth while

⁴⁷ Mzwandile Wiseman Zulu, "An Exploration of the Integration of Technology by Mathematics Teachers: The Case of 10 Schools in KwaZulu-Natal under Umlazi District" (University of Kwazulu-Natal, 2020), <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/items/fb191236-62db-4c1e-9541-cfbc69d99907>.

⁴⁸ Anban Pillai and Mohamed Saheed Bayat, "Sustainable Growth Of Clover's Premium Product Portfolio In South Africa's Lower Income Market Segments," *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (Kuwait Chapter)* 9, no. 1 (2020): 28–39.

⁴⁹ Reena das Nair, "Centre for Competition, Regulation & Economic Development, University of Johannesburg," 2021.

⁵⁰ Zulu, "An Exploration of the Integration of Technology by Mathematics Teachers: The Case of 10 Schools in KwaZulu-Natal under Umlazi District."

⁵¹ Pillai and Bayat, "Sustainable Growth of Clover's Premium Product Portfolio in South Africa's Lower Income Market Segments."

⁵² Dukas, "Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementation Targets by South African Companies."

⁵³ Bosiu and Vilakazi, *Competition and Inclusive Regional Economic Growth in Food Production: Barriers to Entry and the Role of African Multinational Corporations*.

reinforcing Shoprite's brand as a socially conscious retailer. Marketing campaigns that highlight these local partnerships resonate strongly with consumers who value community upliftment.

However, Mkhabela critiques Shoprite's initiatives for occasionally being reactionary rather than proactive. While the responsiveness of the company to immediate needs is commendable, integrating longer-term strategies for addressing systemic issues such as rural poverty could deepen its social impact.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the visibility of its efforts may vary geographically, potentially leaving some communities underserved. Addressing this gap would solidify Shoprite's role as a leader in CSR-driven retail.

Nedbank: Green Affinity Program

The Green Affinity program by Nedbank exemplifies how financial institutions can integrate sustainability into their operations. Elsner and Neumann state that the dual focus of the program on environmental conservation and financial literacy is a forward-thinking approach that aligns closely with the NDP's dual priorities of sustainable development and economic empowerment.⁵⁵ By channelling a portion of its revenue toward environmental projects, Nedbank not only supports green initiatives but also positions itself as an advocate for responsible banking.

Furthermore, the emphasis of the program on financial education highlights its commitment to inclusivity. Kilambo argue that by equipping underserved communities with the tools to make informed financial decisions, Nedbank addresses a critical barrier to economic participation.⁵⁶ Marketing campaigns that showcase the real-world impact of these efforts amplify the bank's reputation as a socially responsible entity.

However, it is pointed out that the reach of the program could be limited by its dependence on customer participation. Expanding accessibility to include non-affinity customers or integrating green principles into mainstream banking products could enhance its impact. Additionally, while the program is commended for its environmental focus, its effectiveness would benefit from clearer metrics that demonstrate tangible outcomes, such as reductions in carbon emissions or increased rates of financial literacy in target demographics.

Leveraging Local Culture

Integrating local cultural dynamics into marketing strategies can significantly enhance brand resonance. Manafe et al. explain that campaigns that take advantage of regional traditions and customs can create authentic connections with consumers.⁵⁷ Coca-Cola's practice of tailoring packaging and advertisements to reflect local festivals is a prime example. This strategy not only increases cultural relevance but also strengthens emotional ties between the brand and its audience.⁵⁸

However, cultural appropriation remains a potential pitfall. Brands must ensure that their cultural integrations are respectful and collaborative, rather than exploitative. Engaging local stakeholders, such as influencers and community leaders, can mitigate this risk while improving the authenticity of the campaign.

