



Sustainability and sustainable development

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Editor



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3.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKET RESEARCH



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Abstract: The issue of sustainable development is the subject of market research conducted by many institutions. Companies manufacturing products and providing services, institutions dealing with environmental or consumer protection, scientists and students, carry out many research projects related, for example, to sustainable, responsible consumption and production patterns, ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being of all age groups, and much, much more.

The main goal of the chapter is to present how to use secondary data for analysis and how to prepare, conduct, analyse and interpret the results of primary research in the area of sustainable development (SD). There are many challenges facing researches. For that reason, it is necessary to discuss some of its ethical issues.

The structure of the chapter covers 3 topics:

- 1) research in SD based on secondary resources;
- 2) research in SD based on primary resources;
- 3) SD in market research—ethical aspects.

Keywords: ethics in market research, primary research in sustainable development, secondary research in sustainable development.

3.1. Sustainable development research based on secondary resources

Sustainable development (SD) is a popular and important concept, but also one of the most complex ideas difficult to precisely define, and therefore, difficult to measure. However, methods and tools are continuously being developed to measure SD goals, predict future and create improved and innovative solutions to protect the environment and better human well-being.

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) created in 1992, focused on the development and testing a suite of 58 indicators, condensed from an initial list of 134 indicators, which cover social and environmental issues. The Consultative Group on Sustainable Development Indicators (CGSDI), established in 1996, and consisting of experts, focused its work on creating a single sustainability index” (unctad.org). This work produced a “Dashboard of Sustainability”, a set of 46 indicators organised into 4 clusters (environment, economy, society and institutions) for over 100 countries.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development defines 17 SDGs and 169 related targets that are to be achieved in the world by 2030. They concern achievements in 5 areas—the so-called 5xP: people, planet, prosperity, peace, partnership. They replaced the Millennium Development Goals, which were to be achieved by 2015 (United Nations, 2020).

The SD indicators are increasingly being used by national governments and international agencies for monitoring progress towards sustainability goals, as well as comparing performance among countries. However, as far as the organisation perspective is concerned, indicator estimation is important for planning one’s own strategy and to secure the well-being of stakeholders. As a result, countries may increase the number of such indicators to better recognise the implementation of the SDG. The same can be done by organisations.

The full, current list of SDGs includes 17 goals, which are further elaborated in more detailed indicators (UNSTAT, 2020).

The **main, secondary resources** of SD are:

- international reports, which include comparative analysis (for example, that published by the UN: (The Sustainable Development Report, 2019; Sustainable Development Goals, 2019), Figure 1;
- government reports and statistics;
- institutional reports (prepared by NGO, research agencies, institutions organising rankings), for example, The Global 100 List¹;

¹ The Global 100 list includes only one percent of the world’s leading corporations that stand out by conducting their business according to the principles of sustainable development. The lists are prepared by Corporate Knights, a company specialising in investment research, environmental protection, social responsibility and corporate governance (ESG), creating a ranking of global listed

- reports prepared by organisations, i.e. by Prologis, one of the leading companies in SD (Prologis ESG Impact Report, 2019);
- articles in scientific journals, for example: *Sustainability, International Journal of Sustainability In Higher Education, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Transportation Research Part D: Transport And Environment, Journal of Industrial Ecology, Business Ethics, Journal of Cleaner Production, Business Ethics—A European Review, Business Ethics Quarterly*;
- articles in newspapers and magazines.



Figure 1. Level of achievements in SDG—Poland—2019

Source: (Poland OECD countries, 2019).

companies. In 2020, the top of the ranking is opened by: The Danish holding company Chr. Hansen (1), the French Kering (2), the Finnish Neste, the Danish Orsted (4) and the British GlaxoSmithKline (5) (*Prologis liderem...*, 2019).

Secondary resources for market research in SD are **useful** for:

- recognising state of knowledge and identifying gaps in knowledge;
- comparing countries, industries—for example, in rankings;
- analysing changes in time and space;
- identification the best practices;
- benchmark purposes;
- forecasting.

3.2. Sustainable development research based on primary resources

Among the issues undertaken as part of quantitative or qualitative research in SD, 3 key areas can be indicated: the state of knowledge regarding groups of respondents/awareness of the respondents concerning selected issues, the attitude towards a given problem and the respondents' behaviour when they need to make a decision (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2018) (Table 1).

Table 1. Cognitive, affective and conative goals within the SD context—examples

Cognitive goals	Affective goals	Conative goals
What do people know and understand? The state of knowledge regarding selected groups of stakeholders, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – human rights; – employee rights; – representatives of selected social groups; – environment; – sustainable consumption; – sustainable production. 	What do people feel towards social, economic and environmental issues (attitude, emotions) e.g. attitude of employees towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – diversity; – whistle-blowing; – inclusion. 	What do people do, how do people behave, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – participation in climate protests; – defence of human rights; – activity in social media; – conducting research and publishing results.

