

NHH



Challenges and Approaches of Integrating Sustainability into the Brand Positioning

A Qualitative Research

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1. Executive Summary

Since sustainability is an important marketing tool nowadays, companies are increasingly paying attention to integrate sustainability into their marketing communication. Across the industries and types of companies, there can be observed ambitions of integration processes. Simultaneously, there are obstacles forcing companies to develop new approaches to overcome them.

The paper is dealing with the integration of sustainability into a company's brand positioning and the upcoming challenges of this integration while also looking on possible solutions to overcome these obstacles. The following research questions were developed:

- i. How do marketers integrate sustainability into the brand positioning?
- ii. What challenges and problems occur in the process of integrating sustainability?
- iii. How do marketers try to overcome these challenges and problems?

By using an exploratory design, qualitative interviews were conducted with five major German enterprises. The interviewees have either been marketing managers, sustainability managers or the chief executive officer itself.

The result of the analysis is showing that companies are already actively engaging in sustainable matters and communication by the integration into their practices and strategy. Some of them already implemented sustainability into their brand positioning, while others are actively planning to do so. Across the companies, several sustainable measures are already executed and implemented in the areas of logistics, waste management, internal resource usage, fleet renewal or sustainable project investment.

Challenges of the integration of sustainability can be identified as higher costs due to the amendment of products and services, the thread of being perceived to greenwash with green communication and the overall choice of sustainable approach or measures. Companies feel partly overwhelmed with the possibilities to engage with sustainability which leads to a confusion of where to start and where to leverage sustainability in the most effective way. Simultaneously, an inconsistent and irresponsible communication can create the risk of building an untrustworthy image in this regard.

In order to overcome challenges of sustainable integration, companies adapt their pricing strategies to cover costs, but simultaneously invest into innovations leveraging sustainability. Partnerships and cooperation are of utmost importance to share expertise and build up a whole strategic concept that is supporting each other. At the same time there is paid an increasing caution on thorough communication of sustainable matters and the constant control to prove the measures and believes when questioned.

2. Introduction

When wandering around the streets, listening to the radio, shopping online, watching the news and simply engaging with business in any kind of manner, there is one term that might seem to be the dictum of today's world: sustainability. Companies start or already started to actively work with the concept and term either in their operations or strategies. Some of them even created a new positioning in the market to make use of the concept.

Especially large enterprises are expected to engage and act sustainably due to the great impact they have on the environment. But do we really know what is happening behind the scenes? What is the actual indicator of being seriously sustainable? Positioning statements might be indicators of how company see their role in the market.

The technology company and online retailer Amazon is positioning itself as follows:

“For consumers who want to purchase a wide range of products online with quick delivery, Amazon provides a one-stop online shopping site. Amazon sets itself apart from other online retailers with its customer obsession, passion for innovation, and commitment to operational excellence.” (Hart, 2020)

As well as Amazon, the international sports apparel retailer Nike is also setting the focus on innovation in their positioning statement:

“For athletes in need of high-quality, fashionable athletic wear, Nike provides customers with top-performing sports apparel and shoes made of the highest quality materials. Its products are the most advanced in the athletic apparel industry because of Nike's commitment to innovation and investment in the latest technologies.” (Hart, 2020)

When reading these positioning statements, it might seem that they sound well worded. But there is one thing that is missing in both of them: sustainability. The focus is set on new technologies, innovation and product excellence. But does that mean that these companies do not embrace sustainability? Does that mean, that sustainability is not integrated in the companies' strategies or not even be planned to be integrated? Does that even mean that both companies may not be sustainable enough and focus on a business strategy that is impacting the environment negatively?

The answers to these questions cannot be given by only looking on the positioning statements. It is of much more interest to know the background information. Why is sustainability not a part of the positioning yet? What sustainable measures is the company actually executing? What challenges do occur and how does the company deal with them? All of these questions can indicate a company's commitment to sustainability. But often it is necessary to go beyond the edge, dive under the surface to realize the complexity of sustainable communication and the strategic usage.

On the basis of these issues the following research questions have been developed.

- i. How do marketers integrate sustainability into the brand positioning?
- ii. What challenges and problems occur in the process of integrating sustainability?
- iii. How do marketers try to overcome these challenges and problems?

The paper is starting with a brief reviewing of scientific articles and theories connected to sustainable market communication. The main focus is relying on the concept of sustainability and the scope that is used in this paper. By looking on sustainability as marketing tool, green communication in general and the thread of green washing, an understanding of the use of sustainability within a company's marketing and positioning strategy is built up.

The main part of the paper is concentrating on the analysis of the research questions. A method section is included to explain the choice of design and the guidelines that were used to conduct qualitative interviews.

The final part is the analysis of the qualitative interviews with the companies. Hereby, the focus lies on the main points that could be identified as relevant across the companies and essential for the conclusion of the analysis. Additionally, the analysis is summarized in a table for a complete overview.

3. Theoretical Approach of Sustainability

3.1 Concept of Sustainability

Nowadays, more and more consumers are increasingly paying attention on the companies' and brands' commitments to a sustainable development (Quid, 2019). Sustainable development is described by the World Commission of Environment and Development (WCED) as

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs“. (WCED, 1987)

The rapidly rising importance of sustainability is forcing companies and brands to rethink their current activities and positionings.

The United Nations (2020) define the current decade as the “decade of action” which implies the urgency to execute the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. These goals were set up by all United Nations member states in 2015 as a part of the 15 years plan to achieve all of the goals which are illustrated in figure 1. (United Nations, 2020)



Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016)

The United Nations define these goals as “universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere” (United Nations, 2020). Many companies use these guidelines as orientation for their own business activities and try to implement them into their strategies. Nevertheless, the focus can be set differently depending on the business.

While the sustainable development goals are rather focused on a strategic approach in regard to a business’ concept, there is also framework that is used for a more operational focus. The triple bottom line that was developed by John Elkington in the mid 1990s, is targeting the problem of companies of how to measure sustainability (Slaper & Hall, 2011). The framework is including social and environmental dimensions rather than only focusing on profits, return on investment or shareholder value. Thus, the focus lies on profits, people and planet. (Slaper & Hall, 2011)

Nevertheless, there can occur challenges when trying to measure sustainability even though such frameworks give companies a flexible approach for calculation. There can occur problems how to measure specific projects and how to find relevant data to measure the contribution to sustainability. (Slaper & Hall, 2011)

Sustainability is a complex topic and in order to manage the complexity it requires new knowledge to develop transparent business activities and processes by communicating clearly and without any incorrect information or claims which might lead to certain confusion among customers (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). It can be a long process and might require new guidelines of working together by developing a common goal, vision and trust by stakeholders and all their partners (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Grubor and Milovanov (2017) further elaborate on the importance of listening to market trends, nature and the needs of the society in comparison to orienting towards current environment and society issues. Furthermore, it requires a constant measurement, analysis, improvement and justification resulting from the changes of customer perceptions, the welfare of the society or the company’s reputation.

3.1.1 Definition and Scope of Sustainability

Sustainability is a broad concept and can have several meanings. Thus, it is of great importance to define the scope of the word when using it in different contexts. The

Cambridge Dictionary (2020) is defining sustainability in two ways. The first definition describes sustainability as

“the quality of being able to continue over a period of time” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020)

While this definition is not offering any specifications, there exists a second definition which is focusing on the environmental scope of the word. Here, sustainability is defined as

“the quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020)

Kuhlman and John (2010) see the term sustainability clearly differentiated from economic and social dimensions of the triple bottom line. They argue that these dimensions are rather being summarized by the term of well-being while sustainability is corresponding with the environmental dimension the most.

This paper will use the term sustainability in the sense of environmental aspects.

3.2 Sustainability as Marketing Tool

When thinking simplified about sustainability in connection to marketing, it may appear that the relation of both terms is not as closely tied together as expected. Sustainability stands for a reduction of consumption while marketing is the exact opposite and stands for the effort to increase the consumption (Jones, Clarke-Hill, Comfort, & Hillier, 2008). Nevertheless, in various literature, it is proven that sustainability can have a positive influence on a brand or company. Sustainability improves public recognition (Kotler & Lee, 2005), the competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006), and it can make future financial health available by diminishing possible risks (Osland, 2003). Sustainable attributes, labels or perceptions have a substantial influence on the purchase decision (Kong, Harun, Sulong, & Lily, 2014) while it is also given that consumers pay a higher price for a green brand (Litvine & Wustenhagen, 2011). Therefore, green branding can be seen as an essential driver of brand equity (Benoit-Moreau & Parguel, 2011).

Still, many companies did not adapt a sustainable approach yet. Quid (2019) was analyzing 2,500 different brands which mention specific keywords connected to sustainability since the year 2017. Interestingly, some industries seem to not set the focus on a sustainable

positioning. Quid (2019) found that the food and beverage industry is making up 29 % of all media coverage when it comes to sustainability. Especially industries where customers might expect a high degree of innovation with focus on future sustainability are the ones that score the lowest in the analysis e.g., the industrial and automotive industry with a coverage of only 4,3 %. Nevertheless, the coverage was rising over the last years. It is visible that companies pay an increasing attention on sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

Baldassarre and Campo (2016) developed a scheme shown in figure 2 that is categorizing companies according to their sustainable initiative transparency. It shows four different types of companies: translucent companies, transparent companies, dark companies and opaque companies. According to their actual sustainability initiatives and the initiatives that appear to be executed, categorizations can be made.

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| | | Translucent companies | | Transparent companies | |
| | | Sustainability is <i>de facto</i> realized, but is not exploited as a marketing opportunity. Sensitivity toward sustainable issues is demonstrated by definite actions, but the company is not completely aware of the strategic importance of communication. There is a gap between the sustainable performance and the perception of customers. <i>“We should communicate better what we are. We are doing the hard work—why not celebrate it?”</i> | | Sustainability is an important topic of the overall corporate strategy. Consequently, the marketing and communication approach to sustainable initiatives is consistent with what the company actually does. ‘Sustainable value’ is made up of definite activities, well-communicated to stakeholders, and the reputation of the company is supported by facts and figures. Sustainability is a competitive advantage. <i>“We communicate what we are”</i> | |
| Being sustainable | | Dark companies | | Opaque companies | |
| | | Companies are not at all aware of the relevance of sustainability as a strategic topic. There is no company website on sustainability and no possibility for stakeholders to know anything about the organization’s mission, values, etc. Sustainability is not a concern. <i>“What are you talking about?”</i> | | Sustainability is used as opportunistic leverage. Management overpromises and underdelivers on sustainability, and this could put the company’s reputation at risk. ‘To appear’ is more important than ‘to be’: the marketing and communication strategy regarding sustainable initiatives is emphasized, but is inconsistent with what the company actually does. <i>“We are (we pretend to be) what we communicate”</i> | |
| | | Low-profile communication | | High-profile communication | |
| Appearing sustainable | | | | | |

Figure 2: A self-assessment tool for sustainable initiative transparency (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016)

According to the scheme, companies can be categorized and reviewed in regard to their serious commitment to thorough green communication.

Opaque companies see sustainability as a marketing tool, but do not deal seriously with the topic. That means that they are manipulating data and exaggerating in their communication style to simply appear sustainable. (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016)

Translucent companies on the other hand are conscious about their sustainable commitment and are fully aware of their sustainable approaches. Simultaneously, they are not using sustainability as strategic approach in their communication. Marketing and sustainable commitment are separated from each other. (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016)

The strategy of transparent companies is described by Baldassarre and Campo (2016) as the objective that every company should have. Transparent companies value sustainability and do not see it as a cost to the firm. They communicate exactly what they are executing, and sustainability becomes a competitive advantage for them. (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016)

Lastly, there are dark companies. These types of companies do not embrace sustainability because they are simply not aware of it due to low sustainability performance and a weak communication profile. Additionally, they are characterized by business inertia, trying to remain unchanged. (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016)

These four categories are summing up the types of communication use for companies in the sense of sustainability as marketing tool. As Baldassarre and Campo (2016) point out, every company's goal should be to become a transparent company. Nevertheless, it is questionable, if all companies are able to embrace and use sustainability in such a thoughtful and responsible approach.

3.2.1 Green Brand Equity

Often seen as pioneer definition of green brand equity, Chan explained it as

“a set of brand assets and liabilities about green commitments and environmental concerns linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service.” (2007, p. 310)

The basis of this definition was given by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993). Also, studies can prove links between sustainability and brand equity. The survey of TANDBERG and Ipsos MORI was revealing an interdependence among corporate environmental responsibility, brand equity and competitive advantage (TANDBERG, 2007). In addition, Gidwani (2013) found a strong correlation between corporate sustainable practices and brand strength by examining more than 1,000 companies in over 54 countries. Thus, there is prove for the importance and significant influence of sustainability for the company, marketers and products.

Nevertheless, there are areas of brand equity which are not entirely researched yet to conclude a positive influence on brand equity. The effect of a reputation signals like sustainability or corporate social responsibility can be reduced when consumers are not fully aware of which is applying even more to global markets (Gowan & Guzman, 2018). It is argued that investments into reputation do not automatically assure an increased brand equity, but rather an indirect relationship (Gowan & Guzman, 2018).

3.2.2 Green Brand Positioning

The positioning of a product, brand or company is an essential part in the marketing strategy. Former editor of the Havard Business Review and economist and Havard Business School professor Theodore Levitt is pointing out that commodity products do not exist. Instead, even the most basic products can be differentiated and if that does not apply, the products are marketing failures, according to Levitt (Avery & Gupta, 2015). Avery & Gupta define positioning as

“a brand’s position represents its location vis-à-vis its competitors in the mental maps that consumers construct to represent the range of possible solutions to their problems” (2015, p. 3)

As opposed to slogans and taglines, positioning statements are normally used exclusively internally and consist of four important parts: the target market, the competitive set, a unique value and evidence to believe the claims (Avery & Gupta, 2015).

The positioning statement always contains a value claim highlighting the company’s most important value generating point (Avery & Gupta, 2015). The so-called unique selling proposition (USP) was firstly defined by Rosser Reeves as

“type of value claim that offers a prospective customer a specific, unique, and superior reason to purchase a product” (Avery & Gupta, 2015, p. 6)

Nevertheless, Avery & Gupta (2015) point out that Reeves’ understanding of the USP was affected of the strategies that existed in the 1940s and 1950s expecting the buyer to be rational. Nowadays, the consumers are rather irrational, relying on their memories, emotions, dreams, intuitions and aspirations.

Green branding is starting by selecting a niche in the market and consequently developing a product for the respective target group. These two steps are integrated into the green brand positioning process which requires an interaction of all marketing tools of the company (Danciu, 2015). According to Danciu (2015), brands can activate hedonic and experiential benefits while also reinforcing the favorability of the green brand associations. Thus, consumers may develop a positive attitude when perceiving that the cause the consumer is supporting is going along with the brand. Especially the strength of environmental associations can have a great influence on the credibility of the brand (Danciu, 2015).

Danciu (2015) is emphasizing on a clear and accurate process in connection to a sustainable branding and positioning. When aiming for a successful green branding it is essential to identify the exact green brand categories and criteria that are offering the choices. Afterwards, the strategic level is set up focusing on green brand positioning. Pflanz (2016) is categorizing sustainable brands into three parts: green as a core, greening integrated and green values as guaranties. Furthermore, there are criteria for establishing successful green brands which are important to demonstrate how the sustainability effort relates to the consumers and the competitors (Danciu, 2015). According to Danciu (2015), successful green brands must be authentic, unique meaningful and of great value for the customers, cause emotional response with the customers and comply with the promises that are made.

