

Sustainable Society: Successful Transformation through Market Research

Resurveying the World



Berufsverband
Deutscher Markt- und
Sozialforscher e.V.

Resurveying the World

While buzzwords are common in management, sustainability is not among them. This is a lasting development. Large organisations, such as the UN with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, have established a scope of action that has significantly altered humanity's attitude to life already. We no longer calculate in monetary terms alone, but additionally in units and currencies such as CO₂, trees, energy, water, refuse, food waste and so forth.

In addition to ecological aspects, sustainability is viewed in terms of the ESG criteria (environment, social, governance). This means that companies are not only taking steps to compensate for environmental effects, but also to ensure the fair treatment of employees, suppliers and partners, to support local/regional society and to ensure ethical business practices. Aside from the customer perspective, other stakeholders such as investors are considered here as well.



Thus industry and society are clearly being confronted with new demands. Simply put, everything is being re-examined: production methods, the amount and type of consumption, prices of consumer products, communication that accompanies consumption and ultimately, the responsibility for disposing of goods that have been released into the world.

Market research that is literally in tune with the times

Measuring social changes is essential in these times. Changes in mindsets, behaviours, consumption. The term “transformation” far from overstates the magnitude of these change processes. We are talking about nothing less than resurveying the world. Nothing will be as it once was any more: gut instinct, experience, existing benchmarks – all of that is outdated and must be reviewed.

Nobody is better equipped for this task than market researchers with their ability to go right to the source. This puts market research in the eye of the storm. The discipline will play a **central role** in the next few years because measuring changes and their speed as well as capturing the respective status quo of the transformation cannot be left up to the “gut instinct of experts”.

What can market research do?

Companies can use market research to

- understand the needs of consumers and offer sustainable products and services,
- develop new business models that are based on sustainability,
- improve their communication and marketing activities to draw the attention of consumers to sustainability,
- rise to the challenges of implementing sustainability, for example, in pre-sales or after-sales,
- develop and implement their sustainability strategy.

Politics, industry and sociology will all depend on data to succeed in the transformation to a sustainable way of life. Thus market research is not just an element but a **success factor** for the coming transformation.

Market research institutes must serve as role models for society

Ultimately, the surveyors of the transformation have to embrace current developments. Service providers who want to succeed in this environment must not only measure sustainability comprehensively and knowledgeably, but also need to demonstrate their own sustainability in order to be credible. Otherwise, market research institutes cannot serve as believable ambassadors for the transformation.



In terms of ESG, we are not just talking about waste reduction or taking the train for business trips. Sustainability also means the sustainable treatment of employees. Results need to be sustainable as well, that is, they have to be produced ethically and responsibly. That is of great importance. Market research with the central role it plays can have a positive impact on society, but also a negative one by producing and publishing skewed or incorrect results. Rather, market research needs to contribute to objective debate on the basis of facts.

Thus, market research has a total of four possible levels for sustainable engagement:

Institutes can

- act sustainably in their own processes,
- conduct studies on sustainability,
- ensure that results are sustainable and
- ensure that tools such as AI are used responsibly and according to ethical standards.

The BVM's major annual convention on 5 June 2024 in Frankfurt/Main and the 2024 market research yearbook are therefore dedicated to the topic **"Transformation to a sustainable society – the central role of market research in the transformation"**. Thus the association and its members are emphasising their mission to accompany the transformation processes in society. The seminar programme is geared toward this as well. Participants will learn about the tools they need for a responsible survey of the new world.

To sum up, your attendance is particularly important this year. Society needs market research, and market research institutes need reach and a public presence. Doing good is not enough on its own, we also have to talk about it.



Author
Christian Thunig

Christian Thunig is a Managing Partner of INNOFACT AG. His work focuses on brand management and media. Previously the business management graduate was with the Handelsblatt publishing group for 17 years as Managing Editor and Publication Manager for "absatzwirtschaft", Germany's leading monthly marketing magazine. He is on the board of the BVM (Berufsverband Deutscher Markt und Sozialforscher e.V.) and a member of the publishers' advisory board for the platform marktforschung.de. He is also a member of the Effie main jury (Germany's leading prize for advertising, awarded by the umbrella association of communication agencies) and numerous other juries.



Images:
iStock-ID 1393058268©
Blueastro/DESIGNBÜRO,
Freepik.com, rawpixel.com



BVM
Berufsverband
Deutscher Markt- und
Sozialforscher e.V.

Bundesgeschäftsstelle
Friedrichstraße 187
10117 Berlin
Deutschland

Tel.: +49 30 9203128-0
info@bvm.org | www.bvm.org