



Extended Abstract | The 2nd Research Innovations in Sustainable Marketing: A Global Symposium

A Sustainable Diffusion-Discontinuance Framework Integrating Economic Paradigms

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Degrowth, Diffusion, Discontinuance, Ecological Economics, Environmental Economics, Sustainable Growth

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This research presents a conceptual framework that integrates the processes of diffusion and discontinuance of innovations to advance sustainability, drawing on the complementary theories of degrowth, sustainable growth, ecological economics, and environmental economics (Engler et al., 2024; Polewsky et al., 2024). By exploring how diffusion and discontinuance of sustainable innovations systematically interact in the framework, their interdependent roles are highlighted in driving effective sustainable progress. This integrated approach underscores the synergies between four economic paradigms, offering insights into how their combined application can enhance the design and implementation of sustainable marketing strategies in response to global ecological challenges (Singh et al., 2024). The four concepts—degrowth, sustainable growth, ecological economics, and environmental economics—can be structured along two axes to highlight their distinctions. The Economic Orientation axis spans from Degrowth, which emphasizes reducing consumption to respect ecological limits, to Sustainable Growth, which broadly focuses on innovation within planetary boundaries (Van den Bergh, 2010). The Theoretical Focus

axis ranges from Ecological Economics, a holistic view embedding the economy within the biosphere, to Environmental Economics, which addresses externalities by designing market-based mechanisms, such as taxes, subsidies, or cap-and-trade systems, to internalize the environmental costs or benefits of economic activities. This framework integrates degrowth, sustainable growth, ecological economics, and environmental economics with the theories of diffusion and discontinuance of innovations Rogers (2003), providing a holistic perspective on adopting innovations and eliminating harmful practices for sustainable transitions.

Although the interplay between diffusion and discontinuance is critical for sustainability, it is often overlooked due to pro-innovation biases, cultural inertia, and market resistance. Policymakers and businesses frequently prioritize introducing new technologies while neglecting the equally vital task of phasing out harmful products and systems. These biases perpetuate unsustainable practices and delay systemic change. While diffusion drives the adoption of sustainable innovations, discontinuance eliminates harmful practices to enable sustainable transitions (Palacios-



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Fenech and Vrain, 2024). In the degrowth paradigm, diffusion prioritizes sufficiency-focused solutions like renewable energy and repairable goods, while discontinuance eliminates resource-intensive practices such as single-use plastics, fostering regenerative alternatives. Conversely, within sustainable growth, diffusion leverages technological innovation and market mechanisms to scale solutions like electric vehicles and circular supply chains, while discontinuance relies on tools like carbon taxes and emissions trading to phase out fossil fuels and outdated technologies. Together, these dynamics inform marketing strategies to drive sustainable adoption and behavioral shifts toward phasing out harmful practices. The framework connects economic paradigms, demonstrating how they can coexist to support diverse pathways toward sustainability (Griffith, 2021). For instance, degrowth prioritizes reducing economic activity in over-consuming regions to respect ecological limits, driving cultural and systemic changes toward sufficiency, a critical approach in more advanced regions. Conversely, sustainable growth relies on technological innovation and market dynamics to reduce environmental impact while maintaining economic expansion, which could be essential in some developing regions. This approach integrates the theoretical paradigms of ecological economics, which embeds the economy within biosystem boundaries, and environmental economics, which employs market mechanisms to internalize externalities.

By integrating diffusion and discontinuance, the framework offers actionable insights for businesses and policymakers, emphasizing strategic disadoption to maintain competitiveness and meet regulations, while designing integrated policies that pair diffusion incentives with discontinuance measures. By aligning these processes with degrowth, sustainable growth, ecological and environmental economics, the framework synthesizes theoretical perspectives to address barriers and support equitable sustainability transitions, reinforcing Elkington's (2018) call for systemic shifts beyond traditional frameworks like the Triple Bottom Line.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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