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The Impacton Academy: A social marketing approach for the
promotion of sustainable development in the educational
context

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Abstract

Title: The Impacton Academy: A social marketing approach for the promotion of sustainable development in the educational context

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Our world is facing a time of tremendous social, economic, and environmental challenges. Addressing these requires action of the people, who need to be equipped with the right knowledge and skills to contribute to sustainable development. Education therefore plays a crucial role in this undertaking. Especially the tertiary education sector and therewith the group of tertiary students promise high potential to promote societal change. Due to the difficulty to transform education systems, other ways of providing education in sustainable development need to be investigated.

By means of a social marketing approach, the aim of this dissertation is to introduce the Impacton Academy as an add-on learning solution to the existing curriculum to promote sustainable development through education. To control for its viability, the right customer segment profiles by means of a qualitative survey are defined and the competition examined through a benchmark analysis to elaborate the right marketing mix and identify the market position for the Impacton Academy.

Results revealed the optimal customer segment for the Impacton Academy that promises the highest potential to promote sustainable development are students in the age between 19-25 years who want to take action in sustainable development. Deriving from the needs of this target group and considering given competitive threats, the Impacton Academy should position itself in the market as a mobile learning and community platform that delivers educational content in micro-learning format and connects students with sustainable development practitioners, such as NGOs, social businesses and entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Sustainability, Education, Sustainable Development Goals, Social Marketing, Impacton

Abstrat

Título: A Impacton Academy: Uma abordagem de marketing social para a promoção do desenvolvimento sustentável no contexto educativo

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O nosso mundo enfrenta uma época de tremendos desafios sociais, económicos e ambientais. Abordar estes requer acção das pessoas, que precisam de estar munidas com os conhecimentos e aptidões adequados para contribuir para o desenvolvimento sustentável. A educação desempenha, portanto, um papel crucial neste empreendimento. Especialmente o sector do ensino superior e, com este, o grupo de estudantes terciários promete um elevado potencial de promoção de mudanças sociais. Devido à dificuldade de transformar os sistemas de educação, outras formas de proporcionar educação no desenvolvimento sustentável precisam de ser investigadas.

Através de uma abordagem de marketing social, o objectivo desta dissertação é introduzir a Impacton Academy (IA) como uma solução de aprendizagem adicional ao currículo existente para promover o desenvolvimento sustentável através da educação. Para perceber a sua viabilidade, são definidos os perfis certos do segmento de clientes através de um inquérito qualitativo e a concorrência é examinada através de uma análise de referência para elaborar o mix de marketing certo e identificar a posição de mercado para a IA.

Os resultados revelaram que o segmento de clientes ideal para a IA são os estudantes entre os 19-25 anos de idade que queiram tomar medidas em prol do desenvolvimento sustentável, que promete o maior potencial para promover o desenvolvimento sustentável. Derivando das necessidades deste grupo-alvo e considerando as ameaças competitivas, a IA deveria posicionar-se no mercado como uma plataforma móvel de aprendizagem e comunidade que fornece conteúdos educativos em formato de micro-aprendizagem e liga os estudantes a profissionais do desenvolvimento sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Sustentabilidade, Educação, Objectivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Marketing Social, Impacton

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List of Acronyms

CRM	Customer-Relationship-Management
IA	Impacton Academy
IAU	International Association of Universities
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SD	Sustainable Development
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SM	Social Marketing
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
U.N.	The United Nations

1 Introduction

1.1 Context and Background

Our world is facing a time of tremendous social, economic, and environmental challenges. Rising inequalities, disparities of wealth and power, global health, and natural crises, are only a small part of a long list of challenges of our time (U.N. General Assembly, 2015). In response to the increasing concern about these developments, the United Nations (U.N.) launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a 2030 agenda that includes 17 goals and 169 goal targets with the long-term objective of creating an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable future for our world and future generations. The SDGs are a remarkable policy for global commitment and they bring the aspiration and promise of prosperity for humanity, peaceful co-existence of nations, and an environment that supports all forms of life (Niklasson, 2019). However, solely aspirations won't be sufficient to achieve these goals (Walker & Pekmezovic, 2019). The achievement demands hard work and future orientation but at the same time practical strategies from governments, organizations, and individuals. By now, they are still lacking a tangible strategy for implementation (Niklasson, 2019).

The basis of the SGDs is the achievement of sustainable development (SD) in all its dimensions by further embedding it at all levels of society (U.N. General Assembly, 2012). As SD involves and requires fundamental societal transformations (Kates et al. 2001), it is pointed out that people are at the center of the achievement of this goal (U.N. General Assembly, 2012). To promote SD, people must acquire new skills and knowledge that encourage changes in behavior, and result in the creation of a more sustainable future (O'Flaherty & Liddy, 2018). This points towards the importance of integrating SD into all aspects of learning and education (Buckler & Creech, 2014) and thereby initiating fundamental changes in the educational system to sufficiently equip learners to contribute and to promote SD (Leicht et al., 2018).

1.2 Project Presentation and Topic Relevance

In the course of the launch of the SDGs and with that the increasing awareness of the role of education in the achievement of SD, various innovative educational approaches have been introduced to achieve societal transformation towards sustainability (Buckler & Creech, 2014). However, this undertaking, especially in the higher education sector, where the potential to bring about societal change is greatly promising, still lacks in implementation at many ends due

to a lack of capacity and resources of institutions to integrate SD into their mainstream teaching practices (Mulà et al., 2017). Given the necessity of understanding the role of the younger generations and how to best support and prepare them to make meaningful contributions to addressing contemporary and future global challenges and promote SD (Corcoran & Osano, 2009), the organization *Impacton* has dedicated itself to this objective. *Impacton* made it to its mission to solve the greatest challenges of our time by joining forces to create a better future. After interviewing several groups of people, followed by a deep research, *Impacton* came about the assumption that young generations at a global level, but especially students, are facing a deep gap between theoretical knowledge that they gain during their studies, and practical, actionable insights that are required to join the workforce and contribute to SD and positive social and environmental impact. To address this problem and to bypass these educational gaps, the idea for the Impacton Academy (IA) was born. The IA approaches the topic by offering young learners an alternative learning solution in addition to the existing curriculum. It aims to provide them with interactive learning material and methods to acquire skills and knowledge to educate themselves in SD related topics. Moreover, it is supposed to function as the connecting link to bring together young talents with collaborators, companies, and institutions around the world that pursue a mission of creating social or environmental value (Blueprints for Impact, 2020).

1.3 Problem Statement and Research Questions

Given the immense social, economic, and environmental challenges that our planet is confronted with, there is a growing necessity to further SD and its integration into all levels of society. As the human himself is at the center of this process, and because he needs to change his behavior by acquiring new skills and knowledge that are needed to promote SD, the education system plays a crucial role in this undertaking. Due to the complexity and individuality of the education systems in the world, its organizational structures and the resulting difficulty in initiating fundamental changes, other ways of providing knowledge about SD need to be investigated. Therefore, the aim of this research is to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by giving birth to the IA using a social marketing (SM) approach to position the product in the market. The IA is supposed to be an alternative learning solution with focus on the young generation of students as the customer target segment group, with the objective to equip future generations with the right skill set and knowledge to promote SD. The research includes the analysis and exploration of the target customer segments using a survey,

as well as the selection of target segment-specific market decisions for the optimal design and positioning of the IA. Throughout the research the following research questions will be examined:

1. Which is the ideal customer segment profile of the IA?
2. How would IA be affected by the competition?
3. What's the optimal Marketing Mix for the target customer segment of the IA?

1.4 Thesis Structure

The dissertation is structured as follows: The second section consists of a literature review, in which the whole topic of SD in the educational context will be outlined. Therefore, in the first part relevant terms, such as sustainability and SD will be entangled and defined. Subsequently, the achievement of SD will be discussed with a closer focus on the role of education. Finally, SM as a conceptual framework with all facets will be explained.

The third chapter contains the description of the applied methodology for data collection. Based on the results and insights from the methodology section, the fourth section discusses the findings and draws conclusions to answer the stated research questions. Following the SM approach and availing oneself of market segmentation methods, an analysis of the competitors that influence the market positioning of the IA and an analysis and classification of the customer segments using the results of the survey will be conducted. Following that, a rationale for the selection of the right target customer segments and finally the elaboration of the optimal marketing mix for that selected customer target for the design of the IA will be performed. Finally, the fifth section subtracts the main conclusions and highlights potential limitations of the project.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Sustainability and Sustainable Development

In order to define sustainability and SD, it first has to be clarified, to what extent the concepts entail the same dimensions and can be used interchangeably or if there exist any differentiation between both. Some authors state that sustainability refers to a process, whereas SD refers to the end product. In this case the two concepts yield the same dimensions and policy implications

(Holden et al., 2014). According to UNESCO (2019) on the other hand, sustainability is referred to as the long-term objective of a more sustainable world, whereas SD is thought of as the many pathways and processes towards this goal, such as sustainable production and consumption, research and technology transfer, or training and education. In the course of this thesis, SD is recognized as the process towards a sustainable world and thus UNESCO's approach will be adopted.

Now with a view on existing literature, there are many different definitions of SD. The definition most commonly used is the one by the United Nations Environment and Development Council from 1987. According to this, SD can be defined as the “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs*” (Brundtland Commission, 1987, p. 44). It works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect natural resources, diminish global warming, and create societies that enable people to live their full potential. (Ayodele & Ogunlola, 2016). However, in order to achieve SD it is fundamental to assess environmental impact, which can be defined as “*any positive or negative change in environmental quality resulting from human interference, able to change the natural rhythm of the processes of a system*” (Hoshino Neta & da Cal Seixas, 2019, p. 1).

In regards to sustainability, the definition of this term is more difficult and there are various approaches existing in the attempt to interpret it. AtKisson (1998, p. n/a) describes the problem as follows: “*Sustainability is an ideal end-state-like democracy, it is a lofty goal whose perfect realization eludes us. For this reason, there will always be competing definitions of sustainability. We know these definitions will always include the well-being of people, nature, our economy, and our social institutions, working together effectively over the long term.*” The look at the literature for further definitions of sustainability confirms AtKisson's description and one witnesses the most diverse directions. According to Sterling (2010, p. 512), sustainability refers to “*both a process and a broad direction*” but also a value, a mindset, and a skill set. On the other hand, Shrivastava (1995) describes it as a concept constructed by humans to help them bridging between the social and ecological system to become valued and meaningful. One omnipresent approach that describes how to realize a sustainable state consists in the three pillars of sustainability, which hold the three dimensions: *environmental, social, and economic* (see Fig. 1) (Purvis & Robinson, 2019). In essence, the concept of the three pillars suggests that SD can only be achieved if each dimension is promoted in conformity with the other two dimensions. Therefore, in case of neglect of any of these pillars, the whole system is

believed to be unsustainable (Woodcraft et al., 2012). As the concept of the three pillars of SD is the foundation of the SDGs that are trying to balance out all three dimensions (U.N. General Assembly, 2015), this concept will be adopted in this research.