Source: Own elaboration.

Primary market research in SD requires going through the following stages presented in Table 2 to create reliable and useful research (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020; McDaniel & Gates, 2018).

Table 2. Project of research in SD theme—theoretical stages

Stages of marketing research		Stage description
Analysis of situation	→	Conducting desk research (secondary resources)—determining the reasons for the need to conduct research, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – review of secondary data and current research on the analysed topic; – diagnosing market conditions of the necessity to conduct research; – presenting the situation of the organisation that conducts the research.
Defining research problem	→	The problem is expressed by determining what is needed to be known to achieve a given goal and how to obtain this knowledge. It is worth referring the problem to the existing state of knowledge. Is it worth conducting primary research at all?
Defining goal(s)	→	Research objectives are derived from the types of decisions that are to be made as a result of the research.
Scope of research	→	Subjective—who will we research? Households, enterprises, organisations? Who is the target respondent for this company/firm? Subject—what will we study? Time—what time range will the questions refer to: retrospection, present or future? Spatial—where will the research be carried out?
Required information	→	Defining what information is needed to solve the research problem.
Hypothesis	→	These are test statements/assumptions that will be verified during research (true/false). They express the research problem in the form of a series of statements that constitute a tentative explanation of the relationships between the variables.
Research methods	→	Determining which research methods are optimal for solving a defined research problem ² .
Sample	→	Determining whether the study will be conducted on the whole population or on a sample? If on the sample, its size and method of selecting respondents should be determined.
Methods of analysis of collected data	→	Determining what methods will be used in analysis of the collected data (descriptive statistics, advanced econometric methods, grounded theory, others).

Source: Own work based on (Neuman 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Synthetically described exemplary stages of the research process for qualitative and quantitative research are presented in Table 3. These examples relate to one of the SD objectives—“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

² The choice of method depends on a number of factors, among which, the following are worth mentioning: the number of research questions and the level of their complexity, the degree of availability and the anticipated level of respondents' knowledge, the degree of control regarding the structure of the research sample, the possibility of using advanced measurement techniques and multimedia materials, the degree of respondent anonymity, duration of the research project, cost of the research.

Table 3. “Lifelong learning opportunities for all”—project examples of research within SD theme—basic assumptions³

Main assumption: Imagine that you intend to set up a company in the near future that will deal with training and courses for adults. Before deciding to start a business, you intend to conduct primary research (both quantitative and qualitative)		
Stages of marketing research	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Analysis of situation	<p>Before planning the primary studies, the first step is to analyse the secondary data. In this regard, we need information on, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – what is the structure of a given society according to education? – how many entities with training courses and training operate, offering them to people who have already completed their education? What are the features of their offer? – how many people study at such courses? How many people do it on their own? How do they do it? – what are the characteristics of the offers of training companies? – what studies have been carried out in this area so far and what are the most important conclusions? – other questions. 	
Defining research problem	Defining consumer attitudes and opinions about life-long learning, as well as the current preferences and future intentions in this regard.	Perception of life-long learning.
Defining goal(s)	Specifying how to encourage respondents to undertake life-long learning.	Preparation of a strategy to promote life-long learning.
Scope of research	<p>Subject: adults who have already completed regular education.</p> <p>Subject: see research questions.</p> <p>Time range: experience with training in the last 2 years, current status and plans for the next 6 months.</p> <p>Spatial scope: nationwide survey.</p>	<p>Subject: adults who participated in at least 1 course in the last 12 months and who have no professional relationship with the entity organising the training courses, are not a teacher/trainer, etc.</p> <p>Subject: see research questions.</p> <p>Time range: as in quantitative research.</p> <p>Spatial scope: 3 types of localities: large city with over 300,000 inhabitants (2 groups), small town—up to 20,000 inhabitants (2 groups) and village (2 groups).</p>
Required information – research questions	<p>How many people take part in life-long learning courses?</p> <p>How often people...</p> <p>How many times people...</p> <p>What courses do they choose most often?</p> <p>What are the reasons for choosing courses?</p> <p>How do they rate the available offer?</p> <p>What is the preferred form of classes?</p> <p>How big should the training group be?</p>	<p>Why the people...</p> <p>In which way people...</p> <p>What people do when...</p> <p>How the people...</p> <p>How do people understand the term “life-long learning”?</p> <p>What emotions does life-long learning evoke?</p> <p>What are the pros and cons of life-long learning?</p>