Understanding Societal Dynamics

Brands that align with societal dynamics, such as addressing pressing social issues, gain significant consumer trust. Manafe et al. assert that initiatives such as the Equality campaign by Nike, which advocates for social justice, resonate deeply with audiences and foster brand loyalty.⁵⁹ However, brands

⁵⁴ M. K. Mkhabela, "Divergence or Convergence? South Africa's Post-Apartheid Foreign Policy and Corporate Expansion in Africa: The Cases of Shoprite Holdings Limited and Standard Bank of South Africa Limited" (University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2021).

⁵⁵ Carsten Elsner and Manuel Neumann, "Caught between Path-Dependence and Green Opportunities—Assessing the Impetus for Green Banking in South Africa," *Earth System Governance* 18 (2023): 100194.

⁵⁶ Kilambo, "Black Economic Empowerment Policy and the Transfer of Equity and Mine Assets to Black People in South Africa's Mining Industry."

⁵⁷ Mesri Welhelmina Nisriani Manafe, Ahmad Rizani, and Elisa Purnawati, "Analysis of the Influence of Technical Expertise, Market Orientation, Social Capital, and Innovation on the Performance of Micro and Small Businesses in the Technology Sector," *International Journal of Business, Law, and Education* 5, no. 1 (2024): 983–95.

⁵⁸ Dukas, "Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementation Targets by South African Companies."

⁵⁹ Manafe, Rizani, and Purnawati, "Analysis of the Influence of Technical Expertise, Market Orientation, Social Capital, and Innovation on the Performance of Micro and Small Businesses in the Technology Sector."

must strike a balance between advocacy and authenticity. Over-commercializing social causes risks alienating consumers, particularly if campaigns are perceived as opportunistic.

Embracing Technological Innovations

Technological advancements offer unparalleled opportunities for businesses to enhance consumer engagement. Perera and Iqbal emphasize the transformative potential of data analytics in personalizing marketing efforts.⁶⁰ By leveraging insights into consumer behaviour, brands can create tailored experiences that boost engagement and conversion rates. However, ensuring data privacy and ethical use is paramount, as breaches can severely undermine consumer trust.

Incorporating digital platforms also enhances brand visibility. The Real Beauty campaign by Dove, which uses user-generated content, exemplifies how technology can foster community and inclusivity. This strategy not only amplifies reach but also cultivates a sense of belonging among consumers.⁶¹

METHODOLOGY

This study examined the integration of the NDP 2030 objectives into South African marketing strategies as a key driver of sustainable development. The research focuses on how businesses can align their marketing efforts with the broader socio-economic goals of the NDP 2030, particularly in the areas of sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation.⁶² In this study, a secondary data approach was used, drawing on existing literature, reports, and case studies to explore the possible impacts of integrating NDP objectives into marketing strategies. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how businesses can contribute to sustainable development without the need for primary data collection. By synthesizing prior research, the study highlights the role of marketing strategies in supporting the realization of the NDP 2030 vision.⁶³

The secondary data collection focused on reviewing past research to assess how integrating NDP 2030 goals into marketing can foster national development.⁶⁴ Specifically, the review explored how sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation in marketing strategies align with NDP objectives, and how businesses can contribute to socio-economic transformation through their marketing efforts. Academic publications, government reports, and case studies were analysed to identify best practices, challenges, and successful examples of businesses that have effectively integrated the NDP 2030 principles.⁶⁵ Databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, ResearchGate, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal online library were searched using terms such as “National Development Plan 2030,” “South African marketing strategies,” “sustainable marketing,” “inclusive marketing,” and “innovation in marketing.” Additionally, the study employed a qualitative literature analysis to understand how different businesses have incorporated NDP objectives into their marketing strategies. The analysis involved reviewing reports, journal articles, and marketing case studies related to companies in both the public and private sectors, with a focus on South Africa’s unique socio-economic challenges and opportunities. By examining case studies from various industries and sectors, including successful marketing campaigns by companies such as Woolworths, Shoprite, and Nedbank, the study provided a comprehensive view of how businesses can contribute to national development through their marketing efforts.

