

**BALANCING IMPACT AND INCOME:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MARKETING IN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES**

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**Abstract**

Social enterprises operate where commercial objectives and social impact overlap with each other requiring innovative marketing strategies to manage these dual priorities effectively. This paper demonstrates a comparative case study of two renowned social enterprises TOMS Shoes and Warby Parker that analyzes their marketing approach to retrieve key insights and offer practical recommendations. Based on the secondary sources and desktop research, the study examines how these companies utilize purpose-

driven storytelling, social media marketing and impact models such as “buy one, give one” enhancing brand recognition and visibility as well as strengthening loyal community. The analysis illustrates that effective marketing in the social enterprise goes beyond conventional sales approaches concentrating instead on stakeholder engagement, transparency and alignment with mission. Yet, challenges such as limited resources and public skepticism regarding marketing underline the need for internal capacity development and digital innovation. The study concludes with strategic guidance on incorporating marketing as a vital function supporting both financial resilience and social impact. Furthermore, the study deepens the understanding of the significant role of marketing in social entrepreneurship and suggest the marketing tactics for the enterprises that aim to enhance their influence and outreach.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Social enterprise, One-for-One model, Marketing strategy, Sustainability

**Disciplines:** Sociology, Economics

### **Absztrakt**

#### *HATÁS ÉS JÖVEDELEM EGYENSÚLYA: A MARKETING SZEREPÉNEK ÖSSZEHASONLÍTÓ VIZSGÁLATA A TÁRSADALMI VÁLLALKOZÁSOKBAN*

A társadalmi vállalkozások működése a kereskedelmi célkitűzések és a társadalmi hatás metszéspontjában történik, amely innovatív marketingstratégiákat tesz szükségessé e kettős prioritás hatékony összehangolására. Jelen tanulmány két elismert társadalmi vállalkozás – a TOMS Shoes és a Warby Parker – összehasonlító esettanulmányán keresztül vizsgálja marketingmegközelítéseiket, feltárva kulcsfontosságú tanulságokat és gyakorlati ajánlásokat fogalmazva meg. Másodlagos forrásokra és irodalomkutatásra (desktop research) támaszkodva a tanulmány azt elemzi, hogy e vállalatok miként alkalmazzák a célorientált történetmesélést (purpose-driven storytelling), a közösségi média alapú marketinget, valamint az olyan hatásmodelleket, mint a „vegyél egyet, adj egyet” (buy one, give one) elv. Ezek a módszerek hozzájárulnak a márkaismertség és láthatóság növeléséhez, valamint az elkötelezett közösség megerősítéséhez. Az elemzés rámutat arra, hogy a társadalmi vállalkozások marketingje túlmutat a hagyományos értékesítési megközelítéseken, és elsősorban a szereplők bevonására, az átláthatóságra és a küldetéssel való összehangolásra koncentrál. Ugyanakkor a korlátozott erőforrások és a marketinggel szembeni nyilvános szkepticizmus kihívásokat jelentenek, amelyek indokolttá teszik a belső kapacitásfejlesztést és a digitális innovációk alkalmazását. A tanulmány végkövetkeztetése stratégiai iránymutatást kínál arra vonatkozóan, miként integrálható a marketing mint kulcsfontosságú funkció, amely egyaránt támogatja a pénzügyi fenntarthatóságot és a társadalmi hatást. Ezen túlmenően a kutatás hozzájárul

a marketing társadalmi vállalkozásokban betöltött szerepének mélyebb megértéséhez, és ajánlásokat fogalmaz meg azon vállalkozások számára, amelyek célja befolyásuk és elérésük növelése.

**Kulcsszavak:** marketing, társadalmi vállalkozás, „egyért egyet” modell, marketingstratégia, fenntarthatóság

**Diszciplinák:** szociológia, közgazdaságtan

### Introduction

Social Enterprise is a type of business that aims to achieve positive impacts addressing social and environmental issues, simultaneously, generating revenue to sustain its operation through commercial activities. As a result, in the operation of social enterprises the profit is reinvested into social programs rather than distributed to shareholders (Investopedia, 2024).

Social enterprises have emerged as a response to the inability of the governments to meet the needs of the disadvantaged and financially vulnerable groups of societies (Satar et al., 2016; Zemtseva, 2021). In order to reach the social and business goals, it is suggested to develop the implementation of the marketing in social entrepreneurship allowing to balance the opportunities and risks. Marketing helps to identify the needs of the target audience of a business and justify what exactly and why it will be demanded through conveying the idea of social entrepreneurship (Zemtseva, 2021). Along the same lines, marketing is an effective means of promotion and communication

that creates trustful relationships and drives meaningful impacts for the organizations and the communities through educating the public, raising brand awareness, engaging donors and investors (Impactful Marketing for Social Enterprises, n.d.).

Owing to the current digital innovations and trends, social media has become a common platform for communication and engagement resulting in its usage in marketing purposes. Social media marketing also referred to as digital marketing and e-marketing entails utilizing social media platforms enabling its users to create networks and exchange information to enhance brand awareness, increase sales and generate website traffic. Moreover, it offers advanced analytics tools that enable marketers to evaluate campaign effectiveness and explore new strategies for engagement (Hayes, 2025).