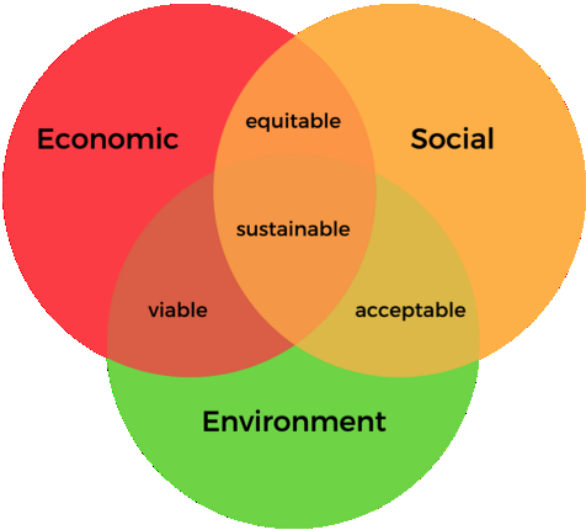


Figure 1: Three pillars of sustainable development (Adapted from Brundtland Commission, 1987)

2.2 Achieving Sustainable Development

To meet global challenges, the mastering of which is essential for the survival of humanity, the SDGs have been launched in order to promote the global acknowledgment that all countries must become active in the key areas of planet, people, partnership, prosperity, and peace (U.N. General Assembly, 2015). At the basis of these goals is the achievement of SD in all its dimensions by further embedding it at all levels of society (U.N. General Assembly, 2012). The following section presents the current existing literature about the pathway and challenges of achieving this goal with focus on the educational context.

2.2.1 The Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are subject to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established by the U.N. General Assembly in 2015 (U.N. General Assembly, 2015). They address global challenges that we are presented with and therefore act as the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future (U.N., 2020). Balancing the three dimensions of SD, the SDGs consist of 17

development goals and 169 goal targets (see Fig. 2) supposed to stimulate action within the next 15 years to deal with some of the most important challenges for humanity and our planet (U.N. General Assembly, 2015).



Figure 2: The Sustainable Development Goals (U.N. General Assembly, 2015)

In order to enhance people’s lives and advancing SD, the 4th SDG was established for the promotion of quality education (UNESCO, 2014) with a specific goal target (4.7) that focuses on education in SD which indicates:

“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development (U.N. General Assembly, 2015, p. 17).”

This thesis will look at the achievement of the SDGs, with specific focus on the fourth SDG “Quality Education” and its associated goal target.

2.2.2 The Role of Education in Sustainable Development

In the process of achieving SD, it is clear that people are at the center of this goal and changing values and attitudes of world citizens are a necessary precondition to behavior change (U.N. General Assembly, 2012; Verplanken & Holland, 2002; Nickerson, 2003). With a view on pro-environmental and sustainable behavior, we are strongly influenced by our beliefs about environmental conditions and whether our own individual actions can have an impact on these (Joireman et al., 2004; Stern, 2000). Thus, educational interventions with the mission to educate citizens about the consequences of environmental degradation and the benefits of individual action, might lead to changes in their attitudes and values regarding the environment and society and potentially cause behavioral change (Arbuthnott, 2009). Therefore, education plays an essential role in the advancement of SD to help young people understand and address critical environmental and social issues and encourage changes in their attitudes and behaviors (Buckler & Creech, 2014; UNESCO, 2010).

A concept introduced by the U.N. in the course of the SDG's, is Education in Sustainable Development (ESD), which is based on the premise that traditional delivery of knowledge is no longer sufficient, and that education must change in order to equip present and future generations with the knowledge and skills needed to respond to the changing world and the upcoming challenges (O'Flaherty & Liddy, 2018). It is necessary to rethink the learning environment, physically and virtually to inspire learners to take action as responsible citizens and contribute to SD. Therefore, ESD aims to integrate critical local and global sustainability issues, such as poverty, sustainable production, or climate change, into the educational curriculum and provides for transforming education to contribute to the advancement of SD (O'Flaherty & Liddy, 2018). For this reason, the concept is not to be seen as an add-on to the existing curriculum, but rather a fundamental reorientation and reframing of education systems and teaching and learning processes (Buckler & Creech, 2014).

2.2.3 Tertiary Students as the Agents of Change

Following on the consumer action approach, sustainable decisions made by people rely on their motivations, skills, and access to information that enable them *“to make choices that do not degrade or deplete resources in physical, cultural and social domains”* (Sibbel, 2009, p. 74). To help consumers in making sustainable choices, the focus shifts towards the training of professionals who are responsible for managing the resources and information provided that

build the basis for the decision (Sibbel, 2009). As these professionals are being trained at university, the tertiary education sector and therewith the group of tertiary students have a significant role for SD because of their impact on society (Davies et al., 2003; International Association of Universities (IAU), 2006).

Another argument that points towards higher education and students as agents to bring about change consists in the fact that they are still in the formative stage of their lives and possess the intellectual capabilities to grasp the various dimensions of sustainability. Especially in their studies, they are encouraged to explore and experiment with ideas and creative solutions to problems, which could be a great opportunity to fuel solution finding in the field of SD (Sibbel, 2009). Another perspective that indicates that educational activities for tertiary students in sustainability and SD will be of increasing importance in the upcoming years is the values perspective, as activating values cause changes in behavior (Field & Tunna, 2011; Schwartz, 2007). Thus, there is evidence that profound impressions in a person's formative years have a lifelong effect on their values, beliefs and actions and eventually on their engagement with and their behaviors towards sustainability (Uitto & Saloranta, 2010).

Deriving from the insights of existing literature, the higher education sector and therewith tertiary students are considered to have a high potential to promote social change. Because of that they constitute a promising target group when it comes to implementing SD initiatives, such as the IA.

2.2.4 The Challenge of Transforming Higher Education

With the growing environmental and social challenges, the need for education to address these becomes more and more crucial. The challenge consists in the question of how to integrate SD into education and vice versa, education into SD.

Education as a whole is a complex system (Jacobsen et al., 2019) and the process of transforming an education system is generally highly difficult to predict or control (Duffy, 2010). This is due to several reasons: first to mention is the fact that the organizational structure of the education systems can vary greatly between countries and depends on various nation-specific factors. On the one hand, educational transformation is strongly influenced by standardization, the national curricula, and national education policies in each country (Bates, 2016). On the other hand, the evolving values, visions, and beliefs as well as the specific

educational needs of the community in which it is rooted, play an important role for the direction of the transformation (Duffy, 2010).

As mentioned, the higher education sector is considered as an important force for societal change, because of its potential to turn students into future leaders and professionals from different sectors who assume responsibility in society (Mulà et al., 2017). However, it is also a very complex realm as it involves a range of different stakeholders with very distinct and diverse skills, knowledge, attitudes, and study fields, and therefore, when it comes to realizing its potential, faces many challenges (Sibbel, 2009). The Consultation on Sustainable Development in Prague (2003) has acknowledged higher education's failure to master these challenges (IAU, 2006). For example, the fact that most of the world's leaders had graduated from university could be seen as evidence that education failed to provide sufficient knowledge and skills to develop the capabilities needed to address problems in sustainability (Sibbel, 2009). Viewing literature for the reasons of this failure one can witness a variety, such as lacking incentives, information, interest, financial resources, and administrative support, as well as a lack of shared vision across the university, and conflicting values of various factors within the tertiary infrastructure (Thomas, 2004; Davies et al., 2003; Richardson & Lynes, 2007). Since the development of bottom-up sustainable initiatives requires considerable financial and time resources that are difficult to acquire without administrative support of the senior management, such initiatives seem doomed to fail in the long run (Ávila et al., 2017).

Considering the difficulty of transforming the education system in general and the tertiary education system in particular, this thesis focuses on the development of an alternative learning solution for providing young learners, more precisely tertiary students with the right attitudes, values, skills and knowledge for promoting SD. Thus, the IA shares the same mission such as concepts like ESD of advancing SD in the educational context, but differs in essence in the approach to achieving that mission. While ESD is a concept not to be considered as an add-on to the educational curriculum, as it concerns the core of teaching and learning (Buckler & Creech, 2014), the IA aims to provide an additional learning solution to the existing curriculum.

2.3 Social Marketing

The field of SM has shown significant growth and adaptation in the past years and especially non-profit organizations and government agencies have recognized that sophisticated marketing tools from the commercial sector can contribute significantly to make the world a

better place (Kotler, 1975; Kotler & Lee, 2008). As SM is a viable approach for both profit-making organizations, as well as non-profit and public organizations, an increasing number of organizations have introduced the application of SM practices and strategies to important and critical challenges of individual and social well-being (Kotler, 1975; Kotler & Lee, 2008).

In the marketing field, there exist several attempts to define SM. An early definition was proposed by Kotler and Zaltman and reinforced by Kotler and Roberto (1989) which describes SM as “*the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas*” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, p. 5). Even though this definition was commonly accepted, social marketers and contemporary writers have come to the conclusion that SM is not only about promoting ideas as Kotler and Zaltman suggested, but rather about influencing behavior of target audiences (Andreasen, 1994; Andreasen, 1995; Kotler & Lee, 2008; Donovan & Henley, 2003). According to Andreasen (2002), the definition of SM should instead be classified as education or attitude change to meet its purpose, because it is argued that the only acceptance of an idea without the induction of an active intervention cannot be assessed as success (Andreasen, 2002).

One commonly accepted definition from the International Social Marketing Association (ISMA, 2020) describes SM as follows: “*Social Marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good*”. This points towards the main objective of SM programs of achieving a behavioral change to bring about meaningful social impact (Dibb, 2014) by addressing any kind of improvements, may it be related to environmental issues (Maibach, 1993), public health challenges or other social needs (Lefebvre, 2011). Due to this nature, it can be seen as an endeavor to encourage people to change their behavior and do something that will not only be beneficial for themselves but also for the common good (Lovelock, 1979).

Deriving from existing literature about SM, Andreason (2002, p. 7) summarizes the unique characteristics of SM that imply critical focus on different elements of marketing strategy and comes up with six benchmark criteria for a SM approach (see. Fig. 3):

The benchmark criteria for social marketing interventions

- (1) Behavior change is the „bottom line“ and at the same time the superior objective to design SM interventions.
 - (2) SM projects make use of thorough consumer research to understand the target audience.
 - (3) To ensure a maximum of effectiveness in the use of limited resources, a careful segmentation of the target customers must be conducted.
 - (4) At the center of any SM strategy that focuses on changing behavior is the creation of attractive and motivational exchanges with the customer segments.
 - (5) SM combines all Ps of the traditional marketing mix, namely products, price, place, and promotion for a specific target group.
 - (6) Careful attention is paid to the competition faced by the desired behavior
-

Figure 3: The six benchmark criteria for social marketing interventions (Adapted from Andreason, 2002)

For a SM approach to be labelled as such, it doesn't necessarily have to comply with all of the six elements. However, it must move beyond purely communications campaigns to manifest the power of the approach (Andreason, 2002). The benchmarking framework established by Andreason will be adopted in this thesis.

