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The Impact of Modern Marketing on Quality of Life from the Perspective of Sustainability

Oddziaływanie współczesnego marketingu na jakość życia w perspektywie zrównoważonego rozwoju

Eva Pechočiaková Svitáčová

Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7201-6691> • eva.svitacova@uniag.sk

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Abstract

Quality of life is linked to consumption, and consumerism is developing in a way that contradicts the paradigm of sustainability. Based on a critical review of literature, the aim of this article is to point out that modern marketing leads to mass consumption and that quality of life is under pressure from consumption, which threatens sustainable development. The article is based on theoretical research, the results of which show that the growth in consumption promoted by contemporary marketing cannot in itself ensure a good quality of life. Moreover, some forms of modern marketing manipulate consumers and restrict their freedom. At the same time, satisfaction of needs is achieved through excessive use of natural resources and at the cost of increasing waste. Given that the purpose of any marketing activity should be people and their quality of life, the article justifies the need for a reform of modern marketing. This would ensure that it focuses primarily on people's needs and that the relationship between consumption and quality of life is balanced. The humanistic approaches established to marketing should be implemented in marketing practice in the interest of sustainable quality of life.

Keywords

modern marketing, quality of life, consumption, reform, humanistic marketing, SDG 12

Streszczenie

Jakość życia jest ściśle powiązana z poziomem konsumpcji, a konsumpcjonizm rozwija się w sposób sprzeczny z paradygmatem zrównoważonego rozwoju. Celem niniejszego artykułu, opartego na krytycznym przeglądzie literatury, jest wykazanie, że współczesny marketing sprzyja masowej konsumpcji, zaś jakość życia znajduje się pod rosnącą presją mechanizmów

konsumpcyjnych, co stanowi zagrożenie dla zrównoważonego rozwoju. Artykuł opiera się na analizach teoretycznych, których wyniki pokazują, że wzrost konsumpcji promowany przez współczesny marketing nie jest w stanie sam w sobie zapewnić wysokiej jakości życia. Co więcej, niektóre formy współczesnego marketingu mają charakter manipulacyjny i prowadzą do ograniczania autonomii konsumentów. Jednocześnie zaspokajanie potrzeb odbywa się poprzez nadmierną eksploatację zasobów naturalnych oraz kosztem narastającej ilości odpadów. Biorąc pod uwagę, że celem wszelkich działań marketingowych powinni być ludzie i ich jakość życia, artykuł uzasadnia potrzebę reformy współczesnego marketingu. Powinna ona zapewnić, że marketing będzie koncentrował się przede wszystkim na rzeczywistych potrzebach ludzi, a relacja między konsumpcją a jakością życia zostanie ukształtowana w sposób zrównoważony. W tym kontekście humanistyczne podejście do marketingu powinny zostać wdrożone w praktyce marketingowej jako warunek osiągnięcia zrównoważonej jakości życia.

Słowa kluczowe

współczesny marketing, jakość życia, konsumpcja, reforma, marketing humanistyczny, Cel Zrównoważonego Rozwoju 12

Introduction

Quality of life has been the focus of people's attention since ancient times, and since the middle of the last century, many scientific disciplines have begun to take a systematic interest in this phenomenon. However, it is indisputable that the economy is an essential factor in ensuring a good quality of life for members of society and even for the advancement of society as a whole. A developed economy is a prerequisite for the development of society and a good quality of life for its members, and consumption, which is supported by the economy, is considered the driving force of society and economy.

Consumption is not only an economic category, but also an important social activity that is increasingly penetrating society's value patterns and influencing the lifestyle of our contemporaries, their quality of life, and the overall quality of life in society. The problem is excessive consumption. It is associated with consumer culture, and an increasing number of people developing a consumerist lifestyle. In addition, excessive consumption is the cause of a great socio-cultural burden on nature, which manifests itself in gradual degradation of the environment and deterioration of the quality of life on Earth. The price of increasing consumption is therefore not low.

It cannot be overlooked that business entities operating in marketing consciously and unconsciously contribute to the promotion of consumption. To succeed in a highly competitive market environment, they strive to stimulate demand and sales as effectively and efficiently as

possible, thereby, to varying degrees, promoting consumption. This is often done without regard for people's real needs or for the impact on their quality of life.

Marketing is used to promote product sales and thus the development of businesses and, ultimately, the entire economy. At the same time, certain aggressive forms of marketing increase the number of consumers, which is unsustainable in the long term. Excessive and often mindless consumption not only prevents people from living well but also brings further risks and threats to future generations, endangering humanity as a whole in the long term.