The intersection of social enterprises and marketing is obtaining its significance as they aim to broaden their influence, create supportive communities and engage larger audiences (“How Can Social Enterprises Use Digital Marketing to Grow Their Impact? – fundsforNGOs – Grants and

Resources for Sustainability,” 2025). As social enterprises face several constraints, they attempt to use cost-effective marketing strategies to engage with their audience through utilizing the resources that they possess. Moreover, these constraints may influence the primary goal of social enterprise by addressing how social enterprises can balance their dual (or triple) objectives of generating social impact as well as sustaining financial viability through effective marketing.

Thus, this papers enclose the following research questions to answer:

- What are the primary marketing strategies that aim to enhance the visibility of social enterprises?
- What challenges do social enterprises encounter in their marketing implementation?
- How does marketing influence the visibility and growth of social enterprises?

Furthermore, this study is conducted through a comparative case study of two well-known social enterprises, TOMS Shoes and Warby Parker aiming to analyze and identify effective marketing strategies enhancing the visibility and brand awareness of social enterprises. Along the same lines, the study aims to examine the challenges social enterprises face to raise brand recognition and make recommendations for social enterprises to optimize their marketing presence for better visibility and engagement.

### **Literature review**

As social enterprises are a blend of public service goals with efficient and innovative business approaches, these organizations operate with a primary focus on social impact that reinvest their profits into the enterprise and the communities they serve (Lougheed & Donkervoort, n.d.). When proponents of social enterprises emphasize their ability to create blended value entailing economic, environmental and social outcomes (Emerson, 2023), the increased risk of mission bias or internal conflict between these goals are underlined (Edwards, 2008; Fritsch et al., 2013). There are arguments when business goals may conflict with social goals, which can lead to inevitable tension as social enterprises seek to balance double and in some instances triple lines. Notwithstanding the importance of this task, scientific research overlooks the internal complexities associated with solving numerous tasks. Nonetheless, existing research highlights that performing both financial and social tasks generates an extremely complex operating environment for social enterprises (Moiser and Tracy, 2010; Mish and Scammon, 2010).

The case study by Lougheed and Donkervoort (n.d.) illustrated the organization prioritizing its promotional campaign in its social mission assuming to drive customer interest. Yet, the customer feedback showcased that product quality, professionalism and reliability were the primary concerns. It has been identified that the social impact

was appreciated as an additional value not as a substitute for quality resulting in the assumption that the organizations should change their approach by developing marketing strategies addressing real customer needs and concerns and ensuring brand visibility, message clarity and audience targeting. Eventually, the authors suggested that the understanding of marketing should be embedded as a strategic function within social enterprises to balance their mission with market expectations and ensure long-term sustainability.

As marketing plays a crucial role in the operation of social enterprises. The study by Liu et al. (2013) suggested that social enterprises that have strong marketing capacities are more likely to be better equipped to manage complex processes effectively and promptly. In comparison with those lacking in such skills, these social enterprises are more susceptible to meet customer needs more efficiently and gain a competitive edge over their rivals. Furthermore, the findings by Liu et al. (2013) indicate that not all forms of marketing capability constantly enhance social enterprise performance. Drawn upon the context, certain capabilities may possess a greater impact than others. Along the same lines, some types of marketing capability may positively impact one aspect of performance when having little or no effect on others. Moreover, the influence of marketing capabilities differs based upon the performance measures being regarded. Consequently, social

enterprise managers should comprehend the distinct effects of each type of marketing capability and strategically develop the ones aligning best with their performance goals.

The studies performed in not-for-profit organizations indicate that, notwithstanding, marketing is generally regarded positively by many organizations in different sectors (Pope et al., 2009), a skepticism towards its usefulness still exists. The researchers Andreasen and Kotler (2003) underlined three main stigmas hindering the broader adoption of marketing practices in their operation. Marketing is perceived as a financial waste, specifically, in organizations relying on public funding. The concern highlighting marketing as an unnecessary expense was raised that may distract from the organization's primary mission. The following is intrusiveness, as market research often entails collecting information from consumers to better comprehend their needs, this approach was commonly criticized and viewed as an invasive process and a violation of personal privacy. Furthermore, marketing was stigmatized as manipulation and was perceived as deceptive and coerced when not carefully and ethically managed. As a result, these negative perceptions can lead not-for-profit organizations to adopt marketing strategies that are overly concentrated on internal organizational priorities rather than truly understanding and addressing the needs and preferences of their target audiences.

Within a study conducted by Mitchell et al. (2015), participants identified limited financial resources as the primary barrier to their marketing efforts. The study illustrates that social enterprises generally are in a deficiency of sufficient funding to support reliable marketing strategies. As a result, most organizations heavily relied on low-cost promotional methods, for instance, word-of-mouth, to reach their audiences. In this study, 10 out of 15 participants referred to word-of-mouth as a currently effective and widely used marketing strategy. Furthermore, this approach was recognized not only for attracting new consumers and boosting sales but also for fostering relationships with key stakeholders, including employees. Along the same lines, when examining the specific marketing tools used recently, a transparent trend emerged in an increasing adoption of social media platforms.

In this study, 9 out of 15 organizations were actively using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, while 12 illustrated their intentions to expand the usage of social media platforms. Furthermore, the participants regarded social media as a means of communication to inform and engage stakeholders involving customers, volunteers and members of the broader community by updating them in the organization's activities.

