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Sustainable development as a competitive advantage of the salon business: The global trend toward environmental responsibility and social responsibility

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Abstract

The article analyzes the integration of sustainable development principles into the strategy of the salon business as a factor in forming long-term competitive advantage. The aim of the work is to identify specific mechanisms and proven practices that allow beauty salons to transform environmental and social responsibility into a tool for increasing consumer loyalty and business efficiency. Within the framework of the research, the tasks include systematizing the theoretical foundations of the sustainable development concept as applied to the beauty industry, summarizing global experience of its practical implementation, and analyzing the economic and reputational effects that arise from it. The practical significance of the study lies in the development of a structured approach to implementing sustainable practices that can be adapted by salons of various scales to strengthen their market positions.

Keywords: Sustainable Development; Salon Business; Competitive Advantage; Corporate Social Responsibility; Environmental Responsibility; Consumer Loyalty; Green Economy

1. Introduction

The modern paradigm of doing business is undergoing systemic changes, shifting the focus from exclusively financial indicators to the integration of environmental and social aspects into the overall strategy. The beauty industry, being sensitive to changes in consumer values, finds itself at the epicenter of this transformation. The growing awareness of clients regarding environmental issues and social inequality forms a new demand for responsible consumption.

In this context, the principles of sustainable development cease to be merely an element of image and become a strategic resource capable of generating sustainable competitive advantages for the salon business. The purpose of this article is to analyze, based on current scientific data and global business cases, how environmental and social responsibility can be systematically integrated into the operational and marketing activities of salons in order to increase their competitiveness.

1.1. Theoretical Foundations of Sustainable Development in the Beauty Industry

The concept of sustainable development, in its classical interpretation, implies meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Applied to the salon business, this is expressed in three interconnected directions: environmental, social, and economic.

The environmental aspect includes minimizing negative impact on the environment through waste management, energy conservation, and the use of resource-saving technologies.

The social aspect covers fair working conditions, investment in staff development, and support for local communities.

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The economic aspect ensures financial stability and profitability, which make it possible to invest in the first two directions.

Studies show that companies that consistently implement such practices demonstrate a higher level of consumer trust and strengthen their market positions [1].