In order to promote a healthy lifestyle and, overall, a high quality of life for people in the long term, the aim of the study is to critically point out that some forms of modern marketing promote mass consumption and consumerism, which threaten the quality of life of the current generation and future generations. At the same time, it points out that contemporary marketing is increasingly deviating from its original role, defined at the time when it began to develop, and justifies the need to reform it so that it promotes a good quality of life for people from a sustainability perspective. At the same time, the study outlines some sustainable alternatives to marketing that could support the quality of life of this generation and future generations.

1. Materials and Methods

The study is based on a reflection of the situation on the market and in society, where consumer culture is developing and people's lifestyles and quality of life are increasingly linked to consumption. It points to the influence of modern marketing on increasing consumption and, overall, its impact on the quality of life of people – consumers.

We assume that consumption is an important part of quality of life, representing the material aspect of quality of life, but at the same time we argue that growth in consumption alone cannot guarantee people a good quality of life.

Given that certain aggressive forms of marketing in particular are an obstacle to quality of life from a sustainability perspective, we are seeking answers to the question of how to reform marketing so that it fulfils its original role, supports sustainable quality of life, and ensures that the relationship between consumption and quality of life is balanced. We assume that current marketing promotes consumption and consumer culture to such an extent that quality of life has come under pressure from consumption, which has serious negative consequences for people. Although the reform of current marketing is justified, we assume that it may be hindered by the focus of business entities primarily on economic profit.

The text is a critical overview study based on theoretical research. It systematizes and connects knowledge from several scientific fields (marketing, sociology, philosophy, cultural studies, etc.). In addition to a critical analysis of certain forms of modern marketing and their impact on quality of life from the perspective of sustainability, the study is based on logical methods, particularly the method of comparison. It highlights the values that modern marketing should respect in the interests of quality of life and sustainability.

We view quality of life as a phenomenon associated with personal development and point out that quality of life in today's consumer society is influenced by consumption, thanks to the economy and especially marketing, whose aim is achieving business goals and satisfying customers at the same time. We draw on P. Kotler, the father of modern marketing, as well as other economists, sociologists, and philosophers who point out that when choosing marketing strategies, tools, etc., the customer should come first.

We point out that this is not yet the case and that, especially in developed countries, consumption patterns are shifting towards "consumerism" and quality of life is coming under pressure from consumption, regardless of the need to ensure sustainable development. In our critical literature review, we rely primarily on the works of some well-known sociologists, philosophers, and economists (G. Lipovetsky, Z. Bauman, S. Latouche, and others) on consumer society, mass consumption, and contemporary marketing. We also draw on some of the works of economist J. K. Galbraith (1967), who used the term "quality of life" in his response to the growth of human needs and mass consumption, self-serving consumption in a "society of abundance," and was among the first to point out the dangers associated with the artificial creation of needs and artificial demand.

The next part of the study focuses on aggressive forms of marketing, which are aimed primarily at increasing sales and profits for businesses, and only then on satisfying the real needs of customers. We point out their impact on changes in consumption patterns, changes in people's lifestyles, and ultimately on how they affect the quality of life of our contemporaries, while also suggesting the consequences of modern marketing for future generations.

Quality of life and other phenomena are explained throughout the text, and we also point out that it is necessary to distinguish between the needs, desires, and wishes of people – consumers – and demand. Particular attention is paid to so-called marketing myopia, which is an obstacle to fulfilling the original goal for which marketing was created, which also implies the need to reform modern marketing.

In conclusion, humanistic approaches in modern marketing and a new concept – humanistic marketing – are highlighted, which focus on improving people's quality of life in the long term.

In order to promote healthy lifestyles and, overall, a high quality of life for people in the long term, the aim of the study is to critically point out that some forms of modern marketing promote mass consumption and consumerism, which threaten the quality of life of the current and future generations. At the same time, it points out that contemporary marketing is increasingly deviating from its original role, defined at the time when it began to develop, and justifies the need to reform it so that it promotes a high quality of life for people from a sustainability perspective. At the same time, the study outlines some sustainable alternatives to marketing that could support the quality of life of this and future generations.

2. Quality of Life under the Pressure of Consumption

The phenomenon of the “quality of life” emerged in connection with the need to preserve human life and ensure a certain quality of life for people. This phenomenon is the focus of attention of several scientific disciplines, and since it is a multidimensional phenomenon, we observe inconsistency in research on quality of life.