Zemtseva (2021) highlighted that marketing in social entrepreneurship is applied as an only tool for improving and promoting the product of social enterprises. Yet the

significance of the marketing can be viewed from a broader perspective. Specifically, the key focus can shift from the product to social entrepreneurship itself. From this regard, marketing can operate in several directions:

- funding, when marketing helps to create a positive image of social entrepreneurship in the business environment and attract additional funding. Furthermore, it helps to reach the target audience, such as investors interested in the social mission. As a tool, marketing can assist in promoting ideas as well as involvement in solving social challenges as a way to engage and illustrate the value of collaboration.
- human resources, when marketing can contribute to forming a strong brand and value system, which is significant for attracting a motivated team and volunteers. When a company's values align with those of its staff and target audience, it helps to simplify promotion and attract committed employees concentrated on achieving social impact.
- consumers, when marketing assists not only to promote the product, but also to identify the needs of consumers resulting in improving the products and services. Furthermore, marketing campaigns can draw attention to social issues, create communities and improve the social impact of the organization.

- competitors, when marketing enables organizations to position themselves in the market, analyze competitors and identify unmet consumer needs. Along the same routes, social entrepreneurs can become trendsetters by joining forces with other companies to drive social change. Additionally, marketing analysis strengthens market positioning and helps discover new niches.

According to Zemtseva (2021), the concept of social marketing is recently one of the most widespread, as it compliments a company's set of actions regarding corporate social responsibility, which is regarded as significant for long-term business sustainability. Moreover, an essential tool in an organization's marketing efforts is its marketing strategy, which is a part of a company's overall strategy, a way of achieving its goals, concentrated on the development, production and delivery of goods and services that best meet consumer needs. Furthermore, it is suggested that to improve the organization's performance, a social entrepreneur must analyze the elements of the marketing strategy contributing to the final result and which ones need to be refined. Thus, the study highlights the significance of the key performance indicators of the marketing strategy to making management decisions.

The findings by Mitchell et al. (2016) illustrate that social marketing experts operating within the context of social

enterprises are prone to experience both challenges and opportunities. Though managers in the social enterprises may lack formal training and direct experience in social marketing, the study showcases they often have practical knowledge of commercial marketing, which they apply to pursue profit-driven goals within their enterprises. The study suggests that such managers can contribute valuable expertise to the development of social marketing strategies. Andreasen (2002) noted that one barrier to the adoption of social marketing is a lack of awareness among top decision-makers. Meanwhile, the research didn't particularly investigate social marketing knowledge among practitioners in social enterprises, it did reveal that participants generally illustrated a strong understanding of core marketing principles. Mitchell et al. (2016) assumed that there is a transparent need to enhance expertise in both commercial and social marketing strategies, acknowledging the unique dynamics of social enterprise contexts. As governments and traditional providers of social marketing programs encounter increasing economic constraints, it becomes significantly important to strengthen institutional understanding of social enterprises as viable and innovative actors in driving social change and addressing societal challenges.

In the study by Powell and Osborne (2015), the interviewed leaders of the social enterprises primarily considered marketing as a selling tool, without

acknowledging the value of directing marketing efforts toward specific stakeholder groups and bridging relationships with them.

Powell and Osborne concluded that many social enterprises (SEs) often mistake marketing for the commercialization of public services, perceiving it as contradictory to their social values. As a result, these organizations fail to exploit marketing as a valuable strategic tool. It was mentioned that social enterprises are prone to associate marketing solely with sales hindering its ability to support their social mission and long-term sustainability. The organizations are prone to overlook service-based marketing approaches, for instance, relationship marketing, which are highly recommended to public service delivery. This misconception leads to undermining the effectiveness of their marketing efforts and their ability to sustain services over time. Furthermore, the study highlights that some social enterprises do engage in basic marketing activities without formally recognizing them. Yet, owing to a lack of proper training and understanding of service marketing, these marketing efforts are often ineffective. Therefore, the authors suggested that social enterprise managers are required to gain relevant experience and receive training aligning with their values and operational needs. Along the same lines, social enterprises can strengthen their long-term sustainability by integrating a structured relationship marketing strategy

drawn upon public service values rather than traditional commercial sales methods enabling the organizations to create and sustain valuable stakeholder connections. However, the application of relationship marketing concepts in social enterprises still needs additional research and confirmation.

Through analysis of 47 research papers, Bandyopadhyay and Ray (2019) summarized a model exemplifying drivers, barriers and nature of social enterprise marketing. They identified that the social enterprises mostly focus on promoting their products and services when overlooking other crucial marketing activities such as market research, brand development and customer relationship management. Along the same lines, they have mentioned that social enterprises mostly adopt a low-cost marketing approach through relying on personal contacts, networks and grassroots effort to strengthen their brand awareness instead of investing heavily in traditional advertising. Furthermore, many social enterprises are prone to prioritize the business side of their organizational operations occasionally at the expense of their social mission as they recognize that customers seek high-quality products and services. Yet, overconcentration on business goals can lead to mission shifts since the organizations start neglecting their social objectives and pursuing commercial success. Along the same routes, social entrepreneurs with a non-profit background



frequently possess a charity-driven mindset when running their organizations.