Danciu (2015) is presenting two strategies concerning a green brand positioning which also shows the rational and irrational sites. The first strategy is focused on functional attributes that deliver information on environmental product attributes resulting into building certain brand associations. The attributes should focus on the relevant environmental advantages of the product, production, processes, use or elimination of the product in comparison to the competing offers on the market. Danciu (2015) is arguing that the benefits for the consumers might not be decisive enough to motivate to buy a specific brand. Furthermore, there can

occur more problems regarding the functional strategy. It can be imitated by competitors, rational buyer decisions are assumed, and it could lead to a reduced flexibility of the brand differentiation (Hartmann, Apaloaza, & Forcada, 2006). On the other hand, Danciu (2015) is presenting another approach – the emotional green brand positioning strategy. It focuses on the emotions as a key to develop an emotional bond to the consumers. A commitment to a green brand can be strengthened by the consumers' belief of making a difference on environmental and social criteria (Russo, 2010). Thus, the emotional bond can reinforce loyalty, which is not possible when only focusing on product attributes (Danciu, 2015). In order to choose either the rational approach or the emotional approach is dependent on three interacting factors. How is the product chosen and used by the target group? How does the competition use the rational versus emotional appeals? How can the company's assets or other brands support the positioning statement? (Avery & Gupta, 2015)

There are three different types of green brand benefits when using the emotional brand positioning (Danciu, 2015). Firstly, environmentally conscious customers develop a feeling of well-being when contributing to the enhancement of the environment. Secondly, there are auto-expression benefits, which originate from the personal satisfaction of consumers presenting their environmental consciousness to others. The last category concerns the nature-related benefits developing out of sensations feeling by having contact with the nature (Danciu, 2015).

In general, the positioning and managing of a sustainable brand can offer a lot of benefits. At first, it is beneficial for the differentiation to the competitors. Furthermore, it can reinforce reputation and brand image among the target groups while also opening new markets. Companies can develop a loyal connection to the customers and at the same time enforce specific prices of the products or service. Moreover, it can have a beneficial effect on employer branding (Pflanz, 2016).

3.2.3 Challenges of Green Communication

When talking about sustainability, it is often referred to the positive impact it can have. Simultaneously, there can occur challenges when integrating sustainability into the strategy or product. Often, the actions of companies in terms of sustainability and the awareness of the consumers about it is not aligned with each other (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Interbrand's annual Best Brand Global Green report was defining two gaps between a

company's environmental practice and the consumers' perception – a positive and a negative gap. The positive gap is describing a higher performance in sustainability than the consumers are actually perceiving, while the negative gap is the exact opposite of this circumstance (Business Wire, 2014). The reason for these gaps is the confusion of the consumer in connection with “greenwashing” (Zammit-Lucia, 2013).

The Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility is defining the word greenwashing as

“practice of falsely promoting an organization's environmental efforts or spending more resources to promote the organization as green than are spent to actually engage in environmentally sound practices.” (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013)

Companies need to be extremely careful when dealing with sustainability in order to not confuse the customers and create questionable perceptions. If corporations do not hold up to their claim and will be accused of greenwashing, it can affect the trust and confidence in a firm and their products or services. This can lead to a loss of interest and enthusiasm of consumers to practice environmentally friendly behavior while waiting for someone else to engage in the problem and solve it (Hollis, 2011).

Even though, most companies' goal is to not actively engage in greenwashing, it might not be as simple as it looks like. Interestingly, the organization TerraChoice was reviewing more than 1,000 products that were described as green or eco-friendly and they discovered some form of greenwashing for all except one product (Aji & Sutikno, 2015).

Companies are faced with a rapid rise of popularity of green products. Firms and manufacturers are adopting environmentally friendly practices to produce products which is not only transforming the production process and final product but also the approach to market these products. To respond to these market trends and needs, green marketing is perceived as best strategy, but environmental claims can easily become equivocal and deceptive. (Aji & Sutikno, 2015)

The theory is showing that green marketing is already an important tool that can be used by companies. The significance will even increase in the future. Green communication has benefits for the firm to adapt to the market and to follow current trends led by customers or the industry itself. A green positioning can therefore be a competitive advantage for companies. On the other hand, it is important to look out for the threads and challenges

connected to the green communication. Especially greenwashing is a topic that is critically looked at by customers, institutions or other parties. It is thus important to communicate responsibly and pay close attention to the match of communication and actual measures that are undertaken in the business.

The following research is looking on the challenges and threads that companies perceive when integrating sustainability into their brand positioning and also if companies even integrate sustainability at all. Furthermore, it is examined how these challenges can be overcome.

4. Methodology

The following section of the paper is focusing on the methodology of the executed study. It is presenting the research questions, describing the choice of design and method, while presenting the sample and interview guide of the study.

4.1 Research Questions

Literature and research already provide an insight of sustainability in relation to positioning and branding. The effect of sustainability on the company and on consumers was identified by several researchers and companies. As proven, nowadays, sustainability plays an utmost important role for companies irrespective the in which industry they operate or whether it is a multinational enterprise or regional small player. Nonetheless, there are problems and questions that have not been examined yet and urge more clarification and research. One of the most striking questions is how companies and especially the employees of the respective departments, e.g., the marketing and brand division, incorporate sustainability and develop a consistent and convincing positioning of the company or product. Marketers most probably meet challenges and problems when trying to integrate sustainable approaches and strategic decisions into their operations and culture. On the basis of these issues the following research questions have been developed.

- i. How do marketers integrate sustainability into the brand positioning?
- ii. What challenges and problems occur in the process of integrating sustainability?
- iii. How do marketers try to overcome these challenges and problems?

As mentioned previously, the available literature and research are not offering an in-depth perspective on these research problems. The identified research problems help to examine the importance of sustainability in a firm's positioning while determining the actual challenges and obstacles that occur and how they are approached by marketers. The research questions are targeting the purpose of figuring out the actual approaches of marketers to deal with sustainability in regard to the positioning. It is investigated whether there are similarities between the approaches and problem-solving strategies and how sustainability is handled in the actual day-to-day business of marketing and brand divisions of firms.

4.2 Research Design

In order to answer the research questions a research design needs to be chosen. Since the research questions are open and more informative and investigative, a qualitative research is most suitable in this case. Figure 3 illustrates the approaches that can be taken when designing a research. Since a qualitative research is chosen to be conducted, the most suitable concept is the exploratory design as it is mostly qualitative by nature (Shukla, 2008).

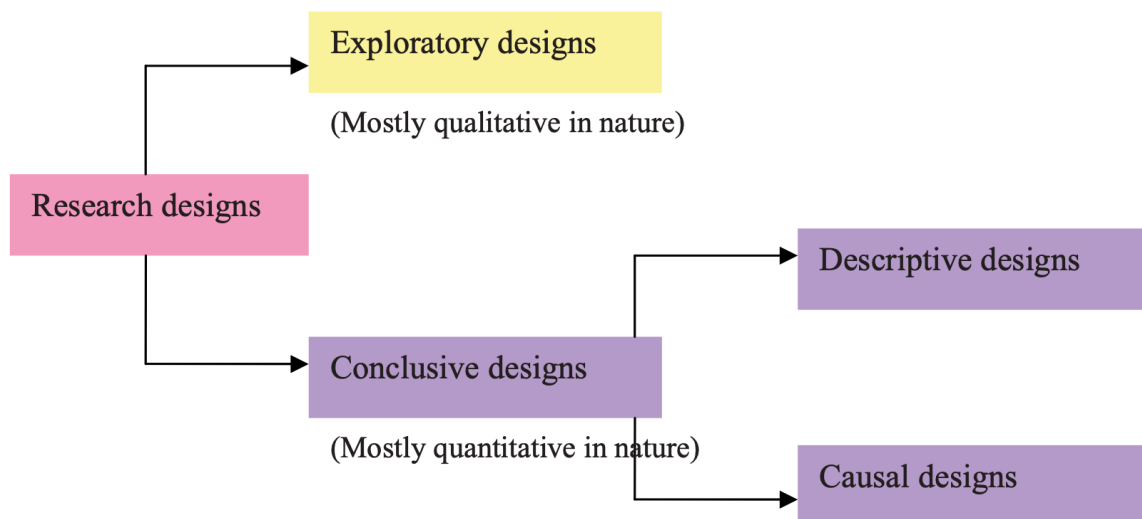


Figure 3: Classifications of research designs (Shukla, 2008)

As highlighted by Shukla (2008), the exploratory research design “deals with exploring into the phenomenon” (p. 32), which helps to analyze and identify the problem accurately and provides profound insights. In order to receive answers to the research questions stated previously, primary data is gathered.

Exploratory research design offers different types of data gathering like in-depth interviews, focus groups or projective techniques (Shukla, 2008). The study is conducted by choosing to execute in-depth interviews. Since the interviews are conducted with actual employees of several companies, there is no intention of conducting interviews in focus groups. Instead, each person is questioned individually due to the possible reluctance of the respondents in answering openly and truly when other persons attend the questioning round as well. This applies especially for company sensitive data. The benefits of in-depth interviews are the

detailed information that can be examined as well as the thoughts and behaviors of the interviewees. Moreover, these kinds of interviews help to analyze new issues thoroughly (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Boyce & Neale (2006) further point out that respondents may find themselves in a more relaxed situation and are more willing to give information about the topic than in a classical survey. The interviewer has the possibility to gather behavioral and attitudinal data and is able to use the answers to develop new questions out of them to probe for more detailed answers of the interviewee (Shukla, 2008).

In light of the previously mentioned theoretical background, the exploratory research design is used for the study. The research questions are dealing with specific topics that have a great depth and range which is dependent on the industry or company itself. The exploratory research design is a sufficient approach for this analysis due to the possibility to gather in-depth data from the spokespersons of the companies' itself. Since the topics need a certain explanation and thorough understanding, a design where people can be interviewed is most suitable. The personal interview gives the opportunity to ask spontaneous questions and to ask for elaborations on specific arguments and meanings. Since the topic of sustainability is a broad and complex concept, a personal interview is giving much more opportunities to communicate thoroughly and critically with the interviewee. Furthermore, companies might feel less constraint in an interview situation.

4.3 Sampling

Regarding the sampling, the research is mainly based on credibility and with a purpose, which is most suitable for qualitative research (Brounéus, 2011). In line with the credibility sampling, the respondents are chosen by the principle of maximizing responsibility and validity (Brounéus, 2011). The goal is to have a representation of different industries and companies within the sample. The sampling is only taking the geographical area of Germany into account and is focused on medium to large sized companies. The sample size can be seen as sufficient when similar answers, stories, issues or circumstances emerge (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Nevertheless, the sample size is not set to a specific number and will be based on the recurring information of the respondents due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study.

The sample that was taken for this study is consisting of five companies. Each company has a subsidiary or their headquarter in Germany. No specific regions have been chosen to select

the companies. The sampling was based on the contacts and network of the author. The author used his network to gather participating companies. Other than the requirement to have a location in Germany and to preferably be a medium to large sized enterprise, there were no other requirements in place. The sample is not focusing on any specific industry nor any specific products or services. The majority of the company are operating internationally.

Each company has a representative, who was taking part in the study. The representative has either been the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Sustainability Manager, Chief Marketing Officer or Marketing Manager. The Interviewees were chosen according to their expertise within the company. All of them were contacted directly or have been referred to by others.

The following paragraphs are shortly outlining the sampled companies' profile and main business area.

Company A is a subsidiary of an international German supermarket chain which is responsible for the development, coordination and internationalization of the digital business models of the supermarket. Part of it is the online shop, the travel portal or phone and electricity tariffs. (Interviewee A, personal interview, 05.11.2020)

Company B is a German-Turkish leisure airline which is a joint venture of two global airlines. The leisure airline is specialized in travel between Germany and Turkey while being a holiday specialist for several European destinations. (Interviewee B1, personal interview, 27.10.2020)

Company C is one of the leading German providers in the do-it-yourself sector. While having several stores and brands in their portfolio, the company is a subsidiary of Germany's and Europe's leading retail and tourism group. (Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020)

Company D is designing, producing and distributing high quality audio content. The company creates high-quality and innovative audio solutions for different companies by providing expertise in radio, TV and marketing. (Interviewee D, personal interview, 30.10.2020)

Company E is an international logistics solutions provider operating globally. The company is mainly specializing in the automotive industry operating as component supplier for global car manufacturers. (Interviewee E, personal interview, 16.11.2020)

As outlined before, the companies are operating in different industries. Furthermore, they are focusing on different target groups are either product or service focused. Thus, the chosen sample is representation a diverse set of companies operating in the German market and beyond that.

4.4 Interview Guide

The interview guide is based on the suggestions and samples of Boyce & Neale (2006).

First the interviews start with an **introduction** where the following key components are clarified and stated.

- Personal introduction and acknowledgement for the participation of the interviewee
- Purpose of the interview (goal of the study)
- Confidentiality assurance (restricted access to answers by defined groups of persons)
- Duration and process of conducting the interview
- Verification of consent and understanding with the above

The next step of the interview are the actual **questions** that are asked. The questions are rather open-ended than close-ended, factual questions are asked before opinion questions and probes are used when necessary. In the following, the interview questions are stated. Afterwards, the choice of questions is explained.

- A. What is your company doing? Describe it with your own words.
- B. What significance has sustainability in your company?
- C. What does your company do on sustainability? Which specific actions and measures are undertaken? Please elaborate.
- D. What is the current positioning of your company? Please explain.
- E. How do you want your brand to be perceived? Please elaborate.
- F. How do you describe the brand positioning? Is it a brand positioning statement or a value proposition?
- G. Which significance has sustainability in your brand positioning? Which role does it play in your brand positioning? Please elaborate.

If sustainability is a part of the brand positioning:

- H. What are the challenges and problems of the integration of sustainability? Please elaborate.
- I. How do you try to overcome these challenges? Which solutions do you have? Please explain.

If sustainability is not a part of the brand positioning:

- J. Why is sustainability not a part of your brand positioning? Please explain.

- K. Are there any external regulations that are hindering you on becoming more sustainable? Please describe.

It is important to notice that the stated questions are rather a guideline for the interview than being followed strictly. According to the interview session, person and individual answers, the questions can be asked in a different order or can be adapted accordingly.

After the questioning round, the **closing** of the interview is following which is containing the following key component.

- Asking for additional comments of the interviewee
- Explaining the next steps (processing of data and data analysis)
- Acknowledgement of the time and participation of the interviewee

4.4.1 Choice of Interview Questions

Each question is serving a purpose for the interview. The following section is explaining the choice of interview questions.

- A. What is your company doing? Describe it with your own words.

Question A is supposed to serve as introduction for the interview questioning. This question is simple to answer by the interviewee. Thus, the interviewee starts with a basic question about their company which will make the start of the interview easier, since the interviewee can build some comfort of answering. Furthermore, question A is giving an overview of the

company with the words of the interviewee. This delivers an additional orientation of the company's scope and industry.

B. What significance has sustainability in your company? Please explain.

Question B is used to let the interviewee reflect on sustainability in their company and department. It helps to start opening up and think about the topic more critically. It can be seen as a warmup question to initiate a conversation about sustainability.

C. What does your company do on sustainability? Which specific actions and measures are undertaken? Please elaborate.

Question C is concentrating on specific measures the company is executing in regard to sustainability. This question functions as follow up question for the previous one, where the interviewee needs to present very exact actions of the company. It also serves to become very clear and specific on the actual measures of the company to avoid a mere impression of being sustainable presented by the interviewee. The measures also indicate a certain level of involvement, since they provide an overview of how sustainability is already integrated and part of the company.

D. What is the current positioning of your company? Please explain.

Question D is asking the interviewee how the company is currently positioned. This question is directly connected to the research questions, since it reveals, if the company is prominently using sustainability in their positioning already or if sustainability is playing a subordinated role. It shows the perspective of the company, how the company is perceiving itself and what makes the company unique. The question can be seen as a first identification of the use of sustainability in the company's brand positioning. On this base, the interview can be built up.

E. How do you want your brand to be perceived? Please elaborate.

Question E is a follow up question to Question D. Here, the interviewee has the possibility to elaborate on the desired perception of the positioning. It indicates the ambitions of the company in the light of their brand communication as well as the current striving of the company.