In general, however, quality of life can be defined as the qualitative parameters of human life, lifestyle, standard of living, and living conditions in a given society (Encyklopédie Sociologického ústavu AV ČR 2018). Its components mainly include the needs, living conditions, consumption, and value orientations of the population (Laluha 2004).

Given the multidimensional nature of the issue, we find not only diverse opinions on the definition of quality of life, but also a number of different methodological and applicational approaches to its study (Aristotle 2009; Nussbaum and Sen 1993; Búzik and Zeman 2021; Smolková 2023).

In philosophy and ethics, quality of life also relates to the concepts of eudaimonia¹, human well-being², and also to the concept of the good life, which cannot be precisely defined, is not uniformly interpreted, but is mostly associated with quality of life. Quality of life and the good life are sometimes used as synonyms (Smolková 2023). The idea of a “good life” includes

¹ The essence of the concept of eudaimonia, which is still relevant today, is “to live an active life in order to fulfil our potential, develop our abilities and talents” (Smolková 2023, 31).

² The concept of well-being has traditionally been associated with human health. However, well-being differs from welfare, which is linked to consumption.

psychological, ethical, and aesthetic priorities that stem from ideas about the world and humanity, but in Western culture, a good life mainly refers to the individual and is associated with material values. Quality of life is also about needs and their satisfaction, and thus also about consumption.³ According to P. Singer, “the prevailing idea of a good life today depends on ever-increasing levels of consumption” (Singer 2025, 13).

As early as the 1960s, economist Galbraith (1967) used the term “quality of life” as a counterbalance to the unambiguous consumer orientation of American society, or as a counterbalance to mass consumption in the affluent, post-industrial society of the time. He also pointed to the artificial creation of needs, which leads to consumerism and at the same time curtails human freedom. A few years later, he described mass consumption as consumption for its own sake, which cannot provide people with a good quality of life and does not allow them to develop (Galbraith 2019).

Although consumption is an important part of quality of life and represents the material aspect of quality of life, growing consumption or consumption can bring people a higher standard of living, but that does not mean that it also guarantees them a good quality of life.

It cannot be denied that consumption is a social phenomenon and that it plays an irreplaceable role in relation to quality of life. It is linked to the material aspect of fulfilling human needs and desires. Through consumption, basic needs, including artificial ones, so-called developmental needs⁴ of people, as well as their demands⁵, are satisfied. They enable the development of the economy and consumer society.

It is not only measured by wealth or income, but nowadays also by various sensations, experiences, and the like, which are becoming desirable commodities⁶ in a consumer society. This is also thanks to marketing, which “encompasses all the activities that a company undertakes to promote and facilitate the buying or selling of its products or services” (Twin 2025).⁷ According to its leading representatives, the main task of marketing is to identify human

³ From a sociological point of view, consumption in the broadest sense of the word is a process or result of satisfying needs that involves the use, depletion, or “consumption” of material and non-material goods (Encyklopédie Sociologického ústavu AV ČR 2020). Consumption is a means to achieve something, but when it becomes the goal of life, it is referred to as *consumerism*.

⁴ In a consumer society, even artificial or so-called developmental needs, which some people consider to be their own, are satisfied. Although in fact it is market needs.

⁵ A requirement is a perceived human need that expresses a subjective state.

⁶ “Quality of life” and “well-being” are measured, for example, by the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

⁷ This is one of the latest definitions of marketing, the essence of which is not uniformly defined (see more in: Lesáková 2006).

and social needs and, at the same time, satisfy them (Kotler and Keller 2012; Drucker 1957). In today's society, also referred to as "consumerist," marketing accelerates unjustified consumption, even at the cost of overexploiting and damaging natural resources and the environment, but also at the cost of damaging human resources, although the negative consequences may not be immediately evident. A consumer culture is developing, and with it "consumerism,"⁸ a consumerist lifestyle or way of life. It is based on the belief that the consumption of goods and services leads to happiness and improves the quality of life. This leads to excessive consumption, which not only fails to guarantee a better quality of life for people, but also poses a serious threat to the environment and sustainable development. It can be agreed that it is becoming a serious threat not only to our contemporaries but also to future generations (see more in Markauskaitė and Rūtelionė 2022; Binnuri and Rajanikanth 2024).