The literature analysis also aimed to compare the effectiveness of marketing strategies aligned with NDP objectives in various sectors, identifying common trends, barriers, and strategies for success. This approach allows for a broader understanding of how marketing strategies can be used as a tool for socio-economic transformation, while also ensuring that businesses remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market. The research highlights the importance of integrating the NDP 2030 goals into business

⁶⁰ Ananda Perera and Khurshed Iqbal, “Big Data and Emerging Markets: Transforming Economies through Data-Driven Innovation and Market Dynamics,” *Journal of Computational Social Dynamics* 6, no. 3 (2021): 1–18.

⁶¹ Manafe, Rizani, and Purnawati, “Analysis of the Influence of Technical Expertise, Market Orientation, Social Capital, and Innovation on the Performance of Micro and Small Businesses in the Technology Sector.”

⁶² Voluntary National Review, “South Africa’s Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. NDP 2030.” 2019, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23402RSA_Voluntary_National_Review_report_July_2019.

⁶³ NDP, *Our Future: Make It Work: National Development Plan*.

⁶⁴ NDP, *Our Future: Make It Work: National Development Plan*.

⁶⁵ NDP, *Our Future: Make It Work: National Development Plan*.

practices, particularly in marketing, to achieve long-term sustainability, inclusive growth, and socio-economic development for South Africa.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Integrating NDP 2030 goals into South African marketing strategies represents a transformative opportunity for businesses to align their operations with national socio-economic objectives.⁶⁶ The NDP envisions a society driven by sustainable growth, inclusivity, and innovation, providing a framework for businesses to address critical challenges while contributing to the development of the nation. However, this process is filled with complexities that require companies to navigate the intersections of sustainability, inclusivity, and technological advancement while maintaining competitiveness in dynamic markets. This discussion critically considers these dynamics and asserts that successful integration demands not only strategic alignment but also a deep commitment to systemic change, reimagining traditional business practices to achieve meaningful socio-economic impact.

Sustainability in Marketing: Beyond Greenwashing

A central finding of this study is the critical importance of embedding authentic sustainability practices into marketing strategies. Today, businesses are under increasing pressure to demonstrate environmental responsibility as consumers become increasingly aware of ecological challenges. While Zulu and Singh emphasize the value of showcasing eco-friendly initiatives such as sustainable sourcing and carbon reduction, the pervasive risk of "greenwashing" remains a significant challenge.⁶⁷ Companies that exaggerate their environmental contributions risk losing consumer trust, as highlighted by Matyana and Thusi.⁶⁸ To counteract this, businesses must substantiate their claims with measurable outcomes, such as transparent reporting on emissions reductions, resource conservation, or ethical supply chain practices. The success of Woolworths' "Good Business Journey" exemplifies how a genuine commitment to sustainability can resonate with consumers, creating long-term brand loyalty and establishing a competitive edge in the market.⁶⁹

Community Engagement: Substance Over Visibility

Another key finding is the potential of targeted community engagement initiatives to promote trust and brand loyalty. Job creation, skills development, and education campaigns can create meaningful connections between businesses and their communities, as argued by Zulu and Singh.⁷⁰ However, the impact of such initiatives often hinges on their depth and continuity. Dukas critiques the superficiality of many CSR efforts, warning that once-off events and symbolic gestures fail to generate sustainable impact or build lasting relationships with communities.⁷¹ To address this, businesses must prioritize initiatives with substantive, measurable contributions to societal well-being. Shoprite's "Act for Change" campaign, which addresses food security and promotes economic inclusion, serves as a benchmark, illustrating how community-focused programs can strengthen brand identity while supporting national development goals.

Inclusivity in Marketing Strategies

Inclusive marketing strategies are indispensable to align with the NDP's emphasis on social inclusion, yet many businesses struggle to implement them effectively. Tailored marketing efforts addressing underrepresented groups are essential for fostering consumer trust, as noted by Zulu and Singh.⁷² However, tokenistic approaches that simply signal inclusivity without genuine representation can alienate audiences, as Matyana and Thusi caution.⁷³ The real challenge lies in understanding the diverse cultural dynamics that shape South African society and ensuring that inclusivity is embedded in both marketing narratives and operational practices. Examples such as Nedbank's financial literacy initiatives targeting

⁶⁶ NDP, *Our Future: Make It Work: National Development Plan*.