F. How do you describe the brand positioning? Is it a brand positioning statement or a value proposition?

Question F is specifically focusing on the brand positioning of the company. The question is actively asking for a brand positioning statement or value proposition. Here, it can be identified if the company possesses a manifestation of their positioning and if so, how sustainability is already integrated or not. If a current brand positioning statement or value proposition is available it directly shows, if sustainability is actively integrated, which is also connected to the research questions.

G. Which significance has sustainability in your brand positioning? Which role does it play in your brand positioning? Please elaborate.

Question G is building up on question F. The interviewee has the chance to elaborate on the degree of importance of sustainability in the brand positioning. This is important in order to give the interviewee the possibility to explain the exact meaning and intentions of the brand positioning. Especially, if the brand positioning or value proposition is not containing sustainability or the term of sustainability, there might be an intention of the company to implement that in the future or that the current positioning stays under the scope of sustainability in a broader sense.

H. What are the challenges and problems of the integration of sustainability? Please elaborate.

Question H is being asked depending on the answer of question G. If sustainability is a part of the brand positioning or is being planned to be a part of the brand positioning, question H will serve as follow up. Here, the interviewee is asked to present the challenges and problems occurring by integrating sustainability into the brand's positioning. This part is also highly significant in regard to the research questions. The interviewee is expected to directly name their company's challenges and to elaborate on them.

If sustainability is not a part of the company's brand positioning nor being planned to integrate into it, the interviewer is skipping directly to question J.

I. How do you try to overcome these challenges? Which solutions do you have? Please explain.

Question I is also directly focusing on the research questions. The interviewee is asked to explain how challenges and problems can be overcome and solved. The question is identifying possible solutions or approaches for problems of the company in regard to the

integration of sustainability. This is essential to understand the different strategies and to identify if challenges are even approached actively.

J. Why is sustainability not a part of your brand positioning? Please explain.

Question J is being asked when the company does not have integrated sustainability into their positioning nor planning to integrate it in the future. The interviewee is expected to provide profound explanation of the circumstances. Even though a company is not integrating sustainability in their positioning, it can be worth knowing the reasons for this decision.

K. Are there any external regulations that are hindering you on becoming more sustainable? Please describe.

Question K is the last question of the interview guide and is focusing on external factors that might hinder companies on their sustainable approaches. This question is supposed to identify possible challenges that might not have been mentioned by the interviewee in regard to special regulations or laws. This will make sure that all perspectives were looked at and thought about by the interviewee.

4.4.2 Interview Execution

The interviews were executed by the author of this paper. All participating interviewees were previously contacted by email and were given a rough introduction to the topic and research questions. After the consent of the interviewees to be willing to participate in the study, a meeting was set up. The interviews were all conducted virtually via the communication platform Microsoft Teams. The interviews were conducted in German. Generally, the length of one interview was maximum 30 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed into actual text, while they got translated into English. The recordings were deleted after two weeks or respectively after the transcription was finalized.

5. Interview Analysis

The analysis is based on the expert interviews conducted by the author. In the following sections, the interviews are analyzed and are structured into different parts orientated on the interview guide questions. All transcribed interviews can be found in the appendices as the original transcript in German language as well as a translation of the transcript in English language.

All names that may identify the companies in any way e.g., company name, product names, shareholders, interviewees or any other identifying terms are replaced by anonymous and general designations for each company.

5.1 Significance of Sustainability to the Company

The interviewees were asked to describe the significance of sustainability in their company. All of the participants described the significance and importance of sustainability as highly essential. The analysis of the interviews could not see a different significance of sustainability between the companies. Each company was pledging to actively being involved in approaching the sustainability issue and the impact the company has on the environment. The sampled companies are all aware of the importance of becoming more sustainable in the future and they are all strategically or operationally committed to reach specific goals. The interviews have shown that sustainability is not only a general focus point among other aspects but is rather one of the most valued and essential orientations of the companies.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that some industries are often expected to be less or more sustainable than others. Sustainability is an important topic, and it is natural that industries like the aviation or logistics sector is not being perceived as fully sustainable in the first hand since their operations are naturally setting free emissions and will also do so in the future. Still, it can be seen that also these companies are setting a focus on sustainability and try to approach their operations accordingly.

The analysis is drawing the conclusion that companies are aware of the growing significance of sustainability for their business and that companies do value sustainability extremely high and see it as necessary implementation for themselves.

5.2 Current Sustainability measures of the Company

The participants were asked to state the current measures and actions of the company on sustainability. The focus lies on the main measures undertaken by the company with regards to sustainability. Depending on the industry, different measures could be observed, but generally, all participating companies have measures taken place in their operations and strategic focus. The following sections are summarizing the different measures, whereby the named sustainability measures are the main activities among other ones the company is undertaking.

The main focus lies on **logistics** for the majority of the participating companies. Company A, Company C and Company E have a strong targeting on logistics when it comes to sustainable measures. This includes several operations in this area such as supply chain, transport or product management. Interviewee A states to “try to centralize the warehouse locations” (Interviewee A, personal interview, 05.11.2020) which is reducing the movement of transport vehicles. This also goes in line with the strategy of Company E which is trying to intelligently coordinate the movement of their transport vehicles. Interviewee C states:

“Basically, we always look at the supply chains or the life cycle of a special product group and first try to find out what the so-called hotspots are.” (Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020)

This implies a strategic focus on supply chain management. Additionally, Interviewee C points out the importance of sustainable logistics in the company:

“We have most of the measures in logistics. Drive less, send less and return as few as possible.” (Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020)

One point that was named several times is the active **reduction of greenhouse gas emission**. Company B and Company E are heavily focusing on this aspect by reducing their carbon dioxide (CO₂) footprint. Company B as airline is reducing their CO₂ footprint by adapting their aircraft in several ways such as weight reduction on board by replacing heavy materials with lighter ones or by modernizing the fleet. According to Company B, this could already save tons of CO₂ in the last year. The focus for them lies on “fuel consumption” (Interviewee B1, personal interview, 27.10.2020). Company E has the same ambitions when it comes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. While they are operating a fleet of trucks, they

also set the focus on less fuel consumption by the strategy to “approach technologically” (Interviewee E, personal interview, 16.11.2020) with special systems to indicate a more sustainable way of driving the trucks. Additionally, Company E is also ambitious to modernize their fleet of trucks. Company A is additionally focusing on the reduction of packaging in regard to minimizing the number of transportable pieces with the aim to reduce the emissions caused by several transports.

Furthermore, there is also a focus on the **products** of the companies itself. Company A and Company C generate their main income from the products they sell. Company C is rather setting the focus on the handling of the products and supplier choice. Company A is proactively following a strategy to promote specific sustainable products with their own sustainable private label to indicate the environmental footprint of them. Interviewee C illustrates that clearly:

“First and foremost, the approach is then to really look where the challenge from a sustainability point of view lies with any product and what must be done to improve it.”
(Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020)

Important to notice is that Company C is having an independent advisory board consisting of several non-governmental organizations which is determining if a product can be promoted with the sustainability label. Both, Company A and Company C are trying to look into the life cycle of products and are interested in extending it.

Waste management is also of utmost importance for most of the participating companies in the interview sessions. Company B is currently trying to ban all single-use plastic from their aircraft fleet, while Company D is reducing any form of paper in the office by transforming everything digitally. Company A is putting efforts into acquiring companies which are in charge of recycling and disposal.

An additional point worth mentioning are the efforts of the companies to support **sustainability projects** and to invest into them. Examples are the reforestation program that is supported by Company B or the partnership agreement of Company A to plant trees for each order taken with a specific credit card. Almost all of the companies are using corporate social responsibility projects as an investment opportunity and for their communication purposes.

In general, all of the companies have sustainability measures in place. The scope of the measures that are already integrated differ from the type of company. Depending on the industry they are in, the measures are adapted accordingly. Each company is finding an adequate way to demonstrate sustainable efforts. Most of the companies are engaged in relatively universal measures to become more sustainable e.g., waste management and logistics. One of the most important topics for all of them is the intelligent way of using resources. These efforts are undertaken differently by each company e.g., adapting products, service operations or internal processes, but they are all targeting the same goal.

The analysis shows that all companies despite the industry they are operating in have sustainable measure in place which they actively use to become more environmentally friendly. Naturally, it depends on the size and budget of the company how extended these measures are. Nevertheless, each of the interviewed companies are proactively trying to minimize their carbon footprint and impact on the environment.

Thus, it can be concluded that sustainable measures are already in place and natural for all sampled companies. The existence of sustainable measures is therefore not dependent on the industry, size of the company nor target group. Merely it is the scope of the measures that can differ between the companies.

5.3 Brand Positioning of the Companies

When looking on the current brand positionings, it can be noticed that not all of the companies specifically mention sustainability in them or even have a positioning statement. Some companies describe their brand positioning in short sentences and others rely on specific claims and systems. The following overview demonstrates each company and their brand positioning.

Company A does not have a positioning statement but is currently working on it. As assured by Interviewee A, the positioning statement will include a sustainability focus. Currently, the company does not position itself in their online business segment. Nevertheless, the mother company is relying on a sustainable positioning when it comes to the stationary trade in the stores itself. The main target is to position the online shop as

“[...] online discounter. Always be able to shop at the best price-performance ratio with the best quality.” (Interviewee A, personal interview, 05.11.2020)

Interviewee A highlights that:

“If you ask about sustainability then we will, [...] inevitably have to get involved in the sustainability offensive.” (Interviewee A, personal interview, 05.11.2020)

The Interviewee also points out that the mother company is impacting the positioning of the subsidiary and thus, forces Company A to implement sustainability strategically.

Company B is pointing to their mission statement which is also used as understanding of the company's brand positioning:

“We are the German-Turkish Leisure Airline connecting people, families and friends with places they love. We combine great value with unique hospitality. We are an experienced, reliable and innovative business partner. Our customers are at the heart of everything we do. We are a strong team with our shareholders [Shareholder 1] and [Shareholder 2]. Our continuous cost discipline allows us to compete successfully and embrace sustainability. Trust is an integral part of our culture. Every single one of us is vital to our success and makes the difference.” (Interviewee B1, personal interview, 27.10.2020)

Clearly, sustainability is an integral part of the strategy of Company B. The company integrated sustainability into their positioning statement and thus, gave the term a certain significance.

Company C is demonstrating their four pillars of sustainability including green products; energy, climate and environment; employees and the social commitment. As well as Company A, Company C is impacted by the sustainable ambitions of the mother company. Additionally, the company is communication with a special claim called “Triple Use” (Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020) meaning “good for me, good for the environment and good for my wallet” (Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020). Thus, Company C is relying on a manifested strategy and a specific claim. The four pillars are therefore an underlying concept for Company C which is showing the significance sustainability has for the company.

Company D does not have a positioning statement but is planning to develop one for the future. Currently, the company positions itself as a unique way to offer conception, production and distribution of podcasts as marketing tool for other companies. Interviewee D describes the company as service provider which

“consider[s] the company completely neutrally and position [itself] as a partner, as a service provider for the company with the corresponding know-how”. (Interviewee D, personal interview, 30.10.2020)

Company E is stating several values to position themselves. The company describes themselves as the following:

“Designing, implementing and managing innovative logistics solutions is our passion. Our rapid growth and success is due to the long lasting partnerships we forge with our clients. These are based on trust, passion, innovation and common goals.” (Interviewee E, personal interview, 16.11.2020)

Furthermore, Interviewee E was referring to the company’s website and vision to “become one of the leading European providers of sustainable supply chain solutions based on a solid business model” (Website Company E, 2020).

Generally, all of the companies are showing ambitions to integrate sustainability into their positioning. Company B, C and E already integrated it into some of their statements which are manifested in text and can be accessed online. Company A and D are actively planning to incorporate sustainability into their future positionings and to also manifest them into statements. Thus, across the industries, there are strong initiatives to use sustainability for communication purposes and to position the brand in this light.

Consequently, it is observable that companies do value the integration of sustainability into their positioning. Therefore, the companies are able to realize a lack of integration of sustainability into the brand positioning. It can be concluded that enterprises are setting the focus to implement sustainability into their brand positioning in the long-term. It is an issue that is directly dealt with and which is already known by the companies. Thus, companies already have sustainability implemented into their brand positioning, have sustainability implemented into other concepts or claims or are actively planning to implement sustainability into their brand positioning.

5.4 Challenges of Integrating Sustainability into the Brand Positioning

As mentioned in the chapter before, all of the companies are embracing sustainability and are either actively working with a sustainable positioning or planning to implement that in the future. Nevertheless, there are occurring challenges and difficulties when integrating sustainability into a brand's positioning. The following sections are analyzing the companies' problems and main challenges when communicating and implementing sustainability strategically.

Generally, the interviews were showing three main issues the companies are facing when it comes to the obstacles that occur when trying to integrate sustainability into a brand's positioning. The three main issues focus on the worries of the interviewees and represent cumulative impression of all of the companies.

5.4.1 Costs

One of the main challenges that can be identified for the companies are the costs. Company A is clearly mentioning:

“Cost pressure and still the goal of promoting sustainability. That conflicts sometimes.”
(Interviewee A, personal interview, 05.11.2020)

Company A especially struggles with the topic of costs since they are following a strategy of offering low-cost products with high quality. Thus, the pressure to perform with minimal costs is exceptionally high. Company C is also seeing the costs as one of their main problems, but with a focus on the customer's willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products:

“Of course, the price is also a challenge because they always say that customers want to pay more for sustainable products. But then I have to prove it properly in practice.”
(Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020)

Additionally, there is the pressure of good performance. Sustainable products need to perform as good as it is expected by the company, customers and any other products in the segment. Like Company A also highlighted, the margins of sustainable products may be occurring as challenges. Company C is as well dealing with difficult decisions of product

pricings. Sustainable products may normally cost more, which is also accepted by consumers, but they still need to be priced responsibly.

Therefore, it can be concluded that sustainability may cause higher costs in specific areas. This especially applies to companies that are selling physical products as the manufacturing costs can increase when trying to produce sustainably. The challenge is to cover those costs by a reasonable retail price which can be difficult. Thus, there is the challenge being profitable while manufacturing prices increase. Companies need to make sure to maintain specific profit margins on the products, invest into sustainable manufacturing and simultaneously deliver a good quality and performance with the products itself.

5.4.2 Thread of Greenwashing

The other main challenge that is identified after the interviews is the risk of being perceived to greenwash when communicating sustainability. The companies describe the situation as balancing act where sustainable actions are implemented but customers might perceive that as greenwashing. Company C is pointing out:

“[...] I think, in general, customers are already sensitive when it comes to greenwashing, etc. I believe that it is also a challenge to get across that you are really serious about it and that you really want to do it and execute it.” (Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020)

Nowadays, the majority of the companies are entering into the communication and implementation of sustainable actions. This circumstance can lead to difficulties for single enterprises since customers might perceive these actions as simply floating with the current. Real graveness and commitment need to be communicated while standing out of the mass of green communication.

The difficulty is that the companies are facing the issue that they want to communicate sustainability proactively and constantly but are refrained by the public perception of being accused to greenwash their communications. It can be concluded that the challenge here is to use sustainability as communication tool but always being threatened by the possibility to create the impression of using false claims.

5.4.3 Developing and Selecting the Approach

The third issue that could be derived from the interviews was the problem for companies to select the right approach or to develop their sustainable actions further in the future. Company D is claiming that they already feel as a sustainable company referring to their 100 % digital approach of doing business. Interviewee D is claiming:

“The question that should also be asked is what other sustainable measures could we use in the company?” (Interviewee D, personal interview, 30.10.2020)

Company D is thus struggling to find new approaches of developing the sustainable strategy the company already has in place. The firm is specifically highlighting that there is the thread of “leaning back a little at times” (Interviewee D, personal interview, 30.10.2020) when being already ahead of other competitors or firms in regard to the integration of sustainability. Company B is also mentioning the difficulty of finding the right approach:

“Credibility per se is not the biggest problem, but rather the approaches to find. That's the biggest problem.” (Interviewee B1, personal interview, 27.10.2020)

Company B is pointing out that their operations will never be 100 % green or emission free. Thus, there is the question of where to start or to continue to develop the own strategy of becoming sustainable.

