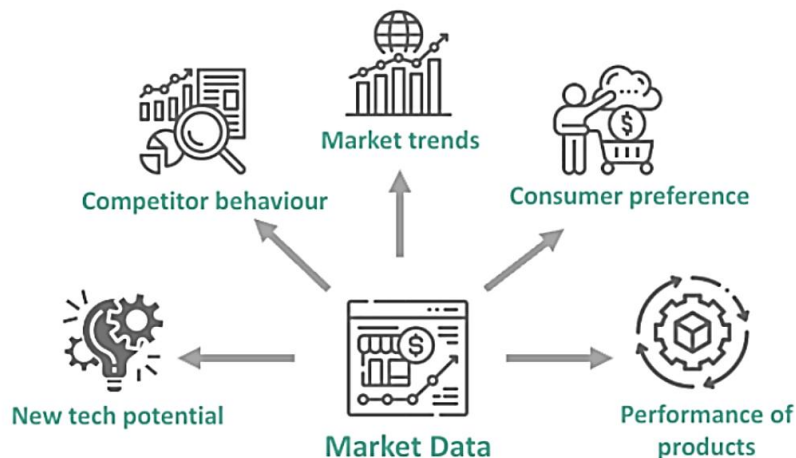


ESG-Driven Marketing Intelligence: Turning Data into Market Advantage

The Crucial Elements of Market Intelligence Success



In today's business environment, success is no longer defined solely by profit margins and market share. Since 2019, interest in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles has grown fivefold in global search activity, and as of 2024, **94% of S&P (Standard & Poor's) 500 companies** and **71% of Russell 1000 companies** publish ESG reports (McKinsey, 2024). The investment trend is equally compelling; PwC (2022) projects ESG-focused institutional assets under management will grow from **US\$18.4 trillion in 2021 to US\$33.9 trillion by 2026**, representing **21.5% of total global AuM (Assets under Management)**.

At the same time, **Market intelligence (MI) has the potential to be the key to opening doors for terminal owners in terms of growth, cost savings, and wise investment decisions.** The whole picture for the organization might alter if the management team is successful in primarily making informed decisions based on easily assimilated, organized information. Strong MI also makes it easy to focus on underperforming terminals right now, where market optimization and modification can improve profitability and performance.



In today's digital era, market research has evolved alongside the rise of socially conscious, digitally connected consumers. Leveraging artificial intelligence and advanced technologies, organizations can now track online behavior, sentiment, and engagement with unprecedented precision. Big data and machine learning have not only streamlined data collection and processing but also enabled the integration of sustainability metrics and social impact indicators. This empowers companies to understand customer preferences in ethical, inclusive ways, linking purchasing patterns and transaction histories with values such as environmental responsibility, social equity, and transparency.

When applied through a Data for Good lens, market intelligence becomes more than a growth tool; it accelerates and enhances decision-making while promoting responsible innovation, organizational learning, and solutions that balance profitability with positive environmental and societal outcomes.



The Handbook of Market Intelligence” by Hans Hedin, Irmeli Hirvensalo, and Markko Vaarnas

When ESG principles are embedded into marketing intelligence systems, the result is a powerful strategy that aligns purpose with performance, turning values into measurable competitive advantage. This integration enables organizations to move beyond superficial sustainability claims and instead leverage real-time, data-driven insights to identify market opportunities, predict consumer behavior, and respond proactively to stakeholder expectations.

By fusing ESG metrics such as carbon footprint, diversity ratios, and governance scores with advanced analytics, companies can segment audiences based on values alignment, design targeted campaigns that resonate with socially conscious consumers, and track the tangible business impact of their sustainability initiatives. In doing so, they not only strengthen brand trust and loyalty but also position themselves to capture a share of the rapidly expanding ESG-driven investment and consumer spending segments.

From Compliance to Competitive Edge

ESG once sat primarily in the realm of corporate reporting and investor relations, but rising consumer awareness has brought it into the heart of brand strategy. Customers now actively seek out brands whose values align with their own, whether that means supporting renewable energy, advocating for social equity, or ensuring ethical supply chains. Marketing intelligence, which involves gathering and analyzing customer,



market, and competitor data, becomes the bridge that translates ESG commitments into actionable market opportunities.

