

Universidad del Rosario
Rennes School of Business



Do Colombian companies consider sustainable practice implementation as part of a
customer-loyalty strategy?

Graduating Project

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Rennes, France

August 31st, 2022

Universidad del Rosario



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OATH OF PERSONAL WORK

I undersigned **Laura RUEDA SANTOS** declare that the following graduating project is my own work. No part of this research has been submitted in the past for publication or for degree purposes.

I am fully responsible for the truthfulness of this declaration.

Date: August 31st, 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Rueda". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Laura" and "Rueda" being capitalized and prominent.

Signature:

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First of all, I want to thank my family for all the support they have gave me during all my life and for trusting in me. Thank you for giving me the amazing opportunity of studying abroad at Rennes School of Business and always being there for me even in the most difficult moments, all of my achievements are the result of their support and all the love they provide to me. I want to also to say thank you to the Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá, Colombia for giving me the opportunity of completing my studies with a double degree, thanks for all the values and learnings I got during all my six years of career, to all my professors and friends there. I am also really grateful with Rennes School of Business for opening me their doors and giving me this amazing experience where I learn a lot not only on the professional aspect but also in the personal one. Thanks to my supervisor, Petya PUNCHEVA, for supporting me in this challenging project and providing me her advice to deliver my project; thanks to all my international friends who make this experience the best possible experience ever, for being my family far from home and for all the support during these years of experience. Finally, I would like to say thank you to all the participants of my survey who helped me complete this project and who were open to help me.

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1. Abstract

In a world where sustainable practices and environment preservation is getting more important every day due to all the problematics it is facing and in a country like Colombia where their economic activities are based on the use of natural resources, sustainable practices are something companies need to start implementing. Sustainable practices could bring different benefits not just to the environment but also to the companies implementing it.

This graduating project pretend to analyze the impact that sustainable practices have in the customers loyalty strategy of Colombian companies as sustainability is getting more important nowadays and customers are starting to change their consumption behavior being more oriented to a more environmentally friendly one so as a result companies should be reacting to these new tendencies and start the implementation of it inside their organizations.

To develop the research of this study there were two different methodologies, the first one was the review and analysis of corporate sustainable reports from the most sustainable Colombian companies and the second was a survey to Colombian small companies who are actually developing sustainable practices inside their companies.

Results of the study do not show a clear relationship between the implementation of sustainable practices and the purpose of setting it as part of the customer loyalty strategy of the companies, however it did show that companies do consider that customers are not changing their consumption behavior into a more sustainable one and some of the companies make the

implementation because customer were asking for those products. Even though companies do not consider sustainable practices as a method to promote customer loyalty, in an indirect way they could be doing so as there are some studies that proves that customers feel more engage with a company when they feel identify by their sustainable practices.

Keywords: Sustainability, sustainable practices, Colombia, customer loyalty, corporate sustainable reporting.

2. Resumen

En un mundo donde las practicas sostenibles y la preservación del medio ambiente se vuelve cada día más importante debido a todas las problemáticas que se están presentando y en un país como Colombia donde sus actividades económicas están basadas en el uso de recursos naturales, las prácticas sostenibles son algo que las compañías necesitan empezar a implementar. Las prácticas sostenibles pueden traer diferentes beneficios no solo al medio ambiente sino también a las compañías que las están implementando.

Este proyecto de grado pretende analizar el impacto que tienen las prácticas sostenibles en la estrategia de lealtad del consumidor en las compañías colombianas entendiendo que las prácticas sostenibles están obteniendo mayor importancia actualmente y que los consumidores están comenzando a cambiar sus comportamiento de consumo orientándolo más hacia uno más amigable con el medio ambiente y como resultado las compañías deberían reaccionar a estas nuevas tendencias y empezar la implementación de estas dentro de la organización.

Para desarrollar la investigación de este estudio, hay dos metodologías diferentes. La primera la revisión y análisis de reportes corporativos sostenibles de las empresas colombianas más sostenibles y la segunda metodología fue el desarrollo de una encuesta aplicada a pequeñas compañías colombianas las cuales están desarrollando actualmente las prácticas sostenibles dentro de sus compañías.

Los resultados de este estudio no muestran una relación clara entre la implementación de prácticas sostenibles y el propósito de establecer estas como parte de la estrategia de lealtad del consumidor de las compañías. Sin embargo, si se demuestra que las compañías consideran que los

consumidores no están cambiando su comportamiento de consumo en uno más sostenible y algunas de las compañías hacen la implementación de estas prácticas debido a que algunos de los consumidores estaban requiriendo este tipo de productos. Aunque las compañías no consideran la implementación de prácticas sostenibles como un método para promover la lealtad del consumidor, de forma indirecta ellos podrían estar haciéndolo debido a que hay diferentes estudios que demuestran que los consumidores se sienten más comprometidos con una compañía cuando ellos se sienten identificados con sus prácticas sostenibles.

Palabras clave: Sostenibilidad, prácticas sostenibles, Colombia, lealtad del consumidor, reportes corporativos sostenibles.

3. Introduction

Sustainability is a relative new concept that has different definitions all around the world and it changes depending the study area people are working on. This term was first use around 1980s and it aims to be related with social, environmental and economic aspects; by 1990s it was a common term use and know around the world (Caradonna, 2014). The United Nations define sustainability as the action of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Nations, n.d.).

Considering the importance that sustainability has gain over the years and the need of taking actions over different issues in the world related with sustainability, the United Nations create and propose 17 Sustainable Development Goals to all the countries around the world. With these goals, all countries are invited to join by making an implementation of these goals in their government to protect the planet with their actions willing to make their sustainable development (Neshovski, n.d.).

On February 18th of 2015, the President of the Colombian Republic announced the implementation of the SDG, they developed a document CONPES where they define the main goals, indicators, actions and set the responsible for each activity from the government to achieve the SDG by 2030 (*Colombia en la implementación de la Agenda 2030*, 2012). In this plan they focus on involving no governmental actors like the society, the private sector and the academy to work all together to identify different ways to achieve those main goals by 2030. Colombia also participates as one of the countries that develop the Voluntary

National Report (*Colombia consolida sus avances en el cumplimiento de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible*, n.d.) to show the progress that the country has made over the years, it shows how it is represented in numbers and indicators. Additionally, in their report for the year 2021, they also consider the report of 137 companies contributing to the 17 SDG.

Considering the compromise that the Colombian government took, companies also join to this initiative and started to do their own sustainable reporting and they developed different actions to follow and approach some of the 17 SDG they compromise with. According to a study made to Colombian companies, the issues that companies highlight and focus more on their reports are mostly the ones related with the planet, with people and prosperity (Gallego Navarro, n.d.). From their analysis in this study, they also came up to the conclusion that those companies have developed the ability to quantify their impact and relate it with the SDG.

The consciousness of consumers have improved over the year and people started to prefer products that support sustainable practices and they are becoming more eco-friendly, according to ACIS (Asociación Colombiana de Ingenieros de Sistemas), after all the changes generated by COVID-19, people want to change and improve the world they live in, when consumers are about to buy a new product they now take into consideration quality and functionality but also its impact on the environment (*Colombianos Consumirán En 2021 Más Productos Sostenibles y Con Tecnología Consciente* | ACIS, n.d.). It is also mention that there has been a tendency of customers preferring more sustainable products not just since the pandemic but more years ago and because of that reason, companies are looking for new developing strategies relate with sustainability to keep and attract more customers.

According to a new publication by an important magazine in Colombia, they consider a report made by Nielsen where they conclude that around 59% of the Colombians, from the ones that were interviewed, would change their consumption behavior preferring products more environmental friendly instead of the popularity of the brand (Semana, 2019). Nielsen's report also mentions that they are willing to pay more if the product is more sustainable and around 90% of the country population are really worried for our actual environmental issues.

Considering these changes in the consumption behavior of people, companies need to take that into consideration when developing their strategies for the business in order to keep their customers. The term of customer loyalty refers to the desire of the customer to come back to its supplier in the future to acquire its goods (Sargeant & West, 2001) and it is divided into four main levels. The first one is the no loyalty where the consumers go to any brand because he or she has the perception that all are similar and they do not have any problem if they have to change from supplier. The second level is where the customer comes back to its supplier because they do not find any reason to change from it and then come back to it. The third one is known as latent loyalty and is when the customer in fact has a feeling of loyalty to some specific good from that supplier and does not want to change it. Finally, at the fourth level is the true loyalty when the customer prefers just one specific brand or supplier (Sargeant & West, 2001).

Colombia is a country that is moving forward to meet sustainable goals but at the same time, companies are moving slowly to include those practices as part of their strategy as it also means a high investment into new technologies. Even though of those limitations,

companies are trying to move fast to those changes as it could improve their image and their impact on the environment, including those improvements into their practices could bring them more benefits than limitations (León Gaitan, 2017).

The aim of this work is to study and see if there are any intentions from companies to include and use sustainable practices in their corporate strategy as a way to keep and increase their customer loyalty. It is important to study because it can show the perception that companies have about the importance of sustainability and also at the same time it could show the level of consciousness that people have at the moment of making their decisions of what to buy, if a standard product or if they prefer a sustainable product and are willing to change to new products just because they could reduce impact on the environment. If companies consider sustainability at the moment of developing their strategy and driving their business, this could also change the way the industry works and how they compete so they would have to create new strategies not just considering how are they going to approach their customers but also on how they plan to enter into new markets and which is their plan to compete with other brands that could or could not be implementing also sustainable strategies.

4. Literature review

4.1 Introduction to the region LATAM

According to the Real Academia Española, Latin America refers to the group of countries that belong to the American continent and whose languages have their origin in Latin language (Spanish, French and Portuguese) (RAE, n.d.).

The territory belonging to Latin America is more than 20 million kilometers square which represents around 13,5% of the territory in the Earth. This region has a wide variety of biodiversity, different types of geographies and has almost all the types of weather that exist around the world. This region is characterized because of all the colonization around 1942 made mainly by Spain and Portugal in the new continent (Definista, n.d.).

Six countries of the region (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela) are considered as megadiverse because of the amount of biodiversity in its territory, it is even more important that in the region and in every city are different endemic species meaning they are just present in this specific area due to different factors like natural barriers, geography, weather and behavior (Bárcena & Vereinte Nationen, 2002).

By 2017, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, represented 8% of the gross domestic product (GDP) globally and represented the same percentage for the global population (Caribe, 2020). Even though, after the crisis due to the COVID 19 and the consequences it develop as the uncertainty in the economy behavior and the increasing level in the global inflation, the region decreased its participation in the GDP and by 2021 reported a 6.9% or participation in the global economy; however, it is plan to have a growth in 2,3% in 2022 and 2,2% in 2023 (*América Latina y el Caribe*, n.d.).

From all the countries that belong to the Latin American region, the biggest economies are represented in first place by Brazil and in second place by Mexico whose GDP are considerably high in comparison to the other economies in the region. Colombia is situated at the fifth place after Argentina and Chile with a GDP of 314,27 thousands of millions dollars (*PIB por país en América Latina y el Caribe 2021*, n.d.).

4.2 Sustainability in LATAM

From the total global emission, Latin America represented just 9% of them but unfortunately is extremely vulnerable and affected by the climate changes happening nowadays. There are some evidences that show that climate change has a high impact on biodiversity, water, increasing sea levels, forest, tourism, health, cities and more; being these some of the main economic activities in the region they are increasing their poverty levels and making the region find new ways to growth their economy and give their population options to develop themselves and their families (Álvarez Restrepo, 2017).

Contamination is a big problematic in the region, this is coming mainly from the economic growth of the region additionally to the growth in population and certain production and consumption habits. This speed in growing was no expected for the region and because of this reasons they were not prepare to it and had to adapt and make fast changes in order to increase the production capacity bus this at the same time has different consequences like air pollution, the increase volume of dangerous left overs, contamination in the water between other environmental consequences (Bárcena & Vereinte Nationen, 2002).

Being conscious about the climate changes the world is facing, the need of cooperation and action, and being member of different organizations like the United Nations following the Sustainable Principles, there has been planning and implementing actions in order to reduce their impact on the environment. One example is the mining sector, where the importance of human rights and the environment are fundamental. For this specific reason is that even when this sector generates lots of employment and economic incomes, it must be

control and must follow different regulations to protect the environment and ensure the preservation of it for future generations, here lays the importance of government to support each other in order to follow those regulation and growth as a region in general as well as they export their product and foreign countries like Germany are already requesting the origin of the products or services they are acquiring and they want to be sure those products are being environmentally friendly (Caribe, 2018).

Other sector that is starting to implement sustainable practices and thinking about the future is the electronic sector, the waste management of electronics is one of the main issue when thinking about sustainable electronic considering also that the amount of waste generated every year is a lot as it does not only come from the waste companies generate in their production process but also when customers acquire different technological products like computers, cellphones, cables and others, and for any reason just thrown it away after is used or because they want to buy a new version, etc (*Conozca El Concepto de Electrónica Sostenible* | AVI Latinoamérica, n.d.).

Knowing the impact that the electronic sector is having on the environment, companies in the region have develop a new practice named as sustainable electronic that aims to reduce less electronic components and less toxic components. The idea is to produce with the smallest possible impact on the environment and at the same time having products of good quality and that could last longer even if this concept is not a good idea for the sector considering that the base of it is renewing products so in this way customers could buy new versions and throw the old ones away (*Conozca El Concepto de Electrónica Sostenible* | AVI Latinoamérica, n.d.).

According to a study where they interview different companies from the region, the results showed that 45% from the total of the companies participating are already using sustainable practices in their organizations and 22% of them also said they were working on it to make a final implementation. One of the most important conclusions obtained after the study was that every six from ten executives think that sustainability is actually profitable, also they ensure that sustainable practices inside the organization does not only help the environment and the communities around it but is a way they can develop a competitive advantage in comparison to their competitors and other companies in the industry and make their customers feel more satisfied with their products or services (Noticias, 2021).

Sustainable practices are going from being an option for companies to be required in their operations, some studies have shown that around 64% of the millennials would accept a job if inside the company there are sustainable initiatives showing a high interest in environmental preservation. The use of technology is fundamental and really helpful when promoting and developing sustainable practices inside the organizations (Noticias, 2021), in this way by mixing all these characteristics, every single day is more effort coming from different companies in the region to develop more sustainable practices due to the awareness of the actual problem the entire world is facing and that is already affecting the economy of every country in the region and as a result also the economy of Latin America.