It can be therefore concluded that companies are facing the issue of being confronted with possibilities to develop or maintain a sustainable approach but there is no specific guideline of what the correct and best choice would be. Companies are actually aware of sustainable strategies and they also implement them, but it is a question of prioritization and in the end as well the question of what does make sense and what will give the greatest impact.

5.5 Overcoming Challenges

This section is analyzing the companies' approaches of trying to overcome the challenges that were indicated before. There were four main points that can be identified from the interviews, that are summarizing the approaches and solutions to overcome the challenges and problems of integrating sustainability into the brand positioning and company's operations.

5.5.1 Product and Service Pricing

One approach that was described and mentioned by several companies was the pricing strategy. When integrating sustainability, it is often connected with several costs, especially when it comes to the amendments of products or services. These costs can either mean that the profit margin of the sold product or service will decrease, or the product or service will increase in retail price. Especially Company A and Company C are dealing with those issues and approach them with a different pricing strategy. Both companies adapted some products to make them more sustainable, which means that the costs were increasing.

Interviewee A and C were pointing out that it is proven by several market research institutes that people are willing to spend more money on sustainable products. With this background, the companies are actively pricing their sustainable products higher in comparison to the standard products. Thus, some increase in costs can be covered in this regard. Company C was highlighting that this does not mean that they price their products arbitrarily. Interviewee C is elaborating that all prices for sustainable products need to be reasonable and should not make use of any false claims for the customers.

The increase of prices can be seen as a rather simple method to cover costs that occur by working with more sustainable solutions. On the other hand, sustainability is not only a cost factor. Company B is able to save costs in their operations when e.g., they use less fuel or renew their fleet as well as Company E was doing. Nevertheless, a higher pricing cannot be seen as a long-term solution to cover all increasing costs. It can be rather seen as compensating factor that could help to cover the impact to a certain degree.

5.5.2 Thorough Communication

One very essential approach of overcoming obstacles by integrating sustainability into the brand positioning is the communication of sustainability itself. The majority of the companies elaborate that they focus on communicating constantly and thoroughly to stay relevant and to be perceived seriously about the topic. Especially Company C is counting on a constant and proven communication strategy. Sustainability topics are handled with extra care and everything that is communicated in this sense needs to be proven correctly. Thus, there is a high sensitivity connected to the approach. Furthermore, the communication does not only have to be honest but also constantly present. Interviewee C is stressing that it is highly significant to

“communicate continuously and loudly and on the other hand really only credible and secure”. (Interviewee C, personal interview, 10.11.2020)

Concluding, when building up an integration of sustainability into the brand positioning or strategy of a company, the topic has to become part of the daily operations and routines of the company. Thus, it is natural that communication processes and campaigns are taking up the topic regularly to not lose the focus point. Also, for the specific target groups, the constant communication can function as a reoccurring reminder which can strengthen the sustainable image of a company. It might also be an approach to be not perceived to greenwash, since the company then has to constantly prove their claims and is not working with randomly occurring campaigns which can be perceived to be not genuine enough.

5.5.3 Innovation

Being innovative and having the courage to try new innovative ideas and bring them into practice is seen as counteracting the challenges of sustainability integration. Company B claims themselves as a highly innovative company, which is helping them to integrate sustainability more easily and to overcome some challenges that are coming along with it. Interviewees B see an innovative approach as driver of sustainability while also compensating problems that occur. Interviewee B1 highlights the following:

“[...] I think if you have the claim to sell innovations and then just look at what possibilities there are with innovations, it will get you further in the process.” (Interviewee B1, personal interview, 27.10.2020)

Company B is pointing out that problems can be solved by integrating new and often unconventional solutions. Particularly getting start-ups involved is seen as a favorable approach by Company B as they can provide some new ideas and are often known for their unconventional perspective. Most of the companies are seeing market trends to be an essential part of keeping track of new developments. They can indicate specific directions of developments which can be watched and integrated in time.

These insights are showing that the sustainable development process is not only based on existing possibilities or adapted approaches. There is the need of innovating and trying to find new ways to tackle challenges in this sector. Some companies are dependent on innovations and are increasingly investing into them. Consequently, challenges of the

integration of sustainability do not necessarily have to be solved immediately or rather cannot always be approached directly with current strategies since there is an urgency to further develop and to think out of the box.

5.5.4 Partnerships and Cooperation

One last point on overcoming challenges in regard to sustainability integration is the focus on partnerships and cooperation. This approach is rather looking on external support to find solutions to specific obstacles. All of the companies are actively working together with other parties such as special suppliers, start-ups, business customers, non-governmental organizations or institutions. Those partnerships can create synergies and the companies are able to find solutions to problems that might have been not bearable by them alone.

Company B is using e.g., the partnership together with the non-profit organization “atmosfair” to provide customers the possibility to offset their carbon footprint. Such a partnership is beneficial since the infrastructure and process is already setup by the other party which then can be used by the company without integrating a whole new process itself.

Also, Company A is actively cooperating with partners and especially suppliers. Manufacturers and suppliers are sensitized to produce more sustainable and under specific regulations. Additionally, Company A is heavily focusing on working together with other companies when it comes to their waste management. This can be an example of a possibility to outsource specific sections of the company to reach an even greater effect when it is being handled by a party with the respective expertise.

Company C introduced their own sustainability label. The label is given to products that fulfill specific social and environmental requirements. Important to mention is that products are not labeled with this brand by Company C but by external partners. That means that Company C is receiving the label on their products only when independent institutions and non-governmental organizations reviewed the requirements that need to be met.

Partnerships and cooperation can help and support a company to further develop and integrate new processes and concepts. As the interviews are showing, those collaborations are crucial for companies in regard to their sustainability strategy. On the one hand the company is able to outsource specific tasks that it would not be able to operate or does not have the expertise in and on the other hand partners can trigger a commitment to specific

requirements. Consequently, cooperation is a tool to find new solutions and to collaborate to create a whole system that can support itself.

5.6 Summary of the Analysis

The following overview in table 1 is shortly outlining a summary of the analysis. The table shows current states of the companies and the main findings from the analysis.

| Sustainability Aspects | Company A | Company B | Company C | Company D | Company E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Sustainability Significance | Significant high importance of sustainability for all companies. | | | | |
| Main Sustainability Measures | logistics & waste management | emission reduction & resource management | product adaption & project investments | resource reduction & digitization | emission reduction & green energy |
| Sustainability Integration into Brand Positionings | no statement available, planning to create one and integrate sustainability | integrated into the brand positioning statement | integrated into sustainability concept and manifest | no statement available, planning to create one and integrate sustainability | integrated into the brand positioning |
| Main Challenges | costs | credibility & choice of approach | costs & credibility | choice of approach | no specific challenges |
| Main Approaches | price increases | innovation & partnering | price increases & constant, reliable communication | partnering | innovation |

Table 1: Summary of the interview analysis

6. Conclusion

The analysis has shown that the companies have largely similarities when integrating sustainability into the brand positioning and approaching the topic of sustainability by implementing it into their strategy and operations.

Without exception, all of the sampled companies assign sustainability an utmost importance to the company itself. Therefore, sustainability can be seen as a strategic part of a firm which has a high significance strategically and operationally. Companies already have personal experiences with sustainability issues and strategies and therefore the concept of the integration of sustainability is nothing completely new and can rather be seen as a concept that is either already implemented to a certain degree or is currently in the process of being integrated into the company's business model.

By being already familiar with the strategic use of sustainability, companies have several environmental measures in place. These measures differ from the industry and kind of firm and the product or service they are selling. Nevertheless, not only basic and easy to implement measures are already being executed but also much more complex concepts have been integrated. Measures that are simple to implement e.g., internal reduction of resources like paper or plastic or digitalized processes are universally applied. Simultaneously, there are companies that are more involved into implementing specific measure which is then resulting into outsourcing and partnering to become more sustainable. Generally, there is the approach of first adapting own products and service as well as the connected operations and equities that are involved in that. Thus, sustainability can be seen as usual strategic concept that is actively applied in today's companies.

Even though, companies are already working with sustainability, not all of them position itself sustainably yet. Some companies integrated and manifested sustainability into their brand positionings while others are still planning to do so. Consequently, there is a gap of actively implementing sustainable measure into the firms' operations and the actual implementation into the strategic approach of the firms. The integration into the brand positioning is either already completed, in process or in the planning for the future. Nevertheless, it does not seem that there is no ambition at all to integrate it into the positioning.

The main challenges that companies meet when integrating sustainability, are higher costs, the threat to appear not credible when communicating and to select the right approach and touchpoints. Even though costs may increase when investing into being more sustainable, there are opportunities to also save costs after some time when the concept is paying off. The main focus of the obstacles lies in the choice a company is making on what to concentrate on and where to begin. Companies are facing a vast amount of improvement points and suggestions of customers or external organizations where to develop to become more environmentally friendly. This leads to the problem that this might create an overwhelming effect for the company to not know which problem should be addressed first to not waste any potential or to simultaneously meet the expectations of customers, shareholders and other external parties. This expectation is putting pressure on the company since sustainability always needs to be communicated and executed thoroughly and credibly. Otherwise, the company might face a problem of being perceived to make false claims.

Overcoming these obstacles can result into different approaches. On the one hand, companies make use of the trends and willingness of customers to pay a higher price for a sustainable product. On the other hand, there is the need of paying close attention to a thorough and constant communication while being able to prove the credibility of any claims and action in connection with sustainability. Companies are making use of partnerships and cooperation to outsource specific operations where they do not have an expertise in or to seek for support to reach a certain goal faster and more effectively. Therefore, it is natural that investments into innovations and even unconventional approaches are needed. It can be concluded that companies are not being able to stem the integration of sustainability and the issues resulting out of that alone but rather build up a good functioning network of e.g., partners, institutions, suppliers and manufacturers to reach the goals together.

It may seem that some companies do not have integrated sustainability into their brand positioning when having a first look into their strategy but there are ambitions and actual processes that companies already take into account and execute to prepare and lead a way into a sustainable positioning and to use the advantages of green communication in connection to their target audience. This may be already implemented, or it may take some time. But there is one similarity that can be seen as universal concept for all companies: the

significance and willingness to engage with sustainability has a major relevance across the industries and will probably become even more significant in the upcoming year.

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Appendix A – Interview Transcripts (German Original)

Interview Company A (German Original)

05.11.2020

Interviewer: Beschreiben Sie mit Ihren eigenen Worten, was Ihr Unternehmen macht.

Interviewee A: Genau, also Company A ist die digitale Sparte [des Mutterkonzerns], das heißt wir verantworten den Onlineshop und sind quasi der verlängerte Arm der Filiale. Bei uns gibt es die Aktionsware, nicht nur zum Aktionszeitraum, sondern auch noch ein bisschen länger. Das nennen wir dann Festlistungssortiment und jetzt gilt es einfach, die Bekanntheit ein bisschen zu stärken als Onlineshop selbst und nicht nur als Website [des Mutterkonzerns], und quasi die Offlinewelt mit der Onlinewelt zu verzahnen.

Interviewer: Welchen Stellenwert besitzt Nachhaltigkeit bei Ihnen?

Interviewee A: Also, im Onlineshop ist Nachhaltigkeit natürlich ein bisschen schwieriger umzusetzen als in der Filiale. Ich kann Ihnen nur sagen, dass Nachhaltigkeit in der Filiale ein großes Thema ist. Wir müssen da auch mit der Zeit gehen. Dazu zählt auch, dass wir einen Nachhaltigkeitsbericht rausgegeben haben aus Eigeninitiative – nicht, weil man es musste. Das zeigt glaube ich auch, dass wir da Vollgas geben wollen. Im Onlinebereich ist es so, dass wir versuchen mit sinnvollen Verwertungskonzepten quasi die Wiederverkaufbarkeit von Waren sicherzustellen, um möglichst wenig in die Tonne geben zu müssen. So würde ich das mal zusammenfassen.

Interviewer: Was sind die spezifischen Maßnahmen, die ihr Unternehmen mit Hinblick auf Nachhaltigkeit ergreift?

Interviewee A: Wir versuchen die Lagerstandorte zu zentralisieren. Dass man quasi nicht von einem Lager zum anderen Lager fahren muss und Ware hin und her schieben muss, weil dort auch immer ein LKW unterwegs ist. Dann versuchen wir die Pakete zu reduzieren. Das heißt, wenn Sie etwas bestellen, bekommen Sie für drei Artikel drei Kartons an unterschiedlichen Tagen. Auf unserer Agenda steht, dass wir das stark minimieren müssen. Sodass wir quasi nur noch ein Paket an den Kunden verschicken. Das spart zum einen Kosten an den Dienstleister, aber spart auch an Kartonage und CO2 Ausstoß. Dann

versuchen wir Kartons wiederzuverwenden im Lager. Wir versuchen die ganzen Beileger zu reduzieren. Die nennen sich Paketbeileger. Wir sagen es macht gar keinen Sinn, dass das Bestellmagazin, das Reisemagazin, das Weinmagazin in das Paket zu legen. Wir verschicken ja, glaube ich, über eine Million Pakete, ich glaube in der Woche. Und das ist eine ganze Menge. Und wenn man dann den ganzen Müll mit reintut und der Kunde es sowieso wegschmeißt, haben wir es jetzt auf einen Flyer reduziert, wo auch alles drauf ist. Was gibt es noch? Dann haben wir mit Kreditkartenanbietern einen Deal laufen, wo wir immer einen Baum pro Bestellung pflanzen. Daran merkt man auch, dass diese Dienstleister Interesse an Nachhaltigkeit haben. Eigentlich sind das so die großen Themen. In der Logistik liegen bei uns die meisten Maßnahmen. Weniger fahren, weniger verschicken und möglichst wenig Retouren. Das fängt ja beim User-Erlebnis an, dass man im Shop selbst schon weiß, wie die Ware aussieht und ob sie wirklich passen wird, damit man sie nicht zurückschickt. Den Großteil an Umsatz generieren wir über Mode. Und da ist die Retourenquote sehr hoch normalerweise.

Interviewer: Wie positioniert sich das Unternehmen derzeit?

Interviewee A: Also im Onlinebereich positionieren wir uns in unserer Sparte des Unternehmens nicht zum Thema Nachhaltigkeit. Aber das Unternehmen selbst hat einen Nachhaltigkeitsbericht erstellt. Wir wollen ja im ganzen die Wertschöpfungskette von A bis Z haben. Das heißt wir produzieren quasi die Schokoldade selber und gucken da, dass die Produkte entsprechend gut angebaut wurden und nach den guten Konditionen und Bedingungen für die Mitarbeiter dort. Zum anderen haben wir ja durch diesen Zukauf von PREZERO noch die Verwertung sichergestellt von Plastikflaschen. Bei unserer Hausmarke gibt es sogar eine Werbekampagne, wo wir sagen, wie die Flaschen recycelt werden, wiederverwendet werden und dadurch unser Footprint positiv ist. Dann haben wir auch Verwertung, wir recyceln nicht nur, wir entsorgen auch. Wir kaufen immer mehr Unternehmen auf, die sich um die Entsorgung von Materialien kümmern. Ganz simpel die privaten Müllfahrten beispielsweise. Außerdem haben wir ein Ziel, dass wir bis zu dem Jahr 2025 unser Plastikvolumen auf minus 20% bekommen, also 20% reduzieren. Da gibt es auch einen Fortschrittsbericht zu. Energieverbrauch, dass wir gucken, dass die Büros in der Corona Krise nur geöffnet werden, weil sie geöffnet werden sollen.

Interviewer: Wie soll denn ihre Marke bei den Kunden wahrgenommen werden? Was ist das Ziel?