³ The contents of this table are only basic assumptions that would definitely need to be developed and supplemented in the research project

Stages of marketing research	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
	How many days should the training last? What are the traits of the people who are training? Should classes be conducted on-line or off-line, and which ones?	What drives people to learn throughout their lives? How do people learn on their own (without using organised or paid courses)? How are sample course offers evaluated? What are the features of the perfect course? How are on-line and off-line courses perceived?
Hypothesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – about 25% of the respondents take advantage of additional training courses; – respondents most often choose language lessons; – the most common reason for training after graduation is the growing expectations of employers; – women, people aged 45–55, and those with higher education are most often trained; – course groups should not exceed 6 people. 	Exploratory research—no hypotheses.
Research methods	PAPI/ CAWI	Focus group interview.
Sample	Random quota selection, 1,200 households, taking into account the structure of society by sex, education and age.	Total of 6 groups, 6–7 respondents in each group; purposeful selection (see subjective scope).
Methods of analysis of collected data	Descriptive statistics measures, logistic regression model, cluster analysis Computer software, e.g. SPSS, Statistica.	Descriptive analysis, use of quotes, Computer program from the group CAQDAS, e.g. Atlas.ti.

Source: Own work based on (Kaczmarek, Olejnik, & Springer, 2013; Schreier, 2012).

3.3. Sustainable development in market research—ethical aspects

The issues of market research in SD can be considered within the context of **research agencies**, as well as generally conducting research in a sustainable way. In the first case, the SD strategy of research agencies is considered. As an example, we may have a look at Amer Nielsen (AM)—one of the leading companies in the research sector. Amer Nielsen informs: “through responsible, sustainable business practices and our commitment to giving back, we care for the communities and markets where we live and operate our business. Our Global Responsibility & Sustainability strategy at Nielsen includes all environmental, social and governance (ESG)

issues that affect our business, operations, and all internal and external stakeholders (...)" (*Making an uncommon impact*, 2021). The AM research agency perceives its role broadly, in education, technology, human rights and preventing hunger (Figure 2). The employees also devote their time and skills to help non-profit organisations through *pro bono* work, in-kind giving and hands-on community projects. Nielsen measures the behaviour of consumers in more than 100 countries, and expertise helps nonprofits maximise their impact through improved outreach, messaging, effectiveness and efficiency.

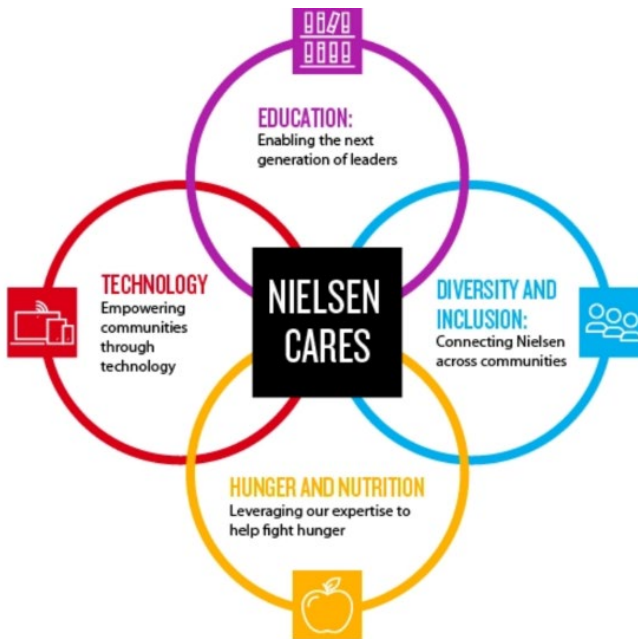


Figure 2. Amer Nielsen Commitment

Source: (*Making an uncommon impact*, 2021).

The ethical issues have to be considered at all stages of **market research**. Participants of any research trial should be aware of its purpose, expected duration and procedures, any prospective research benefits, limits of confidentiality, such as data coding, disposal, sharing and archiving, and when confidentiality must be broken. As a result, conducting research often requires the consent of an ethics committee, especially when the research subject, trial or implemented method may significantly infringe the privacy and well-being of the respondent; for example:

- conducting research with the use of neuromarketing techniques requires determining whether the respondent meets the health criteria to take part in the study, although it is not of interest to the researchers;

- conducting the study without consent to record the course of the study;
- scope and form of published information (i.e. non-financial reporting by companies—what kind of information is included and the way it is presented).