They may regard marketing as overly commercial, unnecessary and incompatible with their values of social welfare. Some social entrepreneurs have dreads that spending too much on marketing can lead to distrust among stakeholders entailing employees, volunteers and donors, who may perceive the organization as financially secure, which can result in reducing their support. The literature review highlights that a major challenge for SEs is their limited capacity to apply comprehensive marketing activities owing to a deficiency of skilled personnel, insufficient financial resources and absence of dedicated marketing departments. It is suggested that a carefully designed marketing strategy is vital for SEs to boost awareness about their initiatives and to distribute innovative solutions among their target audience. Moreover, managing relationships with a wide range of stakeholders varying each with social and business expectations can be challenging and demands a thoughtful understanding of their diverse needs. The analysis suggested to balance social and business mission social enterprises should apply differentiated marketing strategies customized to each stakeholder group, example given as offering tiered pricing structure aligning with consumer's purchasing power. Furthermore, the review elaborates that instead of aggressively promoting their products and services, social enterprises make priorities

to be visible and easily found by potential customers. In order to achieve this, social enterprises rely on personal networks and social media platforms to remain engaged and maintain visibility.

This organic bottom-up marketing approach mirrors similar strategies utilized by small businesses with constrained marketing resources.

The study by Atanasova (2021) highlights how social enterprises, specifically those concentrated on solving environmental and social problems, initiated using social media marketing accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic for communication, adaptation and education. As a result, it has increased the reliance on online tools to help environmental movements and social entrepreneurs to sustain their activities and increase audience engagement due to social restrictions and uncertainties. Furthermore, the study explores the need for research into how environmental and social entrepreneurs utilized SMM during the self-isolation period, since there is no comparable research. The author underlined that online content creation, eco-education and virtual events have become essential adaptation strategies, which helps to promote more sustainable behavior among people during the pandemic.

The study states that the effectiveness of social media as a promotional channel lies in the organization's popularity and efficiency, particularly, in promoting services. Social networks serve as accessible tools for communication with the audience and

for positioning brand values. Through this tool, organizations can boost their influence on their social projects that attract more participants and partners. Moreover, each social network is identified by the type of content it delivers and the audience it attracts. Thus, it is important to analyze promotion channels in terms of how often they are visited by the target audience. (Zemtseva, 2021). The role of marketing in social entrepreneurship does not differ considerably from its role in traditional business, where marketing helps to smooth out some of the difficulties that are absent in conventional business models. Meanwhile, the role of marketing in social entrepreneurship is primarily targeted at facilitating the search for optimal ways to combine commercial and non-commercial elements. As social entrepreneurship does not always generate high profits and it is often operated at a break-even level illustrating that the targeting funding streams are not always suitable resources for long-term development. As a result, social enterprises mostly rely on using low-budget channels for creating sales and increasing demand for the services of social enterprises through implementation of marketing strategies for service promotion (Zemtseva, 2021).

Luzhnova and Fedorov (2022) assumed that SMM can help to effectively boost the commercial success of the businesses irrespective of their size and structure. They highlighted the significance of a well-designed publicly accessed page of the

organizations leading their users to make a purchase. Furthermore, the study highlighted the following core components of social media marketing: creating valuable, convincing and engaging content, stimulating user interaction and driving traffic to their page using tools like targeted advertising and retargeting to succeed in reaching its objective to convert casual visitors into buyers resulting in brand promoters in the long-term.

The importance of clear content strategy was underlined by Luzhnova & Fedorov (2022) enabling the organizations to inform, engage and convince the audience. In order to reach this objective, the following practical ways of content creation such as customer reviews, behind-the-scenes content, event reports, FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), case studies, news and updates, using a sense of humor in handling objections are advised by the researchers.

In the study by Shafigullina and Palyakin (2016), social media was defined as a cost-effective promotional tool enabling social entrepreneurs to interact with their target audience as well as to accomplish in the business projects the following tasks:

- attracting potential customers by generating social engagement and raising visibility, which is measured by the number of group members and attention from users outside the network;
- identifying and reaching the main audience on social media platforms

when monitoring user activity through internal analytics tools;

- fostering consumer engagement with the product or service through active social interaction;
- launching promotional campaigns of products and services through utilizing available advertising features and collaborating with other online communities.

The study by Baretta (2022) highlights that social media platforms enable organizations to reach and create relationships with a huge number of users through more customized and confidential ways in comparison with traditional methods. Furthermore, this digital interaction encourages to build trust, which is significant for long-term collaboration and the success of mission-driven projects. Furthermore, the author mentions that trust-building is even more important than financial incentives within these ecosystems. Along the same lines, the organizations can enhance their social media activities through demonstrating prominent acts of cooperation that strengthens the belief that collaboration is reliable, simultaneously, fosters a stronger sense of community. Moreover, the authors assume that the organizations should not only earn the trust of stakeholders, but also they should trust their stakeholders enough through allowing them to be involved in significant decision-making processes. As social media platforms have fostered new types of relationships, where users can selectively

follow others without expecting mutual connection, it can lead to a more hierarchical structure where highly influential users gain more visibility, while mutual, peer-to-peer relationships (e.g. Facebook connections) are less dominant. Additionally, the organizations can strategically use social recognition metrics, such as “likes” and “shares” to encourage users to share valuable content, similar to how individuals seek validation on personal platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Social media marketing (SMM) has become an essential aspect of digital marketing that offers businesses powerful tools to engage audiences, boost brand awareness and enhance sales through platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter (Anshu & Sharma, 2024).