⁶⁷ Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

⁶⁸ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

⁶⁹ das Nair, "Centre for Competition, Regulation & Economic Development, University of Johannesburg."

⁷⁰ Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

⁷¹ Dukas, "Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Implementation Targets by South African Companies."

⁷² Zulu and Singh, "The National Development Plan (NDP) in South Africa: An Inspiration to Shape Communities by 2030."

⁷³ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

marginalized groups underscore the potential for inclusivity to create tangible social benefits while expanding market reach and strengthening brand equity.⁷⁴

Technological Innovation and Accessibility

Technological advancements offer significant opportunities to optimize marketing strategies, personalize consumer engagement, and align with NDP goals. Myeki highlights the transformative potential of data analytics and artificial intelligence in crafting dynamic campaigns that resonate with diverse audiences.⁷⁵ However, technological dependence poses challenges, particularly for smaller businesses and consumers who lack access to digital resources. This disparity risks reinforcing economic and social inequalities, as noted by Matyana and Thusi.⁷⁶ To address this, policymakers and businesses must collaborate to democratize access to technology. Investments in digital infrastructure and initiatives to improve digital literacy can help bridge the gap, ensuring equitable participation in the digital economy and maximizing the benefits of technological innovation.

Navigating Regulatory Complexities

The South African regulatory environment adds another layer of complexity to marketing strategies. Compliance with legislation such as the POPIA safeguards consumer privacy but creates significant resource demands, particularly for smaller enterprises.⁷⁷ This duality underscores the need for regulatory frameworks that balance consumer protection with business feasibility. Simplifying compliance processes, offering training, and providing financial support for SMEs can help mitigate these challenges. Such measures not only enhance the capacity of businesses to align with NDP objectives but also contribute to a more equitable and competitive marketplace.

Economic Challenges and Marketing Adaptability

South Africa's economic instability, characterized by high unemployment and inflation, continues to pressure consumer spending. These conditions compel businesses to prioritize affordability over innovation, limiting the scope for implementing ambitious sustainability and inclusivity goals.⁷⁸ However, adaptive marketing strategies can help address these immediate economic concerns while gradually integrating sustainable practices. Shoprite's focus on local sourcing illustrates how businesses can achieve a balance between affordability and sustainability, benefiting both local economies and long-term brand performance. By adopting innovative approaches that address pressing economic challenges, businesses can remain resilient while contributing to broader development objectives.

Addressing the Digital Divide

The study also reveals the growing digital divide between urban and rural consumers, exacerbated by the rapid rise of e-commerce platforms.⁷⁹ Although digital tools allow businesses to reach wider audiences, this divide limits accessibility for rural populations, perpetuating economic disparities. Bridging this gap requires strategic investments in digital infrastructure and innovative solutions that make online platforms more inclusive. Collaborative efforts between the government and private sectors can improve connectivity in underserved areas, ensuring that rural communities are not excluded from the benefits of technological progress and digital commerce.

⁷⁴ Elsner and Neumann, "Caught between Path-Dependence and Green Opportunities—Assessing the Impetus for Green Banking in South Africa."

⁷⁵ Myeki, "Possible Futures for South Africa's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy towards 2050."

⁷⁶ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

⁷⁷ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

⁷⁸ Kaftan et al., "Socio-Economic Stability and Sustainable Development in the Post-COVID Era: Lessons for the Business and Economic Leaders."

⁷⁹ Kaftan et al., "Socio-Economic Stability and Sustainable Development in the Post-COVID Era: Lessons for the Business and Economic Leaders."