2.3.1 Market Segmentation

One important element of the SM approach proposed by Andreason (2002) is market segmentation. Market segmentation can be defined as a strategic marketing tool (Assael & Roscoe, 1976) that helps “to divide a market into smaller groups of buyers with distinct needs, characteristics, or behaviors who might require separate products or marketing mixes” (Lamb et al., 2003, p. 214) to ensure maximal efficiency in the use of scarce resources (Andreason, 2002). According to Kotler and Lee (2008) the process of market segmentation is divided into three phases: (1) Segmenting the market into similar groups of consumers; (2) Evaluating the attractiveness of each segment based on a set of criteria in order to (3) choose one or more target segments for the positioning and marketing mix strategies to differentiate from the competition (Doyle & Stern, 2006; Kotler and Lee, 2008). The process of market segmentation involves usually both secondary as well as primary market research (Stokes, 2000).

For the first step of segmentation, Smith (1965) suggests three widely used approaches: Segmentation by demographics (e.g. gender, age, geographic location, religion, etc.); segmentation by psychographics (e.g. customer lifestyle); and segmentation by benefits sought by the customer (e.g. environmentally friendly, reliability, etc.). The second step is the selection of target markets, which is actually not part of the segmentation process, but a natural consequence of it (Sun, 2009). The selection of the target markets is a key decision and determines the firm's marketing mix. The last step of the process is the design and implementation of the appropriate marketing mix for the selected target customer segment in a way that they satisfy the customer's need better than the competition (Lamb et al., 2003, Zineldin & Philipson, 2007).

2.3.2 The Four Ps of the Marketing Mix

Following on the segmentation of the market into customer groups, a thorough assessment of customers needs (Stokes, 2000) and the selection of the target customer segments, the third step of the market segmentation process focuses on the implementation of the positioning and marketing strategy. This marketing problem is viewed by marketers as the development of the right product, put at the right place, accompanied by the right promotion at the right price (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). These kinds of activities are part of the marketing mix or the four "Ps" of *product*, *promotion*, *price*, and *place*, a marketing framework established by McCarthy in 1960 (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971; Webster, 1992).

Because the use of the four P's of the marketing mix for SM has been subject of criticism in recent years as it has been seen as too simplistic for complex problems, such as SM interventions (Gordon, 2012; Peattie & Peattie, 2003; Wood, 2008), several attempts have been made to develop alternative models or adjust the traditional four P's (Peattie & Peattie, 2003; Gordon, 2012; Tapp & Spotswood, 2013). However, SM researchers have not empirically and comparatively evaluated their proposed models to determine its efficacy against the four P's model (Lahtinen et. al, 2020). Considering this and despite the criticism, the four P's still constitute a useful conceptual framework that helps marketers to allocate resources and apply techniques to behavior change initiatives (Gordon, 2012). Furthermore, it is argued that SM is strongly related to commercial marketing and possesses variables that gives marketers the opportunity to control the influence of attitudes, knowledge and behavior of the target audience (Peattie & Peattie, 2003). Lastly, in a study by Lahtinen et. al (2020), where the four P's have

been tested and compared against the 1P framework or the promotion-only strategy, it could be proven that the full marketing mix of the four P's is more effective in influencing the behaviour of the target audience. Due to the mentioned reasons, the four P's will be applied for the purpose of this research (see Fig. 4).

While in business marketing, the first variable *Product* refers to the attempt to design products and services in a way that it meets the needs and desires of the customers to increase their likelihood of purchase, social marketers have to be more careful in studying the target audience and designing the appropriate products for them (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). That is because of the existence of the social idea which must be packaged in a manner that it's perceived as desirable by the target audience to realize a purchase or behavior change (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). The second variable *Promotion* is referring to the direct communication of the appropriate message to address the individual customer characteristics and preferences (Zineldin & Philipson, 2007). The third variable of *Place* aims to provide adequate and compatible distribution systems (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). This is a critical variable because these systems have a high influence on the way the customer contact is taking place (Zineldin & Philipson, 2007). Therefore, a distribution system must be viewed in its entirety, thus as the transmission point for information that people require to make informed choices and adopt new behavior (Lefebvre, 2011). Also facing the cultural and technological revolutions that have an influence on framing our thinking and activities, one has to even more accurately think about different ways to expose people to behaviors, products, services and communications that encourage and facilitate the promotion of behavior change (Lefebvre et al., 1999; Resnicow & Page, 2008; Gordon, 2011). Lastly, the *Price* is the final variable that must be considered. It is represented by the costs that customers must be willing to pay in order to make a purchase (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). In the case of SM interventions, the price goes beyond monetary rewards, but also takes psychological, social, geographic and other behavioral awards into consideration (Lefebvre & Flora, 1988).

The four P's of the social marketing mix

Product	Product relates to the offer that is made to target adopters that involves the adoption of an idea or behavior.
Price	The price refers to the costs and efforts that is to be made by the target audience to adopt a certain behavior which can be from psychological, cultural, social, temporal, practical, physical, or financial nature.
Place	The place in SM refers to the channels that encourage and facilitate the promotion of behavior change.
Promotion	Promotion relates to the marketing mechanisms that support the promotion of behavioral change.

Figure 4: The four P's of the social marketing mix (Adapted from Gordon, 2011)

This research uses the SM approach as described above. The “bottom line” for the implementation of the IA is a behavior change of the customer. This change process consists in the adoption of the IA, therewith the willingness to educate oneself in the topic of SD to eventually adopt sustainable behavior, make sustainable choices and promote SD. With the help of a customer survey, a thorough consumer research will be conducted in order to understand the target audience of students better and to build the foundation for the market segmentation by splitting them into segments and creating customer segment profiles. In the case of social businesses such as the IA, a segmentation by demographic as well as psychographic and behavioral approaches seems reasonable to fully understand the attractiveness of the product for the potential target customer segment. Based on an analysis of variables such as the segment's size, estimated product use, and willingness to pay, one segment will be selected for designing the marketing mix. In order to comply with (4) of the social marketing benchmark framework (see Fig. 3), which entails the creation of attractive motivational exchanges with the customer segments, the survey will be packed into a global initiative. This initiative is called *The Future We Want* and aims to mobilize and sensitize the target segments for the topic of SD while generating valuable demographic, behavioral and psychographic data about them.

3 Methodology

The methodology of this work relies on primary and secondary data in order to answer the stated research questions. The objective of using primary data is based on the endeavor to obtain reliable first-hand information to strengthen the positions and findings that have been extracted from the secondary data.

3.1 Primary Data

For thorough consumer research with the objective of better understanding the target customer segment of students, reliable first-hand data will be obtained through a survey that was designed in collaboration with the Impacton team. The *Impact & Sustainability Survey* addresses students around the world and can be found in Appendix 1 of this research. In essence, the survey will ask participants for demographic information (e.g. age, gender, and nationality) and their knowledge and attitude towards SD. Furthermore, psychographic and behavioral data will be obtained through questions about attitudes, learning behavior, willingness to pay, learning tools, digital usage etc.

The survey tool that was used is called *Landbot.io*, which is based on chatbot technology to create interactive and conversational survey experiences. The distribution of the survey was realized by partnering up with student associations around the world to reach as many students as possible to participate in the survey to obtain a realistic picture of the status quo of education in SD. Moreover, the survey was posted between October and December 2020 in social media groups, such as *LinkedIn* and *Facebook* Student and Alumni groups and networks. In total, there are valid 260 respondents who have completed the survey and that will be included in the data analysis. The data analysis will be conducted using *SPSS*.

3.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data was used primarily for the competitor analysis, where key data and information was extracted from websites of the competitors to analyse the environment and existing competing solutions in order to identify differentiation and benchmark criteria for the IA. A table with the main secondary sources can be found in the appendix (see Appendix 2).

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Mission and Vision

Based on the insights from the Literature Review (see *2 Literature Review*) and the findings from the survey (see *4 Data Analysis*), the mission and vision statement for the IA have been formulated in the following.

Mission Statement

The mission of the IA is to provide tertiary students with education in the field of SD to build the necessary skill sets, attitudes, and values that are needed to promote sustainable behavior and drive social and environmental change. To this end, the IA provides learning content tailored to the specific needs of the target group and focuses on providing knowledge that not only encourages them to learn but also to take direct action for social and environmental impact.

Vision Statement

The vision of the IA is to become the leading and first priority Go-To-platform for young learners when it comes to education in SD. Therewith it not only strives to become a learning platform, but also a global community that connects young talents with SD practitioners, professionals and institutions around the world to join forces in pursuing a mission of advancing SD and driving social and environmental change.

4.2 Customer Segments

For already mentioned reasons, the group of students was chosen as the main target group of the IA, as they are considered to have a high potential in promoting social change and thus represent a promising target group in the advancement of SD. According to the World Bank Group (2017), there are around 200 million higher education students in the world and the number of people enrolled in higher education tends to grow annually (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2013). In the following, a customer analysis using a survey provides in-depth insights into the customer segment regarding their needs and behaviors that are relevant for the design of the IA.

4.2.1 Survey Analysis

First, looking at the sample that was collected with help of the survey, it becomes salient that 76 % of the respondents are in the age between 19 and 25 years (see Fig. 5). This is not a surprising result because according to the OECD (2010), in most of the developed countries the majority of students in higher education graduate by their mid 20's. Following on this result, all other age groups that took the survey can be treated as outliers and will be excluded from the data analysis as they don't represent the target population of students in higher education and might falsify the results. After excluding the outliers, 200 respondents were left in the sample.

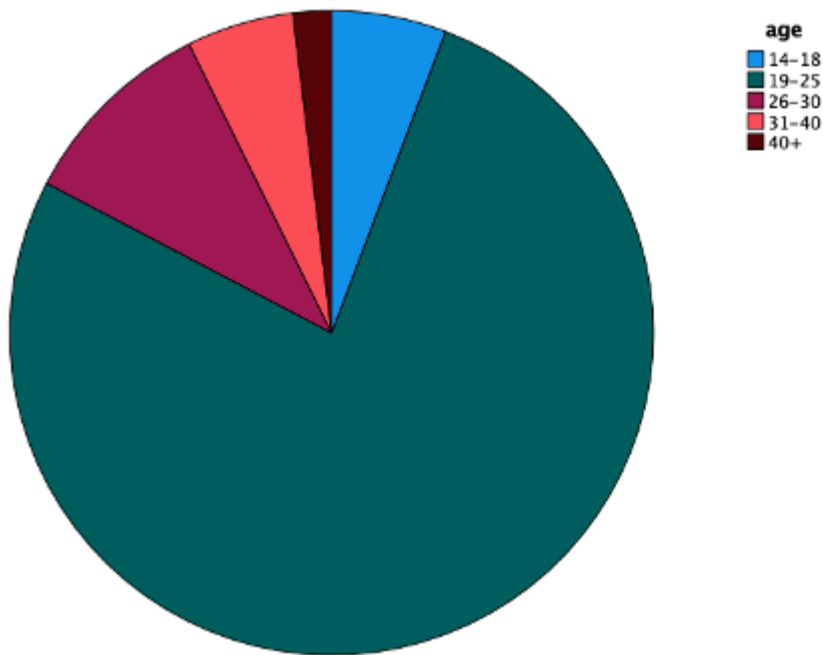


Figure 5: Age distribution of respondents in the survey sample. Source: *The Future We Want Global Survey (SPSS output, 2020)*

The next step in the analysis was to find out the general interest and attitude of the participants towards SD. In the sense of the SM approach, the “bottom line” and precondition of customer's likelihood to adopt the IA, consists in the willingness to educate oneself in the topic of SD. In order to test on whether this precondition is met, the respondents were asked if they personally have the desire to grow their knowledge and learn about SD. After looking at the results from the survey, the prevailing attitude becomes clear as 96% of the respondents answered this question with *yes*. This result, which indicates that there is a general interest, builds a good basis

for analyzing how the exact design of this learning process should look like for the customer segment.