Marketers utilize AI (Artificial Intelligence) and Machine Learning to receive predictive analytics allowing to anticipate the outcomes of promotional campaigns, consumer behavior as well as market shifts using historical data, to approach customer segmentation helping to spot patterns in enormous datasets, grouping consumers drawing upon behavior, preferences and demographics, to personalize delivering customized content and ads to users based upon real-time data analysis, which helps to improve engagement and conversion rates (Anshu & Sharma, 2024).

As the world is changing rapidly from manual to digital, AI (Artificial Intelli-

gence) is taking a fundamental role in how today's social media operates. AI is defined as the capacity of machines, such as computers and robots, to perform tasks requiring human intelligence typically. It can be seen that AI is utilized by marketers to better analyse brand performance over time. AI and machine learning assist with content regulation and creation as well as determination of how the advertisements by marketers are delivered to users on social media platforms. Furthermore, AI can develop its own algorithm and lead the way for more advanced marketing strategies, simultaneously, helping to make automatic decisions. Along the same lines, when AI is integrated with customer data platforms, programmatic demand-side platforms use extensive targeting signals to personalize both audience selection and advertisements drawn upon behavioral and lifestyle data (Anandvardhan, 2021). Anandvardhan (2021) suggested that utilizing AI in social media marketing (SMM) significantly diminishes the time and costs related to tasks, such as analyzing data, generating performance reports, crafting posts and developing promotional strategies as well as mentioned that marketers who utilize AI in their SMM efforts can obtain a strong and sustainable competitive edge.

### **Methodology**

In order to understand interrelationship between marketing and social enterprises, secondary data are analyzed from the

existing literature, including international and national articles, journals, books and websites in the English and Russian languages. Moreover, the methodology to conduct this research paper entails a desktop research and comparative case study.

A desktop research is known as a secondary research that involves using already existing literature and data enabling a researcher to gain an initial understanding of the areas of interest without conducting field research. Furthermore, the research process entails the use of already published materials such as articles, reports and similar documents.

Meanwhile, a comparative case study methodology is applied to explore and contrast the characteristics, approaches and impacts of the following social enterprises such as TOMS Shoes and Warby Parker aiming to identify common themes and unique marketing strategies implemented in their operations. Afterwards, a Venn diagram was depicted as a visual tool to illustrate the overlapping and divergent aspects of the marketing approach of both cases.

### **Case study**

#### **TOMS**

TOMS was founded in 2006 with a focus in the footwear industry and mission to enhance lives through its business. The brand became renowned for its pioneering One for One model, which illustrates the process of a new pair being donated to a child in need for every pair of shoes sold,

simultaneously, of support of education, broader health and community development initiatives through partnerships. TOMS has shifted from an one-for-one strategic approach into donating one-third of its profits to grassroots organizations concentrated on building equity at the local level, with a specific emphasis on funding access to mental health resources for millions of people. The company's symbolic product is the Alpargata, a classic slip-on shoe influenced by traditional Spanish and Argentine footwear, designed for both style and comfort. Since the company's foundation, TOMS and its partners have made a positive impact on the lives of over 105 million lives and the organization continues to concentrate on encouraging growth and supporting communities at the grassroots level. TOMS specifically targets socially conscious individuals, students, young professionals, fashion- and charity-oriented individuals, middle-class men and women at the age range between 13 and 30 mainly in North America and over in 30+ countries worldwide through offering Alpargata slip-ons, other casual footwear styles for all ages (TOMS, n.d.).

In 2006, Toms was founded by Blake Mycoskie with a mission "One for One", reflecting that for every pair of shoes sold, another pair is donated to a child in need. The first batch consisted of 250 pairs, over the time, the numbers have reached at 60 million shoes being donated globally, gradually, the company has expanded its operation into bags, socks, eyewear and

coffee, all of which are tied to different social causes.

The name of the company stems from "Tomorrow" reflecting how the company represents modern social entrepreneurship by combining business success with philanthropic efforts. The company approach has transformed consumer perception of ordinary products such as shoes while presenting them as means for social impact.

Blake Mycoskie, the founder of TOMS, got inspired from his visit to Argentina where he experienced how children were shoeless. His personal experience shared through public speeches and his book named *Making Something That Matters* assisted to build a powerful brand awareness attracting loyal consumers, specifically, the TOMS tribe entailing socially conscious young customers eager to bolster a positive impact through their purchases. In order to reach its audience, TOMS utilizes social media platforms entailing Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat through campaigns such as "A Day Without Shoes" by encouraging fans to share their experience online by amplifying the brands' message. Although in 2014, Mycoskie sold 50% of TOMS to Bain Capital, simultaneously, stepped down as CEO, the company's mission "One for One" continues to drive the company's growth and impact (Ramsenthaler, 2023)

### **Marketing strategy**

In 2011, the launch of eyewear collection transformed the marketing approach of

TOMS Shoes significantly. The launch of the new product line offered stylish glasses as well as bolstered the company's broader mission through assisting to provide vision care to the individuals in need. Beyond expanding shoes, TOMS continues to align its business with social impact efforts. In order to reach its objectives, TOMS uses its social media tools playing a vital role in its marketing strategy. Therefore, the organization actively utilizes such platforms as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and Google Plus to share its story, communicate with consumers and promote its philanthropic initiatives. TOMS has created a loyal online community, deliberately maintaining its Facebook following around two million to engage audiences and offer a customized service. Along the same lines, TOMS' visibility is endorsed by celebrities such as Keira Knightley, Scarlett Johansson, Liv Tyler, Anne Hathaway, Tom Felton and Julia Roberts who supported the brand through their social media presence by helping to spread awareness of its mission and values. Simultaneously, the company utilizes the marketing approach through storytelling and social media campaigns such as "One Day Without Shoes" to create brand loyalty and engage consumers.