4.3 Introduction to Colombia

Colombia is the fourth largest country in South America with around 1,1 million square kilometers of territory and the only country in the region surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean

and the Pacific Ocean. The entire country is divided in 6 different main regions and the total population is around the 51 millions of people and contains around the 10% of the total biodiversity in the world (*Así es Colombia*, 2012).

In 2021, Colombia reported a total of 41.387,3 millions of US dollars in its exportation activities where the main goods exported were oil, coals, coffee, gold and flowers; its main countries of destination were the United States, China, Panama, India, Brazil and Ecuador (*Perfil de Colombia*, n.d.).

Additionally to the exportations, the total amount of importations was 61.101,4 millions of US dollars where the most imported goods were medicine, corn and blood for therapeutic uses and the main countries were China, the United States, Mexico, Brazil, Germany and France (*Perfil de Colombia*, n.d.).

Colombia is the fourth largest economy in Latin America after Brazil, Mexico and Argentina; is the sixth largest from America and is in thirty third from the world. The main activities develop in Colombia and that are key in order for the country to be able to export goods and services to others countries are based on the extraction activities like oil, coal, emeralds, silvers and platinum. This main activities receive high amounts of foreign inversion and just for this activities, the foreign direct investment represents a 61% from the total foreign investment made for the country (área, n.d.).

Considering the agricultural activities in the country, the main production is for flowers, coffee, sugar cane, bananas, potato, plantain, milk, meet, pork, avocado, eggs and others (área, n.d.). Here is where lays some of the importance of the environment and natural

resources use and preservation for the country as they mainly need those in order to produce their goods and services to keep their economic activity and growth it.

Colombia is the second country with more diversity in the world so it is one of the countries considered and defined as megadiverse. There are more than 50.000 different species registered and around 31 million hectares of protected area which represent 15% of the national territory and these areas pretend to protect and preserve all the different species and biodiversity present in the country. It is important to highlight the importance of the preservation of the diversity in the country, there are different activities that depend on the biodiversity like food production, nutrition and health in humans beings (“Colombia, el segundo país más biodiverso del mundo, celebra el Día Mundial de la Biodiversidad,” 2019).

There are some ideas that the key for Colombia to have an economic and sustainable development could be its biodiversity, there is a need of understanding and protect biodiversity because there is where could be the answer to actual environmental problems, the answer could be on the nature (*El desarrollo sostenible de Colombia*, 2021).

One of the opportunities offered by biodiversity is called as biomimicry which is based on understanding how and with which materials have different problems been solve in the nature environment and in this way, humans could try to replicate those solutions, or imitate the nature, in order to solve problems in the society (*El desarrollo sostenible de Colombia*, 2021). There are nine principles highlighted by Janine M. Benyus in her book *Biomimicry: Innovation inspired by the nature*; nature first flows with solar light, second use just the needed amount of energy, adapts the form to the function, recycles everything, reward

cooperation, bet for diversity, requires local experience, prevent excess from inside and take approach of the power of limits.

Considering the importance that biodiversity has in and for the country, there has been an increasing concern between the population and environmental communities due to the high percentage of loss in biodiversity that is around 18% just in Colombia, the biggest threat is the loss of their natural habitat; there is around 1200 different species that are in danger and around 1503 species are being use as a commercial trade (Webmaster, n.d.). With this worrying numbers, different communities, international and national organization and even the Colombian government had started to develop different strategies in order to preserve and keep safe the natural environment and all the species, that is the reason why sustainable practices and every practice related to the preservation of natural resources, natural habitats and the environment in general have increase their importance and have been promoted and regulated between the communities and population.

Colombia as a country and as a society has the big challenge of understanding and protecting the biodiversity of the country and to take advantage of the big opportunities that biodiversity brings in order to continue its economic and sustainable development to at the same time improve the living conditions of its population and the awareness and relationship of people with the environment. In this way, biodiversity could be the key for the future development of Colombia (*El desarrollo sostenible de Colombia*, 2021).

4.4 Sustainability in Colombia

Reporting has become a more common activity to do from the companies in order to communicate their information, it is mainly focusing in communicating to their stakeholder's essential information they think is important for them to know. Developing these reports is something that requires not just economic resources for the company but also time, mainly big companies are the ones investing in the development of these reports for their companies but sometimes those reports are not clear enough to communicate what they are supposed to the stakeholders.

CSR is being included in the strategy of the companies where they also report their sustainable activities inside the company (Ueberwimmer et al., 2015), all of these reports are suppose to be truthful by everyone that read it as they are supposed to follow some regulations and international standards. The sector that makes and publish more CSR report in Colombia is the energy sector followed by the food and beverage sector in the country; even though, one of the main reasons of why those specific companies make those reports is because of following regulations more than being completely compromise with sustainable development (*Corporate Social Responsibility Reports: Evolution and Trends in the Intern...: Sistema Integrado de Búsqueda*, n.d.).

Even though, companies have been compromising more and more over the years with CSR and because of that they have been putting a lot of effort to improve their performance when reporting, they have been informing and following international practices, then they try to put it into national practice too; for a better performance and improving, some policies and regulations have been also helpful when developing those reports (Ueberwimmer et al., 2015). CSR is directly link to the core of the business, it is a strategic part of the company

more than any other additional element that could or could not add value to the company, because of that reason it requires the compromise and support from all the essential actors for the company in order that it can be develop in the best possible way for the company (Perdomo-Ortiz et al., 2017).

Sustainable reporting is not only a good initiative but also has transformed into a good business, actually there are around 230 Colombian companies that are being part of the Global Reporting Initiative that develop sustainable reports. The implementation of sustainable practices is being more notable in companies that export their products to other countries as the sustainable practices are really appreciated and required in the foreign market, for this reason they must implement sustainable practices to the production of their goods in order to be competitive at the moment of exportation and trading as sustainability is not negotiable (Procolombia, 2020). This is an example of the importance that the companies are giving to sustainable practices also considering that Colombia is a country that make exportations to around 153 different countries (*Exportaciones de Colombia*, n.d.) so to keep this number and increase it is important to follow and meet all the sustainable requirements from others.

4.5 Sustainable and green consumption behaviors

By the implementation of the term green, it usually refers to the actions that are environmentally responsible and friendly meaning they try to reduce in the most possible way the impact is going to have in the environment and in the resources use for future generations (Rustam et al., 2020).

In this way, when referring to a green consumer is someone that tries to protect the planet with actions like buying from eco brands or buying eco products and with daily activities like recycling and reusing because of its consciousness of the environmental problems the world is facing nowadays and the possible results it could have if there is not any corrective action taken (Rustam et al., 2020).

Green consumers consider the impact of all their actions like buying, using, final disposal of the products, etc.; and try to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones in which they could help (Wu & Yang, 2018). Sustainable consumption is composed by the ecological and socio economic dimensions where there are three stages considered, the acquisition of a product or service, the actual use of it and finally, the disposal it has referring to what happen at the end of the life of the product or service (Salciuviene et al., 2022), for example it can be thrown in the garbage or can be recycle.

When referring to green consumption, there is an implication for the customers to change their old behavior of consumption and sometimes could also bring some tradeoffs as this could increase the time or effort needed for certain actions but beneficiate the environment and its preservation. As a result this could be a self-sacrifice for some benefits in order to increase the environment benefits (Wu & Yang, 2018).

Moral identity is the degree in which people give the importance of being a moral person as part of their self-conception (Tissot et al., 2022), there are a set of moral traits that are needed for the individual self-conception (Salciuviene et al., 2022).

Considering that moral identity is one of the main drivers for people when they have to make decisions and give them an idea of what actions are good and which are not, some

studies have shown that because of their moral identity, customers are more likely to compromise and engage and support sustainable consumption not just for them but also with the ones around them; when the moral identity is stronger, there is going to be a higher level of engagement in sustainable consumption (Salciuviene et al., 2022).

Other study also shown that consumers whose moral identity is activated in comparison to the ones whose not activated, are most likely to engage in green consumption because this would make them feel greater for its responsibility preventing and reducing the environmental damage (Wu & Yang, 2018).

Consumption behavior is influenced by different factors as economic, physical and social that are at the same time also influence by other factors like nature, circumstances, geography, culture, laws, politics and infrastructure. Additionally, there are two different types of needs people have, the first ones are the basic or intrinsic needs that are essential for the human being in order to continue living like food, drinks, clothes, security and others related to the basic and more primitive needs. The second ones are the social and emotional needs, an example of these needs could be the need of acceptance, the status, love or self-fulfillment. This type of needs change depending on every single person as those are the specific wants, change with every lifestyle and society surrounding the person (Peattie, 2010).

There are different factors that influence green or more sustainable consumers behavior, those factors are explain in one publication focused on green consumption investigation and all the factors that are going to be explain in the following part are based on that specific publication (Peattie, 2010).

1. Economic rationality; this refers basically to the interest of the customer and the perception they have from the cost of the product or service and the benefits they perceive are receiving from it.
2. Demographics, where communities are divided by different characteristics and analyze for it even though there has not been find a relationship between this factor and the green consumption behavior of customers.
3. Impact income-spending relationship, different studies have shown that there is a relationship between the income and the environmental impact meaning that if the income is higher then, their footprint and impact on the environment is also going to be higher as the income is also determining sometimes the different lifestyles people have.
4. Environmental knowledge, there has been found that if there is a well understanding of the environment, it could have a positive impact on green consumer behavior. Even though sometimes people could have the knowledge like for example how to recycle, but it does not mean there is going to be an actual change on the consumption behavior oriented to green consumption and practices. When it comes to information and knowledge, it could have a bigger impact if it is familiar and related to similar activities people actually do in their daily life, if the new information takes the customer to think different about their own consumption, it is more likely to change its behavior to a greener one.
5. Attitudes, beliefs and values; those are factors that have a high level of influence for the change of behavior into a greener one because is someone has disposition and is open to the change then its level of resistance is lower and is more likely to engage with different behaviors contributing to the benefit of the environment. Even though

those attitudes could help to practice green activities and buy from green brands and green products or services, it does not always mean is going to be in a full way so for example someone could recycle but is not willing to buy organic food or pay more for a more sustainable product or service.

6. Responsibility, control and personal effectiveness; here is how the customer see itself and the way they believe their actions could have a meaningful impact or not. The importance of believing on the power of their actions and the influence they could generate is extremely important because if this feeling is stronger, their willingness to change for a more sustainable actions is going to be higher to and they could change to better practices easier.
7. Lifestyles and habits, change is easily done when it comes as a collective change instead of and individual change. Most of the actions people do every day are coming from their habits instead of conscious thoughts, here is where the importance of collective changes and lifestyles change lays because is there is a change make as a group, it could be easier to remember and act based on consciousness instead of old habits; after acting with consciousness the result would be a change on the behavior of people creating a new habit like for example the implementation of recycling inside the house.
8. Green consumer identity and personality, how someone sees themselves is going to influence the actions someone is actually going to make. There are different interpretations of what does it mean to be a green consumer taking to different adoptions of the role, there are mainly three different types of it, the first one is the antihero that is when people reject to actually implement and practice green consumption and staying with their traditional behavior. The second type is the

environmental hero that is characterized because has a big compromise with green consumption and wants to help and contribute in the best possible way to the preservation of the environment. Finally, the third type is the anarchist that perceive green consumption just as a reaction against the traditional consumption culture.

9. Consumption context, people can be influenced by situational factors meaning that if they are surrounded with strong environmental values this could influence their consumption behavior. Even if someone is used to practice green actions every day, it does not mean that it could be always this way as if there is any change in their environment and context around them, they are most likely to change their behavior again and adapt to the new context they are in. however, those extremely changes that could create a change on consumption behavior are difficult to create and are not that usual.
10. Spatial dimensions, when using the term spatial it is referring to spatial variations as local, regional and national levels that could influence consumers behavior. Because of this reason is that depending on the country there are different types of consumption as they are exposed to different living styles, agricultural practices and different types of energy used. Even inside the same country and in the same city, there are differences between the population that has a strong influence on green consumption.
11. Consumption as a social process, many of the consumption behavior of an individual reflect not only themselves and their circumstances but also their social relationships and obligations as part of different groups in the society like a family or a community. A change of attitude and behavior could make people feel they are getting away from their social identity and here could be a resistance to the change but if green

consumption is included as part of the social identity of a group or community, the resistance to change is going to be lower and people could compromise easier to it.

12. Social norms about the environment, social norms include what someone perceive to the normal or common do be done and the actions they also perceive as right. When recycling or any other sustainable and green activities are perceived as normal for others and in the community, it is easier to adopt those practices too as they are normal and good not just for you but most important for the environment meaning is good for everyone living in it.

13. Media, it is an essential component when it comes to green consumption. Media is one of the best and common ways used by people in order to get informed about the environment, what are the opinions and concerns about it. The amount of people media can achieve to is surprisingly high and super high velocity, here people can share their experience and sometime they can build communities where sustainable practices are promoted and this could motivate other to also implement those sustainable practices and change their consumption behavior to a greener one.

After the analysis of all the factors that have influence for people to change their consumption behavior and adopt a greener and more sustainable way of consumption, in the same study (Peattie, 2010), they also propose some ways to motivate customers to change into a green consumption.

1. Green labeling, this kind of initiatives give information to customers bout different components of the product or service they could buy and additionally to that, sometimes it also includes extra information regarding what could happen when the product is used like extra uses the customer could make with it. Labels could be a

combination between visual and textual information but is important to promote consumption into the optimal level instead of promote it to a level where customers buy more than what they need and, in this case, would be using more resources than needed not really helping the preservation of the environment.

2. Choice editing, the idea is to just offer the customer the more sustainable options by removing the least sustainable ones and in this way, customers could only opt for sustainable options even if they want another one. This option could be useful when it comes to the use of resources and environmental preservation but on the other hand, it takes off some kind of freedom and variety to the customers as the idea would be that they prefer sustainable options instead of the traditional one because of their choice and not because they do not have any other option to choose from.
3. Social marketing, this type of marketing practices focuses on promoting messages that make the customer want to change their behavior into actions that could make them meet social goals, this could be apply to different areas like health but recently has been used in sustainable and environmental applications. This is now promoting a low-carbon emissions behaviors, consumptions reduction and sustainable life cycles for the products or services.
4. Collective action and activism, a real change could be meet when there is a collective change instead of an individual one. It is true that the change star from an individual but to really get to the point to make an impact is necessary to have a collective solution that could really generate an impact, one of the best examples if the use of renewable energies in a neighborhood. After those changes in community, people is going to change their mindsets and in the future they would be willing to implement more sustainable practices in the community and could start influences people around

them not necessarily inside the neighborhood and this would create a chain effect where others are going to implement those practices until hopefully everyone is implementing it.