For the customer segmentation process, which involves the identification of homogeneous groups consisting of individuals that share common characteristics, one had to think about the criteria that might have an influence on the customer's expectations, the type of content or the specific message of the offer. After an explorative data analysis approach with the help of Chi²-tests, a psychographic segmentation criterion has been selected for the segmentation. This criterion is reflected in the question regarding people's own preference to either learn about SD or to take direct action which is to be assumed an impact factor that would influence the positioning of the IA, and thus the four P's. The percentage distribution splits the sample into two almost equally sized groups (see Fig. 6). 49 % answered that right now they still want to learn more while 51 % answered they want to take direct action.

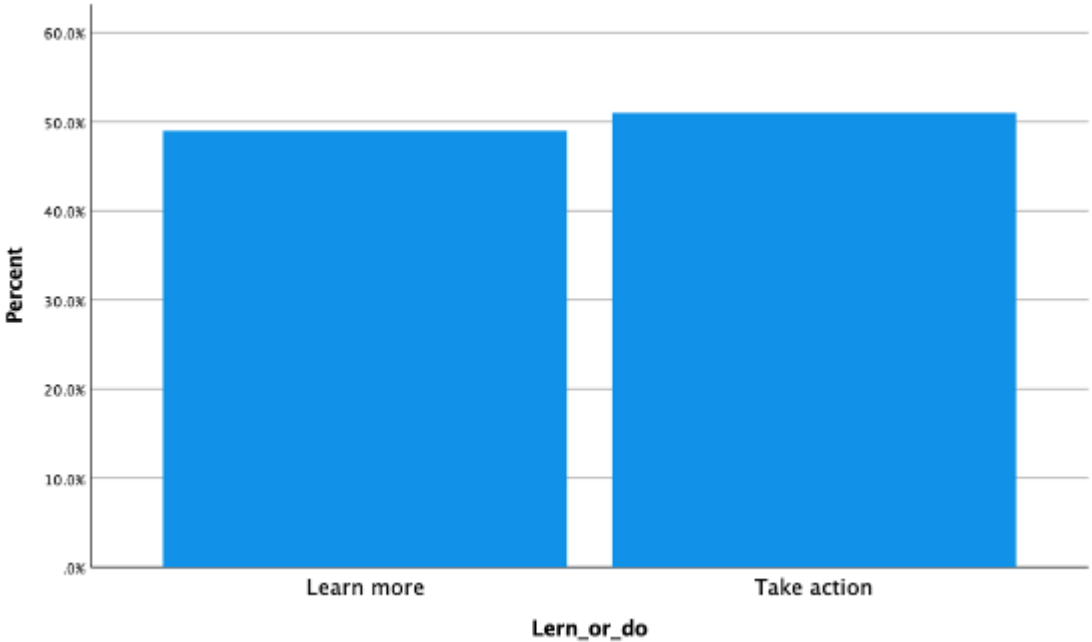


Figure 6: Percentage distribution between respondents who prefer to learn more and take action. Source: The Future We Want Global Survey (SPSS output, 2020)

After running a Chi²-test on the two groups regarding their content preferences to test on the assumption mentioned above, a significant difference can be observed (see Fig. 7). The question suggested three answer possibilities to choose from: *Actionable and applicable in real life*, *Technical and Academic*, *Engaging and Entertaining*. People who want to take direct action prefer content that is actionable and applicable in real life (56%), while people who want to

learn more place higher value to content that is engaging and entertaining (48%) (see Fig. 8). This difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval ($p > 0.004$).

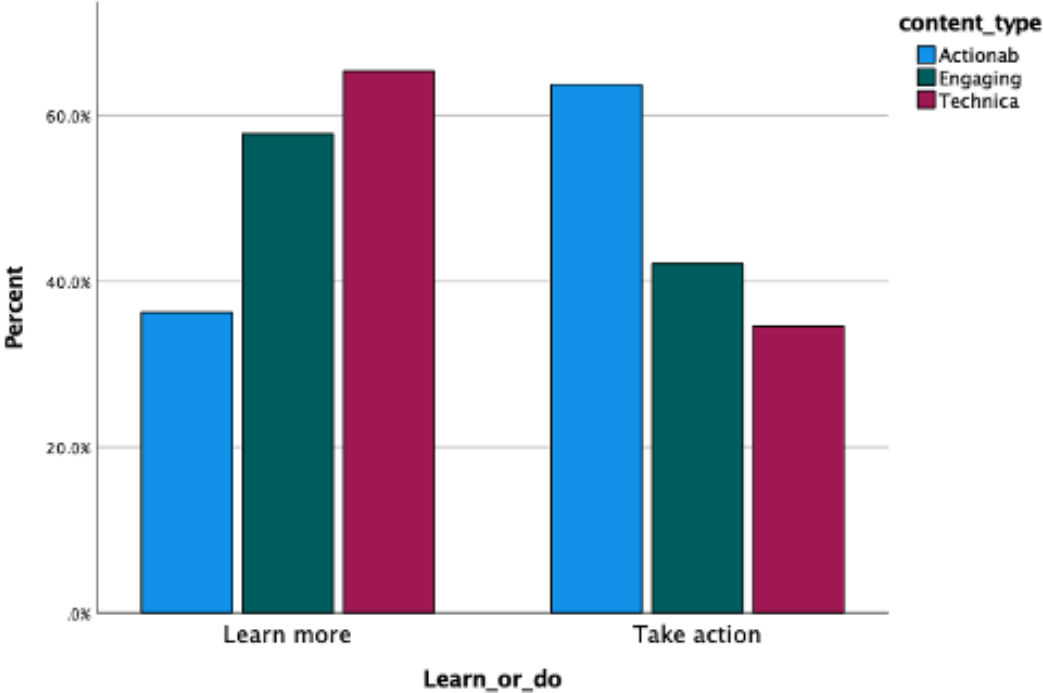


Figure 7: Bar plot Type of Content. The x-axis depicts the two groups of people who want to learn and people who want to take action. The bars are clustered by the preferred type of content the respondents within each of the two groups choose, where the blue bar reflects content that is **actionable and applicable in real life**, green reflects **engaging and entertaining** content, and red reflects **technical and academic** content. Source: The Future We Want Global Survey (SPSS output, 2020)

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.290 ^a	2	.004
Likelihood Ratio	11.424	2	.003
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.74.

Figure 8: Chi²-test output using the test variables *learn_or_do* and *content_quality*. Source: The Future We Want Global Survey (SPSS output, 2020)

Following on the segmentation, both identified customer groups of people who would prefer to learn more and people who would like to take direct action were renamed *Sustainable Promoters* and *Sustainable Learners*. In order to explore both groups more in-depth regarding their demographic characteristics and to identify differences between them in regards to their expectations, preferences and needs, further statistical tests were run. One significant difference that can be observed is the self-assessment of people's knowledge in different topics related to SD. *Sustainable Promoters* seem to have a higher tendency to self-assess their knowledge higher than *Sustainable Learners*. Looking at the results, with a significance at the 95 % confidence interval ($p > 0.006$) *Sustainable Promoters* assess their knowledge higher in the field of Development and New Economies (*Very familiar* = 46 %) than Learner (*Very familiar* = 24 %). Furthermore, also significant at the 95 % confidence interval ($p > 0.03$), *Sustainable Promoters* also assess their knowledge higher in the field of Sustainability. These results might be an explanation for the learn-or-do-decision, because with *Sustainable Promoters* having a higher self- perceived knowledge about different topics within the field of SD, they already might feel better prepared for taking action than *Sustainable Learners*.

Another finding that might provide a deeper understanding of the two groups is about their dream jobs. Among the *Sustainable Promoters*, the most selected job is *Entrepreneur* (32 %) followed by *Consultant* (15 %) and *Public Sector* (15 %). Among the *Sustainable Learners*, the *Entrepreneur* scores clearly lower with 22 %, followed by *Consultant* (15 %) and *Public Sector* (15 %). One striking difference that can be observed is the dream job selection of *Researcher*. 14 % of *Sustainable Learners* chose this job as their dream job while only 7 % of the *Sustainable Promoters* did. In order to further test the influence of people that want to become Researchers and Entrepreneurs on the likelihood of them to want to learn or take action in SD, two binary logistic regression models were run. The first binary regression model (see Fig. 9) found a positive statistically significant influence of people who want to become researchers and want to learn. The variable *learn_or_do* is binary, where value 1 reflects *learn* and 0 reflects *take action*. Thus, people who want to become researchers have a 81 % higher likelihood to choose to learn over take action. This value is significant at a 90 % confidence interval ($p > 0.093$). Looking at the second binary regression model (see Fig. 10), a negative relationship of people who want to become Entrepreneurs and their likelihood of choosing to learn over taking

action can be observed. However, this result is not statistically significant and thus cannot be trusted.

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	career_researcher	.816	.487	2.814	1	.093	2.262
	Constant	-.123	.150	.675	1	.411	.884

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: career_researcher.

Figure 9: Binary logistic regression model using *learn_or_do* as the dependent variable and *career_researcher* as the independent variable. The Future We Want Global Survey (SPSS output, 2020)

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	Career_Entrepreneur	-.502	.322	2.438	1	.118	.605
	Constant	.097	.166	.338	1	.561	1.101

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Career_Entrepreneur.

Figure 10: Binary logistic regression model using *learn_or_do* as the dependent variable and *career_entrepreneur* as the independent variable. The Future We Want Global Survey (SPSS output, 2020)

Based on the assumption that past experience within the field of SD might have an influence on the decision of people to learn or take action, several Chi²-tests were run using the appropriate variables. From the test results it can be observed that the proportion of students who already have volunteering experience or whose studies are about one of the fields of SD is

the equal between *Sustainable Promoters* and *Sustainable Learners*. Concludingly past experience doesn't influence the decision to whether learn or to take action. Also when asking about people's willingness to pay for curated content in SD topics that matches all their preferences, there is no significant difference between the two groups (see Fig. 11). *Sustainable Promoters* have a slightly higher willingness to pay (72 %) than *Sustainable Learners* (64 %). However, this difference is not statistically significant. The main significant differences in the characteristics between the group of *Sustainable Promoters* and *Sustainable Learners* can be found in Fig. 12.