Since 2006 TOMS has positioned itself as a leader in social entrepreneurship with its signature "One for One" model which encourages over 35 million pairs of shoes in 60 countries. Moreover, the company

inspired other companies such as Warby Parker and Roma Boots to integrate similar socially responsible business models. Along the same routes, TOMS has received an investment of 300 million USD for a 50% stake highlighting the commercial success and appeal of TOMS' socially driven marketing. Yet, the company was criticized for dependency of the consumers and local markets causing disruptions, as a response to this, TOMS integrated its business model to coffee sales through bolstering clean water and local shoe manufacturing in Haiti. Furthermore, the company collaborates with brands such as Marvel and interactive retail displays improving the outreach and customer connection. Notwithstanding ownership changes, TOMS continues to prioritize social responsibility and sustainability through donating millions of shoes worldwide (TOMS Shoes Marketing Strategy 2025: A Case Study – Latterly.org, n.d.).

### **Social impact**

Along with donating products, TOMS attempts to empower global communities through collaborations with over 100 Giving Partners globally making contributions to the societies mostly in need. As a result, these partnerships assist to enhance local communities and bolster sustainable development through encouragement of sustainable progress and self-reliance. Although TOMS's mission has been widely encouraged, it has also been

criticized by the statement of the giving away products stimulating dependency and failing to tackle the underlying causes of poverty. Along the same lines, concerns have been raised about the impact of free goods on local markets, therefore, TOMS has shifted its approach to include programs promoting local job creation and economic growth to aim to provide both short-term support and sustainable solutions (Sahu, 2024).

TOMS has increasingly made a priority of sustainability and ethical standards. The company started concentrating on utilizing environmentally responsible materials and minimizing its ecological impact throughout the manufacturing process. For instance, the company launched the TOMS Animal Initiative ensuring that their footwear and eyewear are without any animal products, aligning with consumer expectations for ethical and eco-friendly choices. As a leading example, TOMS illustrates how social purposes can be adapted into business strategy, simultaneously, allowing the businesses to expand. The pioneering model of TOMS “One for One” has inspired many other brands to follow suit, illustrating that making a profit and difference can go hand in hand (Sahu, 2024).

With an initiation of “One for One” shoe donation model, TOMS has expanded its diversity of products entailing eyewear, bags, books and coffee. Each categorized product is tied to a distinct social cause, for instance, every pair of

eyewear purchases resulted in funding vision restoration, when book sales bolstered promotion of literacy in underserved communities. These initiatives mirror the brand’s comprehensive commitment aiming to solve social causes and engage with more socially conscious consumers. Along the same routes, TOMS offers eco-friendly bags and coffee to bolster the communities with clean water supplies and encourage sustainability projects where each product line addresses a specific social and environmental issue.

Since 2011 TOMS Eyewear has started offering sight-saving surgery, glasses and medical treatment for every pair sold. This approach has helped to restore sight to nearly a million people and led to the creation of 55 vision centers in countries, such as Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

TOMS effectively utilizes social media to share its image stories through engagement of customers and enforcement of a sense of belonging. Campaigns such as “One Day Without Shoes” and user-generated content help create a loyal community through meeting the brand’s mission, specifically, among millennials who are eager to purchase commodities with a social purpose. TOMS’ ongoing impact and strategy is reflected where the company has donated over 75 million pairs of shoes and restored sight to nearly a million people. For the time being, the brand donated one-third of its profits to mental health, opportunity access and ending gun violence illustrating a shift

from product-based giving to broader social impact.

Toms differentiates itself in the market through its concentration on social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility, which serves as a model influencing other companies to adopt similar approaches. Although TOMS encounters criticism and obstacles, the company remains committed to ethical conduct, environmental sustainability and making a positive global impact.

### **Warby Parker**

The Warby Parker Impact Foundation is a nonprofit organization committed to solving barriers to quality vision care. The mission of the organization highlights promoting an expanded availability of vision services, increasing awareness about eye health and delivering important care to help individuals live healthier, safer and more fulfilling lives.

In 2010, Warby Parker was founded with the launch of the “Buy a Pair, Give a Pair” initiative through donating a pair of glasses to the individuals in need for every sold pair of glasses. By 2014, over a millionth pair of glasses had been distributed owing to Warby Parker’s initiative. Moreover, since 2015 the organization initiated the Pupils Project through providing free eye care to public school students in such cities as New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C. and California. Later in 2019, Warby Parker established the Impact Foundation so that

the expansion of the company’s philanthropic work would be accelerated (Warby Parker Foundation, n.d.).

### **Marketing strategy**

The initiative “Buy a pair, give a pair” has encouraged Warby Parker to donate a pair of eyewear for each one bought resulting in contribution to over 5 million people around the world. This philanthropic approach gains more consumers valuing corporate responsibility and amplifies both the brand’s image and customer loyalty.