Interviewee A: Hauptziel ist Onlinediscounter. Immer zum besten Preis-Leistungsverhältnis mit bester Qualität einkaufen können. Wenn Sie Richtung Nachhaltigkeit fragen dann werden wir, momentan machen wir da noch nichts aktiv, uns an die Nachhaltigkeitsoffensive dranhängen müssen zwangsläufig. Wenn [der Mutterkonzern] stationär das vorgibt, machen wir das auch. Wir kommunizieren das momentan noch nicht und wie wir uns dann dahingehend positionieren werden, kann ich noch nicht sagen. Nur so viel, dass wir darauf achten, dass sinnvoll zu verwenden und möglichst die Produkte so einkaufen, dass sie auch nachhaltig sind.

Interviewer: Unterscheidet sich da die Positionierung zu B2B Kunden?

Interviewee A: B2B Kunden haben wir eigentlich nicht. Oder was meinen Sie mit B2B Kunden im Sinne von Discounter?

Interviewer: Sagen wir vielleicht nicht B2B sondern die Hersteller der Ware beziehungsweise die Partner.

Interviewee A: Im Zuge dieser Nachhaltigkeitsoffensive wurden die natürlich auch gemessen. Wir haben eine gewisse Marktmacht und nutzen die auch gern für solche Themen. Wenn wir jetzt sagen Nachhaltigkeit ist uns wichtig oder bio. Dann müssen die Lieferanten und Hersteller das entsprechend umsetzen nach unseren Vorgaben. Definitiv ist auch eine der Vorgaben, dass sie nachhaltig produzieren müssen und das nutzen wir dann auch diese Machtposition.

Interviewer: Sie sagten, dass Sie zukünftig den Fokus auf Nachhaltigkeit in der Markenpositionierung setzen wollen. Welche Herausforderungen und Probleme sehen Sie da bei der Integration?

Interviewee A: Im Backend ist das Thema Kosten immer eine andere Nummer. Also wenn man nachhaltig etwas aufbauen möchte, wird es automatisch immer etwas teurer. Da man immer mit einer sehr geringen Marge rechnen muss im Discountbereich und online noch viel weniger, weil man dort viel mehr Fixkosten und variable Kosten hat, ist das die größte Herausforderung für uns als Unternehmen. Das man quasi trotz erhöhter Kosten sagt, okay ich mach das trotzdem, weil das total sinnvoll ist.

Interviewer: Das ist praktisch das Hauptproblem?

Interviewee A: Genau. Kostendruck und trotzdem das Ziel Nachhaltigkeit zu fördern. Das beißt sich manchmal.

Interviewer: Sind es den hauptsächlich die Kosten oder spielen auch andere Faktoren eine Rolle? Beispielsweise interne Schwierigkeiten.

Interviewee A: Das ist in unsrem Unternehmen ganz cool. Da gibt es praktisch einen Herrscher. Das ist ja eigentlich ein Familienunternehmen. Die Ansage ist ganz klar, dass wir uns um das Thema kümmern müssen. Dann wird das auch bis ganz unten durchgeführt und durchgesetzt. Das wie zum Beispiel die [Organic Brand] Initiative, alles bio. Das wurde auch so vorgegeben, strategisch. Auch wenn die Kosten dann etwas höher sind in der Beschaffung und das im Verkauf auch nicht immer zu einem Discounter passt. Es ist von der Philosophie immer vorgegeben, dass wir uns darum kümmern. Und so sehe ich das auch bei der Nachhaltigkeit. Intern gibt es da eigentlich keinen Widerstand, weil es vorgegeben wurde.

Interviewer: Sie haben von den höheren Kosten gesprochen. Wie versuchen Sie da ranzugehen, wie versuchen Sie das in Grenzen zu halten? Wie werden solche Initiativen umgesetzt, trotz dieser hohen Kosten?

Interviewee A: Ich habe letztens gelesen, 40% der Kunden wünschen sich mehr Nachhaltigkeit oder mindestens Optionen der Nachhaltigkeit im Sortiment. Das ist schon eine Gruppe, die sich immer mehr erweitert und die sind auch bereit mehr zu zahlen. Wenn diese Bereitschaft erhöht wird haben wir auch automatisch mehr Möglichkeiten das Umzusetzen. Dann bietet man höher preisige Produkte an mit dem Siegel Nachhaltig produziert beispielsweise. Aber da kann ich jetzt konkret im Onlinesegment sagen, wo wir das tun. Wir verkaufen ja sogenannte Non-Food Ware, alles außer Lebensmittel, ausgenommen Wein und Schnaps, und da kann man glaube ich nur die Vorgabe dem Hersteller machen darauf zu achten. Wir sind quasi diejenigen, die das Produkt gestalten und irgendjemand produziert das dann. Da kann man dann am meisten darauf achten bei der Produktion.

Interviewer: Auf langfristiger Sicht, meinen Sie, dass mehr Herausforderungen auf ihr Unternehmen bei der Integration von Nachhaltigkeit auf Sie zukommen? Oder denken Sie, dass Sie als nachhaltiges Unternehmen einfacher wird sich dann auch nachhaltig zu positionieren?

Interviewee A: Also wir sind ja zu fast 98% bekannt. Wenn man den Ansatz hat, und den haben wir, Abfall reduzieren, Energie reduzieren, kann man das recht einfach machen. Wir haben ja in Deutschland fast 4.000 Filialen und wenn du da schon loslegst und man stattet alle Filialen mit LEDs aus, hat man ja schon einen sehr hohen Effekt bei 4.000 Filialen. Deshalb glaube ich, dass wir Trends initiieren und vielleicht auch lenken. Im Onlinesegment positionieren wir die Marke an sich erstmal und dann kümmern wir uns um Markenwerke. Da ist ein Markenwert die Nachhaltigkeit. Aber die Nachhaltigkeit sticht momentan im Onlinesegment sticht erstmal Preis-Leistungs Qualität aus. In der Filiale sind wir da schon weiter und das sieht man ja auch schon ganz deutlich.

Interviewer: Entstehen Impulse für mehr Nachhaltigkeit eher intern oder extern?

Interviewee A: Also wir orientieren uns an der Stelle immer am Markt. Da ist ja eine Gruppe an Menschen unterwegs und die schauen nach den Trends. Ein kleines Beispiel, hat jetzt nichts mit Nachhaltigkeit zu tun. So ein Stand-up Paddle hat vor drei Jahren noch kein Mensch gekannt. Wir haben dann gesehen, dass es aber Sinn macht und wir haben es eingekauft und es läuft wie Hulle. Bei sowas müssen wir natürlich mit den Trends gehen. Aber auch Bio Bewegung. Wenn du dich dagegen gesträubt hättest, hätte man weniger Kunden gehabt.

Interviewer: Wenn man versucht nachhaltiger zu werden und dies auch versucht in die Unternehmenskultur zu integrieren, gibt es da externe Hemmungen? Beispiele wären politische Entscheidungen, wie gesetzliche Regelungen, die einen einschränken?

Interviewee A: Finde ich weniger, weil es ist ja bei uns relativ einfach. Plastik vermeiden, recyceln, Abfall vermeiden und weniger Produkte in die Tonne. Dass man auch wirklich sinnvoll einkauft, damit nicht so viel Ware überbleibt. Die Ware, die in der Filiale nicht verkauft wurde, können wir auch im Onlineshop anbieten. Das hilft uns auch diesen Warenfluss zu optimieren und auch die Verkäufe. Aber da sehe ich wenig Einflussfaktoren von extern, die da irgendwie einen Nachteil für uns darstellen könnten.

Interviewer: Dann sind wir jetzt am Ende des Interviews. Haben Sie sonst noch irgendwelche zusätzlichen Kommentare?

Interviewee A: Also ich glaube wirklich, dass durch die Ware und das Sortiment kann man bei einem Discounter das meiste rausholen. Also beispielsweise die Vorgaben keine

Plastiktüten mehr. Da muss man sich Gedanken machen. Und eigentlich sind die Discounter immer ein bisschen schneller als die Vollsortimenter. Das zeichnet uns auch aus, diese Schnelligkeit solcher externen Faktoren, dass man die dann in die Umsetzung bringt. Das finde ich noch wichtig zu erwähnen. Sodass der Discounter eigentlich der schnellere ist im Umsetzen und meistens schon vordenkt.

Interviewer: Dann danke ich Ihnen für Ihre Zeit und wünsche Ihnen noch einen schönen Tag.

Interviewee A: Danke, gerne, dass wünsche ich Ihnen auch.

Interview Company B (German Original)

27.10.2020

Interviewer: Welchen Stellenwert besitzt Nachhaltigkeit bei Company B? Welche Rolle spielt das?

Interviewee B1: Wenn wir auf die Vor-Corona -Zeit schauen, war es ein wichtiges Thema und war eigentlich neben Innovationen das Thema, das wir vorantreiben wollten. Company B hat ja da schon seit vielen Jahren auch auf strategische Unternehmensebene Maßnahmen eingeleitet, wie Fuel-Consumption Programme, dass die reduziert werden, was schlichtweg heißt, dass immer möglichst die direktesten Strecken, die optimalsten, bei Wetterverhältnissen, Druckverhältnissen gewählt werden, dass man eigentlich einen niedrigeren Fuelflow hat. Dann ist die ganze Flotte ausgestattet worden mit diesen Winglets, die auch noch eine höhere Aerodynamik haben und dadurch eben auch mit geringerem Widerstand und dadurch wieder Fuel sparen. Dann haben wir 2018 schon angefangen die Trolleys gegen light-weight Trolleys auszutauschen. Da sind etliche Tonnen schon eingespart worden. Und das geht automatisch sukzessiv weiter. Dann haben wir mit vielen [Boeing] NGs in unserer Flotte eine der jüngsten Flotten Europas für einen Low-Cost-Carrier. Mit der Einflottung, die zu erwarten ist von der [Boeing] MAX, war auch ein Renewal der Flotte angedacht. Die [Boeing] MAX hat auch ihre Implikationen. Das ist aber genau die Strategie, dass man eben einen Austausch macht hin zu einer modernen, effizienten Flotte. Und die [Boeing] MAX, alle Probleme jetzt mal zur Seite, ist halt einfach eines der effizientesten Flugzeuge, die es heutzutage gibt. Dann haben wir an Bord schon Maßnahmen ergriffen. Am Weltumweltschutztag haben wir alle Plastiksachen von Bord verbannt und haben das durch Holz und Papier, Pappbecher etc. ersetzt. Wir versuchen bis 2021 im Januar, laut EU-Verordnung alle Plastik Materialien von Bord zu nehmen. Also diese Maßnahmen haben alle eine hohe Priorität und auch Aufforstung von Wäldern, was in der Türkei angefangen haben als Corporate Social Responsibility Projekt. Also sehr divers; einmal Flotte, einmal In-Flight Service, aber natürlich auch in den Büros. Also hoher Stellenwert, immens wichtig. Das war im letzten Jahr auch genau Gegenstand der Positionierung mit den Worten: „Company B strives to be the most innovative low complexity airline, constantly enhancing the customer experience and taking on environmental responsibility along the corporate complete value chain.“ Also eigentlich ein

Thema, das wir auf einer ganzen Wertschöpfungskette verfolgt haben, was wir natürlich weiter machen, aber im Rahmen der Corona Situation als kommunikatives Element im Marketing etwas vernachlässigt wurde.

Interviewee B2: Dann klicke ich mich gerade in diesem Sektor mit ein. Das Thema Nachhaltigkeit, wie Interviewee B1 auch schon sagte, hat natürlich einen extrem hohen Stellenwert von uns. Und das muss es tatsächlich auch. Aber auch mit Blick auf die Zielgruppe, insbesondere mit Blick auf die Millennials und Jüngeren, die ja extremen Wert darauf legen, ob sich ein Unternehmen nicht nur, sagen wir in Richtung Greenwashing mit dem Thema Marketing beschäftigen, sondern die Dinge auch angeht und umsetzt. Also das ist ja ein Thema, das oder vielleicht in meiner Generation ist das vielleicht auch ein Thema, wo man sich schnell von Greenwashing eher positiv beeinflussen lassen hat. Die jüngere Zielgruppe, wenn ich mir ihre Generation angucke, da ist es einfach so, es wird alles hinterfragt. Muss es so? Geht es nicht noch besser? Was macht das mit der Umwelt etc. Und da ist es eben extrem wichtig für uns, um auch die Millennials, die jüngeren Zielgruppen, noch mitzunehmen und auch als zukünftige Kunden von uns zu gewinnen. Dass man sich eben mit diesem Thema nicht nur auseinandersetzt, sondern wirklich auch die Dinge umsetzt.

Interviewer: Sie haben eben das Positioning Statement vorgelesen. Wie will Company B denn nach außen wirken? Soll Company B als nachhaltige Firma wahrgenommen werden oder liegt der Hauptfokus woanders?

Interviewee B1: Es ist einfach mit dabei, weil es macht für uns keinen Sinn, als Airline sich komplett aus Sustainability oder Nachhaltigkeit zu ziehen. Wir fliegen; wir werden immer Kerosin ausschütten. Das ist nicht umweltfreundlich. Insofern kann man in zynischer Weise sagen, dass das der größte Beitrag ist, den wir wahrscheinlich ist, den wir jemals machen werden. Nein, aber es ist eine wichtige Sitenote, die uns unterscheidet und die uns einen Wettbewerbsvorteil gibt, den wir auch nutzen. Aber nichtsdestotrotz als Airline hast du auch immer noch andere Prioritäten, die du einfach setzen musst. Wie gesagt, das Geschäftsmodell an und für sich wird nie ein komplett nachhaltiges Geschäftsmodell in Sachen Umweltschutz werden. Selbst bei Elektro Flugzeugen hat man vielleicht die Batterien, die müssen auch entsorgt werden und das ist auch nicht so gut denke ich.

Interviewer: Wenn wir uns das B2B Geschäft anschauen. Gibt es dort signifikante Unterschiede bezüglich der Positionierung?

Interviewee B1: Ja, wir haben hier zwei verschiedene Sorten von B2B, das ist das Tour Operator Business und das andere ist der ethnische Verkehr oder ethnische Agenturen. Bei Tour Operator, wie das Interviewee B2 schon gesagt hat, achtet man immer mehr darauf. Ist ein Entscheidungskriterium und wird wahrscheinlich immer mehr zum Entscheidungskriterium. Im ethnischen Verkehr wird das nicht so ein starkes Entscheidungskriterium sein, weil da einfach andere Motivationen im Vordergrund stehen. B2C, wie schon gesagt, ist es auf jeden Fall eines dieser USPs neben Innovationen, die wir für uns als Airline claimen und claimen wollen.

Interviewer: Das heißt, im B2B Geschäft hat es schon auf der einen Seite einen großen Stellenwert, aber für den ethnischen Verkehr wird da im Prinzip eigentlich nicht viel drauf eingezahlt.

Interviewee B1: Es gibt einfach Sachen, die für den ethnischen Verkehr wesentlich wichtiger sind. Aber auch da wächst die Generation heran, wo wir das nicht ausschließen können, dass die sagen, ist ja schön, dass die eine tolle Türkei Expertise haben und nachhaltig sind die auch, das finde ich wunderbar.

Interviewee B2: Und da ist eben der Beweggrund: Warum muss oder möchte jemand fliegen? Wenn du aus der jungen Generation sprichst, dann werden sich viele sicherlich die Frage stellen: Warum musst du fliegen? Und da ist eben der Unterschied bei denen bei der Zielgruppe über die Tour Operator oder direkt B2C, das was Interviewee B1 gerade sagte, die hat, die in den Urlaub mit uns beispielsweise fliegen. Da hast du ja andere Motivationsproblem und andere Opportunitäten, die dir gegeben werden. Versus den ethnischen Verkehr, wo eben das „visiting family and friends“ Programm regiert und einfach ganz andere Prioritäten dahinter stehen, warum man letztlich genau zu dem Zeitpunkt an diesen Ort fliegen möchte oder muss? Das quasi noch als Ergänzung zu den Punkt.

Interviewer: Wenn wir uns jetzt diese ganzen Maßnahmen anschauen und auch diese nachhaltige Positionierung, welche Herausforderungen und Probleme gibt es da? Was sind die größten Probleme?