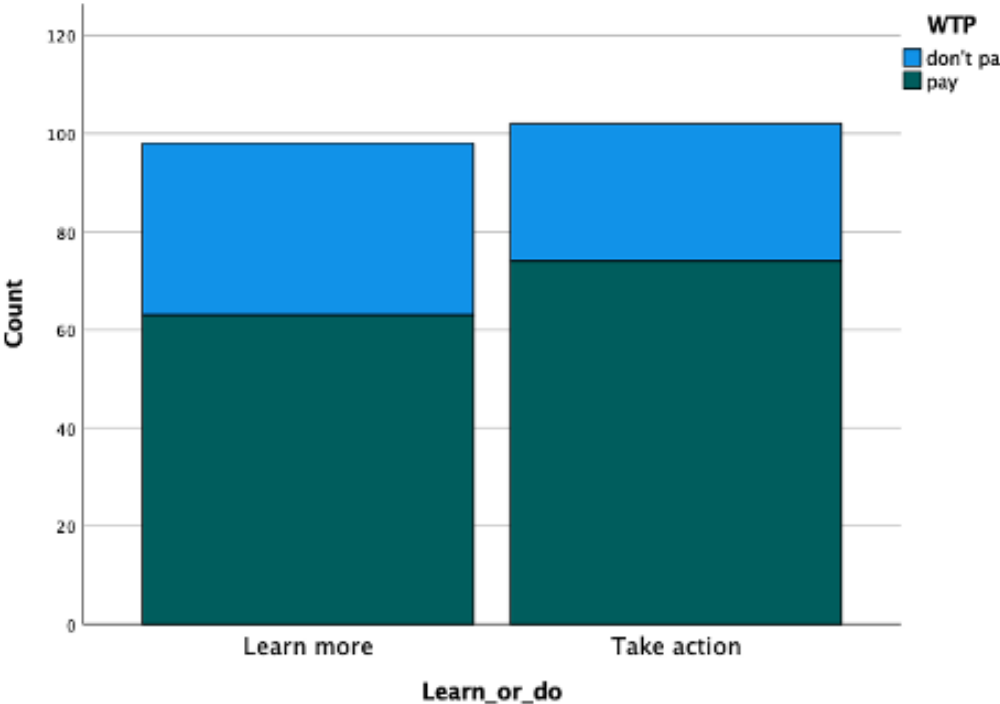


Figure 11: Stacked bar plot. The x-axis depicts the two groups of people who want to learn and people who want to take action. The bars are clustered by the willingness to pay of the respondents within each of the two groups, where the blue bar reflects the percentage of people who wouldn't pay and green reflects the percentage of people who would pay. Source: *The Future We Want Global Survey (SPSS output, 2020)*



Sustainable Learner		Sustainable Promoter	
			
Demographics			
Age:	21	Age:	24
Status:	Learn about SD	Status:	Take direct action in SD
Knowledge in SD:	Mediocre	Knowledge in SD:	High
Preferences			
Type of Content:	Engaging and Entertaining	Type of Content:	Actionable and applicable in real life
WTP:	0,00 - 2,00 € p.M.	WTP:	2,00 - 4,00 € p.M.

Figure 12: Comparison of the distinctive significant differences between the Sustainable Learners and Promoters regarding their demographics and product and pricing preferences (Canva output, 2021)

4.2.2 Target Segment

The next step in the customer segmentation process is the selection of the segment that is going to be targeted. This is an important step in order to ensure the efficient use of marketing resources and to elaborate a marketing mix that appropriately satisfies the specific needs of the customers. As for the IA and in accordance with the SM approach, the targeting decision is not based on the profit that can be generated through a certain customer segment, but rather on the segment that has the highest potential of making an impact, it is reasonable to focus on the customer group of the *Sustainable Promoters*. This customer segment is considered to have a higher impact at the current stage through their willingness to take direct action. Another reason for choosing this customer segment is of a rather practical nature. With *Sustainable Promoters* preferring actionable learning content that is applicable in real life, providing the toolkits for replicable impact models which is the main business of *Impacton*, to the users of the IA, constitutes a viable solution to meet the content type condition, accelerate the main business of *Impacton*, as well as promoting sustainable impact.

4.3 Competitor Analysis

In the following chapter, a benchmark analysis is used to analyze the competitive environment in which the IA operates. According to Wong & Wong (2008) benchmarking can be described as a systematic method in which best practices, new ideas and efficiencies are pursued, leading to quality improvement. Even if benchmarking is a tool that is broadly used by organizations and managers, it doesn't follow a certain theory or procedure (Dorsch & Yasin, 1998).

In this work, an informal competitive benchmarking approach, which is defined as a comparison with the best of the direct competitors (Wah Fong & Cheng, 1998), is being adopted. Following this approach, all competitors, whether they are direct or indirect competitors, are being considered as they could be a source of important information and thus be a valuable benchmarking partner (Singh et al., 2015). First, in order to categorize into indirect and direct competitors, an online research on online education providers that operate within the competitive field of the IA has been conducted. Throughout the research the leading concept of non-institutional educational platforms for personal development that has been found are Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). This concept has become increasingly popular among educational researchers, instructors, and learners. It makes open educational resources and online courses available in digitized form and with open access on the web, which educators and students can access unlimitedly. The resources are offered free of charge or at a nominal course or certificate charge (Mamgain et al., 2014).

After analysis of the different vendors within the MOOC landscape, following categories of providers within the industry have been identified: (1) *Massive Open Online Courses in other fields than Sustainable Development*; (2) *Massive Open Online Courses in other fields and in Sustainable Development*; (3) *Massive Open Online Courses in Sustainable Development*. Besides the competitors within the MOOC landscape, other solutions were identified as important benchmarking partners. The main competitors within each of the categories are going to be presented in the following section.

4.3.1 Massive Open Online Courses in Other Fields than Sustainable Development

The biggest MOOC providers in other fields than SD that exist in the market are *Coursera* with more than 42 million users and *Udemy* with 40 million users. *Coursera* has a high popularity

due to tie-ups with numerous prestigious universities, a range of high quality and free courses, a user-friendly interface and a strong business model (Mamgain et al., 2014). While both *Udemy* and *Coursera* focus on the same target group of global learners from all education levels, sectors and professions and have a very similar spectrum of offered topics, their business models are quite different. While *Coursera* offers high-quality and certified courses curated by top universities and leading companies, as well as online degrees and project-based courses for acquiring job-relevant skills, *Udemy* is a multi-sided platform that connects learners and teachers around the world. Teachers can create profiles and offer their certified courses on the platform, while students can purchase these. The price depends on the course offered and the end-user has to pay per course purchased. *Coursera*'s pricing model is different, because they offer the courses for university students free of charge, while professionals have to pay. Regarding the content, *Udemy* works mainly with video lectures, whereas *Coursera* offers other course material alongside the videos, such as homework exercises, quizzes, community discussion forums, hands-on case studies, and real-life scenario projects. Both course offers are based on an on-demand principle and are self-paced, which means that learners can perform the courses in their own time.

Whilst these providers represent considerable indirect competitors for the IA, they differ fundamentally in multiple ways. First, they strive for a completely different mission than the IA and are not (yet) focused on providing knowledge in the field of SD or building skills to promote sustainable behavior. Secondly to mention is the type of content they are offering and their target customers. Whereas the *Coursera* and *Udemy* focus on global learners from all different education levels, sectors and professions and offer learning materials in online course format only, the IA focuses on students as the target segment. Therefore, it is able to create a more specialized offer based on the specific needs and interests of this target group. In the course of the customer research that was conducted with a survey (see 4.2.1 *Survey Analysis*), it was found that among the group of students within the age between 19 and 25 years, only 23 % of the participants choose Online Courses as their main source to educate themselves in SD topics. This makes *Coursera* and *Udemy* rather uninteresting for the target group of students.

Despite the fundamental differences between *Coursera* and *Udemy* and the IA, there is a possibility that they will launch a division that offers learning solutions in the field of SD, and therefore need to be monitored.

4.3.2 Massive Open Online Courses in Other Fields and Sustainable Development

The main indirect competitor within the category of MOOC's that offers online courses in SD and in other fields is *edX* - a non-profit organization that was founded by *Harvard* and *MIT* and has more than 20 million users worldwide. All the courses offered on their platform are free, but they charge participants if they want to purchase a certificate after completing the course. In terms of learning resources, they provide video transcripts and additional course material, such as in-video quizzes and video viewing related features. Their course topics range from data and computer science to leadership and communications, but they also offer courses in the field of SD. Moreover, they describe themselves as the platform “*where you go to learn*” which overlaps with IA's vision of becoming the Go-To-platform for young learners of students when it comes to education in SD. These two characteristics make *edX* a strong direct competitor for the IA and therefore needs to be monitored thoroughly. However, there are some fundamental characteristics that differentiate *edX* from the IA.

First, as like *Udemy* and *Coursera*, *edX* is focused on a very big and unspecified target group that consist of global learners from all education levels, professional stages, sectors and professions. Even though they might attract many students with their offer, they deliver content in online course format only which is not directly aligned with the specific needs of students. Another fundamental difference consists in the type of content offered. While the courses in SD offered by *edX* are rather informative and academic content, the IA wants to focus more on providing actionable knowledge that encourages students to not only learn about but to directly take action for creating social and environmental impact.

4.3.3 Massive Open Online Courses in Sustainable Development

The main direct competitor within the category of MOOC in SD was identified especially in regards to their mission. The *SDG Academy* defines itself as “*the flagship education platform of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), a global initiative for the United Nations (SDSN, 2018)*”. Following a non-profit approach, the *SDG Academy* provides openly available educational material in the field of SD with the long-term goal of creating sustainable behavior among learners, promoting SD and the achievement of the SDGs.

The *SDG Academy*'s education offer is divided into self-paced and instructor-paced online courses where each course covers a different topic in the field of SD, such as climate change, work inequalities, responsible consumption, or sustainable cities and economies. The courses are compiled and curated by leading experts in the respective field of SD. Each self-paced course is divided into a different number of modules and works on an on-demand basis, where the students can access the content at any convenient time. However, the completion of the course modules must happen before a fixed set deadline. The type of content used in the self-paced courses consists of pre-recorded lectures, readings, quizzes and a final exam. Additionally, every course offers a discussion forum where students are encouraged to discuss the course contents and insights with their peers. Regarding the instructor-paced courses, they stretch over a time period of six weeks and have a workload of 2-4 hours per week. While for the completion of the self-paced courses, absolvents are eligible for requesting a certificate, the instructor-paced courses are non-certified.

Although the *SDG Academy* seems to appear as a strong direct competitor especially when it comes to the mission and similar value proposition, there are fundamental differences, in which regards the IA would occupy a different market position than the *SDG Academy* (see Fig. 13). The main differences consist in the type of content and the target customer segment. Whereas the *SDG Academy* focuses on global learners from all different education levels, sectors and professions and offers learning materials in online course format only, the IA focuses on students as the target segment. Therefore, it is able to create a more specialized offer based on the specific needs and interests of this target group by performing a preceding consumer research.