Warby Parker utilizes email marketing where the consumers receive personalized emails creating a positive first impression and encouraging user engagement. These emails entail valuable information and incentives that aim to create long-term relationships and increase conversion rates. Along the same routes, the organization utilizes Word-of-Mouth Marketing which encourages consumers to promote Warby Parker to others with discounts and perks. This approach increases the effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing resulting in higher customer retention and lifetime value in comparison with traditional advertising. Identifying the growth of mobile commerce, Warby Parker offers user-friendly mobile apps with the following features as virtual try-on, Apple Pay integration, SMS shipping updates and telehealth services for renewing prescriptions serving techsavvy consumers and enhancing their convenience.



Furthermore, Warby Parker invests in SEO (Search Engine Optimization) through improving organic search visibility and attracting more targeted traffic through the content, product descriptions and blog articles bolstering long-term, sustainable digital growth. The retail stores of Warby Parker concentrate on exceptional in-person customer services featuring more interactive displays, well-acknowledged staff with tablets, thoughtfully designed interiors prioritizing customer convenience and accessibility since retail expansion contributed considerably to revenue growth (Warby Parker Marketing Strategy 2025: A Case Study – Latterly.org, n.d.).

### **Social impact**

Recently, Warby Parker's social initiatives have distributed over 15 million pairs of glasses globally that reached communities in the U.S. and over 140 countries through partnerships with organizations such as VisionSpring and RestoringVision. Meanwhile, the Pupils Project alone has distributed over 220 000 pairs of glasses to school children through erasing the barriers to learning and participation. Along the same lines, the Warby Parker's Foundation in partnership with other organizations empower local nonprofits, government agencies and funders to deliver sustainable vision care solutions. Moreover, the Warby Parker's Foundation bolsters U.S.-based tax-exempt organizations working in vision care

through a grantmaking program and concentrates on sustainability, community partnerships and improving technology to enhance access and outcomes (Warby Parker Foundation, n.d.). Through offering consumers its products, Warby Parker has transformed the eyewear industry aiming to eliminate the need for traditional intermediaries, which enables the organization to provide stylish, highquality glasses at more affordable prices. Along the same lines, Warby Parker attempts to manage the full customer experience through offering a more convenient and customized shopping service highlighting the features such as its Home Try-On program and virtual try-on technology.

The company applies social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook to engage its consumers and encourage brand loyalty. Furthermore, partnerships with designers, influencers, celebrities such as Oprah and Reese Witherspoon and other brands enable the organization to broaden its outreach and encourage its presence in the market. Furthermore, the brand tries to increase its authenticity and benefits from organic word-of-mouth marketing encouraging user-generated content and active community involvement (Warby Parker Marketing Strategy 2025: A Case Study – Latterly.org, n.d.).

### **Venn diagram**

Although social enterprises TOMS and Warby Parker operate in two diverse industries, the comparison illustrates that

the both organizations aim to raise a strong marketing approach when it comes to engaging with consumers. It can be highlighted that these organizations share similar business model approach highlighting their social mission “Buy One, Give One” demonstrating of how for every product sold, a product is donated to the communities in need. Along the same lines, it can be seen that a social media marketing presence enables the organizations to create trustworthy relationships through engaging consumers and encouraging word-of-mouth. Furthermore, in order to increase brand awareness, these social enterprises cooperate with influencers and partner with other brands encouraging co-branded campaigns.

Additionally, their marketing approach underlines brand story, mission and impact

by enhancing referral programs and consumer advocacy to grow organically (Figure1).

Moreover, these social enterprises attempt to gain attention through earned media and positive press highlighting their social mission. Meanwhile, both social enterprises focus on sustainable practices in their supply chain and packaging to attract more socially conscious consumers.

Yet, these social enterprises differ in their business models where Warby Parker directly sells directly through online and branded retail stores, simultaneously, bypassing traditional retail intermediaries. Moreover, it implements home try-one and virtual try-on innovative programs enabling consumers to try glasses remotely and promoting mobile apps for shopping and telehealth services.

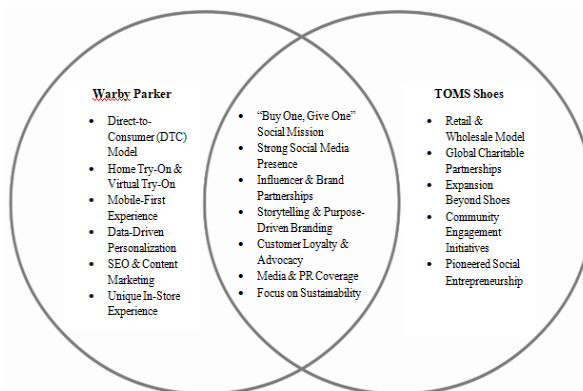


Figure 1. Comparison of Warby Parker and TOMS Shoes (TOMS, n.d.; Ramsenthaler, 2023; Sabu, 2024; Latterly, n.d.; Entrepreneur Story, n.d.; MARMIND, n.d.; Ho, 2023; Warby Parker Foundation, n.d.; Latterly, n.d.; Latterly, 2025; Franklin, 2024; Extole, n.d.; Voy Media, n.d.; Emily Talks, 2025; Impact with Natalie, n.d.; Warby Parker, n.d.)

Along the same lines, Warby Parker utilizes customer data for customized marketing and experience, while focusing on organic search and blog content to generate more user traffic, which enables more personalized service and design.