5. Alternative consumption communities, people could join those communities to inform themselves about sustainable and environmentally friendly practices and start being part of a community where they can learn about it. When people join this type of communities they tend to engage with in and develop certain kind of behaviors inside it where they follow some principles, in this case sustainable principles, where they actions are based on the idea of reducing the consumption of plastic for example, or recycle or any practice related to it that they promote and support each other to do inside these groups.
6. Integrating production and consumption, communities are starting to implement practices like growing their own food in small scales and also the implementation of circle economies or the products that after being used are taken back to the systems so they can enter again the production line and be transform; those practices are breaking the traditional idea of production and consumption where people used to buy from a supplier, use the product and when is done with it then throw it away and the company just continue with the production of more products or services with new resources. Nowadays there is the idea of reuse, remanufacture, recycle and everything related to the use of resources that could be useful for production processes instead of using new resources that are limited; those practices are driving people and companies to sustainability applications where there is a cooperation between companies and customers in order to promote and preserve the environment.

4.6 Colombian consumers

Colombia is a country that has too much diversity in their food, in the regions, in the way people speaks and other characteristics that it makes its consumers full of different characteristics that make them all diverse but the thing they all have in common is their origin, they grew up in a developing country that is trying to follow the peace of bigger ones, this bring some impacts on the culture and one of them is the consumption behavior where people want to satisfy their own needs as fast as possible and started increasing their demand in different goods. Even though, they are known for not being so demanding when it comes to quality to the companies, they tend to satisfy more easily compared to consumers from other countries. Some life foundation for Colombian consumers are their beliefs, their compromise with the country and their family so they feel more attracted and loyal to companies when they give some direct or indirect benefit to one of those foundations. They usually do not search for a lot of information so the main source for their knowledge comes from what they see and heard from others so it is important that companies know how to give a clear message to them so they are able to understand what is the message companies are providing them with (Martínez et al., 2015).

As it is happening all around the world, Colombians have been noticing the environmental impact and changes that have come over the years as a result of human activities but they have decided at the same time to start implementing and compromising to different strategies in order to reduce their environmental impact. They have decided to modify and adapt their usual daily routines to new ones that focus on more environmentally friendly actions that could start making little changes like changing their diet, searching for better ways for waste management like recycling and reusing, reducing natural resources

consumption and many others (Pardo & Alfonso, 2018), showing us that the population is not just aware of all the damage the environment has suffered over human history but also that they decide to compromise with it and with its preservation and recovery letting future generations enjoy from a healthy environment.

There are two main drivers that make that Colombian people actually buy something, those are the necessity and the enjoyment; because of the wide diversity of geography in the country people may change those drivers depending on their location so when it comes to tradition like in food and flavors for example, Colombians prefer to buy local as it keeps its origins and makes them feel identify with the product. Unfortunately, when is related to other more standard products, few people take into consideration if the products are made in Colombia or in foreign countries, the fact they appreciate and consider the most important is that in fact it satisfies its necessities however, people is also willing to pay more for a Colombian product with quality that satisfy their needs (Herrera Mora et al., n.d.).

To promote local consumption in the country, the Government developed and strategy called *Compra Lo Nuestro* which aims to increase local consumption and preference for the population, it helps by improving the communication between the consumers and the supplier giving all the needed information to consumers (*Compra Lo Nuestro*, n.d.). this strategy is also support by others and by different movement like *Economía Naranja* that is a development model aiming to transform the economic and social aspects of the country in the different regions, their foundation is in creating, producing and delivering local goods and services (*ABC Economía Naranja*, n.d.). Those changes and implementations also make Colombian consumers more conscious and demanding from the country so here is where

comes the importance that local companies and the ones place in the country develop sustainable practices to be able to supply the local needs.

There is a common and relatively new concept that has been spreading all around the world, when it was first introduced, people did not imagine the impact and approach that was going to generate in the future years for everyone and everywhere, this term is the word Globalization. There are thousands of definitions from different authors and organizations for this word but, it can be defined as everything that conducts to or whose consequence gets to the transnational or transcultural integration of every kind of activities (Stoudmann, n.d.). Colombia is a country that trade every year with other countries and recently some of those foreign countries started the implementation of new regulations that aims to ensure sustainable practices in everything they produce and develop inside the country and everything that enter to their territory, this is making that every country that wants to trade with them must then follow and make a full implementation of those practices to meet their requirements (Martinelli & Midttun, 2010). As a result, from those relationships with others, Colombia have started to implement those practices but it has also impacted its population and they have started to change their consumption behavior and promoting more conscious consumption and practices as well.

In Colombia, customers value a company with good practices not just with the environment but also with their employees and the society. Some of the main actions that the population have implemented is to reduce their resources consumption and just using the needed amount, they appreciate companies following the CSR models and protecting the environment (Villa Castaño et al., 2016).

4.7 Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is composed and build by different elements, the first element for it is the attitude, those attitudes are built from the information collected by people from their experiences with something and has a lot of influence when it comes to make a final decision on something (Watson et al., 2015). Here lays the importance and all the effort companies put on giving the best possible experience to their customers so as a result they would be able to create good memories and pleasant situations in their minds and would be more likely to come back and buy or take the services the company is offering to them.

The second element is purchase behavior as it is the intention or actual action of buying in repetitive times to a specific company, there are different models, theories and methods that companies implement to analyze their customer behavior like the frequency, monetary theory and others. Purchase behavior is also influenced and affected by the attitude because if customers have a bad experience like lack of alternatives or bad usage experience, they are most likely to change their purchase experience (Watson et al., 2015).

Customer loyalty could be evaluated as the customer satisfaction with the products or services offered by the company creating a long term relationship based on trust with the company that takes the customer to make repeated purchases and promote the company with its own community attracting more customers to the company by sharing their good experiences and high expectations (*THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE* - ProQuest, n.d.).

Actually, holding loyal customer is less expensive than attracting new ones. For this reason, companies are focusing more in developing strong relationships with their customers to create customer loyalty and as a result they will have a competitive advantage making them different from their competitors in the market and keeping their customers. In order to achieve this purpose, companies are implementing different strategies to better understand their customers, their desires, wishes and needs so they could improve customer satisfaction and the quality of their service (*THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE - ProQuest, n.d.*).

The main factors to build customer loyalty customer value and customer satisfaction. When referring to customer value, it refers to which are the needs and desires the customer have and what do they actually get when they buy the product or service. It is shown that is more effective the value perceives by the customer from the product or service rather than the customer satisfaction after the purchase. Even if the customers if satisfied with its purchase, it does not mean they are going to buy it again or will prefer a specific brand in comparison to the others. Here is the importance for the companies not just to focus on the satisfaction of the needs of their customers but also focusing on creating an emotional bond so they could perceive the product not just as a satisfaction of their needs but also as a high value. When there is a high level of satisfaction for the customer, it could increase the general level of customer loyalty by the combination of high satisfaction levels and high value levels (*THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE - ProQuest, n.d.*).

4.8 Types of customer loyalty

A customer could have an attitudinal loyalty, others could have a behavioral loyalty and other could have both of them at the same time. Depending on the type of loyalty a customer has, it represents different things to the company as the benefits it could bring are different. Additionally, according to Watson's research, it is highlighted that customer loyalty is built with relational strategies more than incentive strategies; incentive strategies do not build honest loyalty but is just another loyalty card from another company to the customer (Watson et al., 2015).

Another way to divide the types of customer loyalty is the single brand loyalty, the split loyalty and the weak loyalty or also known as disloyalty. The single brand loyalty is when the customer has a strong positive attitude and beliefs to a single brand, there are certain products or services that could have a high impact and value in the customer's life or cover basic issues that could create this type of loyalty.

Split loyalty is the behavioral loyalty to different brands in any product group based on the usual buying behavior and the previous buying experiences. This type of loyalty could be due because customers do not perceive any difference within the same product from different brands or the usual presence of new brands regarding the product.

Finally, the weak loyalty or disloyalty comes when the customers want to try different products or services having more opportunities and searching for changes. This could happen when the customer need the product or service as an urgency or when they face promotional products (*THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE* - ProQuest, n.d.).

There could be other different classifications to the type of loyalty for the customer like loyalty, latent loyalty, spurious loyalty and no loyalty. Or also there is the cognitive, affective, conative and actionable loyalty types (*THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE* - ProQuest, n.d.). for all these different classifications, they all follow kind of the same structure where the customer could show a strong attachment to a single product of a brand or to the entire brand and make continuous purchases and recommend it to its close circle being this the higher level of loyalty until the lower one where the customer is not really attach to any brand and just want to satisfy its needs with a product and does not care the brand but take into consideration any other kind of factors like the price, promotions, etc.

4.9 Impact of customer satisfaction and customer complains in customer loyalty

In order to ensure customer loyalty, it is necessary to have customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. When customers feel their needs are being satisfied by a product or a specific brand, their willingness to change to other brands or products is lower and they could increase their resistance to the change. When a company has a loyal customer, they could reduce their costs to keep this customer and at the same time they could increase their profitability in the long term by taking advantage of the customer satisfaction and previous relationship they developed.

Satisfied customers are most likely to share their positive opinions and recommend the brand, product or service to their relatives and people they know, so as a consequence this could also increase the amount of new possible customers for the company increasing their sales. Nowadays, when people want to share their opinions, they usually go to their social

media or to the internet in order to communicate their opinions with other. Research developed by the Penn State University shows that the how and why something is recommended give a shape on consumer opinions and help them to make the final decision of choosing product, service or brand over other different options in the market (*Consumers' Buying Decision Based on Product Recommendation Online, Here's How*, 2021). There are some studies that show that even when someone wants to buy something expensive or something more cheaper, they are going to the recommendations of others that they consider as not influencers or leaders, they trust more the opinion of people like them instead of influential one so here lay the importance for companies to motive their daily customers to comments about their products, to talk about their experiences and if those comments are positive, it is most likely that others will see those comments and will buy it (Forbes & Forbes, 2013).

On the other hand, if the customers do not feel their needs are being covered and satisfied by the product or service, they are going to complain not only directly with the company but also with people around them and something on bigger platforms like social media where a lot of people is going to see its thoughts and could prevent themselves of buying the specific product and sometimes event prevent of buying any product for that specific company (*THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE - ProQuest*, n.d.).

According to a study whose purpose was to analyze the impact that a negative comment or opinion could make when it comes for customer decision making, the study results show that a single negative review over a product or service could reduce the probability of

purchase in 18.3%, additional results show that when it comes to a critical opinion, customers are around 10.5% most likely to search for other items (Varga & Albuquerque, n.d.).

Another study also showed that every nine of ten customers first check others customers review before making a purchase, the study also shows that when there is an increase in just one star (depending on the qualification methodology used in different web sites), the revenue could increase between five to nine percent. Around 88% of people have the same amount of trust to online recommendations as well as personal recommendation showing the high impact that comments from people that they do not even know can make in their purchase decision and behavior. Finally, when customers notice and see good reviews for a specific brand, product or service, they are likely to spend 31% more of their money. On the other hand, if they notice a bad review and comment, around 86% of the customers will hesitate and not buy in the business, product or service with the negative comment (*How Negative Reviews Affect Business*, n.d.).

Considering the importance and the difference that good and bad reviews generate for a business, it is important that companies are aware and put a lot of attention and effort when it comes to complains as this could be used as a reference for future customers. When there is a negative review, the most important thing to do is to make the customer feel heard and start working in order to correct those problems, by showing the customer the importance he or she has to the company it could be possible that they still buy from the business and do not continue the propagation of its bad experience to others affecting the image of the company but instead, could share all the attention received by the business and how they care about the issue and work hard in order to bring a solution (*THE IMPORTANCE OF*

CREATING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE - ProQuest, n.d.).

4.10 Green marketing and sustainable practices

Green marketing is a communication channel companies are using nowadays in order to share with their actual customers and possible customers, information regarding their green practices not only in their production and all internal processes of the company but also in their final product or service which customer is actually going to be able to buy and enjoy. This is with the main purpose of showing not only their social responsibility but more important, their environmental responsibility (Stoica, 2021). Another definition to this concept is the promotion of products and services by the implementation of messages focused on the ecology (Robert K. Dzogbenuku et al., 2021).

This kind of communication is being implemented with two main purposes, the first one is to give ecological education to all the interested groups of the company or the specific product itself and, the second purpose is to create, support and robust their image as a company that is environmental responsible (Stoica, 2021).

Green marketing is composed by different elements and strategies like the use of ecological marketing, ecofriendly marketing and sustainable marketing between other options. The main idea when using those kind of messages and strategies is not only to show the customer the environmental and sustainable practices a company is following and implementing but also to create some kind of consciousness in every person that sees this information so they could orientate and change their actions and behavior with a more

sustainable orientation base on sustainable behavioral policies (Robert K. Dzogbenuku et al., 2021).

This marketing practices must follow some policies which they must meet in order to use green marketing or anything related to that, otherwise if they do not follow the policies, they may be doing greenwashing. The idea is that their products or services could satisfy the needs of their customers in the best possible way and at the same time that they make the smallest impact on the environment (Robert K. Dzogbenuku et al., 2021).

The success when implementing this kind of strategies depends on the willingness that companies have to actually change their production and business practices. There are three main changes to implement when changing to a green marketing strategy (*Green Marketing*, n.d.), the first one is claiming social responsibility for the previous changes focused on sustainability and also showing the future initiatives that will help them to implement other eco-friendly practices getting closer to sustainability and changing the image of the brand.

The second change is manufacturing eco-friendly products, it would be ideal to implement the strategy of manufacturing sustainable products with local sources as this strategy could increase customer loyalty. There are two reasons for that, first it means that the company is going to invest on the environment preservation and would be an important factor for brand-conscious consumers and second, by implementing local production they could promote and generate new jobs in the community and at the same time help local economies.