	Impacton Academy	SDG Academy
<i>Topic</i>	Sustainable Development	Sustainable Development
<i>Target Customer Segments</i>	Students worldwide in higher education (19-25 years)	Global learners from all different education levels, sectors and professions
<i>Pricing model</i>	Freemium model	Free subscription
<i>Legal Form</i>	Social Business	Non-Profit Organization

<i>Platform Type</i>	Smartphone App	Website
<i>Educational Format</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous micro-learning • daily insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-pace and instructor-paced online courses • Up to 6 weeks
<i>Educational Content</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker talks • Videos (~10 min) • Visual and written content (infographics, blog article format etc.) • Impact Model Toolkits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-recorded lectures from experts • Readings • Quizzes and final exam
<i>Type of Content</i>	actionable and applicable in real-life	informative and academic
<i>Community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborator Marketplace • Impacton Academy Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Forum • SDG Academy Community of Practice
<i>Community Goals</i>	For students, Education institutions, NGOs, Social Businesses, Government entities, Social Entrepreneurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer learning and networking • Knowledge and best practices exchange • Thought leadership and mentoring • Volunteering and job opportunities 	For higher education institutions, NGOs, for-profit businesses, relevant government entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer learning • Best practices sharing • Customized resource development • Research opportunities • Thought leadership
<i>Certification</i>	Not certified	Partly certified
<i>SDG's</i>	In alignment with SDG's	In alignment with SDG's

Figure 13: Comparative table of the Impacton Academy and the SDG Academy (SDG Academy, 2018)

4.3.4 Other Competing Solutions

Besides the MOOC's, there are other solutions that people use for educating themselves in topics of SD and that have to be taken into consideration as potential competitors or benchmarking solutions for the IA. Other competing solutions where people get information from could be newspapers, websites and blogs, podcasts or Social Media platforms, such as *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *LinkedIn*. In the survey that was distributed among the target group

of students, people were asked about their preferred sources to gain information and to educate themselves in SD topics. The most used source that was selected among the students in the age group between 19 and 25 years were *Websites/Blogs* (57 %), followed by *Instagram* (53 %), *Podcasts* (44 %), *Book* (43 %), and *Newspapers* (41 %). As already mentioned before, online courses were with 23 % rather a rarely used channel among the target group of students when it comes to education in SD. These findings suggest that students and young people are more interested in snackable and digestible content in the form that platforms like *Instagram* provide, rather than lengthy online courses, and will be considered in the conception of the marketing mix.

5 The 4 P's of the Marketing Mix

Based on the findings in *4 Data Analysis*, the IA is being designed with the help of the 4 P's framework in such a way that it is tailored to the target customer segment's needs in order to ensure the best possible launch in the market. For visualization purposes, a self-created mock-up of how the IA could look like as well as a pricing model was designed by the author of this research.

5.1 Product

Deriving from the data analysis the customer segment of *Sustainable Promoters* prefers content that is actionable and applicable in real life. In order to satisfy this condition users will get access to *Impacton's* toolkits, which are part of their main business model. It works in a way that they decentralize and standardize existing impact models and projects that have a proven high, positive, social, or environmental impact with the goal of deploying these projects at these places where they are needed. Therefore, they are creating toolkits from the project's blueprints and make them accessible to individuals and organizations to implement these projects in their communities to scale the impact globally (Blueprints for Impact Ltd., 2020).

The survey also revealed further their preferred content types are video (76 %) and written and visual content (75 %). When it comes to video content, they prefer rather short videos of maximum 10 minutes (49 %) or between 10-20 minutes (37 %). Regarding speaker videos, they prefer single speaker talks in TED talk format (46 %) or interviews (41 %) over QA sessions.

When it comes to written type of content, most of the *Sustainable Promoters* stated that they prefer to read Infographics (38 %) or online articles (35 %) to learn about SD topics. In regards to their social activity, they prefer to use social media platforms, in particular *Instagram* and easily accessible online sources, such as websites and blog articles to learn.

Looking at the customer segment's preferences, it becomes salient that *Sustainable Promoters* prefer micro-learning formats - learning content that is rather snackable, meaning easily to consume in between the day. This combined with their social activity which indicates that they prefer to use social media platforms, such as *Instagram* and easily accessible online sources to learn and inform themselves, it would make sense to set up the IA platform as an application in a format that is easily accessible from a smartphone. In the following, taking into account all the results presented above, a product design mockup of the IA in the form of a smartphone application was designed. The app is structured in four menu items. The first menu item constitutes the start page or the daily insights feed (see Fig. 14). Brief insights on different SD topics are posted there daily, which can be consumed by the user by scrolling down the feed. The daily insights can for instance consist of infographics, short illustrated explanatory videos or bullet-point texts. With the help of a color system, each daily insight is assigned to a certain topic-specific category, for example the category *Responsible Consumption* or *Climate Action*. The respective insights are also directly linked to the SDG's by a matching mechanism to give users an overview of the area in SD in which they currently learn. The daily insights can be

commented on by all users and saved so that they can be retrieved at a later time via the personal profiles.



Figure 14: Impacton Academy Mockup Part 1 - Daily Insights Feed (Canva output, 2020)

The second menu item, marked in the menu bar by the magnifying glass, contains the search function within the various topics for learning content and toolkits (see Fig. 15). For this purpose, the user has the possibility to browse the different topic categories, such as *Responsible Consumption*, *Climate Action*, or *Reduced Inequalities*. By applying filters, they can pick out specific content that corresponds to a particular category that interests them or in which they want to learn more. Within the section of Speaker Talks they can pick out talks that interest them, watch them directly, or add them to their personal watch list. With the help of a filter, they can go into a more concrete search. If users are interested in the toolkits, they can access them in the respective section by applying filters for specifying their search.



Figure 15: Impacton Academy Mockup Part 2 - Content Search Section (Canva output, 2020)

The third menu item takes the users to the page of their own network within the IA (see Fig. 16), where they are able to see how many connections they have already made with other users and collaborators. Below that, they will find a list of all contacts, which they can specify by applying filters.

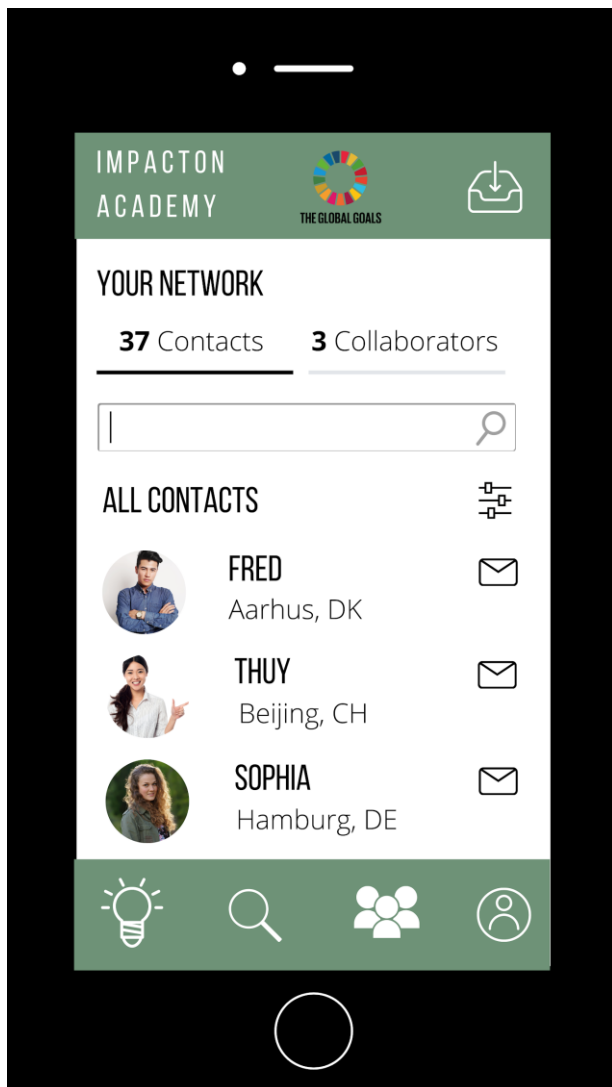


Figure 16: Impacton Academy Mockup Part 3 - Network and Community Section (Canva output, 2020)

The last menu item leads to the user's own profile (see Fig. 17), in which the user's first name, status (i.e. *Explorer* or *Member*) and a short profile status are displayed. In the status, the user can state his or her current professional or study status and interests. Moreover, they are able to indicate through a click their availability for working, either volunteering or paid which results in a listing on the collaborators marketplace. The collaborators marketplace will be a feature mainly for institutions and organizations that have signed up as collaborators. They can create a profile on the marketplace and have access to the users of the IA who have opted-in for job opportunities. This feature is not further discussed at this point in time because it is mainly relevant for the group of collaborators.

To increase user engagement, a proven concept is the incorporation of elements from computer gaming, namely gamification. Gamification is one of the most common ways to trigger joy in

using technology (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). In the context of the IA, the gamification component is incorporated in the activity of an user on the basis of various usage indicators and different KPI's, such as the time spent in the app, the storage of daily insights, the number of completed videos, the number of friends and connections, the activity in groups, and the interactivity with collaborators. In the profile you can see your own percentage progress within each of the respective topics. If you have collected a certain number of points in a specific area and thus reached 100 %, you receive a star, which is added to your collection and displayed in the profile. Lastly, the user has the possibility to access his saved daily insights, saved toolkits as well as the videos and speaker talks saved for later in the watch list.

