

## Sustainability and Product Innovation

Sustainability represents a complex combination of consumer preference and economic factors for companies and brands. While many brands are focusing on sustainability as part of their platform for social influence, acting in a truly sustainable way through business practices and product strategies is more challenging. Unless the market demands, it is difficult to determine when to lean forward in generating a more sustainable platform. Often regulations force their hand on businesses to instigate change and some brands find ways to take on sustainability as a direct part of their marketable differentiation.

No business willingly takes on additional restrictions, burdens or cost unless it has an advantage. (The demands of remaining competitive, developing and maintaining a product line are enough alone.) However, companies are increasingly considering how they should plan for greater sustainability in their product platforms in order to be more viable in a future that will require greater compliance and vision from them. After all, the products a brand makes today will exist for many decades to come as visible trash (environmental burden, negative brand impression and government fines not excluded), if not design to be a part of a more circular economy.



The industries most feeling the pressure for sustainability are the ones with products having the highest rates of use turnover and not in life saving arenas. This centers mainly around CPG single-use type products, plastic bottles, cups and utensils to name a few, but many other consumer product areas stand to be further impacted in the future. As a principle, any product made and purchased is an item that needs to be managed through its discontinued use and its potential reclamation. The long-term vision of sustainability has become a very real and current set of design considerations.

From a product innovation, design and development standpoint, new product ideas foundationally seek to reconcile and access at two central interests of demand and supply: What is the size of prize around a particular new idea and what do the cost of goods need to be to deliver on that idea? However, with sustainability and particularly the use of plastics becoming more a part of the social awareness, sustainability is growing to be synonymous with product experience in many fast moving categories. Consumers are growing in awareness around what they buy and where it ends up. Particularly those consumers with enough disposable income to choose items that go beyond a basic, commodity function. In some instances, it is allowable for the performance of the product to be reshaped in the interest of a more sustainable approach.



SES has longstanding capability and know-how to be influential at this level of consumer experience engagement and product development. It takes vision and a deep understanding of the entire product development process - envisioning potential future wants and needs, along with the technical foresight for how to best influence materials, manufacturing, infrastructure and the economics to deliver product performance, including sustainability.

Future product experiences will realize ways to delight users with new sustainable approaches and incentivize choices for sustainability. Sustainable approaches to materials and processes will be made attractive through new forms of product experience that resonate with consumer lifestyles. Above all, innovations around sustainability will become drivers for category leadership and growth.

## Publications

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