By combining ESG with MI, businesses can:

- **Identify sustainability-driven consumer segments:** Pinpoint and profile customer groups whose purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by environmental, social, and governance values, enabling tailored products, services, and marketing strategies that resonate with their ethical priorities.
- **Anticipate shifts in social and environmental trends:** Use data-driven insights to spot early indicators of changing consumer expectations, regulatory landscapes, and sustainability priorities, giving the business a competitive edge in adapting before these changes become mainstream.
- **Build authentic, data-backed brand stories:** Leverage credible, well-analyzed ESG metrics to craft compelling narratives that highlight the company's real-world impact, fostering trust and loyalty among customers, investors, and stakeholders.
- **Detect and mitigate potential reputation risks before they escalate:** Monitor market sentiment, media coverage, and ESG-related performance indicators to identify emerging threats, enabling proactive action to protect brand integrity and stakeholder confidence.

The Power of Marketing Intelligence in the Digital Era

Modern MI goes beyond traditional market research. With the rise of big data, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, companies can track consumer preferences, online behaviors, and market shifts in real time. Transaction monitoring, search data analysis, and web mining allow for highly targeted strategies. Machine learning enhances this process by identifying patterns and forecasting market changes, helping organizations respond proactively rather than reactively.

Strong MI accelerates decision-making, improves operational efficiency, and fosters innovation. For ESG-focused companies, this means quickly identifying sustainability-related opportunities, avoiding misaligned investments, and ensuring that ESG efforts resonate with evolving stakeholder expectations.

A Feedback Loop between ESG and MI

The relationship between ESG and marketing intelligence is reciprocal. MI benefits from ESG by incorporating sustainability metrics into customer and market analysis, enabling



targeted campaigns and differentiated positioning. In return, MI insights help refine ESG strategies to align with the issues stakeholders care about most. This creates a continuous improvement cycle where both ESG commitments and marketing outcomes grow stronger over time.

For example, Unilever collaborated with reuse start-up QYOS to deploy over 1,000 refill stations in waste banks, small shops, and retailers. In 2023 alone, these stations reached over 6,000 customers, sold 91,000 liters of product, and eliminated more than 6 tons of plastic. Similarly, OMO's concentrated laundry formula, launched in Brazil and later expanded to South America, the Middle East, and Europe, reduced plastic use by 1,500 tons of virgin plastic to date. These initiatives not only met ESG objectives but also generated positive brand equity by marketing the packaging shift as a customer-driven convenience and environmental commitment.

The Crucial Elements of Market Intelligence Success

To build a robust ESG-driven marketing intelligence system, organizations should focus on these key elements:

- **Scope:** Define the boundaries of intelligence gathering, ensuring ESG priorities are integrated into what is tracked and analyzed.
- **Process:** Establish clear workflows for collecting ESG and market data, analyzing it, and delivering it to decision-makers.
- **Deliverables:** Provide actionable outputs, from analytical ESG-market reports to real-time sustainability dashboards.
- **Tools:** Invest in integrated platforms that combine ESG performance metrics with MI capabilities for holistic insights.
- **Culture:** Secure leadership commitment and demonstrate tangible benefits to foster an organization-wide appreciation for ESG-driven MI.

Conclusion

The integration of ESG principles with marketing intelligence represents a powerful evolution in how organizations create value, balancing financial performance with positive societal and environmental impact. In an era where consumers, investors, and regulators increasingly demand transparency and accountability, the ability to transform sustainability data into actionable market insights is no longer a competitive advantage but a business imperative. By embedding ESG metrics into every stage of the MI process: scope, analysis, delivery, tools, and culture, companies can identify emerging opportunities, mitigate risks, and build enduring trust with stakeholders. Ultimately, ESG-driven marketing intelligence is not just about understanding the market; it's about shaping it responsibly, ensuring that growth and innovation contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future.



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