The third change would be the promotion of sustainable business practices, by the implementation of sustainable practices and actually promoting environmentally friendly

practices, a chain effect could be produced by making customers change their normal consumption behavior and change it to a more sustainable one changing to new brands, products and services that support and preserve the environment. There are some incentives like sustainable packaging, the use of recycled products, donations, etc.

There has been identify some positive aspects coming from green marketing (*Green Marketing*, n.d.); the first one is the identification of new resources and renewable ones, by changing production activities more orientated to sustainability, companies need to find new alternatives that at the beginning could represent a reduction in production while they get use to the new ways and sources but in the future they could develop more productive processes and harmless to the environment.

The second positive aspect is the increasing loyalty by customers to the brand and also the increasing of conversions, by the implementation of sustainable practices companies could experience increasing sales and additionally could engage more with their customers.

The third positive aspect is the reduction of overhead costs, by the implementation of sustainable practices companies could reduce the use of other resources like water or electricity, this change could also help them become more self-sufficient and, the reduction of costs could help them to increase their profit and could invest in other aspects of the company.

Even though there are positive aspects as a consequence, there are also some negative aspects generated as a result of the implementation of green marketing due to the misunderstood of some companies (*Green Marketing*, n.d.). The first negative aspects could be the high expenses required for the production of sustainable products, even when

sustainable products or services could help the environment, there is a need of new resources in order to manufacture it and for the implementation of renewable energy systems a high investment is needed by companies. For small businesses this could seem as almost an impossible investment and at the same time for some customers this could become as an inaccessible product as the price could increase and then they would not be able to afford it and may need to change to other non-sustainable options but less expensive.

The second negative aspect is the skeptical consumers, though the companies implementing sustainable practices is increasing, unfortunately there is also an increasing number of companies greenwashing and eco-bleaching customers. Greenwashing could be defined as a situation when a company is spending more money and resources in marketing its “environmentally friendly” practices instead of actually trying to minimize its environmental impact, in order to attract and engage with more customers considering the willingness of new generations to spend their money on businesses and products that are sustainable and promote the preservation of the environment (*What Is Greenwashing and How to Avoid It*, 2021). As a result of those nontruthful strategies, consumers are skeptical and are not completely sure on which are the brands and product they could completely trust and which of them are lying.

Finally, the third negative aspect is the unforeseen industry-wide consequences, with sustainable practices customers could tend to prefer those businesses instead of the traditional ones but this may cause also a change on different industries where some companies with traditional productions may need to slow down because of the decrease on demand for their products affecting its profit and maybe the future of the company but on the other hand, other companies may need to increase their production speed and maybe with this they may need

more resources so as a consequence they will still affect the environment and would not be able to control well the use of resources for the production.

4.11 Sustainable practices and customer loyalty

For customers, green brands and companies implementing sustainable practices are link with the engagement and commitment with the environment and its preservation (Robert K. Dzoghbenuku et al., 2021). There are some facts showing the influence that sustainability could create on the relationship customers have with a brand, product or service (*The Role of Sustainability in Customer Loyalty* | *CustomerThink*, n.d.).

The first impact that sustainability aligns with customer values, there are different studies showing the importance that sustainability has acquired over the years at the moment of customers making purchasing decisions, around 47% of people is willing to pay more for a product if it is sustainable and this trend is going to increase in the next years with the new generations that are more concerned about the environment and sustainable practices. One of the main drivers of loyalty in customers is the emotional involvement they develop with a product or service; sustainability drives a lot of emotions and issues whose people are caring about by developing a commitment and increasing customer loyalty with brands they feel identify and connected with by caring for the same issue (*The Role of Sustainability in Customer Loyalty* | *CustomerThink*, n.d.).

The second impact is that sustainability helps customers uphold personal values, customers search for brand that not only implement sustainable practices but that at the same time help their consumers make their difference and support. When companies change their

traditional behavior for more sustainable ones and align to customers beliefs and desires, customers could develop a stronger engagement and increase its loyalty to the brand as they feel identify with it (*The Role of Sustainability in Customer Loyalty* | *CustomerThink*, n.d.).

The third impact is that sustainability helps customers become brand advocates, when a customer notice shared values and develop an emotional relationship with a sustainable brand, around 72% of them will share its positive experience with 6 or more people. By implementing sustainability, customers would be more likely to become brand advocates, there is also the “social proof” where people want to show they are compromise with something that has value and as sustainability is becoming more important every day, for people is important to compromise with it (*The Role of Sustainability in Customer Loyalty* | *CustomerThink*, n.d.).

It is important that brands show with real actions their commitment as a sustainable business, customers will feel more comfortable if they can actually be sure about the products they are planning to buy, it would be also more interesting and motivating if in all the production process they include sustainable practices from the beginning to the end, with this actions customers could gain confidence in sustainable brands as they have the perception of a transparent brand (“Why Does Sustainability Play A Role In Customer Loyalty?,” 2022).

One of the business practices or values in a company making employees lost their loyalty are first mistreat to employees specially on the supply chain process. Additionally, the link between a company that has any process related with polluted practices. To implement and develop customer loyalty is important to make those previous practices out of the radar and

also keep in mind that the key is to create an emotional link, focusing on a personal relationship and an actual action in it and its sustainable practices (McKeever, 2022).

4.12 External incentives to implement sustainable practices

Considering the importance sustainability has on actual practices and the need to preserve the environment, there are different types of incentives used in order to motivate and promote the implementation of sustainable practices inside the organizations.

The first are the administrative incentives, this type of incentives help the companies by reducing their needed time and resources to follow the regulations and legal requirements, these types of incentive are quickly and simply to implement for companies and other additional benefits could be the reduction of public sector administration costs. By implementing sustainable and good environmental practices, they have the perception that their administrative burdens are reduced. There are two different types of administrative incentives, the mandatory ones and the voluntary ones, one example of the mandatory one is the incentive from the UK Environment Agency where companies that have a certification on environmental management systems (EMS) will have less inspections reducing also their administrative obligations. An example for the voluntary one is the EPA Project XL where the US Environmental Protection agency lets companies extend their permit schedule if they are compliant with some standards (ECORYS, 2012).

The second are the economic incentives, there are different ways of using these incentives, one of the most common is the tax incentive which try to promote the improvement on the environmental performance of the organizations, there is also the

tradable permit schemes more related with GHG (greenhouse gases) and other air pollution emissions, there are also the direct economic incentives like loans or subsidies. One voluntary program is the remake vouchers made by the EU funded program which provides vouchers for companies so they could have free consultancy support to learn and understand how they could increase their resource efficiency, another examples is the eco-driving test in Sweden where drivers from transport companies can save costs and reduce emissions by taking the eco-driving test (ECORYS, 2012).

The third incentive is the reputational incentives, one of the main motivations for companies is to improve and promote a good image between not just their consumers but also everyone around. One example is the global reporting initiative where organizations are motivated to make a public report of their environmental, economic and social performance (ECORYS, 2012).

4.13 External incentives to implement sustainable practices in Colombia

As Colombia is one of the countries following the Sustainable Development Goals, the government has compromise with it with the collaboration of different organizations like the Business Environment Corporation (CAEM by its initials in Spanish), the National Authority of Environmental Licenses (ANLA by its initials in Spanish), and others. There are different economic benefits and tax incentives that companies could enjoy with the creation and implementation of different projects with efficient energy use but unfortunately those are not well known by them (Respaldo, 2019).

The tax benefits accepted and certified by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development are the equipment used to execute any sustainable practice like recycling, waste management, water treatment, etc. all the energy coming from wind energy or agricultural residuals are exempted of paying income taxes. Other initiatives is the Business recognition for the environmental and sustainable actions, the business entrepreneurship with the main goal of environmental and sustainable development, reconversion programs to change and substitute the use of fuels, a reduction in the taxes for companies whose emissions were lower than expected and finally, the promotion and tax reduction by the use of vehicles whose energy come from electricity, gas or that are hybrid (Incentivos tributarios, n.d.).

4.14 Corporate sustainability reporting

In the European Union (EU), there are some companies who must provide some information on a public report where they show their management regarding social and environmental challenges. The companies that have to reports may follow some different requirements like having more than 500 employees and in its report they have to include topics regarding their environmental matter, the social matters and treatment of their employees, the respect for human rights, their anti-corruption policies and talk about the diversity they have inside the organization (Corporate Sustainability Reporting, n.d.).

As this documents main intention is to provide information and data regarding information of the company and its contribution to achieve the Sustainable Development Objectives, it is necessary to be have a transparent document every stakeholder could be able to trust, it could be also be useful for the companies itself as they could use those documents

and compare it in the following years in order to be able to see their progress regarding this important goals (Environment, 2018).

There are some regulations that make sure those reports are following all the required standards in order to avoid greenwashing companies. Due to the important and high level of impact environmental changes are creating nowadays, the regulation for this type of reporting is being updated and changing a lot, not in the reports companies may need to expose how sustainability issues can affect the company and additionally to it, also show how does the company impact the society and the environment. Finally, there is also a required audit who may need to look at the document and certified the information presented on the reports. Even when the development of this type of documents may require from the company financial resources, time and any other effort, it is important they compromise with this documents as they are not only a requirement from the government and the legislation but is also something that could help them as an organization with their stakeholders and also it could be useful information for themselves (What Business Needs to Know about the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive | Blog | BSR, n.d.).

4.15 Corporate environmental sustainability reporting (EnvCSR or CESR)

Corporate environmental sustainability reporting (EnvCSR or CESR) is a practice implemented by different companies around the world where they communicate to their stakeholders all the information regarding their plans and strategies for the short and long term to implement and develop environmental activities in the company, this information must be completely transparent and as a consequence truthful (Rustam et al., 2020).

At the beginning it was being implemented as a result of the constant pressure from the stakeholders as they wanted the organization to behave and be more environmentally friendly, this reporting is sometimes seen by the companies as an added tool they could use with its stakeholders (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017).

One of the main purposes of the environmental reporting is for the companies to openly show their sustainable practices to everyone that reads their report but most importantly to their stakeholders so in this way, they are able to see and trust that their investments and resources are being use on eco-responsible decisions and actions (Rustam et al., 2020). The structure of the reports is almost the same for all the companies around the world but it could be modified depending on the geographical location of the organization as companies could adapt their policies depending on national regulations or the environmental institutions they follow up with (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017).

5. Methodology

This research has been developed with a sample of different Colombian organizations that are actually implementing sustainable practices inside their organization in any part of the life cycle production process, use and disposal of their products. Colombia is a country where more companies are being created with the main idea of sustainable development and environment preservation by considering the importance natural resources and biodiversity represent not just for people but also for the development of the country and its relation with foreign countries.

Also, Colombian population is starting to be more conscious about its consumption behavior, it is important to understand if this new mindset is impacting the local companies

and making them modify their strategies to focus on sustainability or if it does not have a big impact on the market behavior.

5.1 Research methodology

The purpose of this paper is to collect information and analyze if there is any impact regarding the preservation and promotion of the customer loyalty strategies implemented by different companies in Colombia and if there is any influence to consider the development and implementation of sustainable practices. The idea is to use the collected data to see if there is any relation between those two variables or if there is any other relation with other variables not considered from the beginning.

To collect all the needed information to develop this investigation work, the first step to collect data is to go to the actual corporate sustainable reports from different Colombian companies where they mention their current sustainable practices they have been implementing inside the company and its processes. Additionally, other information provided on those reports related to sustainable practices or more eco-friendly are also going to be consider to analyze if there is any relation between their strategy to increase customer loyalty and the implementation of sustainable practices or if it is just related to any other issue, initiative or strategy from the company.

In the Sustainability yearbook 2022 that analyze information from companies all around the world that are implementing sustainable practices in their operations, 14 Colombian companies were present in this list (Tiempo, n.d., p. 14) showing that they already start this journey and could be an example to other companies that would also like to be

recognized not just in that list because of their good sustainable practices but also recognize in the country and in the world for doing their work but in a more sustainable way.

The reports and information from those 14 recognized companies are the first one to be analyze as a first approach to the actions that has been taken by those companies to fit a basis of the activities that are already being use and the new ones they also plan to use as they can be the role model to other starting companies when referring to sustainable practices' implementations inside the corporations in the country.

Additionally to this first approach to the information, a survey was made to different companies with the main purpose of getting more specific information related to the initial question of this work and also have a closer approach of how important is for companies, especially the ones that are just being conformed in the recent years, to consider sustainable practices inside their corporative practices as an strategy and how they perceive that Colombian people value sustainability nowadays. Additional questions were made referring to implementation of sustainability itself in Colombia and which could be the barriers they face when it comes to incentives and the use of resources and any other benefit they perceive from their practices.

After all the research and collecting all the results from the survey, the main methodology implemented for the analysis was the qualitative as it took into consideration the information published by different companies on their reports, additionally to this information, the result from the applied surveys is also going to be taken into consideration and even when those results could have a quantitative analysis, there is a higher influence of the qualitative interpretation for the results.

For the qualitative part, it would be focus mainly on the reports from the big companies of the country as those are the ones that are already developing and posting those reports. Even though, there could be some exceptions from smaller companies that indeed have those reports too so in this situation those are also going to be taken into consideration when collecting all the information and then getting to the final analysis.

The main idea when doing this research is going to be focus on everything related to sustainability and sustainable practices inside the company, it is important to understand the value that each company gives to those specific practices, what is their motivation to implement them inside the corporation and which are their plans for the future regarding these practices. In addition to those questions, it is also important to understand the role of the customer for each company and how valuable is it for each one of the companies, how much is taken into consideration at the moment of making final decisions and implementing new strategies or practices in the company. There are companies that are more focus on a bigger market because of the naturality of the goods they sell so if they lose some customers, it would not affect their business a lot but, it is also the case for companies that have a closer loop with fewer customers and they try to develop different strategies in order to preserve their actual customers and make them more loyal to their brand.

These questions are important to consider because they can give a better interpretation for the information as the reports are going to be taken from companies that are from different industries so because of that, every company could give a different interpretation and focus to their sustainable practices. Considering that these could divide the results at the end, the conclusion could be separated between industries in the country or otherwise, the results

could show that it does not matter the industry a company belongs to, they all give the same value and focus their sustainable practices in the same goal.