It is associated with the idea that the meaning of human life is to consume and is based on a subjective and objective increase in consumption, on the accumulation of money and goods that are supposed to ensure personal satisfaction, happiness, and the like for individuals.

The negative effects of excessive consumption and consumerism on the quality of life of contemporary people are pointed out by S. Latouche, G. Lipovetsky, Z. Bauman, N. Klein, and many others who point out the negative effects of excessive consumption and consumerism on the quality of life of contemporary people. For example, according to Lipovetsky (2007), people's excessive consumption is only a paradoxical happiness, and the entire hyper-consumerist society⁹ is a civilization of paradoxical happiness. Hyper-consumerism focused on material well-being can be associated with anxiety, unrest, and frustration, but also with a feeling of personal and social threat.

Consumption satisfies not only people's needs, but also their desires, which are shaped by society, largely through marketing, although, according to Kotler, the father of modern marketing, the main goal of marketing should always be the customer. Marketing should identify people's human and social needs and satisfy them effectively.

The problem is that the main motivation for business entities in the field of marketing is profit, and they are only slightly aware that their main task is to satisfy people's needs and desires. However, they are forced to promote demand by market forces and, to some extent, by

⁸ Consumerism is also understood as an active ideology, according to which the meaning of life lies in buying things and "pre-packaged experiences" (Bocock 1997, 50).

⁹ G. Lipovetsky presented hyper-consumer society as a society of mass consumption that is not subject to any norms, where consumption based on experiences or feelings, on the pursuit of pleasure and new experiences, is rampant (Lipovetsky 2013).

the development of modern technologies and technological innovations, which lead to overproduction of goods. This is one of the main reasons why many consumers become consumerist.

Artificially created demand has a significant impact on consumers' lifestyles, and also on their quality of life and on ensuring a good quality of life for humanity from a sustainability perspective (see more also in Mravcová and Berčík 2019). Similarly, their satisfaction comes at the expense of the over-exploitation or unnecessary use of resources, including non-renewable ones, and the accumulation of waste that nature cannot absorb. One of the signals is the ecological footprint, which points to the world's limited ability to regenerate resources and absorb waste. It thus addresses the question of whether human consumption is within the planet's regenerative capacity (see more, for example in WWF 2019; European Commission n.d.).

Moreover, the deteriorating quality of life from the perspective of sustainability has been highlighted for several decades by authors of theoretical and empirical studies, as well as by various programmes, resolutions, and other documents.¹⁰

As J. Muncy and J. Eastman (1998) noted, increased consumption may indicate economic growth and prosperity, but materialism and *conspicuous consumption*¹¹ are harmful not only to individual well-being but also to sustainability. Modern marketing, which currently relies on modern technologies, plays a significant role in this. Thanks to them, a *virtual quality of life*¹² is becoming a model for people, especially younger ones. It is established using advanced technology, based on the metaverse. Its purpose is to evoke interactive experiences and desires for products in consumers, but mainly for experiences. As stated: "These virtual reality experiences aim to reinvent the consumption experience" (Leveau and Camus 2022, 1329). However, this is usually a short-term benefit in the form of excitement, relaxation, or a pleasant feeling from illusory ideas, etc. In the real world, this can have serious consequences for people.

¹⁰ For more details, see, for example, Hardin 1974; Keller 2005; Meadows et al. 1972; and others. This is also confirmed by the ecological footprint, a method of measuring the impact of human activities on planet Earth (Myclimate n.d.). For sustainability, or sustainable development, see more in: World Commission on Environment and Development 1987.

¹¹ According to Th. Veblen (2009), conspicuous consumption is "conspicuous" in terms of social status. It is "highly visible consumption". People use it to demonstrate their distinctiveness.

¹² Adjective "virtual" mean not physically existing as such but created by computer technology (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.).

We agree with I. Laluha and P. Dinuš, who, in their dialogue on civilizations at a crossroads, state that “So far, quality of life has been under the dominant pressure of consumption, and there is a real danger that the economy and consumption will create (or are already creating) a virtual quality of life, which they impose as a desirable model of consumption on consumers – manipulated citizens” (Hohoš et al. 2018, 13).

3. Modern Marketing Versus Sustainable Quality of Life¹³

Currently, in the 21st century, not only part of the public but also some studies point to the harmful impact of marketing on people's quality of life. As A. V. Abela (2006) noted, marketing tactics help spread consumer culture, and so we cannot ignore the striking parallels between the growth of consumerism and the development of modern marketing. We would add that we cannot ignore the environmental problems associated with the development of marketing aimed at promoting consumption.