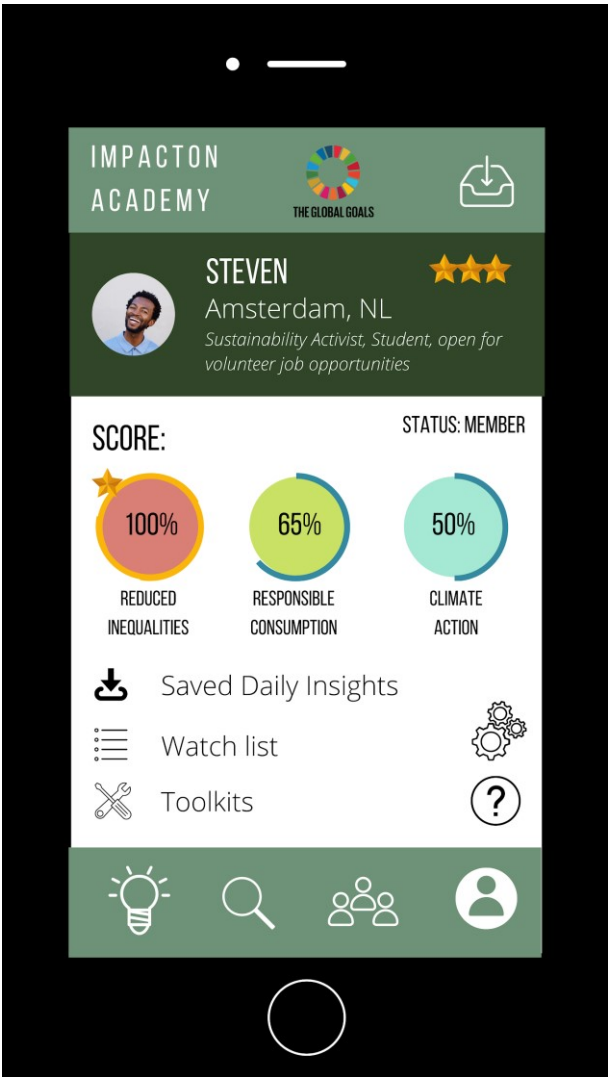


Figure 17: Impacton Academy Mockup Part 4 - User Profile Section (Canva output, 2020)

5.2 Promotion

The promotion variable determines the direct communication of the right message to address the individual characteristics and preferences of the customer target group. In the case of the IA, an initiative called *The Future We Want* was launched for this purpose. The initiative consists on the one hand of the customer survey, which serves to get to know the target group, to use the insights from this to design the IA product appropriately and, on the other hand, to give the target group the feeling that they can actively participate in shaping the future. The aim is to create a sense of community and to involve them more deeply emotionally in the topic. The message used for the initiative is as follows: “*The Future We Want is a global initiative promoted by student associations, networks and organisations from 10+ countries to identify what’s working and what’s missing in our current education system, and how to best provide young generations the tools to shape a future that is sustainable, inclusive and planet-first*” (Blueprints for Impact Ltd., 2020). The main objective of the initiative is first to raise awareness among the IA target group about the issue of SD and the urgency and importance of their own engagement in this area, and then, based on the results of the Customer Survey, to develop an offer that will increase the likelihood that the IA will be adopted. At the end of the customer survey, people are asked to provide their email address if they are willing to be informed about new products and innovations within the field of SD, which gives the opportunity to follow up with them as soon as the IA is ready to be launched.

The dissemination of the initiative takes place in collaboration with student associations and university networks with the aim of exploiting their networks and achieving the greatest possible reach within the target group of students. The collaboration consists in providing the associations with a media kit including various content and promotion material for the promotion of the initiative in their networks. This includes channels such as *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, email newsletters and *WhatsApp*. Two exemplary Instagram posts can be seen in Fig. 18 and 19.



Figure 18: “The Future We Want” Exemplary Instagram Story Post (Canva output, 2020)

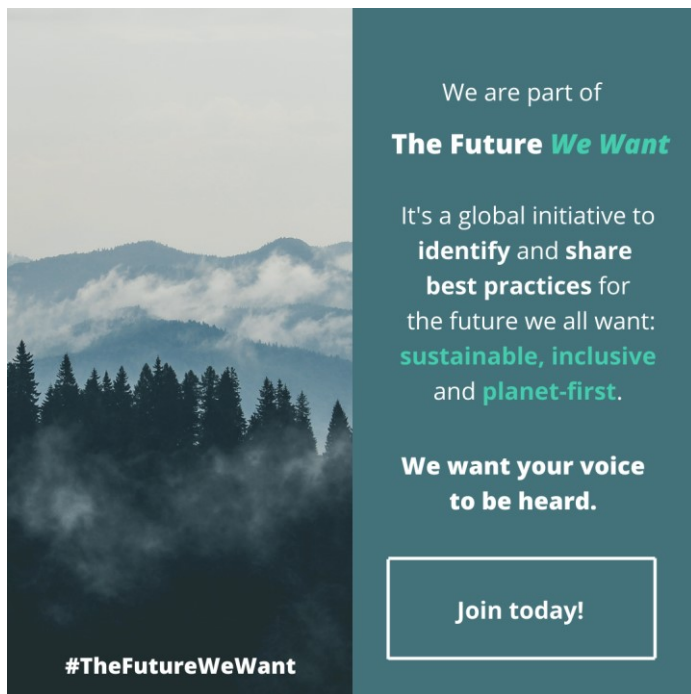


Figure 19: “The Future We Want” Exemplary Instagram Post (Canva output, 2020)

5.3 Price

When asking about the willingness to pay for curated content on SD that matches all of people’s preferences, 35 % of the group of Sustainable Promoters answered they wouldn’t pay at all, and 36 % answered they would pay the value of a coffee per month (equivalent to 2-4 €). The remaining 29 % were allocated at the higher values. However, these results show that not all of the people would pay for the IA and thus it is necessary to come up with a pricing model that satisfies both sides in order for the IA to be adopted by as many people as possible. One possibility for the pricing could be a Freemium pricing model. The Freemium model consists of a free version and a charged premium version. One exemplary freemium pricing model for the IA is shown in Fig. 20.

The free version *Explorer* includes full access to the educational content of the SD as well as the toolkits for social and environmental action in order to also attract the customers who are not willing to pay. This decision is based on IA’s mission to educate young people in SD and facilitate them to take action. Cost shouldn’t constitute an obstacle for them to sign up.

To use the willingness to pay of some of the customers as a potential revenue source to reinvest the profit in curating the content or maintaining the platform, there is a premium version *Member* priced with € 2,99 per month. In combination with other revenue streams, this could

potentially help to build a self-sustaining social business model in the long term. The premium version includes full access to the educational content, as well as access to the *Impacton Academy Community* and the *Collaborator Marketplace* and is therefore suitable for students that want to engage more with the community and seek volunteer or job opportunities at organizations that have a social mission. The Member version is also available for a one-month free trial. Lastly, the *Collaborator* access is suitable for Social Enterprises, NGO's or Originators of Impact projects who seek to acquire or get in touch with students who seek volunteer or job opportunities.



Figure 20: Exemplary Freemium pricing model for the Impacton Academy (Canva output, 2020).

5.4 Place

The last variable *Place* determines an adequate distribution system that influences in which manner the customer contact and the conveying of the message takes place along the different stages of product development and planning.

In the research and planning stage when it comes to the customer survey and the initiative, the primary distribution channel will be the social media channels of partnering associations to attract as many students as possible. Based on the results from the customer survey, the channels for the promotion can be selected and decisions can be made on how to make the IA available on the market. According to the preferences of the target customer segment, the IA will be made

available as a smartphone application for easy and handy use on the go. In combination with that, a website will be created where potential customers and interested parties can learn about the IA, its mission, vision, and pricing and can click on the link that leads them directly to the download area of the app.

In the next stage, as soon as the IA offer is market-ready, a launch announcement email with the help of an email marketing automation tool will be sent out to the database consisting of the people who provided their email address after filling out the survey. The database is built by using a central Customer-Relationship-Management (CRM) system, such as *Salesforce* or *HubSpot*. Depending on the CRM, various marketing automation tools can be explored, such as *Mailchimp*, *HubSpot* or *Klaviyo*. Besides the use of email marketing in the form of Newsletters and direct mailings, further distribution channels consist mainly in social networks, such as *Instagram* and *LinkedIn*, since the customer segments verifiably use these as their predominantly used networks to gather information. In addition to the free channels, it is also worth considering paid channels like *Facebook*, *Instagram* (see. Fig. 21) or *Google AdWords*. For defining an efficient *Google AdWords* strategy, close focus has to be put on the definition of the target group, the selection of the right keywords that match the product, the creation of an expressive advertising copy with 25-35 characters and a target-oriented bidding strategy. An exemplary Google Ad for Google Search can be found in Fig. 22.

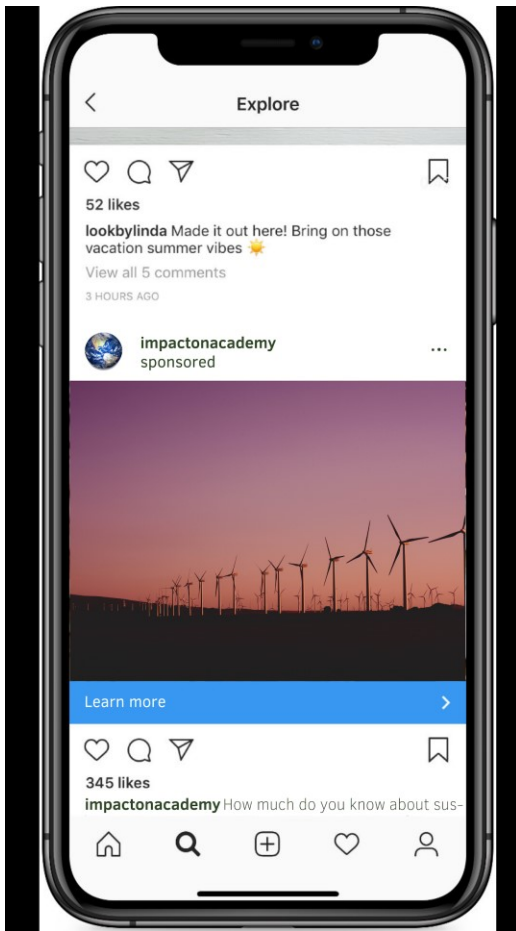


Figure 21: Exemplary Instagram paid post for the Impacton Academy (Canva output, 2021).

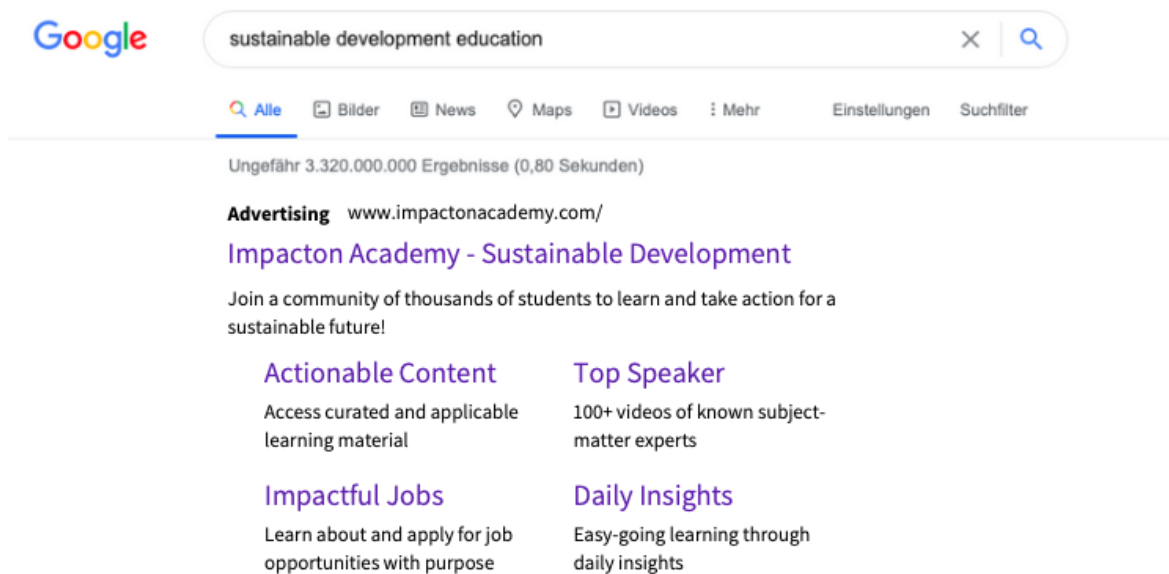


Figure 22: Exemplary Google Ad for Google Search for the Impacton Academy (Canva output, 2021).