Then to add to that qualitative analysis more information to have a more complete idea and actual data, the survey is going to be done to different companies that would previously agree to collaborate and provide their internal information to this work. The survey is going to be in an online approach and it is going to be focus in getting more in deep information from companies, to understand the role that sustainable practices play inside the company, which are their motivations to implement them and the importance it has to implement them. For the companies that have not implemented it yet but are planning to or would like to, the idea is to understand how do they plan to make that implementation in the company and with which purpose they plan to do that.

The role of the customer is so important when collecting all the data from the previous methodology because understanding that is one of the main purposes of this work. It is important to remember that without customers then companies would not be able to succeed so, developing strategies to keep customer loyalty is also an essential part when implementing sustainable practices because companies must understand their customers' needs to make decisions. As a customer you would always expect the product to have the same or better quality you are used to so if the companies change their products just because of sustainable practices but compromise their quality it can affect their customers preference for them and could make them change to another supplier in the market that could provide them the quality they expect and, in some cases, including the sustainability added value.

Now regarding the quantitative part, it is going to be focus on the number of companies that are already developing sustainable practices inside their corporations but also is going to consider the companies that are planning to implement it in short term. Those numbers are important to take into consideration and compare it with other statistics information like for example the total number of companies in the country or to see which is the industry that is focusing their activities more to the sustainable practices, does it have something to do with their impact on the environment or they do it with the purely intention of helping the environment preservation in the country.

The quantitative methodology can also be implemented when referring and analyzing different statistics regarding the behavior of consumptions from the population of the country, which king of factors do they take into consideration when making the decision of buying and from all the facts they take into consideration, which one is the one they consider as the most important one that could make then not to buy the products if it lacks from it.

5.2 Sample selection

The population selected for this specific study by using the online survey where 80 different Colombian companies, most of them small companies currently implementing sustainable practices inside their companies in any part of the production process of their products or services, or any other process in the company. The sample for this study was limited just to Colombian companies currently implementing sustainable practices inside the country and selling it to the local population without taking off the possibility of being present on the international market.

The survey was sent to the companies with different communications channels like mail or different social media like Instagram and Facebook in order to achieve a biggest audience to complete a significant sample to analyze. The structure of the survey was originally developed and send to the companies in Spanish as it is the local language of the country of study. All the survey answers are anonymous to keep their personal information safe and to make them feel more confident on answering by not having to reveal their identity or internal aspects of their business.

Regarding the corporate sustainable reports from different companies considering the availability of these types of reports, a total number of 10 reports were considered and analyze by considering that all the reports may belong to companies who at least have one location in Colombia and whose report is public and trustful. All the reports are also from companies that were recognized on the “The Sustainability Yearbook” of S&P Global in 2022 as the most sustainable companies of Colombia.

5.3 Corporate sustainable reports analysis

To collect the useful information from the corporate sustainable reports of the most sustainable Colombian companies for 2022, the main source of information was the official reports submitted by each company on their web sites or official sites, to be sure the information is completely trustful and can be actually help us get to better conclusions.

When reaching the reports and considering they all have different structures, certain kind of information was search in order to have homogeneous information which could be actually be compared with the others company and have a final conclusion from it.

The main information extracted from the reports was:

- ¿Does the report mention any compromise with the Sustainable Development Goals?
- ¿Do they follow any other international models apart from the Sustainable Development Goals, like the Global Compact?
- ¿Which are the strategies they mention in order to support and promote sustainable practices inside their organizations?
- ¿Do they mention any specific strategy that links their sustainable practices with the wellbeing of their stakeholders apart from the environment, like communities, employees, clients, suppliers, etc.?
- ¿Are there any statistics which could support the impact of their sustainable practices?
- ¿Apart from their sustainable practices, do they have any other actions supporting the environment preservation like investments?
- ¿What is the role of their clients for the company?

5.4 Survey structure

The questions that this study wants to answer is presented below:

Do Colombian companies consider sustainable practice implementation as part of a customer-loyalty strategy?

To collect information and useful data to be able to study and answer the research question, a series of questions were developed to understand the perspective of the

companies. Each question was made with the purpose of getting important information to have a complete overview of the actual status of sustainable practices in Colombia. The questions where most of them open question giving freedom to the answers and avoiding the limitation of the study even though in some cases there where different suggestion for the answer in order for people answering to have a better understanding of the question itself.

All the questions are related with their actual sustainable practices inside their companies, their perception of the behavior of their customers, their motivations to continue implementing sustainable practices, their perception of implementing sustainable processes inside Colombia and which are the benefits they perceive are receiving as a consequence of their sustainability. All the data was collected on the 2022 period.

The questions included on the survey are the following:

- ¿Does you company have sustainable practices currently?
 - Yes
 - No
- ¿Since when are you implementing sustainable practices?
- ¿What is the main purpose of your sustainable practices?
 - Business growth
 - Attract more customers
 - Preservation of the environment
 - Follow and meet the regulations
 - Other

- ¿After de implementation of sustainable practices in your company, have you notice any change on your customers loyalty behavior?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Other
- ¿Why?
- ¿Do you consider that customers are changing their preferences being more oriented to goods or services more sustainable?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Other
- ¿Why?
- ¿Do you think that implementing sustainable practices in Colombia is difficult?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Other
- ¿Why?
- ¿Which changes have you notice after the implementation of sustainable practices in your company like for example, an increase on the sales volume or a cost reduction, in case there is any change?
- ¿When implementing sustainable practices, one of the main purposes of it was focus on increasing the customers loyalty?
 - Yes





- No
- ¿Currently on your business strategy, are you considering the 17 Sustainable Development Goals?
 - Yes
 - No
- ¿Which ones?
- ¿Do you think that all industries are able to implement sustainable practices inside their companies?
 - Yes
 - No
- ¿Why?
- ¿Do you consider sustainable practices implementation as the foundation of your business strategy or as one of the components of your business strategy?
 - One of the components of the strategy
 - As foundation of the strategy
 - Other
- ¿Do you have any external incentives, like government incentives or others, in order to make the implementation of sustainable practices inside your company?
 - Yes
 - No
- ¿Which one?







6. Analysis and results

6.1 Reports analysis results

The following table shows the collected information from the 10 Colombian companies reports analysis and based on this came some initial insights of the behavior and tendencies in the Colombian market related to the sustainable practices.

Table 1: Corporate Sustainable Report Analysis

Company	Sustainable Development Goals	Other international models	Sustainable practices in the organization	Sustainable practices and wellbeing of stakeholders	Statistics	Clients in the company	
	7, 9, 13, 15	Dow Jones Sustainability Indices	Reduce, measure and compensate the green house gases effect	Protection of biodiversity	80% of their operations are carbon neutral		
			Reduce CO2 emissions	90,4% buying locally	36.781 tons of CO2 compensated		
			Millions invested on the environment				
			First habitat bank of Dry Tropical Forest				
			Use renewable energies				
	9, 11, 13	Global Compact	Finance environmental projects	Promotion of consultancies for their suppliers promoting sustainable practices	Prevention of 36 tons of CO2 emissions	Ensure positive experiences and memorable ones in order to obtain customer loyalty and customer recommendations for its diferencial solutions	
			Support organizations with the implementation of green growing policies		Energy efficiency of 40%		
		Dow Jones Sustainability Indices	Develop constructions and sales models of sustainable houses				
			Support sustainable movility				
	7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15	Developed their Corporate Policy of Climate Change	Implementation of the best practices and tecnologia since the beggining of the production till the end	Conservation and restauration of ecosystes to preserve biodiversity	Voluntary compensate 3.209 tons of CO2 with carbon certifications	Give quality service by diversifying its service portfolio	
			Sustainable use of natural resources				
			Reduction on green house gasses emission				
			Promote the reuse and recycle				
	6, 7, 12, 13		Investment in environmental projects	Investment on water projects	Reduce water consumption in 17%	Get close to the consumer, know their needs and habits ir order to offer them the best experience through the diverse portfolio	
			Investmenr in technology to reduce water consumption	Tree sowing	12% of renewable energy generated from the total energy use		
			Investment in electric vehicles	Join the government movement to collect bottles to build a park in Tulua	Reduce their CO2 emission in 19%		

Company	Sustainable Development Goals	Other international models	Sustainable practices in the organization	Sustainable practices and wellbeing of stakeholders	Statistics	Clients in the company	
	6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	Dow Jones Sustainability Indices	Sustainable finance in Colombia	Content generation for employees to teach sustainable practices	Recollected around 1.300 tons of waste material	Keep innovating to create value, be able to positionate in the market and offer clients the solutions that fit with their needs	
			Development of SARAS methodology focus on identify and mitigate projects with environmental and social risk		Compensation of the carbon footprint of 35%		
		Carbon Disclosure Project	Development of a waste management program	Show suppliers the importance of environmental risks management			
		Task Force on Climate-Related	Investment on sustainable infrastructure	Tree sowing			
	7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15	Global Compact	Investment on environmental studies, controls and actions	Support biodiversity preservation	Reduce 10% of their energy consumption	Compromise with customer loyalty and its satisfaction, keep a close relationship and constant communication to continuously improve considering consumers feedback	
		American Gas Association	Selected suppliers and materials more sustainable	Preservation of vegetation and relocation			
		National Association of Corrosion Engineering	Reduce plastic use in their production				
	6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15		Track of the emissions	Investment on biodiversity preservation	Increase their investment in environmental topics in 25%	Be the best possible option for customers of oil products	
			Reduction on the intensity of the carbon emissions		Reduction of 293,594 tons of CO2		
			Reduce and management of water use	Manage the pollution in water and air for local communities			Reduce the use of water in 20%
			Implementation of circular economy				
	7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	Developed their own Sustainability Policy based on the SDG	Buy from local suppliers promoting sustainable practices	Work with different associations to promote agricultural practices in the country	More than 80% of its goods is bought from local producers	Ensure to include customers in the development of sustainable practices inside and out of our stores	
			Reduce plastic bags in their stores				
			Promote circular economy	Education programs for customer to learn how to recycle	20.975 tons of recycled material		
			Investment on electric vehicles				
	7, 8, 13, 17	Dow Jones Sustainability Indices	Implementation of their control platform of environmental indicators	Incorporate circular economy to increase their customer wellbeing and satisfaction and reduce environmental impacts		Developed efficient products and services, safe and innovative, that improve our customers processes, facilitate their businesses and promote clean operations	
			Set specific goals of the limit of energy use				
			Optimization and control of water use				
	2, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17	Dow Jones Sustainability Indices	Reduction of the green house gasses emissions	Regeneration of the ecosystems to preserve biodiversity	Use of 85.7% recycled packaging	Their wide presence in the market and their differential portfolio let them offer their products and develop a close relationship with customers	
			Increase the efficient use of natural resources		43 tons of packaging collected post consumption		
			Buying from sustainable producers				

Summary of the information presented on the sustainable corporate reports of the Colombian companies and taken into consideration when developing this graduating project.

Source: Author's own work

All the links to the organization's corporate sustainable reports are on the Appendix A of this document.

The first thing to highlight after the research and analysis of the reports is that all this organizations are developing and planning their future sustainable strategies using as a foundation the Sustainable Development Goals specially those related with the climate change referring to the Goal 13: Climate Action and Goal 15: Life on Land.

There are some of the organizations that also use additional organizations and information like the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices or Global Compact in order to also have more complete information and define their future goals in the short, medium and long term.

The importance and influence of the policies and regulations of sustainable organizations inside companies is huge. This could be due for the compromises that the Colombian government agree on with international organizations like the reduction of greenhouse gases emissions or the use of renewable energies. However, it could be also the result for the level of consciousness and awareness that companies, especially the big ones and the ones that have a bigger impact on the environment, are developing.

Even when all the studied companies belong to different industries, from the reports it can be seen that there is a common tendency for all of them in the similarity of their sustainable practices inside of their organizations even when each one is focusing it to their industry and the core of their business. For example, Grupo Éxito, that is a supermarket with presence all around the country, is focusing its sustainable practices on the day-to-day practices of their customers by taking off plastic bags from their stores or buying locally from

farmers in order not to just involve their employees on the process but also their suppliers and their customers. They are taking their sustainable practices outside of the internal organization but also including external stakeholders to increase the impact of their practices, this strategy implies the cooperation between the company and stakeholders as for the case of plastic bags, customers are the ones stopping the use of it helping to meet the company's goal.

Other interesting example is the one of Promigas whose core business is the collection of gas to then sell it as a service to the community. Being conscious of the impact its business has on the environment and the use of natural resources, they are searching and implementing new ways to keep the environmental impact the lowest possible. Internally they are investing to run different studies and analysis of the environment before running any project in order to ensure the best practice and the least impact, they are also involving their suppliers by asking them to have sustainable practices and use less plastic in their processes as part of their environmental compromise. When it comes to their input to other environmental practice, they are investing resources in order to promote the biodiversity preservation; for example, they have implemented a plan to relocate trees present on territories where they plan to develop extraction projects, to other territories in order to avoid felling trees but at the same time being able to develop their business.

In all the reports, the companies stated that they focus their activities and strategies in order to meet their stakeholders' interests and when it comes to their customers, their needs. Some of them also mention in their reports that when they start the implementation of sustainable practices inside the organization was mainly in order to start helping the environment but additionally, because they want to also include and promote this sustainable

culture with their employees, suppliers and customers for them to understand and implement it as part of their lifestyles.

Considering the information collected in the literature review made previously the development of this analysis, there is one important thing to highlight considering the strategies implemented by the companies regarding sustainable practices and the effect this could have in their customer loyalty programs. As it is shown on the summary table of the corporate sustainable reports of the companies, all of them apart from the implementation of sustainable practices inside the company and its processes, they are also investing their resources for sustainable practices outside the company like the preservation of biodiversity in the country, the collection of plastic bottles in order to recycled them and support social projects like the construction of parks for kids in small communities, different projects whit the purpose of improving the quality of life of different communities, investment and development of projects where they involve their consumers and suppliers to teach them how to start implementing sustainable practices in their life and practices, and many other practices.

All of those initiatives mentioned previously, could be strategies implemented by the companies in order to create a relationship with their customers, it could be a way to make strong connections with their stakeholders. By the implementation of this strategies and its nature of helping those who needed the most, people could see their desires represented on the company and their personal values creating a stronger engagement and reinforcement on their loyalty to the brand beyond the product or service they sell, is the importance of the wellness they bring to the environment and society.