Meanwhile, TOMS Shoes initially concentrated on wholesale and third-party retail partnerships before expanding to Direct-To-Consumer business approach. Simultaneously, the organization partners with charity organizations globally for shoe distribution and impact. Moreover, TOMS Shoes has expanded its one-for-one model to eyewear, water and books to increase its social impacts. Along the same lines, in order to raise its brand awareness the organization encourages marketing campaigns such as “One Day Without Shoes” reaching its target audience. It should be mentioned that TOMS Shoes is a pioneering social enterprise promoting „business for good” social approach and inspiring other companies to integrate similar approaches differentiating itself with more experience in social driven business models.

### **Recommendations**

In order to reach greater brand awareness, customer engagement and social impact, the following recommendations are suggested drawn upon the comparative case study and literature review.

The case study of TOMS and Warby Parker effectively demonstrates how compelling storytelling may encourage brand

loyalty and trust. It can be suggested that social enterprises should adopt storytelling purposefully through creating sincere and focused narratives connecting their mission to tangible results, which can result in where customer and beneficiary stories are encouraged to make the stories more relatable.

Furthermore, well-structured storytelling can not differentiate the brand, but also encourage customers to become more passionate advocates promoting the mission of the organization naturally (Kasia, 2025).

Furthermore, being open and transparent about an organization’s activities, financial practices and impacts is significant for maintaining and earning trust of the stakeholders. Social enterprises should consistently publish impact reports, maintain open lines of communication and provide insights into their internal organizational processes. This level of openness validates the effectiveness of their work as well as disseminates doubts about the authenticity of the mission and intentions of the organizations (Kasia, 2025; Social Enterprise Case Study: Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprise Success: A Case Study Analysis - FasterCapital, n.d.).

Along the same routes, using digital marketing and social media platforms can be suggested as a budget friendly means of promotion of social enterprises helping to expand their target audience and engage with their consumers. The following platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and

Linkedin can be used for illustrating their impact, encouraging consumer participation and sharing organization's updates.

Investment in targeted advertisements can assist to engage with audiences aligned with their mission. Moreover, video content testing, specifically shorts and behind-the-scenes footage can increase engagement, as these formats are often prioritized by social media algorithms (10 Proven Digital Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprises', n.d.; Innovative Marketing: 7 Strategies and What To Learn from Them. (2025).

Strategic partnerships with NGOs, organizations and micro-influencer can considerably improve the visibility and trustworthiness of social enterprises. Thus, it is crucial to cooperate with partners sharing common values and mission that can result in gaining new, relevant audiences. Joint campaigns, collaborative events and shared content can help to expand outreach, increase their impact and amplify a sense of community (Kasia, 2025; 10 Proven Digital Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprises', n.d.).

Through creating meaningful content entailing blog articles, case studies, educational videos and infographics, which align with the mission of social enterprises and the interests of audiences, can increase trust among stakeholders. Social enterprises can demonstrate tangible and share key insights and lessons inspiring, informing and organically attracting more audience through SEO (search engine

optimization) (Kasia, 2025; Social Enterprise Case Study: Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprise Success: A Case Study Analysis - FasterCapital, n.d.).

Monitoring analytics tools of marketing performance of social enterprises can assist to identify what content and strategies are most effective. Monitoring key metrics such as audience engagement, social impact indicators and conversion rates can help to optimize resource use and showcase value to stakeholders and funders (10 Proven Digital Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprises', n.d.; Social Enterprise Case Study: Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprise Success: A Case Study Analysis - FasterCapital, n.d.).

Moreover, social enterprises can search for alternative funding opportunities, such as Google Ad Grants for non-profit organizations, simultaneously, offering free advertising to generate donations and increase brand visibility.

Furthermore, crowdfunding initiatives and membership-based models can also assist to diversify income sources when strengthening relationships with supporters (10 Proven Digital Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprises', n.d.).

Along the same routes, the social enterprises are encouraged to invest in marketing training for staff and leadership to overcome misconceptions highlighting marketing as sole manipulation and sales. Simultaneously, it is suggested to encourage an organizational culture where marketing is viewed as a strategic tool for

mission fulfillment and long-term sustainability (Kasia, 2025; 10 Proven Digital Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprises', n.d.; Social Enterprise Case Study: Marketing Strategies for Social Enterprise Success: A Case Study Analysis FasterCapital, n.d.; Social Marketing, n.d.).

## Conclusion

Marketing is not only a promotional but also a strategic tool for social enterprises to assess needs, strengthen trust, sustain impact and mobilize communities. The comparative case demonstrates how TOMS Shoes and Warby Parker balance their social impacts and commercial goals smoothly. The success of these social enterprises are incorporated in their mission-driven strategies through storytelling, social media engagement and transparent “Buy one, give one” models helping to sustain loyal consumers and community trust. Yet, to align social and financial objectives is complex since it requires social enterprises to transform sales-centric tactics toward relationship-building and stakeholder collaboration (Powell and Osborne, 2015). As social enterprises are facing challenges such as limited resources and skepticism toward marketing requires new solution approaches such as using digital tools for customized engagement (Franklin, 2024) and advocacy campaigns (Ramsenthaler, 2023). Marketing is a driver of meaningful, systematic change highlighting transparency, sincere storytelling and cooperations with other brands to

expand its sustainable impact. Thus, with the help of marketing, social enterprises can remain competitive, simultaneously, advancing their transformative goals.

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