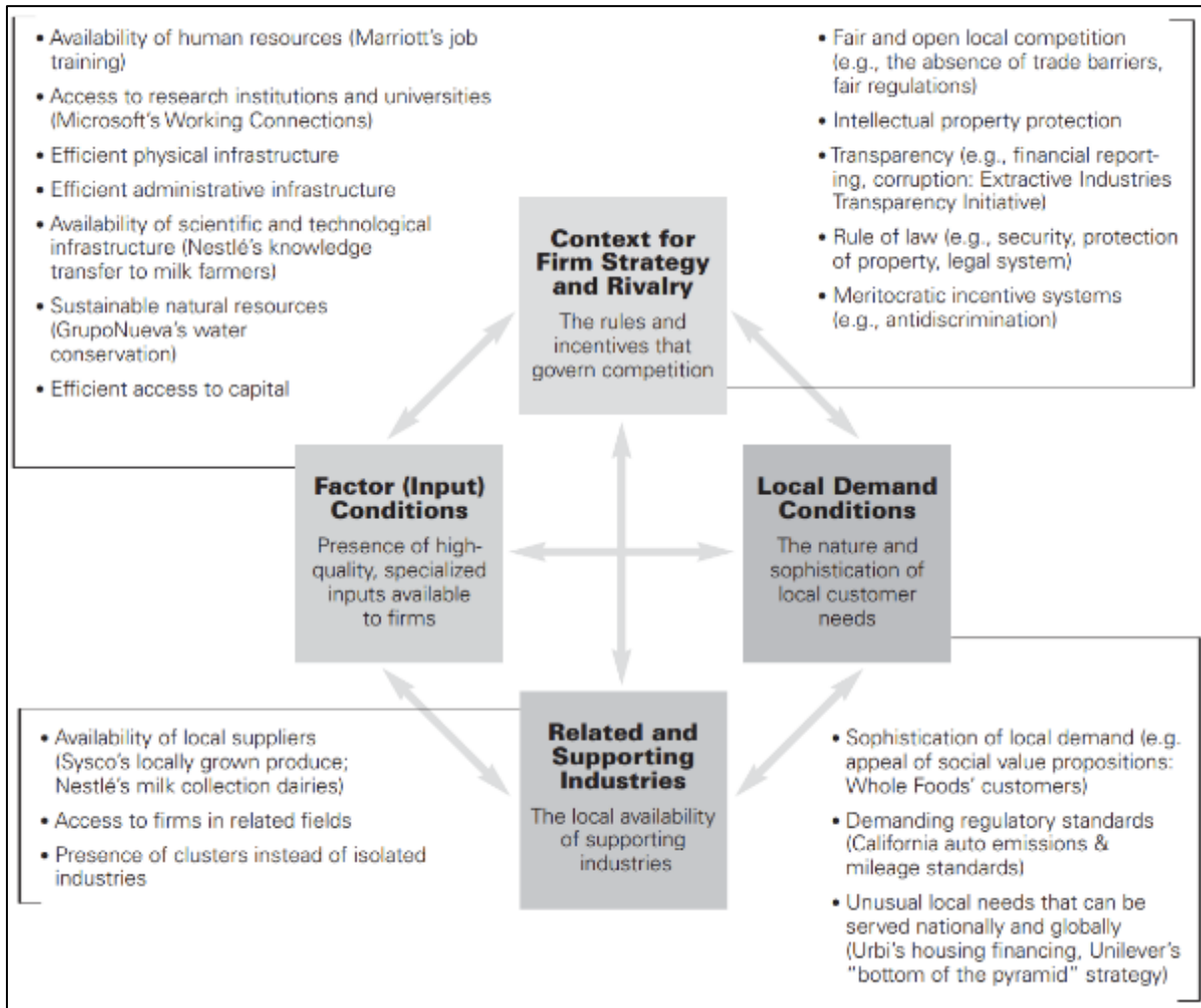


Figure 1 The three pillars of sustainable development in the salon business: environmental, social, and economic dimensions

1.2. Global Practices and Implementation Tools

The practical implementation of sustainability principles in the salon business takes concrete forms. In the environmental sphere, this is expressed through the transition to cosmetics and hair dyes produced using organic and biodegradable components, as well as through active policies aimed at recycling materials. Many international salon networks implement programs for collecting and recycling aluminum foil, plastic packaging, and glass ampoules.

The introduction of water-saving systems and energy-efficient equipment makes it possible to significantly reduce operational costs, demonstrating the synergy of environmental and economic goals.

In the social dimension, the focus shifts toward ensuring fair wages, continuous professional education for specialists, and creating an inclusive environment for clients. Partnerships with local product suppliers not only reduce the carbon footprint associated with logistics but also strengthen ties with the local community, reinforcing the regional economy [2].

1.3. Efficiency Analysis and Consumer Response

The effectiveness of sustainable development strategies is confirmed by market research data. According to global surveys, more than 60% of consumers are willing to pay a premium price for services and products from companies that demonstrate commitment to environmental and social standards [3]. For the salon business, this directly translates into increased customer loyalty and a higher frequency of visits. Visualization of data allows for a clear assessment of the structure of consumer preferences.

A case study of the international salon network “EcoChic Salon”, which fully transitioned to renewable energy sources and biodegradable packaging, showed not only a 45% increase in positive mentions on social media but also a reduction in utility costs by 18% over two years [4]. This indicates that investments in sustainability pay off both in reputational and financial terms.

Another example is the “Green Circle Salons” initiative to recycle up to 95% of salon waste, which has been implemented in more than 1,000 salons in North America and Europe, allowing program participants to position themselves as leaders of the environmental movement in the industry [2].