Something that also helps the reinforcement of the engagements of customers with the brand is the way they communicate those actions, when developing all these initiatives and communicating them by different channels like their social media, in their stores and even in their public reports where mainly their customers and stakeholders could have access, they are creating a good image of the brand in the mind of everyone accessing to this information.

The importance of creating a good image on the mind of customers is more important than just creating a stronger relationship with customers, it is also important because if those customers share their positives opinions of the brand to others specially in channels with long range like social media, they could also generate a chain effect where the brand could have more customers that already have a good perception of the brand from the recommendations and comment previously heard.

Another important factor to highlight after the analysis, is the importance that biodiversity preservation has for the companies in Colombia. For the companies analyzed, 7 out of 10 mention any practice related to biodiversity preservation and improving its quality of life. As mentioned on the literature review, biodiversity has a huge importance in Colombia because a big part of our economic activity is coming from it so is super important its preservation and the development of good practices in it in order to ensure the availability of using it in the future for production. New generations are being more conscious about it so it is a good strategy for companies to support those kinds of initiatives in order to achieve those customers and create a link with them by showing them that they care about the same issues and problems our country is facing nowadays and that they are actually taking action to change it and improve it.

Finally, it is important to also mention the importance of buying from local suppliers and the support given to local communities. Companies are also implementing the strategies of buying from local suppliers that are usually farmers. Additionally, apart from just buying from them, companies are also investing some resources in order to help them learn and actually implement sustainable practices in their productions processes and in this way, they ensure their suppliers are also being sustainable. There is some evidence showing that Colombians are willing to buy a product or service that is supporting local producers instead of international ones.

Also, there is know that Colombian customers also tend to prefer companies who also support and have social contributions specially when their economic activities affect the wellness of some communities like the extraction companies who even when they try to reduce their impact, still generate some pollutions and damage and the most affected ones apart from the environment are the communities around. This is one of the reasons why it is important to take into consideration and put as a priority its wellbeing, people will see those campaigns and would prefer those companies who also care about people instead of the ones that are selling probably the same product but is not spending additional resources on the wellbeing of people.

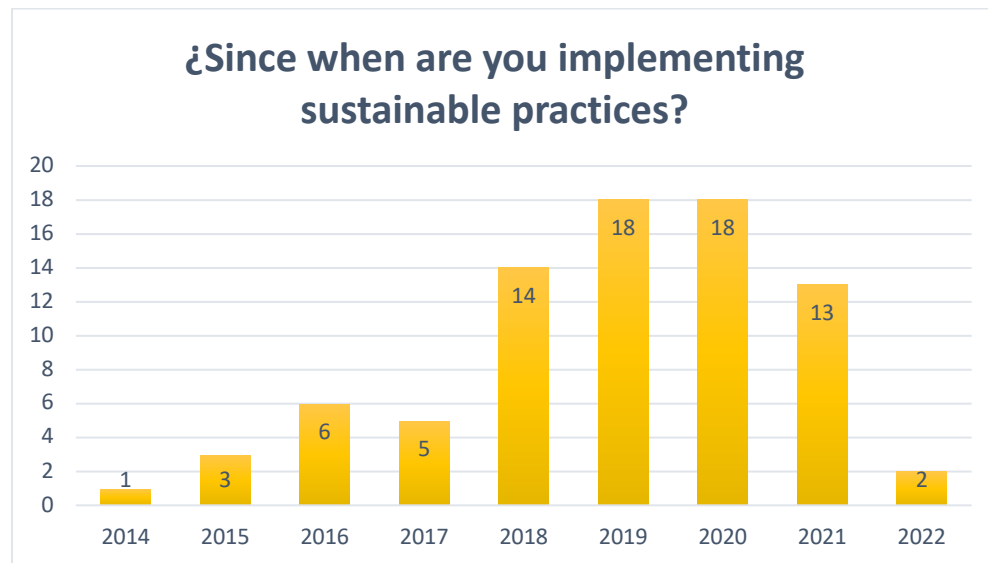
Considering the important points mentioned before, companies are spending more resources and giving more importance to developing sustainable practices inside their companies because they understand that the preservation of the environment for our generation and for future generations is everyone's job. The strategies they are implementing apart from helping the environment and their company's behavior as well, could be also helping then to keep their customers and create a stronger relationship with them.

6.2 Survey results

It is important to first make clear that all the 80 answers presented on this study were answer by companies currently implementing sustainable practices inside their companies meaning that for the first question of the survey asking if they are implementing sustainable practices, it was a 100% of yes answers.

In the figure 1, it can be observed that from the all the companies who completed the survey, there is a higher tendency of implementation of sustainable practices around the years of 2018 and 2021. For the previous years it can be observed that even when there is not higher numbers, it was the beginning of the implementation in the companies and was becoming a more common practice in the country.

Figure 1: Years of implementation of sustainable practices



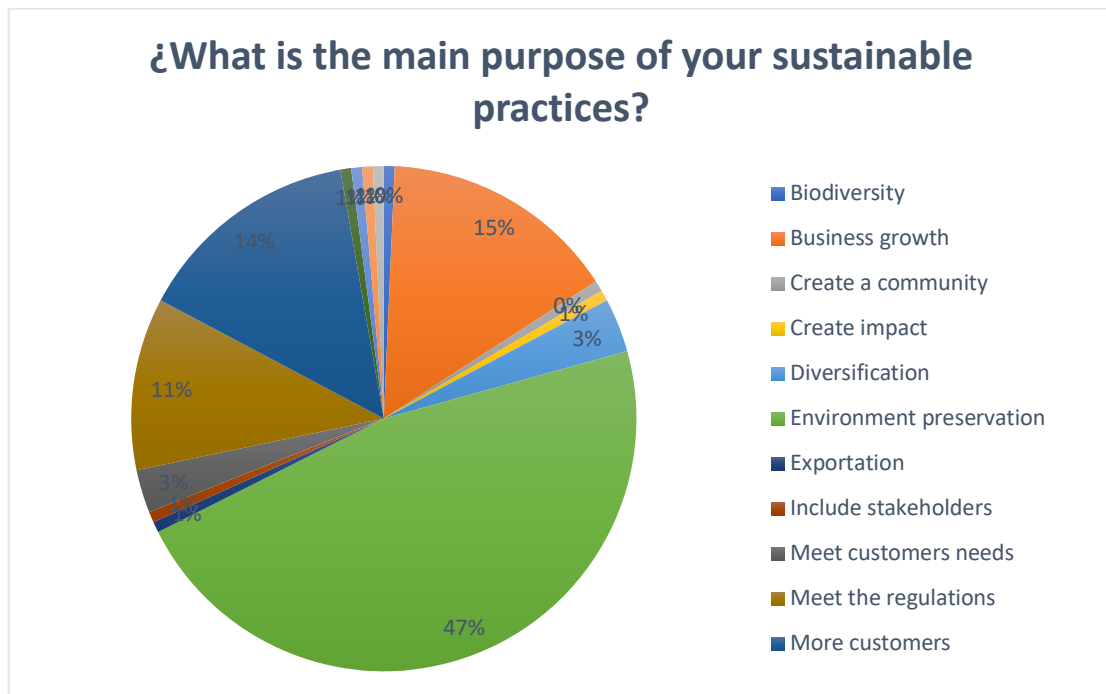
Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

The implementation of sustainable practices could be influenced by different factors, one of them could be the global tendency of implementing this type of practices and even more important because different countries especially European ones, started to demand as a requirement sustainable practice in order to buy from foreign companies. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic started and this was a fact that made a lot of people rethink their plans for the future and change a lot of their habits so people started being a little bit more conscious about their consumption habits and tried being more friendly.

When analyzing and putting into different categories the answer for the main purpose when implementing sustainable practices in the companies, the most common answers were related to the environment preservation followed by the intention of making the business growth, acquiring more customers and meeting the environmental regulations.

Figure 2: Purpose of sustainable practices implementation



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

Other interesting answers were when companies said they implemented these practices because they wanted to meet customers' needs and make a diversification in the market as there were not many sustainable options and customers start demanding those types of products so as a result they decided to develop and give new options to customers. Some other answers were related to the preservation of biodiversity, teaching sustainable practices and for the tendencies developed as a result of the pandemic period the world went through.

When companies were asked if they notice any change on their customers loyalty behavior after they implemented sustainable practices it was a 69% of answers saying that in fact, they noticed changes on their customers behavior and a 29% answer they did not notice any change and just a 2% said they notice a change in some of them.

For the ones that notice a change on their customers behavior, they explained that their customers are feeling identify with the sustainable practices and feel identify with them because in some way they are helping the environment and creating a positive effect. There are some others that explained that customers were the ones asking for those specific products as they already changed their behavior but did not find any sustainable product in the market.

Figure 3: Customer loyalty behavior and sustainable practices

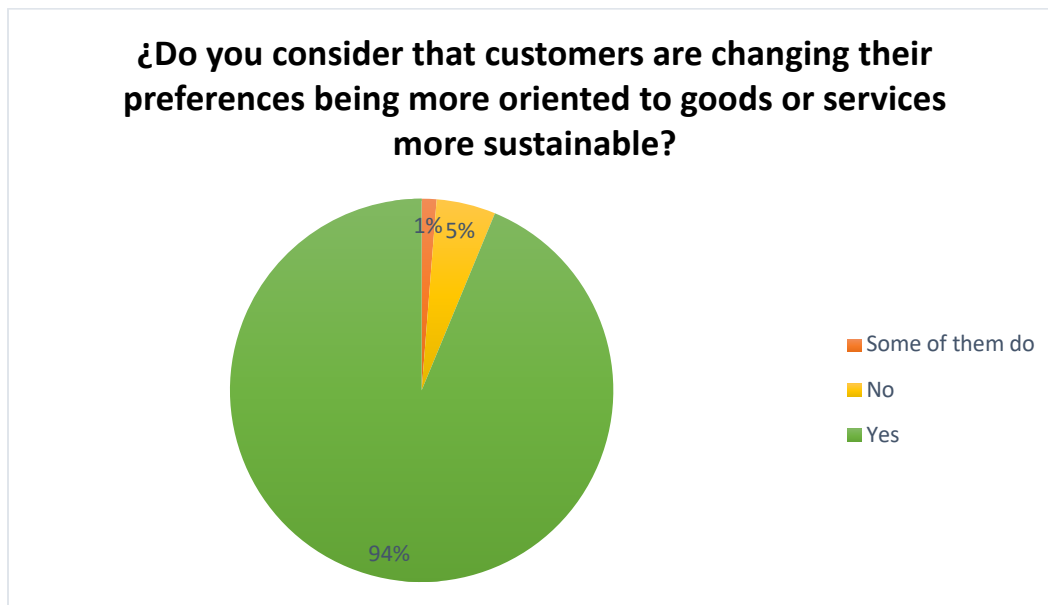


Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

Almost all the answers use as a justification of the change of the customer that they are all being more aware of their impact on the environment and when they find companies and products or services with sustainable practices, they connect more because if they consume those products, they would be helping the environment instead of consuming traditional products.

Figure 4: Customer sustainable behavior



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

From figure 4, it can also be observed that companies consider that customers are changing their consumption behavior being more oriented into more sustainable option. Just 5% of the companies considered that customers are not changing their behavior and 1% consider that some of them are changing. The reasons why they consider this change is taking place is first because they are being more conscious about the impact generated in the environment and the use of resources, another mention reason is that due to the drastic climate changes the world is living nowadays people is now changing their behavior.

An important factor mentioned by some companies is that this is due to the new generations and their tendencies, they stated that new generations are more conscious about the environment and its preservation because they were born in a period of time where they did not know what was living without being worry of limited resources and increasing

temperatures. There is a worldwide crisis and it is more than clear that there is just one planet and everyone needs to work in order to preserve it.

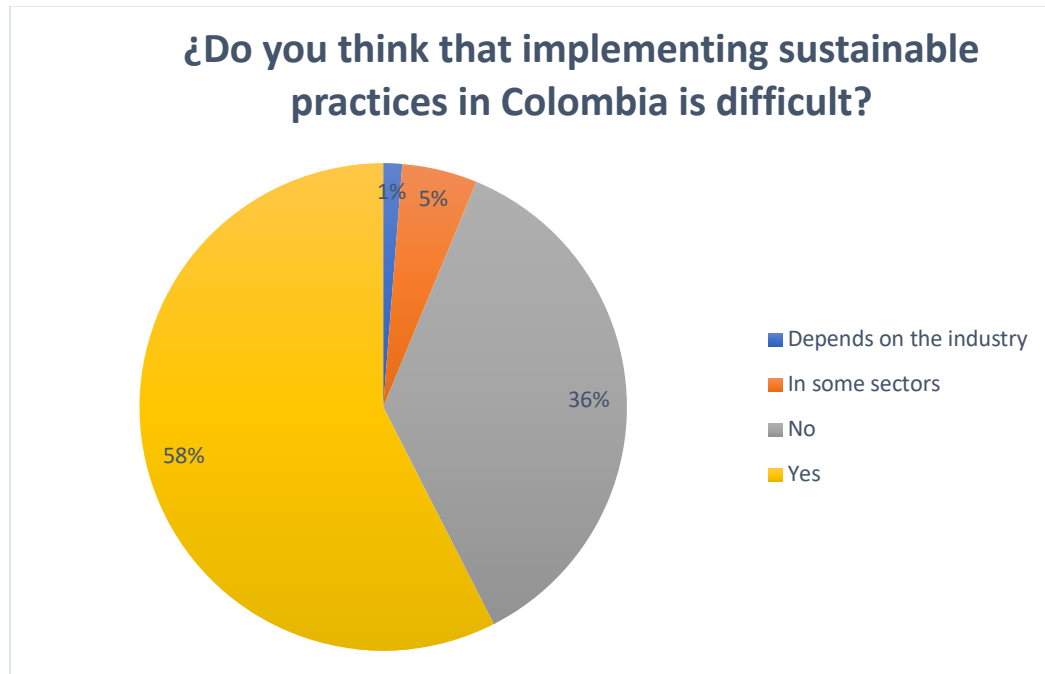
For the ones that did not consider customers are changing their behavior into a more sustainable one, the reasons they mentioned was that this type of behavior is not in our culture and there is still missing a lot of information in order that people understand and actually decide to change their behavior, for now a lot of people still consider the price when making the decision of buying a product instead of other factors like the type of practices use and the impact it could have on the environment.