Of course, not all forms of marketing promote mass consumption or consumption for its own sake, focusing solely on stimulating demand. Some forms of modern marketing genuinely help consumers to purchase products that improve their health and quality of life. For example, so-called social marketing focuses on perceiving and identifying people's needs and influencing consumer demand and behaviour so that they reach for products that help them improve their health, which can also strengthen their financial well-being, the well-being of the community, but also of those who help protect the environment, etc. (Lee and Kotler 2012). An example of this type of responsible marketing is healthcare marketing, which is based on humanistic approaches and an allocentric perspective (Baiocchi 2023), and is focused not only on economic values but also on human values (such as dignity, solidarity, friendship, beauty, justice, etc.). Consumers are perceived as individuals with both functional and emotional needs.

This is a type of social marketing that plays an important role, for example, in the prevention of certain diseases. It encourages people to engage in appropriate physical activity, eat a healthy diet, and take responsibility for their own health.

The priority for many marketing experts in the economy is, however, to stimulate demand. In particular, they realize that in order to increase demand, they cannot rely solely on

¹³ The abbreviated term for “*sustainable quality of life*” (SQoL) is sustainability. Sustainability refers to the requirement to meet the needs of the present without compromising the quality of life of future generations (Robeyns and van der Veen 2007).

We incline to the view that “Accordingly, ‘sustainability’ in our preliminary definition of SQoL means that all people should be able to live a good life, both now and in the future” (Wiesli et al. 2021).

consumers who naturally or automatically reach for most products because they know and need them. As Galbraith noted, “No one needs to remind a hungry person that he needs food” (Galbraith 1967, 157). According to him, the fact that needs can be created by advertising and directed by sales techniques indicates that these needs are not very urgent. At the same time, we believe that the role of marketing should not be to create new needs, but rather to stimulate impulses that already exist in consumers and guide them toward specific behaviours that would create demand.

It depends on marketing communication whether it focuses on identifying consumer needs, helping to satisfy those needs, or whether its goal is to stimulate incentives, or whether it focuses more on influencing and manipulating consumer behaviour in order to influence demand and sales of products with the highest possible profit. We believe that marketing communication focuses mainly on influencing demand or promoting sales in the interest of profit and better market positioning of individual business entities. People’s needs and desires are thus secondary. This is known as “marketing myopia.” Some companies, businesses, and other commercial entities, even entire industries, are declining because they focus only on short-term goals and strategies that they consider important and are not customer oriented. These are *marketing-myopic*¹⁴ companies that are obsessed with selling products or services instead of investing in improving them to better serve their customers. Th. Levitt (1960) blames management in particular for this.

Modern marketing often promises consumers shopping pleasures and consumer experiences and can bring them mental stimulation and temporary satisfaction. In the long run, their use usually does not allow them to lead a good or quality life. On the contrary, other problems arise. A serious problem is that marketing can deprive some consumers of their sovereignty. They become mere pawns, manipulated by producers and entities in the advertising sector of the economy. This occurs in hyper-consumerist society, which is characterized by a “feverish pursuit of constant change,” “emotional consumerism,” or “hedonistic consumerism,” which focuses on evoking pleasure and affective or sensual experiences, etc. In the interest of profit and increasing economic performance, consumers are manipulated.

In the interest of profit and increasing economic performance, consumers are provided with information about revolutionary new product innovations, while their appearance, use, and the like are only minimally improved. *Or, thanks to the programmed obsolescence of products,*

¹⁴ In his 1960 article “Marketing Myopia,” Levitt pointed out a problem in business: prioritizing a short-sighted focus on product sales over a broader view of what customers really want (Levitt 1960).

shortening their shelf life or functionality, which is already considered during their manufacture. Another problem is marketing that promotes *eco-consumption*. Such marketing appeals to the protection of nature and the environment to promote the sale of so-called green products. We can agree that “Under the label of respect for the environment, economic competition can continue, the transformation of the biosphere into the anthroposphere, the ‘will to will’ repainted green” (Levitt 1960, 297). The economy cannot expand the anthroposphere at the expense of the ecosphere, and along with respect for the environment, “respect for life” must be promoted¹⁵.