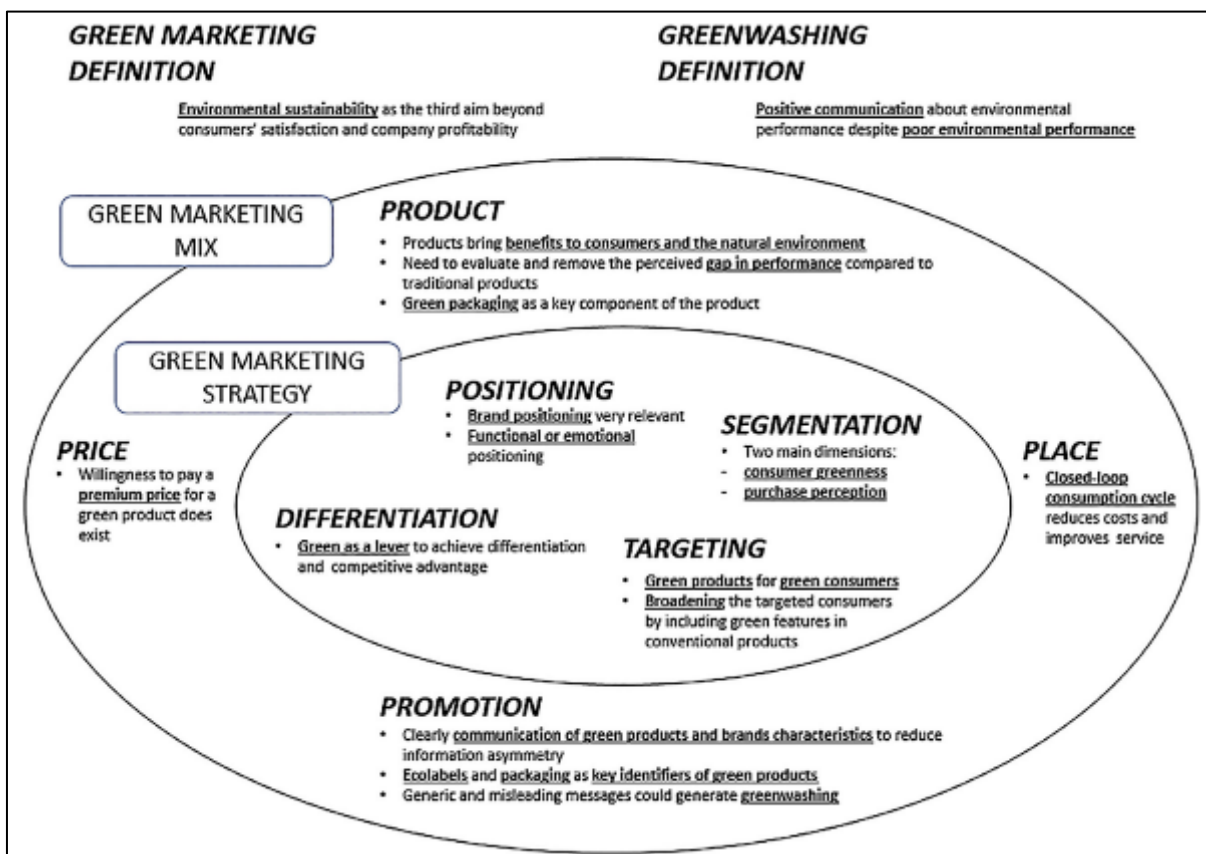


Figure 2 Consumer preferences and willingness to pay for sustainable practices in the salon industry (illustrative summary of survey-based trends)

2. Discussion and Synthesis of the Sustainable Development Model

The conducted analysis makes it possible to synthesize a generalized model of a salon built on the principles of sustainable development. This model is based on four pillars: environmentally responsible procurement, energy- and resource-efficient operations, socially oriented human resources policy, and transparent communication. The integration of these elements creates a synergistic effect.

Thus, the use of professional cosmetics from ethical brands that refuse animal testing and use recycled packaging strengthens the positioning of the salon. At the same time, investments in modern energy-saving equipment for instrument sterilization or LED lighting reduce long-term operational costs. A study conducted among European salons

demonstrates a direct correlation between the depth of implementation of sustainable practices and the consumer loyalty index (NPS) [5].

A critical success factor is not the fragmented application of individual measures, but their systematic integration into business processes and corporate culture. This requires strategic vision from salon management and a willingness to reallocate resources; however, as the examples above show, the long-term benefits significantly outweigh the initial investments.

The conducted research allows us to conclude that sustainable development is not a temporary trend but a strategic imperative for the modern salon business. The formation of competitive advantage based on environmental and social responsibility is achieved through a comprehensive transformation of operational activities, supply chains, and communication strategies.

Global experience shows that salons that proactively implement resource-saving technologies, work with ethical suppliers, and invest in staff development benefit from strengthened reputation, increased customer loyalty, and cost optimization. The proposed model of systematic integration of sustainable practices provides salon owners and managers with a structured approach to transformation, allowing them to adapt global principles to specific market conditions.

Further research in this field may focus on the quantitative assessment of return on investment in specific "green" technologies for salons of different formats.

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