Balancing Authenticity with Competition

South Africa's competitive marketing landscape often drives businesses toward homogenized strategies, where innovation is sacrificed for imitation, stifling creativity and brand differentiation.⁸⁰ This homogenization risks diluting brand authenticity, which is essential to building consumer trust and achieving meaningful alignment with NDP objectives. Companies must strive to maintain unique, value-driven identities while adapting to market pressures. Authenticity in marketing is not just a competitive advantage; it is a fundamental prerequisite for long-term sustainability and societal relevance.

Collaboration as a Catalyst

Collaboration between businesses, government, and NGOs is a critical enabler to achieve NDP-aligned marketing goals. Partnerships can amplify marketing efforts, foster trust, and enhance visibility, as Matekenya and Moyo emphasize.⁸¹ However, aligning diverse objectives requires careful negotiation to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure mutual benefit. The success of initiatives such as Nedbank's "Green Affinity" program demonstrates the potential of well-executed collaborations, highlighting how shared resources and expertise can drive transformative impact.

Redefining Success in Marketing

Ultimately, this study advocates for a redefinition of success in marketing strategies, shifting the focus from profit-driven metrics to include social and environmental impact. The alignment of marketing strategies with NDP 2030 goals is not merely an act of CSR; it is a strategic necessity for long-term relevance and resilience. Businesses such as Woolworths and Shoprite exemplify how integrating NDP principles into marketing fosters trust, strengthens brand loyalty, and contributes to the socioeconomic advancement of South Africa. By embracing innovation, authenticity, and collaboration, businesses can harness marketing as a tool for sustainable development, ensuring their place in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In alignment with the NDP 2030, South African businesses must commit to authentic sustainability practices that go beyond symbolic marketing. Greenwashing remains a persistent risk, and companies should instead invest in measurable strategies such as reducing carbon footprints, sourcing responsibly, and ensuring transparent supply chains. Independent audits and accessible reporting are essential to build consumer trust while advancing national environmental goals.

Businesses should also prioritize long-term community engagement over one-off initiatives. Programs that focus on job creation, skills development, and access to resources (through partnerships with educational institutions or NGOs) strengthen both social impact and brand loyalty. Equally, inclusivity must go beyond tokenism. Companies must adopt culturally sensitive strategies that reflect the diversity of South Africa, ensuring that marginalized groups are genuinely represented in both products and marketing campaigns.

Bridging the digital divide is another priority. Investments in digital literacy programs, rural connectivity, and multi-channel marketing will ensure equal participation in the digital economy. Public-private partnerships can amplify these efforts, enabling broader access to e-commerce and digital platforms. At the same time, businesses must balance innovation with affordability by adopting adaptive models such as tiered pricing and partnerships with local suppliers to support both consumers and local economies.

Lastly, compliance with regulations such as POPIA must be simplified, especially for SMEs. Government support, training, and resource-sharing initiatives can ease this burden and enable broader participation in the economy. Therefore, success in marketing should be measured not only by profitability but also by contributions to sustainability, inclusivity, and community well-being, positioning businesses as key drivers of South Africa's socio-economic transformation.

⁸⁰ Matyana and Thusi, "Unemployment and Poverty in South Africa: Assessing the National Development Plan 2030 Predictions."

⁸¹ Matekenya and Moyo, "Innovation as a Driver of SMME Performance in South Africa: A Quantile Regression Approach."

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that aligning South African marketing strategies with the NDP 2030 is not only a commendable goal but also an absolute necessity for businesses striving for long-term success, relevance, and resilience in an increasingly competitive and socially conscious market. The findings clearly demonstrate that businesses that fail to integrate the NDP 2030's principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation into their marketing strategies will not only jeopardize their position in the market but will also fall short of contributing meaningfully to the socio-economic transformation South Africa urgently requires.

For businesses to authentically contribute to the NDP's vision, they must move beyond superficial marketing tactics like greenwashing or once-off symbolic gestures. True commitment to sustainability involves measurable, transparent actions, with a focus on long-term environmental stewardship, social inclusivity, and economic empowerment. The study shows that businesses can no longer afford to treat CSR as a peripheral concern but must embed it as a core aspect of their identity, strategy, and operations.