It cannot be denied that we are currently seeing some positive initiatives in marketing, such as the purchase of alternative products, organic food, ethical financing, Fair Trade, and so on. As mentioned above, on the other hand, it is a fact that some products are labelled “eco” on the market simply to make them attractive to customers. Many of them are truly deceived and become eco-consumers. Some may even feel that they are behaving responsibly by making “eco-purchases.” For example, they may fall for greenwashing¹⁶, which is not a type of green marketing.

Besides eco-marketing, there are some other types of modern marketing on the market (e.g., Ambush marketing, Aroma marketing, Influencer marketing, Neuromarketing, etc.)¹⁷, which are new and attractive, but are also aimed at increasing consumption. To promote sales, they focus more on encouraging consumers to buy than on identifying and satisfying human and social needs. The goal is to identify consumers' emotional “buttons,” uncover hidden motives and preferences, and thereby enable marketers to gather information for creating sales campaigns that generate profits for them and other business entities.

According to Lipovetsky (2007), this is “sensory and experiential marketing” that reinforces so-called *emotional consumerism*. Or N. Klein (2012) referred to such marketing as Cool marketing¹⁸. It mainly affects the senses and emotions, bringing a sensual and emotional adventure, emotional release.

¹⁵ A. Schweitzer (1993) and similarly H. Skolimowski (1999) consider *respect for life* in general to be a fundamental value and a primary value for sustainable development.

¹⁶ Greenwashing is misleading, untrue, or unsupported statements about a product, brand or company's environmental or climate benefits. (Ecojustice 2024).

¹⁷ For example, neuromarketing involves examining consumers' emotional and cognitive responses and understanding why customers prefer certain products or how they respond to specific visual and communication elements (Berčík et al. 2025).

¹⁸ According to the author, “cool” refers to something that is characterized by originality, freshness, and relaxation. It can be clothing, music, or even behaviour.

In these and similar types of modern marketing, the emphasis is primarily on *empirical motivation* based on experience. It is relying on sensory feelings and perceptions, but also on observation. It is often on this basis that consumers make their decisions. When making a purchase decision, reason takes a back seat, even though rational knowledge and critical thinking would allow us to consider and reveal, or realize, for example, that the products offered do not meet the real needs of the consumer and may be harmful to health or cause other problems.

Considerable attention is currently focused on online marketing or rather marketing in the metaverse. Here, advanced technology based on the *metaverse*¹⁹ can be used to offer consumers a *virtual quality of life*. The metaverse is a specific type of artifact, a tool with which space is designed not only according to how designers want the world to look, but also according to what they want to achieve (Tirinzoni 2025). Its purpose is to evoke interactive experiences and desires for products in consumers, but above all, for experiences. Some studies emphasize the positive effects of virtual reality on purchasing decisions and willingness to pay (see, for example, Wen and Leung 2021; Hilken et al. 2022). “These virtual reality experiences aim to reinvent the consumption experience” (Leveau and Camus 2022, 1329). However, this is mostly a short-term benefit in the form of excitement, relaxation, or a pleasant feeling from illusory ideas, etc. At the same time, creating a world of illusions, detaching oneself from reality, and building false ideas, etc., can lead to anxiety, sadness, trauma, intolerance, hate speech, and so on in real life. Every fantasy, even the most terrifying, can become reality in the metaverse (Yalalov 2023; Kumar 2024).

The use of advanced technologies is of great importance mainly for modern types of marketing, such as digital marketing, online marketing, influencer marketing, etc. They reach a large part of the population and allow consumers to find themselves in a virtual space. These and other types of marketing can use modern technologies to provide consumers with a spectacular experience by appealing to their human senses. However, as mentioned above, it is precisely through the metaverse, which “projects around itself a script that can take possession of each onlooker and force them to play a role in the story by making only changes” (Gibson 1986), that consumers can be manipulated (see more in, Rich 1994; Lipovetsky 2007 and others).

¹⁹ From a technical point of view, the Metaverse is a new generation of internet applications that aim to integrate interactive experiences offered by technologies with economic solutions to create a replica of the real world. The key concepts that define and form the Metaverse are the “avatars” and “augmented reality” (Jora et al. 2022).

This also confirms that despite many advantages, some modern types of marketing can be described as *aggressive*²⁰. They are able to subjugate certain groups of consumers or manipulate them. One of the problems is that aggressive marketing tools can also restrict consumer freedom. For example, when making decisions in a virtual environment, consumers are unable to consider how objects, experiences, etc. will manifest themselves or be used in the real world. As a result, they sometimes purchase products that not only fail to satisfy their requirements and desires but may also negatively affect their understanding of the world, their value orientation, and so on, even though there is currently an increasing demand for the use of virtual environments to be based on legal and ethical regulation.