Interviewee B1: Na den richtigen Mittelweg eigentlich zu finden, dass man als Airline viel Kerosin in die Luft bläst, dann auch noch glaubwürdig ist? Ich kann natürlich ganz tolle Geschichten erzählen. Gab es ja auch schon. Also ich fliege irgendwie mit ganz wenig Fuel, geht aber nicht, denn du brauchst einfach einen gewissen Ansatz, sonst fliegst du nicht. Und deswegen ist dieses Mittelmaß zu finden. Was ist glaubwürdig und wie viel glaubwürdig ist meiner Ansicht nach die Prämisse.

Interviewee B2: Pluss dann tatsächlich aber auch die gesamte Customer Journey zu sehen, also oftmals wird Nachhaltigkeit und Airlines als Kontradiktion gesehen, was nicht zwingend sein muss, sofern es wirklich an den unterschiedlichen Touchpoints der Customer Journey dann auch lebt. Natürlich ist der das das tragenste Segment, aber auch davor und danach gibt es ja eine riesen, ja großes Feld, wo agiert, optimiert werden muss. Und ich glaube, das ist auch eine ganz eigene Herausforderung. Da entsprechend die verschiedenen Steps zu beleuchten und sich dort zu überlegen, was der nachhaltige Faktor ist und wie er gelebt werden kann.

Interviewer: Sie haben gerade von Glaubwürdigkeit gesprochen. Denken Sie, das ist das Hauptproblem?

Interviewee B1: Das ist branchenspezifisch. Es gibt Branchen da ist es ganz wunderbar. Da kann man das ganz gut durchholen. Aber es gibt auch Branchen, wo es einfach schwierig. Und das ist das, was ich gerade sagte, also die Glaubwürdigkeit ist nicht das Problem, sondern an welcher Stelle kann eine Airline die Stellschraube überhaupt stellen? Das meine ich mit Glaubwürdigkeit. Wie gesagt, ein Elektro Flugzeug würde auch nicht helfen. Wäre auch der falsche Ansatz oder nicht der Ansatz. Also wir werden nie 100 Prozent grün fliegen können. Also man müsste, wie Interviewee B2 sagte, an der Customer Journey entlang gucken. Aber das liegt nicht in unserer Hand. Da ist dann auch ein anderer Ansatz gefragt. Nämlich, dass die Authorities und auch die Airports besser zusammenarbeiten. Dann mit Digitalisierung gibt es da ganz viele Möglichkeiten eine ganze Menge an Papier und Prozessen einfacher zu machen etc. Und das ist die Herausforderung. Also sicherlich diese Zusammenarbeit, die erforderlich ist, um die ganze Customer Journey zu machen, dann aber auch wirklich wieviel kann man als Airline dann geben. Wir werden nie 100 Prozent grün sein, aber es ist ein wichtiges Thema. Aber es muss eben in dem Maße auch verfolgt werden oder kommuniziert werden, dass es glaubwürdig ist. Die Glaubwürdigkeit per se ist nicht das größte Problem, sondern die Ansätze bei einer Airline zu finden. Das ist das größte Problem.

Interviewer: Wie gehen Sie dann an solche Herausforderungen an? Wie versuchen Sie diese zu lösen?

Interviewee B1: Man muss gucken, an welchen Stellen kann man kompensieren und es gibt ja auch dieses CO2 Offset. Wir arbeiten ja auch mit Atmosfair zusammen. Das ist ja auch schon ein Benefit nach dem Motto so und so viel Kerosin-Emissionen. Wir arbeiten mit Startups zusammen. Letztes Jahr der Hackathon war komplett unter diesem Thema. Das heißt, wir gucken permanent was gibt es an Innovationen, was gibt es für Möglichkeiten. Es ist eher wie ein kleines Puzzle mit vielen kleinen Elementen als ein großes Thema. Die Summe der kleinen Elemente macht es dann aus.

Interviewee B2: Also konstantes Optimieren von Prozessen und Produkten quasi.

Interviewer: Glauben Sie, dass diese Probleme oder Herausforderungen größer werden? Dass es schwieriger wird, Nachhaltigkeit aufzunehmen. Oder wird sich das dann einpendeln, wenn man damit arbeitet?

Interviewee B1: Die Krise hat da einiges einfach zum Halten gebracht. Es ist halt doof. Das wirft uns natürlich zurück. Aber ich glaube, wenn man den Anspruch hat, Innovationen zu verkaufen und dann eben auch zu schauen was für Möglichkeiten gibt es mit Innovationen, bringt das einen schon sehr viel weiter. Wir hatten mal geplant mit einem Startup zusammenzuarbeiten, wo man die ganze Customer Journey auf Social Media darstellen konnte. Von Zuhause bis zum Flughafen an den Urlaubsort und im Taxi, um dann nachzuvollziehen, was dein Carbon Footprint angeht und auch das Offsett machen konntest. Das sind so die Sachen. Das sind ja Modelle, die gibt es ja auch schon. Da wird es immer mehr Ideen geben und Innovationen. Ich glaube, man muss mehr auf die Innovation gucken als zu versuchen an den traditionellen Geschichten wie Fuel Saving weiterzumachen. Da ist dann das Limit irgendwann erreicht. Aber ich glaube wirklich, diese großen Innovation, die eine Airline in eine andere Position bringen, die laufen dann wirklich über junge Unternehmen, über Startups.

Interviewer: Okay, dann sind wir am Ende des Interviews angelangt. Ich habe keine weiteren Fragen mehr. Aber wenn Sie noch Kommentare haben oder eins zwei Punkte loswerden möchten, können Sie das jetzt noch tun.

Interviewee B1: Im Januar habe ich erst mit Strategy ein Projekt aufgesetzt. Da ging es genau um Sustainability für Company B mit all diesen Teilen. Wir können da nur als Puzzle funktionieren.

Interviewee B2: Ja, und du stößt ja auch an deine Grenzen. Wie du schon gesagt hast. Das Thema Kerosin einsparen. Das kannst du bis zu einem gewissen Grad beeinflussen. Wenn du sagst, ich mache die Sitze oder Trolleys leichter und solche Punkte. Da hast du noch quasi eine Möglichkeit das zu beeinflussen. Aber was gibt es für Innovationen auf technischer Seite, die wir von Aircraft Manufacturern letztlich getrieben werden. Und all solche Aspekte.

Interviewee B1: Ja diese OEMs, also eine Boeing hat keine Kapazitäten mehr in Innovation reinzustecken und bei Airbus sieht es auch nicht viel besser aus.

Interviewer: Glauben Sie denn, dass es externe Regularien gibt, die einen auch hemmen können im Nachhaltigkeitsprozess?

Interviewee B1: Das, was eine Airline machen kann in Sustainability sehe ich nicht als Problem von Regularien. Den Flugverkehr muss man letztendlich ordnen. Und das ist ja einfach ein Sicherheitsthema. Es ist eher Investition und zu sehr der Fokus auf Kabine und Flugzeug und ähnliches, anstelle mal eben „out of the box“ zu denken. Wie gesagt, das mit dem Hackathon war ja schon cool. Das hätte schon Spaß gemacht. Und dieses Thema wird schon wieder aufgenommen werden.

Interviewer: Dann danke ich für Ihre Zeit und wünsche Ihnen noch einen angenehmen Tag.

Interviewee B1: Danke ebenfalls und Tschüss.

Interviewee B2: Bis dann und Dankeschön.

Interview Company C (German Original)

10.11.2020

Interviewer: Dann würde ich auch gleich loslegen. Vielleicht sagen Sie mit Ihren eigenen Worten einmal etwas zu Ihrem Unternehmen. Wer ist Ihr Unternehmen und was macht Ihr Unternehmen?

Interviewee C: Ja, ich bin seit knapp zehn Jahren im Unternehmen und für das Thema Nachhaltigkeit zuständig, seit knapp fünf Jahren im Einkauf. Und da geht es insbesondere um das Thema grüne Produkte. Ja, nachhaltige Produkte weiter auszubauen über die verschiedenen Produktgruppen, aber auch mit der Kommunikation habe ich viel zu tun. Also Richtung Marketing oder was wir zum Thema Nachhaltigkeit in Richtung Presse und so weiter kommunizieren. Da stimme ich mich auch mit meinen Kollegen ab. Aber der eigentliche Fokus ist auf dem Thema nachhaltige Produkte.

Interviewer: Und welchen Stellenwert besitzt Nachhaltigkeit in Ihrem Unternehmen?

Interviewee C: Für uns ist das eigentlich schon seit vielen Jahren ein sehr zentraler Fokus der Unternehmensstrategie. Wir gehören ja zur [Mutterkonzern-Gruppe], wo das Thema generell ziemlich hoch angesehen wird, seit zehn Jahren. Es ist es ein Teil der Unternehmensstrategie. Wir haben ein Vier-Säulen-System im Bereich Nachhaltigkeit, also das wir auch nicht nur irgendwie eine Stabsstelle haben, die sich darum kümmert, aber eben neben dieser Säule grüne Produkte auch noch die Säule, Energie, Klima und Umwelt. Dort kümmern sich die Kollegen eher um die Ressourceneffizienz in den Märkten. Also wie energiesparend sind wir unterwegs? Wie können wir das Abfall-Management verbessern und so weiter. Dann gibt's noch die Säule Mitarbeiter, die sich darum kümmert, ja wie kann man Mitarbeiter unterstützen in verschiedenen Lebensphasen, die sie so durchlaufen und die Säule gesellschaftliches Engagement, wo es eben darum geht, dass wir als Unternehmen dann auch noch mehr Verantwortung übernehmen wollen. Auch für Dinge, die vielleicht in der Gesellschaft wichtig sind und die wir halt auch wichtig finden. Und da kümmert sich dann diese Säule drum. Also das wird auch, seitdem ich da bin, in diesen vier Säulen gelebt und immer weiter ausgebaut. Ich glaube man sieht daran, dass das einen hohen Stellenwert hat für Company C.

Interviewer: Welche speziellen Maßnahmen ergreifen Sie mit Hinblick auf Nachhaltigkeit?

Interviewee C: Ja, wenn ich jetzt nochmal auf die Produkte eingehe. Im Grunde genommen gucken wir uns ja immer so die Lieferketten oder den Lebenszyklus von einer speziellen Produktgruppe an und versuchen erst mal rauszufinden, was dann jeweils die sogenannten Hotspots sind in der Lieferkette oder im Lebenszyklus und versuchen da anzusetzen und das Ganze dann besser zu machen. Wir haben da auch ein unternehmenseigenes Nachhaltigkeitslabel, wo Sie vielleicht auch schon mal drüber gestolpert sind. Das ist von der [Mutterkonzern-Gruppe] generell ein Label für nachhaltige Eigenmarkenprodukte. In erster Linie wird genau danach vorgegangen dann wirklich zu gucken wo liegen bei irgendeinem Produkt eben die Herausforderung aus Nachhaltigkeitssicht und was muss man daran tun, um das zu verbessern. Ganz wichtig ist eben dabei, dass wir einen [Nachhaltigkeitslabel]-Beirat haben, der das dann unabhängig vergibt, also verschiedene NGOs damit drinsitzen, wie der NABU, Verbraucherinitiative usw. Also wir haben uns das Label nicht selber vergeben. Ja und das kann man sich dann von Produktgruppe zu Produktgruppe extrem unterscheiden. Also manchmal sind da die sozialen Aspekte wichtig, wenn man an Arbeitsbedingungen denkt, im Bereich Natursteine zum Beispiel die aus China oder Indien kommen oder „Fair Trees“ Weihnachtsbäume ist auch so ein Thema, wo es dann darum geht die Ernte fairer zu gestalten und sicherer zu gestalten. Bei anderen Themen sind wir eher im Bereich Wohnen und Gesundheit. Wenn man dann an Anstrichmittel denkt oder Bodenbeläge und so weiter, wo dann vielleicht die Emissionen in der Nutzenphase des Produktes eine Rolle spielen. Da geht es dann eher das zu reduzieren oder im Bereich Holz ist dann eher das Thema Umwelt, also dass die Forstwirtschaft nachhaltig ist Richtung FSC/PFC Zertifizierung usw. Das unterscheidet sich immer sehr stark von Produktgruppe zu Produktgruppe. Da versuchen wir halt immer wirklich herauszufinden, was ist das die große Herausforderung jeweils. Und erst wenn wir das wirklich verbessert haben, dann kommunizieren wir das auch als nachhaltig.

Interviewer: Gibt es auch Maßnahmen intern im Unternehmen?

Interviewee C: Das gibt es auf jeden Fall auch Maßnahmen. Digitalisierung ist natürlich ein wichtiger Aspekt. Ob es zum Beispiel ist, dass man elektronisch die Gehaltsabrechnung bekommt, wo früher wirklich an alle Mitarbeiter in Papierform die Abrechnung geschickt wurde. Wir benutzen intern nur das Blauer Engel Recyclingpapier z.B. für Ausdrücke. Da gibt's viele Maßnahmen, gerade auch aus dieser Säule Mitarbeiter heraus, die sich damit

eben auch beschäftigt. Also in meiner Abteilung schauen wir eher in Richtung Verbraucher, aber dann wird auch viel intern gemacht.

Interviewer: Und was ist die derzeitige Positionierung des Unternehmens? Können Sie die einmal beschreiben?

Interviewee C: Wir haben aktuell seit diesem Jahr einen sogenannten dreifach Nutzen. Das heißt gut für mich, gut für die Umwelt und gut für mein Portemonnaie. Da ist dann Umwelt in dieser Positionierung nochmal extrem aufgegriffen. Das würde ich jetzt mal in Richtung Nachhaltigkeit interpretieren, diesen Umweltnutzen, diesen dreifach Nutzen. Da positioniert sich das Unternehmen wirklich nochmal stärker in die Richtung, dass man wirklich diesen Claim mit aufnimmt, wo man wirklich sagen kann es ist für uns ein zentrales Thema. Und da ist dann für uns die Herausforderung halt immer wieder, wenn wir jetzt diesen Claim zum Beispiel in Verbindung mit Produkten nutzen, dass wir dann immer belegen müssen, dass es auch wirklich besser für die Umwelt ist. Das machen wir dann über Label wie [Nachhaltigkeitslabel] oder FFC usw. Aus meiner Sicht ist das extrem wichtig, um sich auch nicht angreifbar zu machen, da es natürlich auch viel in Richtung Greenwashing geht, da viele Unternehmen natürlich versuchen sich da irgendwie zu positionieren. Wir achten in der Kommunikation schon immer sehr stark darauf, dass man das auch belegen kann.

Interviewer: Verfügen Sie da über ein spezielles Brand Positioning Statement oder seine Value Proposition?

Interviewee C: Der dreifach Nutzen wird auf der Webseite manifestiert sein, gehe ich von aus. Das ist eher so ein Kommunikationsthema. Das ist aber auf jeden Fall definiert, was das für uns auch bedeutet.

Interviewer: Und Sie haben wahrscheinlich auch einen Anteil an Geschäftskunden. Also B2B, nehme ich mal an, sind Sie auch dort auch kommunikativ aktiv, was das Thema Nachhaltigkeit angeht?

Interviewee C: Eigentlich haben wir sehr wenig Geschäftskunden. Wenn, dann sind das vielleicht Handwerksbetriebe oder so. Aber wir gehen eher nicht in die Richtung Großhandel oder B2B.

Interviewer: Also es ist eher nicht so ein großes Geschäftsfeld bei Ihnen.

Interviewee C: Nein, nein.

Interviewer: Wie wollen Sie, dass die Kunden Company C wahrnehmen? Was ist da das Wichtigste?