Regarding the culture and the perception that companies have about the implementation of sustainable practices in the country, it is shown that around 58% of them consider that it is difficult to implement sustainable practices in Colombia. The main reasons were because there are still missing regulations for sustainable practices so companies do not completely understand how does the government regulate it. Also, they said that there is a missing of incentives and support from the government than even when they said there are some incentives if they implement sustainable practices, those incentives do not work really well and are not really incentives.

Apart from that, there is also missing information and technology in order to really understand and take the action to implement those practices as mainly the information for these types of practices is coming from developed countries like European countries or the United States so they do not have a local example to follow for the implementation. Finally, they also mention that those practices are not part of the culture, people do not really

understand what sustainable practices mean and are not really interested in that being also a barrier to implement those practices.

Figure 5: Sustainable practices implementation in Colombia



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.
Source: Author's own work

For the other answers referring that it is not difficult to implement sustainable practices in Colombia or that it depends on the sector or industry, their justification is based on the idea that there is always something companies could make in order to be a little bit more environmentally friendly. There are some industries where is a little bit more difficult to find and implement sustainable practices than others but, thanks to technological development and different practices developed they could adapt some of those practices and start making the difference.

Regarding the question for the changes companies have noticed since they implemented sustainable practices, the most common was regarding the reduction in costs or the redistribution of costs in different processes. Also, they have notice and increasing level of sales meaning they are also showing higher incomes but there are some cases where they mention they could increase their sales but at the same times could increase their costs as sustainable materials are sometimes more costly.

The high need of investment was also mentioned as they need to invest in new technologies or in educational programs in order for their employees to be able to develop in the best possible way those sustainable practices and really understand the purpose of it. As a result, they also mention that they have received acknowledgements for their practices and this have increased their differentiation in comparison to other companies in the sectors but without those practices.

Regarding their relationship with customers, they mention that their relationship has improve as customers feel more identify and connected with the company since they started sustainable practices implementation and, in some situations, they also reported an increasing level of customers that were interested on their products.

Other answers said they developed new alliances with local suppliers or international companies interested in their products, they also developed new policies to control and regulate those practices inside the company, some others have had a national expansion reaching new markets and others have had an international expansion, and for the others there is internal changes in order to control the waste management or recycle strategies or use of alternative clean energy sources.

In the figure 6, it can be observed that more than half of the companies answered that when implementing sustainable practices in their processes, they did not make it as part of a strategy with the purpose of increasing customer loyalty even though 41% did considered it when developing the implementation of these practices in the company.

This is an interesting result because there is not a clear tendency to define if it has importance or not when it comes to plan the implementation of sustainability inside the company, this results could also be because of the newness to the practices in the country so companies are still trying to figure out the best way to implement those practices and the main key points they should take into consideration when making the final decision and oriented their strategy to complete their purposes.

Figure 6: Increase customer loyalty strategy



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

Also, the influence of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is significant as 73% of the companies are including at least one of those goals into their business strategy. This is important because the main objective of those goals is to provide a better future to the world considering not only the environment, which is really important but, also taking into consideration society and the wellbeing of the world in general.

Figure 7: SDG on business strategy



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.
Source: Author's own work

The most mentioned goals in order of frequency were the Goal 13: Climate Action, Goal 7: Affordable and Clear Energy, Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, Goal 15: Life on Land, Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

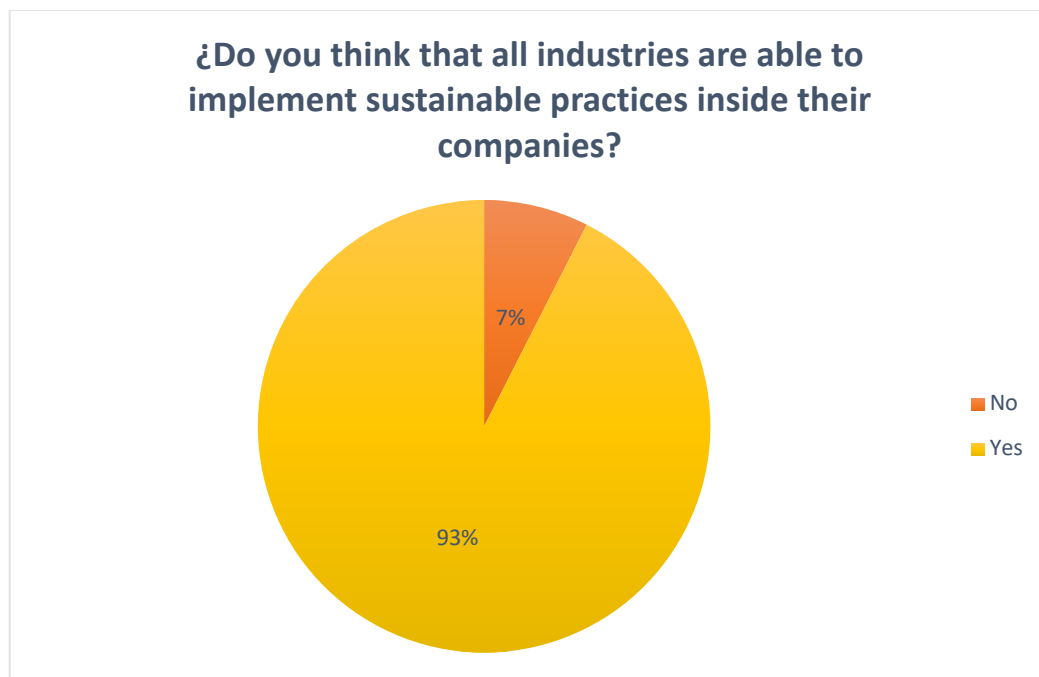
Apart from taking into consideration the climate action and the preservation of the environment, companies are also considering the use of renewable energies even though it represents a high investment for companies and is still not well developed in Colombia. Also, they are implementing the responsible consumption and production and they are using themselves as an example when buying from sustainable suppliers in order to produce a sustainable product or service and provide it to customers promoting this goal.

Regarding the communities and society, companies are also taking them into consideration by ensuring a good working environment for their employees and also by developing different projects including local communities and bringing them some kind of benefits. The importance of bringing good working and living environment for people is important and for this reason is that customers are also more interested in companies that are supporting people instead of other companies that are not or in some cases that even have some proves of bad working environment for their employees.

The answer for the question to see if companies considered that all industries where able to actually implement sustainable practices are shown in figure 8. From all the answers, 93% of them considered that all industries are able to implement sustainable practices inside their companies, their main arguments where because they considered that all the industries could at least implement one of the Sustainable Development Goals inside their organizations. Also, there are different ways to innovative meaning that they could find a way to be more sustainable and environmentally friendly also considering that technology is improving rapidly giving more options for new sustainable practices development.

For the 7% who answered that all industries were not able to implement sustainable practices, they argued that it is because not all the industries behave the same way and some practices implemented in other companies from other industries could not be implemented in different industries considering that the practices are completely different.

Figure 8: Sustainable practices in the industries



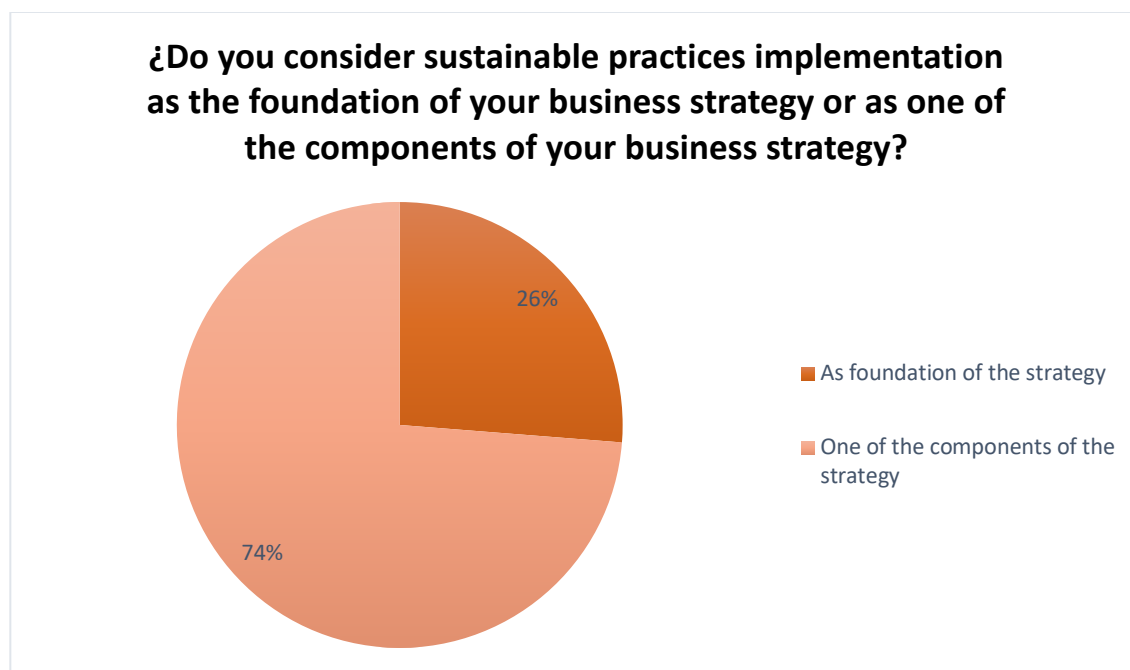
Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

Then was important to understand the role that sustainable practices play on the business strategy of the companies so they were asked if those practices where considered as the foundation of the strategy meaning that all the strategy was based on sustainable practices and all the environmental impact they want to manage in the company or if in the other hand they considered them as one of the components of the strategy meaning that they are as important as the other components of the strategy.

It is interesting to see that just 26% of the companies consider sustainable practices as the foundation of the strategy and 74% consider them as one of the components. This result could be due that some of the companies started without any sustainable practices and implemented them in their journey including it into their strategy but some other companies were born with the idea of being a sustainable company so they were created with sustainability as a foundation. Even though there could also be the situation where companies still were born with the main idea of being sustainable but decided to consider it as a component of the strategy and not the main foundation giving the same importance to other components in order to make the mix, they considered could be the perfect for them.

Figure 9: Role of sustainable practices in the business strategy

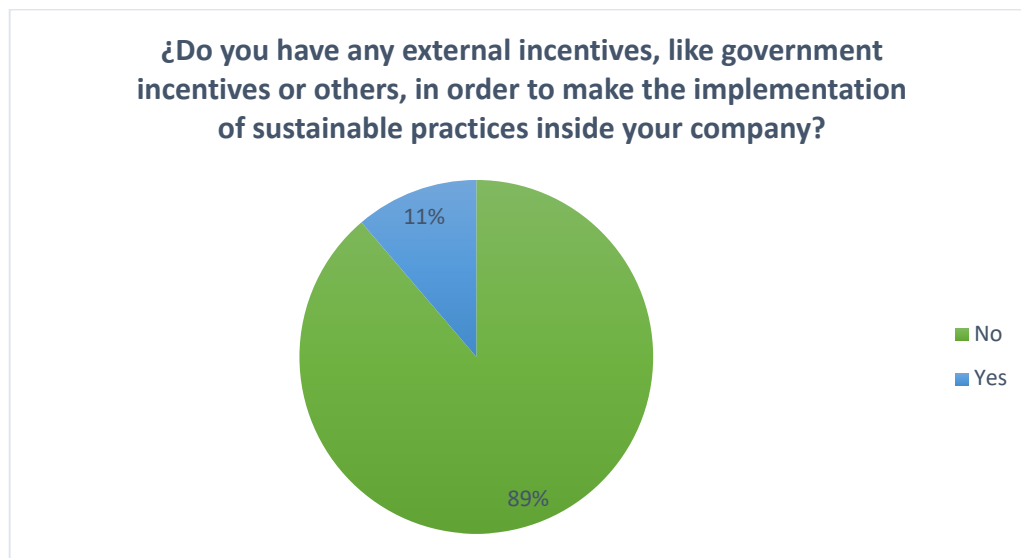


Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

Another interesting factor to study was if companies have any external incentive to make the implementation of sustainable practices in their companies or if it was just because of their own decision.

Figure 10: External incentives for sustainable practices



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

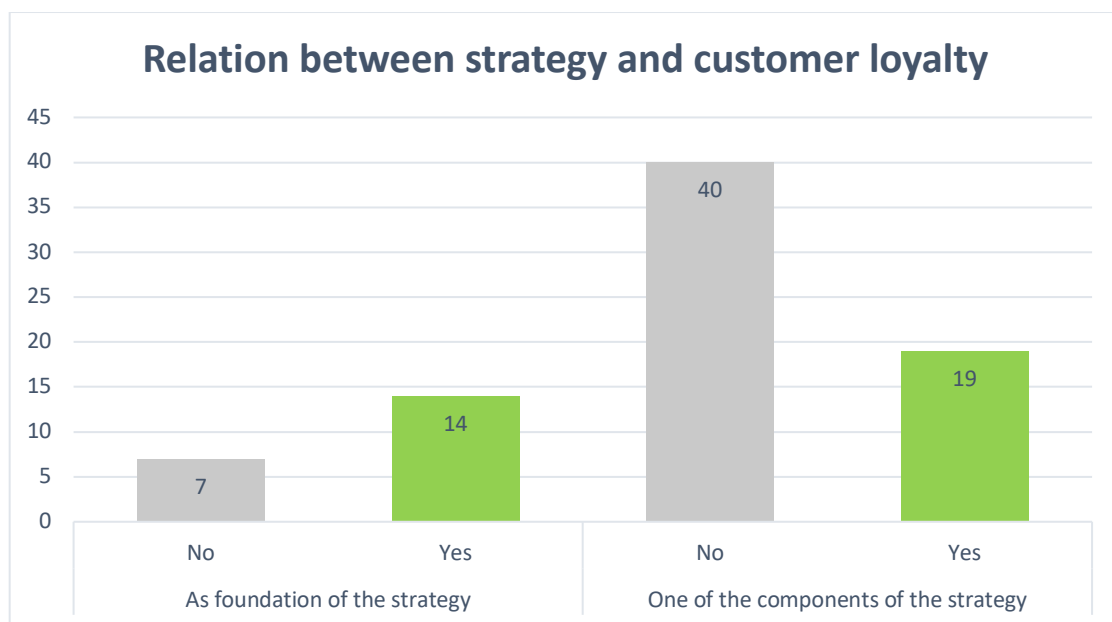
Source: Author's own work

The 89% of the companies answered they do not have any external incentives to make the implementation of sustainable practices in their organizations and 11% said they do have external incentives. Some of the incentives they have to implement these practices are because this is a factor that help them to develop international negotiations and expand their business. Some other incentives are the reduction of taxes, the economic help for employees that use bicycles to come to the office.