Some research also focuses on the impact of marketing tools on consumer behaviour. For example, the influence of marketing tools on consumer behaviour is the focus of research project *APVV-23-0244: The Use of Consumer Neuroscience and Innovative Research Solutions in the Sensory Perception of Audio Stimuli and Its Application in Production, Commerce and Services*. Its aim is to examine the effects of audio and subliminal stimuli in selected spaces on the behaviour of visitors, customers and employees.

It would also be possible to take another, mainly critical view of certain types or forms of modern aggressive marketing which, by encouraging consumption, harm not only consumers but also the environment and nature, and thus ultimately constitute an obstacle to sustainability. They are an obstacle not only to the formation of a *sustainable lifestyle*²¹ for individuals, but also to sustainable living in general. We consider such business practices in marketing to be unsustainable.

One of the biggest problems with the above types of marketing is their *lack of credibility*. Given the accumulation of fraud, fake reviews, and unfair practices, many consumers distrust modern marketing.

When creating marketing tools to support demand, marketing experts use mainly empirical motivation, but at the same time, we also see rational, profit-oriented motivation. Modern marketing deals with customers, but mainly so that they pay for the products it promotes, not so that their real needs and desires are best recognized and subsequently satisfied.

²⁰ Aggressiveness [lat.] – offensiveness, explosiveness, conquest; psychol. tendency to attack, assault things and people ruthlessly asserting one's interests and goals (Beliana, Slovenská akadémia vied 1999). Currently, some even understand marketing as an aggressive sales policy.

²¹ Sustainable Lifestyles are considered as ways of living, social behaviours etc., that minimize environmental degradation while supporting equitable socio-economic development and better quality of life for all (UN Environment Programme n.d.).

Supporting consumption through modern marketing must be done not only in the interests of economic development, but above all in the interests of people – consumers, members of this generation and future generations. After all, the economy is supposed to serve them. The role of marketing, and ultimately the entire economy, is to create conditions for satisfying the needs and improving the sustainable quality of life of members of a given generation without undermining the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs and lead a good life.

4. Humanistic Approaches in Marketing as Sustainable Alternatives

Along with criticism of modern marketing, especially aggressive marketing, we cannot overlook certain cases where contemporary marketing promotes a better quality of life, more specifically a healthier life, a healthy lifestyle, etc. Some positive initiatives in marketing have already been mentioned above, but there are others that help consumers purchase products that improve their health in some way and help them form a healthy lifestyle. For example, so-called social marketing focuses on perceiving and identifying people's needs and influencing consumer demand and behaviour so that they reach for products that improve their health, which can also strengthen their financial well-being, and community well-being, but also those that help protect the environment, etc. (see more in, Lee and Kotler 2012). One example of this type of responsible marketing is healthcare marketing, which is based on humanistic approaches and an allocentric perspective focused not only on economic values but also on human values (such as dignity, solidarity, friendship, beauty, justice, etc.). It plays an important role, for example, in the prevention of certain diseases, among others, by encouraging people to engage in appropriate physical activity, eat a healthy diet, and take responsibility for their own health in general. It can thus speed up and improve the quality of a person's treatment, reduce their losses as a patient by lowering the costs of treatment processes, or eliminate their time and financial losses due to waiting, traveling, long-term incapacity for work, etc. (Hanuláková 2013).

Although such examples do not overshadow the harmful effects and consequences of certain forms of marketing, especially aggressive marketing targeting people, society, and the environment, new marketing concepts are gradually emerging that do not focus on people as a source of income but on their needs and are based on values that enable sustainable development.

Discussions are gradually developing around *humanistic marketing*, which is a reaction to the transactional and manipulative approach to marketing. For example, B. Wooliscroft (2014, 54) asks the question: “Why are there no people in marketing?” According to him, it is Humanistic Marketing “the activity (undertaken by people), set of institutions (made up of people), and processes (that people do) for creating (by people), communicating (through people), delivering (via people) and exchanging (between people) offerings that have value for people.”