Interviewee C: Also für mich ist wichtig, dass wir das für die Kunden letztendlich versuchen besser zu machen und wirklich nachhaltiger zu werden. Und für mich ist auch absolut in Ordnung, wenn der Kunde mitnimmt, dass wir kontinuierlich versuchen, besser zu werden und es natürlich tausend verschiedene Stellschrauben gibt und man hier auch nicht von heute auf morgen komplett nachhaltig ist. Also wenn er das mitnimmt, dass wir daran arbeiten und versuchen in möglichst vielen Bereichen nachhaltiger zu werden, ist das für mich eigentlich schon genug. Wenn man sich mit dem Thema beschäftigt, gibt es für jede Sache, die man besser macht, noch zehn andere Beispiele, wo man noch nichts getan hat oder noch Verbesserungspotenzial ist. Deswegen ist das für mich generell das Thema Nachhaltigkeit für mich die Message, dass man auf dem Weg einfach ist und versucht, das kontinuierlich besser zu machen.

Interviewer: Sie haben ja schon gesagt, dass das Unternehmen sich schon nachhaltig positioniert. Was sehen Sie da als Herausforderungen und Probleme, wenn man versucht, Nachhaltigkeit in seine Markenpositionierung zu integrieren?

Interviewee C: Eine große Herausforderung ist eben, dass den Kunden nicht unbedingt alle Themen bekannt sind in der Tiefe. Es kann vorkommen, dass wir viele Ressourcen in einzelne Projekte stecken, um etwas zu verbessern in der Lieferkette zum Beispiel, und das dem Kunden erstmal auch rübergebracht werden muss, warum es wichtig ist, darauf zu achten. Das ist halt eine große Herausforderung, glaube ich. Als Unternehmen das ernst zu nehmen und wirklich dem Kunden erst einmal klarzumachen, was ist eigentlich die Herausforderung, die wir haben und was tun wir, um uns besser zu machen. Wenn man bereits wieder an die Natursteine zum Beispiel denkt, da haben wir wirklich die Arbeitsbedingungen in China und Indien verbessert und auch die ganze Lieferkette transparent gemacht. Aber wenn man Kunden auf der Straße nach dem Thema Natursteine fragt, im Winter die Herausforderungen eben nicht kennen. Das ist eben, neben dem Ausbau der nachhaltigen Produkten, die größte Aufgabe, diesen Dinge laufend zu kommunizieren an den Kunden.

Interviewer: Die Kommunikation an den Kunden stellt also das Hauptproblem oder die größte Herausforderung dar?

Interviewee C: Ja, ich glaube, generell sind die Kunden auch schon sensibel, was das Greenwashing usw. angeht. Ich glaube, dass es auch eine Herausforderung ist rüberzubringen, dass man das wirklich ernsthaft macht und ernsthaft betreiben und machen möchte. Da natürlich, wie gesagt, jedes Unternehmen quasi irgendwas zum Thema Nachhaltigkeit kommuniziert. Deswegen da die Ernsthaftigkeit rüberzubringen ist glaube ich auch eine Herausforderung. Dann kämpft man natürlich auch immer gegen andere Merkmale, die den Kunden wichtig sind. Im Baumarkt-Bereich ist zum Beispiel die Nähe ein entscheidender Faktor. Wenn ich jetzt neben mir Baumarkt X habe dann fahr ich nicht freiwillig zehn Kilometer weiter, weil jetzt bei Baumarkt Y irgendwas anders gemacht wird. Der Preis ist natürlich auch eine Herausforderung, denn Marktforschungsinstitute sagen ja auch immer, Kunden wollen eben auch mehr zahlen für nachhaltige Produkte. Aber in der Praxis muss sich das dann ordentlich beweisen. Also mache es nicht mit Mondpreisen, die nachhaltigen Produkte verkaufen, weil die dann nicht gekauft werden. Das sind natürlich nochmal globale Herausforderungen, die man da immer hat.

Interviewer: Und wie gehen Sie ein solche Herausforderungen ran? Wie versuchen Sie das zu lösen? Auch mit Hinblick auf dieses Greenwashing.

Interviewee C: Wir haben für uns ganz klar definiert, dass wir wirklich glaubwürdig sein wollen. Also bei den bei den Produkten erst einmal und dann eben auch in der Kommunikation, dass wir auch wirklich nur das als nachhaltiger kommunizieren wollen, was wir eben dann auch belegen können und was wirklich nachhaltiger ist aus unserer Sicht. Und das ist aus meiner Sicht eigentlich fast die einzige Möglichkeit, glaubhaft zu sein, dass man das stringent so durchhält. Und auf der anderen Seite muss man halt schon immer wieder auch laut das Thema kommunizieren, sonst rückt das auch immer wieder in den Hintergrund. Also das sind eigentlich die beiden Dinge, dass man wirklich kontinuierlich und laut kommuniziert und auf der anderen Seite aber auch wirklich nur glaubwürdig und abgesichert.

Interviewer: Und sehen Sie das als etwas eher Langfristiges oder wenn man sich jetzt schon nachhaltig positioniert, vielleicht auch bei den Kunden, das schon verankert ist, ist es dann

etwas, woran man die ganze Zeit arbeitet? Oder gibt es diese Herausforderungen irgendwann nicht mehr oder werden sie weniger?

Interviewee C: Also in den nächsten Jahren sehe ich das nicht, dass man sich da zurücklehnen könnte oder so an dem Image, das muss man natürlich immer wieder nachweisen, dass es irgendwie so ist und die Herausforderungen werden auch eher mehr als weniger in Zukunft. Ich glaube, dass ist wirklich eine Sache, die man, wenn man sich als Unternehmen darauf konzentrieren möchte, wirklich kontinuierlich betreiben muss.

Interviewer: Wir haben schon über einige Maßnahmen an den Produkten gesprochen, wie man da nachhaltiger werden kann. Wenn Sie spezielle Maßnahmen aufsetzen, kommt der Impuls dort eher von den Markttrends oder den Belangen der Kunden? Oder ist das auch eher ein interner Ansporn?

Interviewee C: Das ist auch eine ganz unterschiedliche Mengenlage. Teilweise können es die Kunden sein. Wir merken ja auch, wenn Themen dann stärker werden wie z.B. bio oder so, was aus dem Lebensmittelbereich jetzt auch in den Baumarkt geschwappt ist. Man merkt das da die Nachfrage steigt, dann guckt man natürlich selber, dass man auch da Sortimente weiter ausbaut. Teilweise kommen die Impulse von außen, von NGOs oder so, die uns irgendwelche neuen wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisse kommunizieren, was wir dann zum Anlass nehmen, das Sortiment zu überprüfen. Aber wir haben halt eben auch einen starken internen Treiber, auch immer wieder neue Produkte in die Märkte zu bringen z.B. Lieferketten abzudecken und so weiter. Das ist im Grunde so ein Dreiklang sowohl Kunde als auch wirklich externe Stakeholder, NGOs, Wissenschaft und so weiter, aber auch der interne Antrieb, immer wieder neue Themen zu besetzen.

Interviewer: Haben Sie bei solchen Maßnahmen manchmal das Gefühl, dass es auch extern Herausforderungen gibt? Also mit Hinblick auf, sagen wir mal, spezielle politische Entscheidungen, spezielle Regeln, die man einhalten muss als Unternehmen, dass man da gehemmt wird, auch oft nachhaltiger zu sein. Oder ist das eher nicht das Thema?

Interviewee C: Nein da fällt mir jetzt kein Beispiel ein. Man merkt eher, dass die Politik immer stärker in die Richtung geht. Wenn man jetzt diese Gesetzgebung zum Thema Verpackungen zum Beispiel sieht, dass da Anforderungen das Verpackungsgesetz geschärft werden oder um aufs Thema Klimawandel zu setzen. Dass da mehr und mehr Gesetze und so weiter nach dem Klimawandel ausgerichtet werden und der Klimastrategie der EU und so

weiter. Oder wenn man uns Lieferkettengesetz denkt, was ja auch bald kommen soll. Aber das geht mehr in die Richtung Nachhaltigkeit, einfach mehr Transparenz in den Lieferketten. Die Unternehmen sollen mehr Verantwortung übernehmen. Das ist eher nochmal ein Treiber für das Thema, glaube ich. Aber ich glaube da fällt mir gerade kein Beispiel dafür ein, dass wir gehemmt werden dadurch.

Interviewer: Und sie sind ja jetzt im Unternehmen Manager für Sustainability. Das war richtig?

Interviewee C: Genau. Mit dem Fokus auf die Produkte.

Interviewer: Wie groß ist ihre Abteilung? Wie viele Leute arbeiten direkt in dieser Abteilung.

Interviewee C: Wir sind in dieser Abteilung drei Kollegen. Wir haben aber noch zwei Kollegen in unserem Pflanzenbereich, die sich auch mit dem Thema beschäftigen. Und das ist jetzt wirklich nur für die Produkte. Wie ich eben schon sagte, diese Säulen der Nachhaltigkeit sind im Unternehmen verteilt und da arbeiten dann noch Kollegen aus anderen Fachabteilungen dran. Da wir ja zur [Mutterkonzern-Gruppe] gehören, ist man ja da mit den Kollegen auch im Austausch. Arbeitet an Themen auch zusammen. Man hat sehr viele Schnittstelle.

Interviewer: Dann sind wir jetzt am Ende des Interviews. Gibt es sonst noch irgendwas, was Sie noch hinzufügen möchten?

Interviewee C: Ich finde es ein gutes Thema und schönes Thema für eine Master Thesis. Wie gesagt, ich glaube, das Thema wurde über Jahre wichtiger und jetzt merkt man auch, dass es wirklich so ist.

Interviewer: Ja, das stimmt. Dann danke ich Ihnen vielmals für Ihre Zeit und wünsche Ihnen noch einen schönen Nachmittag.

Interviewee C: Danke. Gern geschehen. Das wünsche ich Ihnen auch.

Interview Company D (German Original)

30.10.2020

Interviewer: Können Sie mir einmal mit eigenen Worten sagen, was Ihr Unternehmen macht?

Interviewee D: Das Unternehmen heißt Company D und beschäftigt sich im weitesten Sinne mit new Audio Solutions. Ich habe früher im Radio lange Zeit gearbeitet in geschäftsführender Positionen und habe alle möglichen Mediengattungen kennengelernt und kam im letzten Jahr über Freunde, die ich wiedertreffen habe, auf die Idee: Wir machen ein Unternehmen auch für Audio Solutions und aber eben auch im Wesentlichen für Podcasts, da der Podcast ein sehr nachhaltiges Medium ist im Endeffekt. Ich komme später gerne darauf zurück, warum das so ist. Aber wir machen nicht nur Podcasts, sondern wir haben auch Audioformate entwickelt, von denen wir glauben, dass sie von der Nutzung her heute Sinn machen. Wir kommen natürlich auch aus der Vermarktung. Also ich bin eigentlich ein Vermarktungsmensch und mein Team auch. Aber alles, was man vermarkten will verpackt sich viel besser, wenn man es von der Nutzungsseite her betrachtet. Ganz einfach, weil man dann die USPs besser herauskehren kann für den jeweiligen Kunden. Ein Beispiel wäre, dass wir Newsletter auditiv anbieten, also Audio-Newsletter. Bisher werden Newsletter digital versandt bzw. ganz wenige wahrscheinlich noch ausgedruckt und postalisch. Also z.B. mein Steuerberater schickt mir immer noch seinen Monatsbriefing auf 20 Seiten, die sofort, wenn ich sie bekomme, bei mir in der Papiertonne landen. Und das Problem ist, dass das Nutzerverhalten, also Problem für uns nicht aber für uns der Vorteil, sich in diesen Audio Bereichen stärker entwickelt. Die Leute lesen immer weniger, weil sie immer mehr Informationen bekommen. Die Leute oder Menschen arbeiten sehr stark im Büro, sind gezwungen im Beruf viel zu lesen und sind eigentlich froh, wenn ihnen mal was auditiv dargestellt wird. Insofern haben wir also solche Formate entwickelt wie Audio-Newsletter oder aber auch Audio-Präsentationen. Warum muss eine Präsentation immer eine Powerpoint-Präsentation sein? Man kann ja sein Unternehmen auch auditiv darstellen, mit witzigen Stimmen, mit guten Sprechern. All das und solche Formate entwickeln wir und verkaufen die halt auch. Das ist eigentlich so ein bisschen darüber, dahintersteckt. Wir haben jetzt sechs Monate für eine IT-Lösung und für die Entwicklung gebraucht. Es ist eine Lösung, die die von uns produzierten Podcasts für unsere Unternehmen aus der relativ

anonymen Welt von Spotify und Apple Podcast und Google Podcast heraushebt. Diese Plattformen sind an an sich ja auch kleine Streamingdienste, bei denen du aber wissen musst, wie der Podcast heißt, den du suchst bzw. brauchst. Da musst du Themen eingeben. Und da die Suchmaschine von Spotify als Beispiel eben nicht wie eine Google Suchmaschine funktioniert, sondern die tatsächlich nur Dinge findet, die du kennst, werden verschiedene Ebenen geliefert als Ergebnis, also z.B. Musik, also Playlisten, Alben oder Podcasts. Wir heben das aus diesen Suchmaschinen-Algorithmen der Streamingdienste wieder raus und geben das über eigene Plattform auf die größte Suchmaschine der Welt Google und positionieren einen Podcast in der Suchmaschine über SEO durch verschiedene Keywords, die wir aus den Podcasttexten als Bausteine rausnehmen. Dann programmieren wir die Landing Page darauf, sodass du, wenn du bestimmte Suchbegriffe z.B. „Bafög“ oder „KfW Studienkredit“ eingibst, dann sehr schnell zu unserem Podcast, den wir für [eine Bank] gemacht haben, kommst. Und damit positioniert sich das Unternehmen gegenüber anderen Banken, die natürlich auch ähnliches anbieten, nachher aber deutlich besser. Also all dies sind Sachen, die wir im Endeffekt ja entwickeln.

Interviewer: Okay, alles klar. Und welchen Stellenwert schreiben Sie Nachhaltigkeit zu in Ihrem Unternehmen?

Interviewee D: Nachhaltigkeit ist ja ein sehr starker Oberbegriff. Nachhaltigkeit kann man ja, von oben bis in das kleinste Element hinein durchdefinieren. Wie der Name von Company D schon sagt, hat es tatsächlich einen komplett nachhaltigen Charakter. Die Formate, die wir entwickeln, im Podcastbereich sind insofern nachhaltig, als dass eben wie gesagt das Nutzerverhalten ganz stark berücksichtigt wird, aber auch im Wesentlichen der Mehrwert des Hörers im Vordergrund steht. Also wir entwickeln z.B. Formate für Recyclingunternehmen, die den Leuten erklären, welcher Müll kommt eigentlich in welche Tonne und warum oder wie stelle ich Kosmetik selber her. Aber auch alles andere im Recyclingbereich. Warum macht ein Unternehmen Recycling? Oder z.B. haben wir ein Format für Gold entwickelt, aber eben nicht Gold vordergründig als Verkaufstool. Also nicht kauft Gold und du bist glücklich, sondern wir erzählen die Geschichte des Goldes. Warum gab es damals diesen Goldtausch in Amerika? Was haben Währungen mit Gold im Zusammenspiel zu tun? Was passiert, wenn die Aktienmärkte steigen oder fallen? Wie verhält sich das Gold dazu? Macht es Sinn, sich Goldbarren zu Hause oder in ein Schließfach zu hinterlegen? All solche Themen sind nachhaltig dahingehend, dass sie dem Hörer einen Mehrwert bieten. Das ist die Challenge, die wir uns gemacht haben.

Interviewer: Und Sie haben gesagt, dass Nachhaltigkeit thematisch aufgearbeitet wird in den Podcasts. Gibt es dann auch noch andere Maßnahmen, die von Ihnen als Unternehmen ergriffen werden in Bezug auf Nachhaltigkeit?