When comparing the relationship of the role that sustainable practices have on the strategy of the company, being the foundation or one of the components of the strategy, with

their customer loyalty strategy; the results show that when companies consider sustainable practices as the foundation of their strategy, the majority of the companies when making the implementation of sustainable practices one of their purposes was to increase their customer loyalty.

Figure 11: Relation between business strategy and customer loyalty



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

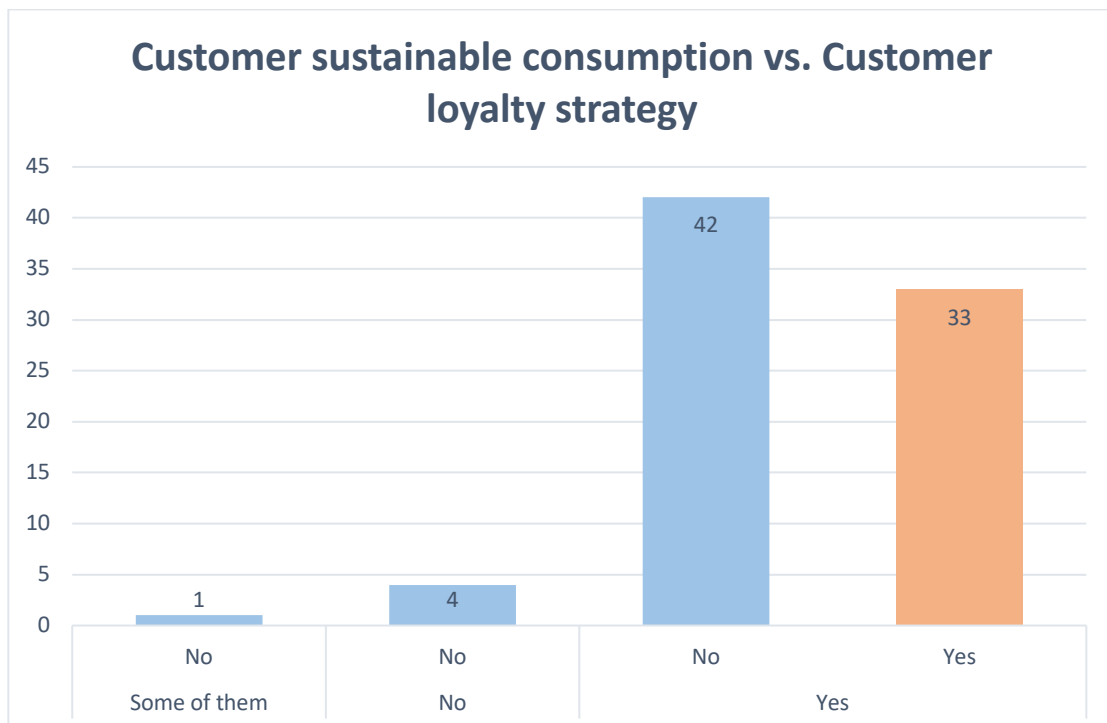
However, when it comes to the companies where the implementation of sustainable practices is considered as one of the components of the strategy, the majority of them do not consider as one of their main purposes the customer loyalty programs.

From these results could be said that when companies consider the implementation of sustainable practices as the foundation of the strategy then they are most likely to also include in it the promotion of customers loyalty programs but when they consider it as one of the

components of the strategy, they do not focus so much on customer loyalty programs but consider other components to build the strategy.

When comparing the perception that companies have related to the consumption behavior of customer related to sustainable products with their intention of companies of increasing customer loyalty the results show that just when companies consider that customers are actually changing their consumption behavior being more interested on changing to sustainable products, companies do focus their strategies to promote customer loyalty in their company.

Figure 12: Relation between customer consumption behavior and customer loyalty



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

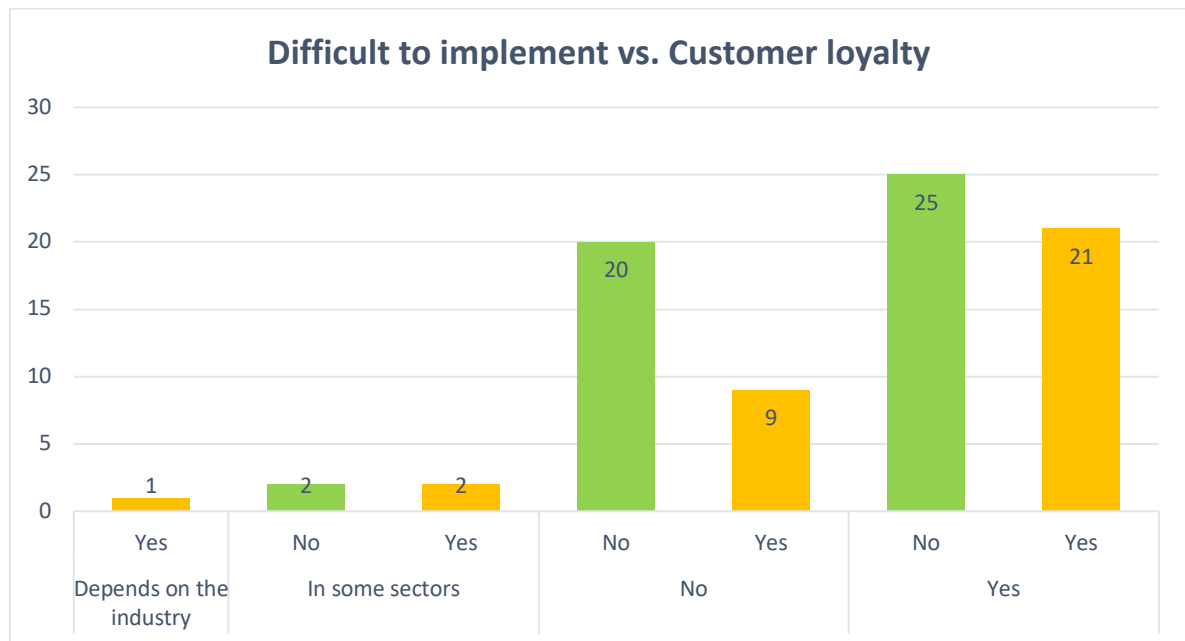
Source: Author's own work

It is interesting to see that when companies do not consider customers are changing their consumption behavior or just a part of them is changing, they do not consider the promotion of customer loyalty into their strategy when implementing sustainable practices. Even when companies do consider that customers are changing their consumption behavior, the majority of them do still decide to not include as their main purpose the promotion of customer loyalty programs.

This could be due to that companies could perceive that even when customers are changing their consumption behavior, it is more effective to use other type of strategies in order to promote the customer loyalty in the company because maybe those other strategies are more effective than the use of sustainable practices as this is a kind of new topic in the country so Colombian customers could still not feel really identify by it or do not completely understand it.

Finally, when comparing the perception that companies have on the level of difficulty when implementing sustainable practices in Colombia compared with their purpose of promoting customer loyalty when implementing sustainable practices, result show that even if companies consider it is difficult or not to implement those practices, they still do not set their purpose as promoting the customer loyalty in their company.

Figure 13: Relation between difficult to implement and customer loyalty



Results of the survey answered by different Colombian companies developing sustainable practices in their organization.

Source: Author's own work

There is a tendency to not decide to set as one of the purpose the customer loyalty strategy when it comes to sustainable practices in the companies even if they consider it is difficult or not to make the implementation. This could be because of other factors like companies knowing that there are other ways to increase customer loyalty in a most effective way than based it on sustainable practices and being environmentally friendly.

7. Conclusions and practical recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Considering that the main purpose of this project was to see if Colombian companies are considering the implementation of sustainable practices inside their companies as part of their

customer loyalty strategy, with the collection of literature review, the reports analysis of companies located in Colombia implementing sustainable practices and reporting it, and the result of the survey filled by different Colombian companies implementing sustainable practices; some conclusions can be draw.

First, it can we concluded that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) has increased their influence when it comes to the development of corporate strategies where there is at least one of them taken into consideration when companies are developing their strategies with the idea of creating a positive impact on the world.

Second, even when companies are implementing sustainable practices and other actions related with biodiversity preservation, working with local suppliers or supporting local communities; it seems like even when they do not take into consideration and make these practices with the purpose of promoting and as a customer loyalty strategy, those actions could be helping them to make a stronger relationship with their customer and indirectly helping their customer loyalty programs.

Sustainable practices are something somehow new for Colombian companies and it is because of the consciousness that companies are developing regarding their impact on the environment and the compromises Colombian government has acquired regarding sustainability. This could be one of the main barriers for companies to consider these types of implementations as part of their customer loyalty because population is still not super familiar with these terms and maybe the effect of using it as foundation of their strategy is not going to be as significant as it could be in other developed countries where sustainability has years of practice and history.

Considering that the majority of the companies have notice a change on the consumption behavior of people and additionally they consider customers are changing their consumption behavior into a more sustainable one, using the implementation of sustainable practices could start being more common and useful in the strategy of the companies considering the data improving they will perceive as example from other companies.

Even though, it is important to considered that more than half of the companies considered that implementing sustainable practices in Colombia is difficult due to different factors like the missing regulations and incentives from the government, apart from the high levels of investment they should do in order to implement appropriate technology and education to develop well done practices. This could be another reason why companies are not basing their strategy in those practices because it could make it more difficult for them to actually achieve and follow their strategy promoting customer loyalty.

For the companies where the sustainable practices are considered as the foundation of the company it can be seen a tendency to then take into approach it to promote and strengthen customer loyalty, in the following years more companies could start considering it as the foundation and the strategy to build a strong relationship with customers. However, while the country gets more information about sustainability and the population gets more used to these new terms, they are implementing other strategies to promote their customers loyalty instead of just using sustainable practices.

Other factors that could promote companies to use sustainable practices as the strategy for their customer loyalty programs could be the well-done regulation from the government regarding these practices and the clear understanding and management of how to be able to

enjoy the incentives the government is promoting in order to be able to make the implementation with all the support they need and all the information they must know to make the change.

In conclusion, with the reports analysis research and all the data collected from the surveys filled by different companies with sustainable practices in Colombia, it is not possible to define a clear relationship between the variables to define that in fact Colombian companies are actually using sustainable practices in order to promote and build the customer loyalty strategy, even though they considered sustainable practices as an important component for the company, a new tendency from the new generations and the new consumption behaviors; they are not the main components and foundation for their strategies. It could be possible to increase the importance of sustainable practices role inside the strategies of the companies when the subject is more developed in the country and companies have more tools to better understand the impact of these practices in their customer loyalty programs.

7.2 Practical recommendations

Since this study was developed with the main idea of identifying the use of sustainable practices related to customers loyalty strategy inside companies, the results of it could be useful for companies who are looking for data regarding what is their opinion and perception regarding sustainable practices development in Colombian companies and the role they could run when it comes to building the customer relationship and developing customer loyalty strategies.

They could also identify new ways of also increase the customer loyalty by using different strategies like social projects or environmental projects that are not fully related with the core business but that is still generating a positive impact.

This could also be useful for someone who is interested in the sustainable practices that companies are taking nowadays and which are their main purposes when doing so, there is still missing a lot of research regarding sustainable practices in Colombia and could be the beginning and the basis for future studies and investigations, this could be useful to start building useful literature for future researches.

For companies is important to considered different practices and search for different models in order to better understand what are sustainable practices, a good model to take into consideration could be the one from the companies catalogued as the most sustainable of Colombia and check their reports, those reports have a lot of useful information companies could use and based their strategies on it.

Even though is important to considered that those companies have years of history and are large companies meaning that small companies and startups could not follow the exact way their strategy as they are different size, have different experience but even thought they could inspire with their information and start building their own strategy.

Is important that companies also take into consideration their customers opinions when developing loyalty strategies, while customers are getting familiar with sustainability and feel identify with it, they are going to start asking for those practices and they will value a lot of they see companies are putting effort in order to meet their needs the way they want. The worlds tendencies are starting to change and is important to be prepare to react to the new

demands' customers are going to make so even when customers are not demanding some specific practice yet, companies should start investigating and searching for new ways they could still produce their products or services in a more environmentally friendly way.

8. Limitations and future directions

Despite the result showed on the analysis section and the ones showed in the conclusions section, there are some limitations that should be taken into consideration for future research or managerial applications from the results obtained. The limitations were the following:

- All the surveys were applied to smalls companies who actually are running sustainable practices but all the variables were qualitative so they were catalogued in different types of answers to be able to divide the answers in different types so the division of the answers depend on the perception of the person developing these projects. For future investigations it could be better to give already different options to the companies so in this way the result could be more accurate since the beginning.
- It should be interesting the use of interviews as it could also be helpful when developing a related study as there is more opportunity to considered different variables and could be better to run a quantitative study in order to have numeric results.
- In the study it does not specify the industry where companies belong to differentiate the survey but it could be interesting to analyze if there is a different

perception regarding sustainable practices implementation on companies depending on the industry of the company.

- The survey was send to companies all around the country but in the survey it did not ask them to specify their location so for future opportunities, it could be important to differentiate the location of the companies to also understand the different perceptions as not all the companies behave the same way due to the differences they have to face when being located in different parts of the country as it is not the same to develop sustainable practices in the capital of the country as develop them in some small village with low resources and technology.
- This study was specifically developed with the collaboration of Colombian companies meaning that the results of this study could not be generalized to other Latin American countries with similar characteristics as there are different factors that could affect the development of sustainable practices as the perception of companies and the behavior of customers.
- Finally, sustainable practices is a term with different definitions and interpretations, that is why the results may vary because of the different understanding depending on people for example for some companies sustainable practices could be recycling inside the corporation but for others could be the actual use of sustainable goods in their production processes like avoiding the use of plastic.

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10. Appendix A

- Isa report link:
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- Banco de Bogotá report link:
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- Grupo Exito report link:

<https://www.grupoexito.com.co/es/informe-sostenibilidad-2021.pdf>

- Terpel report link:

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- Nutresa report link:

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