Acceptable research practices are defined in the Research Ethics Code. For instance, in the Esomar document entitled *International Code on Market, Opinion and Social Research and Data Analytics*, responsibilities to data subjects, clients, general public, research profession are described and available in a few languages (Esomar world research, 2016).

Questions / tasks

1. What methods of operationalisation regarding Corporate Social Responsibility do you know?
2. Find a research paper in which the authors present research findings on sustainable development and then:
 - a) discuss the research methodology used by the authors;
 - b) present the most important conclusions drawn from the research;
 - c) what other methods could be applied to conduct research in this area?
3. Analyse the European Union reports and compare SD indicators of selected countries. Analyse the scope and make conclusions. Give some recommendations as to what each country should do to improve the implementation of SD goals.
4. Taking secondary resources into account—select one of the groups of indicators from the SDG list. Compare them using data from selected EU countries. Formulate conclusions.
5. Which topics should also be included in the theme you selected in the question above? Why?
6. Taking the example of the study presented in Table 3 into account, answer the following questions:
 - a) Which research would you conduct first: qualitative or quantitative? Justify your answer.
 - b) What additional information would you need when analysing the baseline?
 - c) What are the advantages and disadvantages of using PAPI and CAWI in quantitative research? Which of these two methods would you choose and why?
 - d) What additional features should the respondents who will participate in FGI research have? How, apart from the type of town or city, do you differentiate individual groups of respondents?
7. Following the stages of primary market research steps—create the draft of a market research project connected with the topics listed below:
 - a) food waste by households;

- b) food waste by restaurants;
 - c) food waste by retailers;
 - d) renewable sources of energy;
 - e) how attitude towards energy from non-renewable sources can be changed;
 - f) innovations in ecological packaging;
 - g) building understanding of diversity;
 - h) consumer attitude towards second-hand products;
- and then, define: the research purpose and information needs, who could be a respondent in such research, what are the applicable test methods?
8. What ethical aspects should be taken into account when conducting research among children and adolescents on problems related to SD/CSR?
 9. Go to websites of research agencies. On their websites, find codes of conduct/ethical regulations referring to marketing research. Analyse them, then give some examples of how they are respected.
 10. How can research agencies support SD in their business activity?
 11. How would you rate the ethics of research based on household rubbish?
 12. What kind of analysis can you apply regarding the examples of the scales in the 'Appendix'? Prepare a quantitative research project knowing that the questionnaire must contain one of the exemplary scales included in the 'Appendix'. Prepare the project according to the points presented in Table 2.

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Appendix

Regardless of whether quantitative marketing research is carried out by internal services or research agencies—it should be verified whether there are ready-to-use tools to research the chosen problem. There are a number of scales that can be applied for SD or CSR research, and thanks to standardised tools, it is possible to compare the obtained research results between departments, divisions, enterprises or countries.

Example 1. Perceived Role of Ethics and Social Responsibility scale (PRESOR)

1. Being ethical and socially responsible is the most important thing a firm can do.
2. Bending and breaking the rules is acceptable if a firm is making a profit.
3. The ethics and social responsibility of a firm is essential to its long-term profitability.
4. Overall effectiveness of a business can be determined, to a great extent, by the degree to which it is ethically and socially responsible.
5. To remain competitive in a global environment, businesses will have to disregard ethics and social responsibility.
6. Social responsibility and profitability can be compatible.
7. Business ethics and social responsibility are critical to the survival of a business enterprise.
8. A firm's first priority should be employee morale.
9. Businesses have a social responsibility beyond making profit.
10. If the survival of a business enterprise is at stake, then ethics and social responsibility must be forgotten.
11. Efficiency is much more important to a firm than whether or not the firm is seen as ethically or socially responsible.
12. Good ethics is often good business.
13. If the stockholders are unhappy, nothing else matters.

Source: (Singhapakdi, Vitell, Rallapalli, & Kraft, 1996).

Example 2. Corporate Ethical Values scale (CEV)

1. Managers in my company often engage in behaviours that I consider unethical.
2. In order to succeed in my company, it is often necessary to compromise one's ethics.
3. Top management in a company has let it be known that under no conditions will unethical behaviour be tolerated.
4. If a manager at my company is discovered to have engaged in unethical behaviour, primarily resulting in personal gain (rather than corporate gain), she/he will be promptly reprimanded.
5. If a manager at my company is discovered having engaged in unethical behaviour, primarily resulting in corporate gain (rather than personal gain), she/he will be promptly reprimanded.

Source: (Quazi & O'Brien, 2000).

Example 3. Scale to measure sustainable consumption behaviour

1. I always try hard to reduce miss-use of goods and services (e.g. I switch off lights and fan when I am not in the room).
2. I recycle daily newspapers (e.g. use it in pet's litter box, etc.).
3. I avoid being extravagant in my purchases.

