Chapter 1
Is Being Perceived as Sustainable a Means to Achieve a Differential Advantage?

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ABSTRACT
Sustainability has been a concern of activists, organizations, and public officials for several decades. The chapter discusses an important issue: whether consumers purchase sustainable products because they perceive them to be higher in quality or because it makes them feel good. Finally, it submits that the sustained efforts of the organizations can fulfill a brand promise dedicated to enhancing the lives of citizens in the state, nation, and world!

INTRODUCTION
Organizations across all sectors of the economy believe that being perceived as sustainable is a means to achieve a differential advantage. One example of this is BP (formerly British Petroleum), which is one of the top oil and gasoline distributors. BP has shed its old namesake and replaced it with the brand “beyond petroleum.” Also, environmentally conscious brochures are available at the pumps that contain embedded seeds so if they are littered they will still benefit the Earth. However, what is missing in both the strategic initiative and the marketing literature is a thorough consideration of how being perceived as sustainable benefits organizations in their marketing efforts.

The literature’s scant treatment of sustainability issues is surprising given the growing trend towards positioning organizations as sustainable. This positioning reflects growing need for firms to take into full account their environmental impact when making business decisions (Menon and Menon, 1997). Often associated with terms such as “green business,” “going green,” and the “green