At the stage where customers have signed up for the IA, they can opt-in for the IA newsletter where they will be nurtured with updates and news, and information worth knowing in the field of SD. Another important social network is *LinkedIn*, which is rather focused on the professional context. This network is suitable to target students who might be in a stage of searching for job opportunities and at the same time collaborators who are seeking to hire employees or volunteers for their projects. Other distribution channels that are adequate to reach the collaborators in particular have to be explored. However, this undertaking is not within the scope of this thesis.

6 Conclusion

The literature has revealed the importance of promoting SD and pointed out the essential role that education plays in addressing the immense economic, environmental, and social challenges that our planet faces. Young people have to understand how to address critical issues, adopt sustainable behavior to eventually contribute to a sustainable future. By reviewing the literature, it becomes salient that especially tertiary students promise high potential to drive societal change, which is why the goal of this thesis was to develop an alternative learning solution for this specific target group to introduce a solution for promoting SD through the educational context. To understand this target group and identify further segmentation potential, a quantitative survey was conducted. For identifying the right market position for the IA, a SM approach has been chosen including the elaboration of the 4 P's of the Marketing Mix. By analysing the results of the survey by means of statistical methods the stated research questions have been answered as follows:

1. *Which is the ideal customer segment profile of the IA?*

The ideal customer segment profile of the IA that was identified through the customer survey consists in the persona of *Sustainable Promoters*. *Sustainable Promoters* perceive their own knowledge in the field of SD as high and thus have the desire to take action in SD. Due to this characteristic they promise the highest potential of promoting SD and driving societal change, and thus were chosen as the ideal customer segment profile of the IA.

2. *How would IA be affected by the competition?*

The IA competes in an environment where it is presented with a range of indirect and direct competitors. All of these are competing within the field of Massive Open Online Courses

(MOOCs) because of the purpose they serve which is offering online education. The main direct competitor of the IA is the *SDG Academy* which offers educational content in SD. However, the *SDG Academy* does not represent that much of a threat for multiple reasons. First, it serves a much broader target group of global learners from all different education levels, sectors and professions, whereas the IA focuses on tertiary students and is thus able to develop a more tailored offer to serve that specific group more effectively. Second, it offers educational material in online course format only, which is among the customer target group of tertiary students with 23% one of the least preferred sources for education in SD. Lastly, the type of content offered by the *SDG Academy* is of informative and academic nature which makes it rather uninteresting for IA's target customer segment, as it prefers content that is actionable and applicable in real-life and engaging and entertaining.

3. *What's the optimal Marketing Mix for the target customer segment of the IA?*

Concluding from the results of the survey regarding the specific **product** requirements for the IA for the target segment of *Sustainable Promoters*, which indicate that they prefer micro-learning formats, thus digestible content, that is easily accessible on the go and to consume during the day, the IA should be developed as a smartphone application that is similar to the Social Media platform *Instagram*. Regarding product feature requirements stated by the group of *Sustainable Promoters*, the app will include on the one hand a daily insights feed to deliver snackable and short pieces of educational information and on the other hand learning material in short 10 minute videos, as well as written and visual format. As *Sustainable Promoters* innate the desire to take direct action in SD and prefer learning content that is actionable and applicable in real-life, on the one hand a community function will be implemented aiming to connect them with collaborators, such as NGOs, Social Entrepreneurs or Activists to foster collaboration in driving social and environmental change, and on the one hand the impact model toolkits from *Impacton* will be made accessible.

For the **promotion** of the right message of the IA to target the customer segment effectively, a preceding initiative with the name *The Future We Want* that includes the promotion of the customer survey will be launched. Its objective consists on the one hand in the creation of awareness among the target customers of tertiary students for the topic of SD and its importance for the planet and humanity and on the other hand the acquisition of participants for the survey to generate valuable insights on the customer target group.

Following on the result regarding the **price** that within the group of *Sustainable Promoters* the willingness to pay for the product varies between 0 € (35 %) and 2-4 € (36 %), a Freemium pricing model that offers options for both groups has been chosen. The Freemium model consists of a free version *Explorer* that includes full access to the IA's educational content on SD (i.e. video content, daily insights feed, toolkits) to target the people with no willingness to pay, and a charged version *Member* priced at 2,99 € per month to target the other half of the group that also includes access to the IA community and the collaborators marketplace.

The optimal **place** strategy was chosen with respect to the different stages of the product development and planning. In the beginning phase, the phase of creating awareness for the survey, the main channels of use will be the Social Media platforms of the promotion partners. By collecting the email addresses through the survey, a database will be built using a CRM system and leveraged later on by sending direct e-mailings and newsletters about the IA with the help of marketing automation tools. After the IA has entered the market, the main distributions channels consist of *Instagram* and *LinkedIn* for awareness purposes, but also paid channels, such as *Google AdWords*, *Facebook Ads*, and *Instagram Ads* for organic growth.

6.1 Limitations

The conducted research for the elaboration of the 4 P's of the Marketing Mix for the IA has its limitation that will be outlined in the following. The major limitations consist in the one-sidedness of the data collection sample, the sample size and the design of the survey.

Within the analysis a total of 260 completed surveys were considered, which is a rather small sample size. The more data available, the more accurate the analysis will be. For this reason, for further research and deeper insight into the market, the number of respondents could be improved to account for more significant differences. Also regarding the fact that the survey was distributed in collaboration with student associations and networks and posted in social media groups mainly within Europe, the sample might not be representative for the entire population of students and thus be biased.

Furthermore, the design of the 4 P's of the Marketing Mix for the IA is based solely on the data from the target group of students. However, should the IA become a community platform, the group of collaborators would also have to be taken into consideration. Accordingly, further analysis of the collaborators target group would be necessary in order to validate the problem and their needs. In addition, target groups and customer segments other than students and

collaborators, i.e. professionals, could be of relevance to the IA and should therefore be studied. Due to the limitations in time and scope of this research, this was not possible.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Script

	Question	Answer
Intro	Hi, thanks for joining The Future We Want global survey! Our goal is to identify together what's working and what's missing in the education system to build a more just, inclusive and sustainable future. Are you in?	- yes - no
	This will take 5-7 minutes.	
	In this survey, we will ask a bit about: - you - your university journey - your experience and interests around impact, sustainability and social justice Ready?	- yes - no
Demographics	How can I name you? (name, nickname)	free answer
	How did you find this survey?	- Association - Social media - Other
	How old are you?	- 14-18 - 19-25 - 26-30 - 30-40 - 40+
	What's your country of origin?	free answer
	Do you have any other nationality?	- yes - no
	What's your current primary location?	free answer

	You are a...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student - Recent Graduate - Other
	What is your current school or university?	free answer
	Did you attend any other university?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - yes - no
Sensibility for topic	<p>What do you think of the following statement?</p> <p>"The Future we want is sustainable, regenerative and inclusive for 100% of humanity and cultures."</p>	Scale 1-5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest)
	<p>You suddenly have a magic wand and you can choose the next 3 global priorities to solve.</p> <p>What would they be?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate Change - Sexual & Gender Equality - Racial and Cultural Equality - Healthcare - New Economic Models - Nature & Animal preservation - Access to Food and Water - Quality Education - Financial Inclusion - Responsible Production & Consumption
	How important is it that these topics get included in higher education?	Scale 1-5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest)
	What does your university offer around Environmental and Social Impact?	- Courses/seminars...
	What do you think the University could improve? Please be as specific as you can	free answer

Knowledge and interest in topic	How much do you know about the following topics? - Social inclusion and Wellbeing - Development and New Economies - Environmental Sustainability - Human Rights and Social Justice	Scale 1-5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest)
	Are your studies or career focused on any of these areas?	- No - Social inclusion and Wellbeing - Development and New Economies - Environmental Sustainability - Human Rights and Social Justice" - Other
	Do you also follow, research or look for content around Social and Environmental Impact on your own?	- Yes I do - Not really
	What topics are you most interested in?	- Climate Change - Sexual & Gender Equality - Racial and Cultural Equality - Healthcare - New Economic Models - Nature & Animal preservation - Access to Food and Water - Quality Education - Financial Inclusion - Responsible Production & Consumption
Habits/Behavior	What are the main sources or channels you use?	- Instagram - Facebook - Online courses - Newsletter - Newspaper - Websites/Blogs - Podcast - Books - Other

	What are your favourite channels or sources? You can name your top 3, or as many as you like	free answer
	The channels or sources you use are...	- All free - cost - both
Preferences for offer shaping	I prefer contents that are...	- Engaging and entertaining - Technical and informative - Actionable and applicable in real life
	I prefer content that is...	- 1 (free and accessible) - 5 (paid and curated)
	When it comes to learning about topics you are passionate about, what's your favourite format?	- Audio - Written and Visual - Video - Other
	You prefer video content that is...	- Under 10 minutes - 10-20 minutes - 20-30 minutes - 30 minutes or longer
	You prefer sessions with teachers or experts that are...	- Single speaker talks - Panels/interviews - Open Q&A Sessions
	When it comes to written and visual content you prefer....	- A book - An online article - An infographic
Price sensitivity	For curated content on Impact that matches all your preferences, how much would you pay?	- Nothing, it should be FREE - A coffee per month - A beer per month - A pizza per month - A good bottle of wine per month
	Personally, do you feel a desire to grow and learn more on Social and Environmental Impact to be part of this shift?	- yes - no

	What is your "why" or personal drive?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal interest - A sense of responsibility - Develop a career - Other
	To grow into Social Impact and Sustainability, right now you want to....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learn more - Taking direct action
Past Experiences	In terms of action or volunteering, are you already involved with any Environmental and Social Impact initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - yes - no
	If yes, which...	free answer
Future Outlook	As for today, what would you say is your dream job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneur - Consultant - Employee - Researcher - Social Worker - Public sector/ Policy - No idea yet!
	In which sector/industry would you want to work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finance - Science - Healthcare - Technology - Government/ PA - Law - Media - Energy - Other - I don't know
Email address	We'd like to send you this impact report. What email is best to reach you at?	Insert email address

Appendix 2: Secondary Data Sources

Type of Source	Publisher	Author	Publishing Date	URL	Date of Access
Website	SDG Academy	n/a	n/a	https://sdgacademy.org	12/2020
Website	Coursera Inc.	n/a	n/a	https://de.coursera	1/2021

				org	
Website	edX Inc.	n/a	n/a	https://www.edx.org	12/2020
Website	Udemy, Inc.	n/a	n/a	https://www.udemy.com	12/2020
Article	Medium	EAD Courses	09/25/2019	https://medium.com/@EADCourses/udemy-vs-coursera-vs-udacity-vs-edx-online-courses-176b13f4bb68	1/2021
Article	Insider Inc.	Connie Chen	12/18/2020	https://www.businessinsider.com/online-learning-platform-comparison-udemy-skillshare-lynda-coursera#coursera-1	1/2021
Article	World Bank Group	n/a	10/05/2017	https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation	01/2021