Furthermore, inclusivity in marketing cannot be limited to tokenistic gestures. Effective, targeted engagement with marginalized communities is essential, and businesses must develop strategies that genuinely address the unique challenges faced by these groups. The study asserts that businesses must go beyond merely addressing underrepresentation, they must ensure that inclusivity is integral to their marketing campaigns and operational decisions, creating opportunities for all South Africans to thrive.

Technological advancements, if leveraged responsibly, hold immense potential for driving marketing innovation, but businesses must ensure that the benefits of these technologies are not limited to only a select few. The digital divide must be urgently addressed, and businesses must take proactive steps to democratize access to technology, ensuring that no group is excluded from the digital economy. Moreover, businesses must be vigilant in balancing innovation with authenticity, avoiding the temptation to prioritize imitation over originality, which can dilute brand value and trust.

The regulatory environment, while necessary for consumer protection and ethical business practices, also poses significant challenges, particularly for SMEs. The study emphasizes that businesses require more robust support systems to navigate these complexities without stifling growth and innovation. The government, in collaboration with businesses and other stakeholders, must streamline compliance processes and offer resources to facilitate broader participation in the economy, particularly for smaller enterprises that are integral to South Africa's socio-economic structure.

This study makes it clear that success in marketing is no longer solely about profit maximization. It must be measured by the tangible impact that businesses have on society and the environment. In this context, businesses that align their marketing strategies with the NDP 2030 goals, embedding sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation, will not only foster trust and loyalty among consumers but will also play a pivotal role in the long-term socio-economic development of South Africa. This study urges South African businesses to look beyond short-term profits and embrace their role in advancing the national development agenda.

In conclusion, businesses must adopt a holistic and proactive approach that integrates commercial goals with broader social and environmental responsibilities. The time for simple token gestures and superficial marketing campaigns is over. To truly succeed and contribute to South Africa's socio-economic future, businesses must commit to systemic change, innovate authentically, and remain steadfast in their alignment with the NDP 2030's transformative goals. The future of South African business lies in this integrated approach, and those who do not adopt it risk becoming irrelevant in an increasingly conscious and demanding market. The opportunity for transformation is now, and the responsibility lies squarely with businesses to step up and lead the charge.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study emphasizes the importance of authentic sustainability practices in marketing, future research could delve deeper into how these practices specifically influence consumer behaviour in South Africa. Investigating how different demographic groups, such as age, income, and geographic location, respond to sustainability initiatives could provide valuable insights for businesses looking to tailor their marketing strategies. Additionally, studies could examine how consumer perceptions of sustainability affect purchasing decisions and brand loyalty, and whether there is a direct correlation between a brand's

commitment to sustainability and its long-term market success. Longitudinal research could track the evolution of consumer trust in brands over time, especially in the context of environmental claims.

Future research could further explore the long-term impact of community engagement initiatives on South Africa's socio-economic development. Although this study notes the importance of meaningful community contributions, there is still much to study about the effectiveness of specific programs. Research could assess direct outcomes of CSR initiatives, such as job creation, skill development, and improved access to education and healthcare. Moreover, the study could explore whether these initiatives lead to measurable improvements in social capital and community resilience. Comparative research across different sectors (e.g., retail, agriculture, finance) could provide insights into which types of community engagement strategies yield the most sustainable and impactful results.

Given South Africa's diverse cultural landscape, future research could examine the role of cultural sensitivity in inclusive marketing strategies. While this study highlights the importance of tailored marketing efforts, further investigation is needed into how businesses can authentically represent and address the unique needs of underrepresented groups without falling into tokenism. Research could explore how different cultural groups perceive marketing messages and whether inclusive strategies truly foster trust and long-term loyalty. Additionally, it would be valuable to assess the challenges and opportunities that businesses face when integrating cultural sensitivity into their marketing strategies, especially in a multicultural society such as South Africa.