4. I avoid over use/consumption of goods and services (e.g. print only when needed).
5. I reuse paper by writing on the other side.
6. While dining at a restaurant, I order food(s) only in the amount that I can eat to avoid wasting food.
7. I choose to buy product(s) with biodegradable containers or packaging.
8. I do not like to waste food or beverages.
9. I recycle my old stuff in every possible way (e.g. distribute old clothes among those less fortunate).
10. I reuse shopping bag(s) every time I go shopping.
11. I plan carefully before I purchase a product or use a service.
12. I care for the natural environment.
13. I use eco-friendly products and services.
14. I purchase and use products which are environmental-friendly.
15. I often pay extra money to purchase environmentally-friendly products (e.g. organic food).
16. I am concerned about the shortage of natural resources.
17. I prefer to use paper bags since they are biodegradable.
18. I love our planet.
19. I always remember that my excess consumption can create hindrance for the future generation to meet their basic needs.
20. I care for fulfilling the needs of the next generation.
21. I often think about the future generation's quality of life.
22. I try to control my desire of excessive purchase for the sake of future generations.
23. I am concerned about the future generation.
24. I try to minimise excess consumption for the sake of preserving environmental resources for the future generation.

Source: (Quoquab, Mohammad, & Sukari, 2019).

Example 4. Items in the CSRConsPerScale scale

In my opinion regarding society, [organisation's name] is really:

1. trying to sponsor educational programmes;
2. trying to sponsor public health programmes;
3. trying to be highly committed to well-defined ethical principles;
4. trying to sponsor cultural programmes;
5. trying to make financial donations to social causes;
6. trying to help to improve quality of life in the local community.

In my opinion regarding the environment, [organisation's name] is really:

1. trying to sponsor pro-environmental programmes;
2. trying to allocate resources to offer services compatible with the environment;
3. trying to carry out programmes to reduce pollution;
4. trying to protect the environment;
5. trying to recycle its waste materials properly;
6. trying to use only the necessary natural resources.

In my opinion regarding the economy, [organisation's name] is really:

1. trying to maximise profits in order to guarantee continuity;
2. trying to build solid relationships with its customers to assure long-term economic success;
3. trying to continuously improve the quality of the services that it offers;
4. trying to have a competitive pricing policy;
5. trying to always improve its financial performance;
6. trying to do its best to be more productive.

Source: (Alvarado-Herrera, Bigne, Aldas-Manzano, & Curras-Perez, 2017).

Example 5. Cultural diversity on the workplace scale (BTDS)**Benefits of cultural diversity***Understanding diverse groups in society ...*

- ...enables us to adjust our policies to different groups in society;
- ...gives us better insight into the needs of different groups in society;
- ...allows us to reach a larger part of the community with our policy;
- ...helps us better understand new developments in society.

Creative potential...

- ...makes us better at solving complex problems;
- ...enables us to come up with more original ideas;
- ...makes us more innovative;
- ...leads colleagues to learn more from each others' knowledge and experience.

Image of social responsibility....

- ...is good for our image towards the outside world;
- ...makes the outside world look at our department in a more positive way;
- ...makes all groups in society look at our organisation in a more positive way;
- ...is good for our department's image amongst minority groups in society.

Job market...

- ...is needed to fill all vacancies in our department;
- ...is necessary for recruiting enough new personnel;
- ...leads us to have more choices when recruiting and selecting new personnel;
- ...is necessary for anticipating changes in the job market.

Social environment....

- ...has a positive effect on work atmosphere;
- ...leads to a pleasant work environment;
- ...is fun;
- ...makes this an interesting place to work.

Threats of cultural diversity*Realistic threats...*

- ...lead to fewer career opportunities for the majority of members;
- ...diminish the status regarding the majority of employees;
- ...reduce the attention given to the needs regarding the majority of members;
- ...cause the majority of employees to feel less recognised.

Symbolic threats....

- ...cause friction between colleagues with different norms and values;
- ...cause the department's culture to radically change;
- ...lead to a situation in which the majority of members are forced to adjust;
- ...force employees to adjust to a different culture.

Intergroup anxiety...

- ...makes it more difficult for colleagues to understand each other;
- ...leads to uncomfortable situations;
- ...makes it hard to judge what others are thinking;
- ...causes insecurity in interactions with co-workers.

Productivity loss....

- ...causes managers to spend more time on individual coaching;
- ...makes our department difficult to manage;
- ...makes our work processes run less smoothly;
- ...reduces the overall quality of employees

Source: (Hofhuis, van der Zee, & Otten, 2015).