The authors R. Varey and M. Pirson (2014) are aware of the damage associated with the drive to produce and sell more and more, and they see humanistic marketing as the answer to the current growing megatrend that calls for a rethinking of marketing. Mainly, the desires and wishes of consumers that are often evoked by modern marketing, and so we agree with the view that negative attitudes towards marketing are often based on the distinction between people’s needs and artificially created desires (Dierksmeier 2013). If marketing serves real human needs, it helps to satisfy those needs and is generally perceived positively. Marketing that creates desires in people and then focuses on satisfying their so-called developmental needs meets with less approval among consumers.

According to Varey and Pirson (2013), humanistic marketing should focus on the well-being that comes from satisfying needs/interests rather than on the short-term satisfaction of desires. It should also focus on effectively and efficiently ensuring healthy prosperity.

However, Kotler had already considered humanistic marketing long before the above-mentioned authors: “Humanistic marketing is a management philosophy that takes as its central objective the earning of profit through the enhancement of the customer’s long-run well-being (Kotler 1987, 272). He proposed and justified the need to think beyond the marketing concept – humanistic marketing must be people-oriented, preserve human dignity, and at the same time increase human well-being far beyond the limits of consumer value. Along with Kotler, other authors agree that all marketing should be based on humanistic values such as altruism, empathy, justice, respect, trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, care, intelligence, beauty, and so on (Kotler et al. 2021).

The holistic approach of companies to marketing in humanistic marketing goes beyond efficiency or the limits of consumer value and focuses on human values and human approaches. It focuses on consumers who are not seen merely as a source of income or a means of making a profit. It promotes the sale of products that enable them to lead a quality life, develop, and progress. Humanistic marketing is also becoming a tool for competitiveness by directly or

indirectly focusing on solving social problems while respecting values such as truth, human rights, etc. and it focuses on sustainably improving the quality of life.

Humanistic approaches are the basis for types of marketing such as social marketing, which emerged in the early 1970s, but also Human to *Human Marketing* (H2H), which is considered the New Paradigm, as well as *Well-being marketing*, which is considered a business philosophy, and *Quality-of-Life (QOL) Marketing* (Kotler and Zaltman 1971; Kotler et al. 2021; Sirgy and Dong-Jin 2008; Sirgy 2001). They promise responsible business in the interest of improving quality of life, although their implementation in practice is not at all easy under current conditions. In this context, the introduction of certain ethical programs (e.g., codes of ethics, ethical round tables, ethical workshops, etc.) could help, as they would support the protection of human and environmental values in marketing practice.

Conclusion

Based on a literature review and critical analysis, we have pointed out that although needs are an important part of quality of life, the problem is that quality of life is currently under pressure from consumption, which threatens sustainable quality of life.

The growth in consumption, which is currently supported by modern marketing, is certainly not a guarantee of a good quality of life for people from a sustainability perspective. Certain forms of modern marketing play a significant role in the fact that quality of life has come under pressure from consumption. They promote mass consumption, which is associated with the short-term satisfaction of needs, often at the cost of overexploiting natural resources and damaging the environment, which threatens sustainable quality of life.

Business practices in marketing that are not primarily motivated by the consumer and their well-being, and that pay only minimal attention to the finiteness of the resources upon which life depends, are inherently unsustainable. This view is shared by many leading thinkers in the social and human sciences, as well as some marketing experts. Certain forms of modern marketing in particular are an obstacle to a sustainable lifestyle and sustainable living in general and should be reformed and transformed to meet people's needs and desires and to solve key human problems. In such a way that they respect human dignity and consumer sovereignty, while promoting a sustainable lifestyle.

As mentioned earlier, some examples of such marketing practices can already be observed today. However, the vision for a higher quality of life increasingly lies in humanistic approaches to marketing and in humanistic marketing itself. These represent sustainable

alternatives to those modern types of marketing that are often regarded as untrustworthy. What unites them is a single goal: to improve people's quality of life in the long term. The reform of contemporary marketing, especially certain of its forms, can be supported by implementing humanistic approaches into marketing activities, which highlight the need to develop specific procedures and methods for their practical application.

We are of the opinion that those business entities in marketing that rely on humanistic approaches will gradually succeed in gaining the trust of a larger number of consumers, as well as the trust of the public, institutions, and others. This is mainly because they do not treat consumers or other business participants merely as sources of profit, but as dignified human beings and business partners. In the interest of sustainable quality of life, they avoid manipulative techniques that threaten consumer sovereignty and encourage overconsumption, which threatens sustainability.

We can only hope that more business entities will gradually join them. Some, however, remain concerned about whether implementing humanistic approaches in marketing practice will still allow them to increase their profits satisfactorily.

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