As this study points out, the digital divide remains a significant barrier to inclusive marketing. Future research could explore how businesses can bridge this gap in more detail, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Studies could investigate the role of public-private partnerships in improving digital infrastructure and the effectiveness of government initiatives in providing digital access to marginalized populations. Moreover, research could focus on how businesses can adapt their marketing strategies to cater to both digital and non-digital consumers, ensuring that all consumer segments are reached. Another area for exploration could be the effectiveness of digital literacy programs in empowering consumers to engage with e-commerce and online marketing campaigns.

This study touches on the regulatory challenges that businesses, particularly SMEs, face in aligning with the NDP 2030 goals. Future research could further explore the specific barriers that SMEs encounter when trying to comply with South African laws, such as the POPIA, and how these challenges affect their marketing strategies. Research could focus on how simplified compliance processes or government support initiatives could reduce the regulatory burden on smaller businesses, enabling them to implement NDP-aligned marketing strategies more effectively. Additionally, studies could assess the role of business associations and industry networks in providing regulatory guidance and support for SMEs.

As technological advancements continue to shape the marketing landscape, future research could investigate how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytics can be used to optimize NDP-aligned marketing strategies. Studies could explore how businesses can take advantage of these technologies to enhance consumer engagement, personalize marketing campaigns, and improve sustainability reporting. Furthermore, research could examine the ethical implications of using advanced technologies in marketing, particularly in terms of data privacy and consumer rights. There is also scope for research on how businesses can ensure that these technologies are accessible to smaller businesses and marginalized consumers, preventing technological exclusion from exacerbating inequalities.

This study highlights the importance of collaboration between businesses, government, and NGOs in achieving NDP-aligned marketing goals. Future research could explore the long-term outcomes of such collaborations, particularly in terms of their impact on brand perception, consumer trust, and socio-economic development. Research could focus on case studies of successful partnerships and assess the key factors that contribute to their success. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore the challenges that arise when aligning the objectives of diverse stakeholders and how businesses can overcome these obstacles to foster more effective collaborations.

Future research could also examine how inclusive marketing strategies affect brand identity in the South African context. While this study discusses the importance of inclusivity to promote consumer trust, it would be useful to explore how businesses can balance inclusivity with maintaining a strong, authentic brand identity. Research could investigate whether businesses that effectively incorporate inclusivity into

their marketing strategies experience more positive brand perceptions and stronger consumer loyalty compared to those that adopt a more exclusive approach. Additionally, studies could explore how inclusivity can be merged into the brand story and values in a way that resonates with diverse consumer groups without diluting the brand's core identity.

Given South Africa's ongoing economic challenges, future research could investigate how businesses can adapt their marketing strategies to remain relevant and resilient in the face of economic pressures, such as inflation and unemployment. Studies could examine how companies can integrate both short-term affordability measures and long-term sustainable practices in their marketing approaches. Additionally, research could explore how economic instability influences consumer purchasing behaviour and how businesses can respond to changing consumer needs without compromising their commitment to sustainability and inclusivity.

The concept of success in marketing is shifting from purely financial outcomes to a more balanced approach that includes social and environmental impact. Future research could explore how businesses redefine success in their marketing strategies in line with the NDP 2030 goals. Studies could investigate how businesses can measure and report their social and environmental contributions in a way that resonates with consumers and stakeholders. Additionally, research could explore how businesses can integrate social impact metrics into their key performance indicators (KPIs) to align marketing efforts with broader social goals, ensuring that profit-driven strategies are balanced with contributions to sustainable development.

Future research in these areas will not only deepen an understanding of how South African businesses can align their marketing strategies with the NDP 2030 goals but also provide actionable insights that can guide policy development, corporate decision-making, and community engagement initiatives. As the country continues to face complex socio-economic challenges, these research efforts could play a crucial role in helping businesses navigate the evolving marketing landscape while contributing to the broader goals of inclusivity, sustainability, and economic growth.

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