Interviewee D: Also wir haben z.B. unsere gesamte Buchhaltung auf ein Onlinesystem umgestellt, sodass wir überhaupt gar keine Rechnungen mehr ausdrucken müssen, also das Herkömmliche, was man früher gemacht hat. Das haben wir am Anfang auch noch so gemacht. Man bekommt eine Rechnung oder schreibt eine Rechnung. Dann druckt man die aus. Man kann Rechnungen ja einfach als PDF an eine E-Mail anhängen. Aber es gibt immer noch genug Firmen, die im Endeffekt die Rechnungen schicken über die Post. Das haben wir bei fast allen unserer Dienstleister und aller unserer Partner, die wir haben also bis hin zum Finanzamt daraufhin umgestellt, dass wir die bitten, alles in digitaler Form zu machen und arbeiten da mit einem System. Das nennt sich „DATEV Unternehmen Online“. Da wird Ihnen was sagen, gerade hier ist es eines der größten oder wenn nicht sogar einer der großen Monopolisten in dem Steuersystem. Und die bieten für Unternehmen ein System an, da kannst du alle Rechnungen des Systems mit deinem Bankkonto verknüpfen. Es ist also am Anfang ein bisschen aufwendig, denn du musst erst einmal der Bank mitteilen, dass du da an einem Verfahren mit DATEV teilnimmst. Die kennen das, aber dann verknüpfen sie das. Das bedeutet, du kannst sämtliche Rechnungen weiterhin online bezahlen, musst aber eben keine Rechnungen mehr ausdrucken, Rechnungen verschicken oder Rechnungen ausdrucken für den Steuerberater, sodass der sie wieder nutzt. Also dahingehend haben wir eigentlich jegliche Form von Papier ausdrucken abgeschafft. Deswegen machen wir auch jegliche Präsentationen selber in auditiver Form. Also wir produzieren Audiodesigns und Produkte als eine Präsentation und gehen auch so in „face to face“ Präsentationen, die jetzt im Augenblick aufgrund von Corona ja auch ein bisschen nachgelassen haben. Aber ansonsten gehen wir in Präsentationen immer mit einem auditiven Ansatz rein und teilen keine Handouts mehr aus, wie es früher war, das weiß ich. Jeder hat dann eine Powerpoint-Präsentation auf dem Tisch liegen. Machen wir alles nicht mehr, weil es einfach keinen Sinn macht.

Interviewer: Okay verstehe. Und wie positioniert sich Ihr Unternehmen, wie möchten Sie wahrgenommen werden?

Interviewee D: In erster Linie haben wir aufgrund der auflebenden Faszination des Hörens und des Podcast ... Unser Geschäftsmodell ist relativ einzigartig. Es gibt wenige

Unternehmen, die diesen Ansatz haben, von der Konzeption über die Produktion, über die Distribution und einem Marketing Tool, das ganze Thema Podcast für Unternehmen zu gestalten. Entweder machen Unternehmen ihre Podcasts selber, weil sie einfach eine starke PR oder Kommunikationsabteilung haben, haben aber auch gar keine große Ahnung, weil sie nie aus ihrem eigenen Kreis herauskommen. Und wir? Wir stehen praktisch außerhalb eines jeden Unternehmens und betrachten das Unternehmen völlig neutral und positionieren uns als Partner, als Dienstleister für das Unternehmen mit dem dementsprechenden Know How. Und dieses Modell gibt es. Also ich beobachte den Markt jeden Tag. Es gibt so ein, zwei, drei, vier Firmen, die das auch so machen. Die sind aber eher produktionsgesteuert. Das heißt, du gehst mit dem Podcastkonzept dahin und produzierst dort diesen Podcast oder nutzt das Studio von irgendjemanden oder suchst jemanden, der dir Sprecher raussucht. Das bieten wir auch. Aber das ist eben nur ein Teilausschnitt unserer Gesamtleistung, sodass wir uns als 360-Grad Dienstleister an der Stelle begreifen und positionieren. Wir nutzen ausschließlich Google als Plattform. Also über unsere Homepage haben auch Kommunikationskanäle. Du kannst uns also auch anschreiben, wenn du Fragen hast oder du ein Angebot haben willst oder sonst was. Aber wenn dann alles digital.

Interviewer: Und haben Sie denn eine Art Positioning Statement oder eine Value Proposition?

Interviewee D: Uns gibt es erst seit einem Jahr. Und wir sind jetzt dabei für das nächste Jahr die Gespräche zu führen für viele neue Projekte. Also das Business fängt an zu boomen, weil die Leute natürlich auch in Corona Zeiten das Podcasten für sich entdecken und sagen Ich muss neue Kommunikationswege entdecken, um meine Kunden zu erreichen. Aber das Positioning würden wir in den nächsten Schritten erst machen können.

Interviewer: Und planen Sie in die Positionierung bewusst das Thema ökologische Nachhaltigkeit mit einzubeziehen? Oder ist das eher etwas, was dann drum herum geschieht und nicht unbedingt in die spezielle Positionierung geht?

Interviewee D: Es ist halt in diesem Bereich ein sehr komplexer Argumentationsaufbau, wenn wir das tun würden. Ich denke auch oft darüber nach, was zu tun und das auch stärker zu verwerten, gerade auch aufgrund des Namens des Unternehmens. Es ist aber unfassbar schwer, weil es so komplex ist. Ich sage dir ein Beispiel, wenn man sich überlegt, wie schlecht Verlage also ich meine Zeitungsverlage, wie schlecht die heute dastehen und wenn

man sich damit befasst, darüber nachzudenken, warum ist das eigentlich so? Dann ist das so, weil im Endeffekt der Verlag das nicht verstanden hat und ich meine damit auch die großen Verlage. Also wir reden über ein für über einen Change-Prozess, den wir hier gerade durchmachen. Und der Change-Prozess geht für den einen schneller und für den anderen langsamer. Aber auf jeden Fall befinden wir uns meiner Meinung nach in einem kurz- bis mittelfristigen Change-Prozess von mindestens zehn Jahren, bis die Leute das begriffen haben. Also ein Change ist z.B. das Feld der Elektro-Mobilität. Wir produzieren übrigens auch ein Podcast für ein Magazin. Da geht es nur um Elektromobilität. Also das geht nur um nachhaltiges Autofahren. Aber zurück zu den Verlagen. Die Verlage haben nicht verstanden, wie sie ihre journalistische und redaktionelle Macht, die sie durchaus haben, im Endeffekt gegenüber dem Markt besser positionieren können. Sie kennen nur alte Modelle, der Podcast hat sehr große Reichweiten. Alle Modelle, die die Verlage im Endeffekt im digitalen Bereich aufgebaut haben, ist das Abo-Modell. Die wollen, dass du für einen Artikel 99 Cent bezahlst, wenn du ihn lesen möchtest. Aber wenn du dich wahrscheinlich hinter den Kulissen, etwas weiter mit Google befasst, kannst du das bei einem anderen Anbieter umsonst bekommen. Das heißt, eigentlich kannibalisiert sich die Branche permanent selbst und wird damit auch scheitern. Also das große Verlage sterben, wird kommen. „Springer“ wird's überleben, weil „Springer“ sich sehr stark digital schon vor Jahren aufgestellt hat. Aber „Spiegel“ und so weiter wird irgendwann in eine ganz große Problematik reinkommen. Und da reden wir natürlich auch über unterschiedliche Zielgruppen. Die können das ganze Thema heute schon viel nachhaltiger begreifen, indem sie die Marktmacht, Journalismus und Redaktion mit der Marktmacht Vermarktung eigentlich verknüpfen wollen. Heute geht ein Verkäufer eines Verlags zum Kunden und verkauft ihm oder versucht ihm weiterhin eine Anzeige zu verkaufen. Bestenfalls ein Banner auf der Homepage oder in der Zeitung. Das ist aber nicht das, was der Kunde will. Der Kunde will heute andere Lösungen digitaler Art. Und er möchte auch Editorials. Er möchte Content. Er möchte das, was er eigentlich beruflich macht. Sein Unternehmen, seine Marke möchte er in der Tiefe dargestellt haben. Er möchte nicht nur eine reine Angebotsgeschichte, sondern er möchte im Endeffekt das Ganze als ganzheitliche Lösung. Und das ist, was einen Change-Prozess auch ausmacht. Die Leute begreifen viele Dinge auch besser, wenn sie ganzheitlich informiert werden. Das bietet aber ein Verlag nicht mehr. So ist ein Verlag an dieser Stelle auch nicht nachhaltig. Da können sie auch viel erzählen. Sie sind es einfach nicht. Und keiner kauft heute auch noch einen Verlag. Also selbst ein Euro ist zu viel, weil die Verluste, die du ja jedes Jahr einfährst mit einem Verlag immens sind. Das ist ein Beispiel aus unserer Welt, die wir tagtäglich sehen und das

ist natürlich auch ein Stückchen weit Konkurrenz von uns, aber auch wieder nicht, weil sie gehen eben nicht aktiv, so wie wir es tun, mit bestimmten Konzepten, auch nachhaltigen Konzepten, zu dem Kunden raus Sie verkaufen nach wie vor alte, eingesessene, gelernte, analoge, zum Teil im Hybrid analog digitale Pakete, die aber nicht erfolgreich funktionieren.

Interviewer: Ja, okay. Das ist verständlich. Und wenn man jetzt Ihr Unternehmen ansieht, was denken Sie, was sind da die größten Herausforderungen und Probleme in Bezug auf die Integration dieser ökologischen Nachhaltigkeit?

Interviewee D: Gute Frage, also wir sind ja schon, wenn wir das ökologisch betrachten, eigentlich mit unserem fast hundertprozentigen digitalen Ansatz schon nachhaltig. Die Frage, die man sich auch stellen müsste, wäre welche anderen nachhaltigen Maßnahmen könnten wir im Unternehmen einsetzen. Man könnte z.B. natürlich darüber nachdenken, ein hybrides Firmenfahrzeug anzuschaffen bzw. auch die Mittagspausen vielleicht anders zu gestalten oder die Nutzung von anderen Dingen. Aber das ist, das ist glaube ich, dann sehr kleinteilig. Nachher wird es so kleinteilig, da es am Ende die Frage, ob es was bringt, aber an sich, von der Ausrichtung her des Unternehmens mit dem rein digitalen Ansatz, kann man sich natürlich darüber streiten, ob ein Podcast nachhaltiger ist als ein gedruckter Artikel, weil hier ja auch Energie benötigt wird. Zum Beispiel Strom und weiß ich, was alles. Das könnte man natürlich gegeneinander aufrechnen. Ich bin trotzdem der Meinung, dass wir dabei besser abschneiden würden als eben einen Verlag.

Interviewer: Aber sind Sie denn in Ihrem täglichen Geschäft aktiv auf der Suche nach Möglichkeiten nachhaltiger zu werden?

Interviewee D: Wenn dazu Ansätze gäbe oder gibt mit Kooperationspartnern, die wir hier haben, gemeinsam in so einen Nachhaltigkeitsbericht einzusteigen, dann würden wir das immer tun. Das Problem ist aber, dass das im Daily Business natürlich noch immer wieder untergeht. Also das ist eben deswegen der Change-Prozess, der eben meiner Meinung nach Jahre dauert. Da geht die Sache in einigen Branchen schneller und in den anderen etwas langsamer. Ich denke, wir sind schon ziemlich weit mit uns selbst in diesem Change-Prozess. Also wenn ich mir andere Unternehmen angucke, dann sind wir sogar sehr weit. Und das Problem ist, wenn man das Gefühl hat, dass man weiter ist als andere, führt das dazu, dass man sich zum Teil ein bisschen zurücklehnt und sagt, ich lasse jetzt mal die anderen ein bisschen aufholen, um dann zu gucken, was gibt's da an neuen Möglichkeiten.

Und unsere Welt ist heute so schnelllebig, dass sich ja tatsächlich eigentlich fast jede Woche eine neue Möglichkeit auftut, nachhaltig ökologisch etwas zu ändern. Die Frage ist hier immer nur, wie praktisch ist das Ganze nachher in der Umsetzung? Und bringt es dann tatsächlich den gewünschten Effekt? Oder ist es früher doch effektiver gewesen?

Interviewer: Wie gehen Sie damit um? Also wie wirken Sie da entgegen?

Interviewee D: Also ich komme ja wie gesagt aus der Vermarktung. Als Vermarkter hast du nie die Chance, dich zurückzulehnen. Denn die Produkte, die wir anbieten, verkaufen sich nicht von alleine, sondern die müssen aktiv verkauft werden und konzipiert werden. Und mit Marketing Tools versehen werden. Alleine schon daher ist ein Zurücklehnen für uns nicht möglich. Und insofern werden wir immer wieder gucken wo gibt es Möglichkeiten, nachhaltig zu agieren. Zum Beispiel ist eigentlich die Corona Zeit Segen und Fluch für uns zugleich, weil wir unsere Interviewpartner, die wir in einem Podcast verarbeiten oder die wir zu Wort kommen lassen, nicht mehr persönlich treffen müssen, sondern wir versenden unsere Technik zum Teil. Wir werden aber auch niemals über Zoom oder Teams oder Blue Jeans oder sonst was irgendwelche Videokonferenzen aufzeichnen, weil es qualitativ schlecht ist. Das heißt, wir versenden unsere Sendetechnik an den jeweiligen Ort des Interviewpartners und nehmen so ein Interview dann immer auf und dann schickt der das wieder zurück. Natürlich wird es immer einen CO₂ Ausstoß geben, auch bei dem Fahrzeug, was das Gerät hin und her fährt. Aber dennoch vermeiden wir es ihm persönlich auch nochmal hin und her zu fahren. Also das hält sich halt die Waage. Das ist das Problem mit der Nachhaltigkeit. Man versucht selber nachhaltig zu sein, aber das System lässt es noch nicht zu 100 Prozent zu.

Interviewer: Glauben Sie denn, dass es in Zukunft eher schwieriger wird oder noch komplexer wird, nachhaltig zu sein?

Interviewee D: Wie gesagt, wir sind relativ nachhaltig und andere sind es nicht. Andere versuchen es. Aber ich glaube, manchmal ist es so, wie ich das begreife, dass gerade die Politik, die getrieben wird von diesem Gedanken, den Menschen und auch den Unternehmen zu viel abverlangt. Es hat ja Gründe, warum die Autobauer in Deutschland ein Elektroauto wie Tesla noch nicht bauen können. Dafür gibt es ja Begründungen, warum das so ist. Das ist ja nicht so, dass die das nicht könnten. Die deutsche Ingenieurskunst ist mit Sicherheit an der Stelle weiter. Wenn man sich die Autos anguckt, die sie jetzt im Nachhinein entwickelt

haben, dann sind die allemal viel schöner als die von Tesla und wahrscheinlich auch effektiver. Aber es ist halt, um dabei bei dem Beispiel zu bleiben, ein Vorreiter gewesen. Es wird eben unfassbar schwer, diese Vorreiterrolle auf alle Unternehmen umzumünzen. Und deswegen gibt es für jeden einzelnen Bereich kleinere Nachhaltigkeit-Benchmarks. Und die müssen auch erreichbar sein. Es macht keinen Sinn über einen Kohleausstieg 2030 oder 2035 zu reden, wenn man im Endeffekt in einem europäischen Verbund des Stromversorgungsbereichs ist und die anderen Länder nicht mitziehen. Deshalb macht das nachher alles keinen Sinn. Und da stellt sich nachher auch im Endeffekt dieser europäische Gedanke, den ich teile und den ich auch gut finde. Man muss den Leuten, den Menschen draußen, und der da tun sich junge Menschen meiner Meinung nach viel leichter als ältere Leute, die Zeit geben, das zu verinnerlichen und mitzugehen und nicht den Markt als Maßstab nehmen, sondern im Endeffekt die Menschen als Maßstab, den sich der Markt unterordnen müsste. Aber im Augenblick ist es so ein bisschen verschoben umgekehrt. Im Augenblick versucht man, die Menschen dem Markt unterzuordnen. Das halte ich für sehr schwierig, weil es dann eben diese jetzt auch spürbaren Corona Idioten gibt, die der Meinung sind, dass das alles Blödsinn und das alles Verschwörungstheorien sind. Das entsteht daraus, wenn man im Endeffekt den Leuten immer wieder etwas zu stark vorkauen bzw. zu stark medial auch da einen guten Einfluss nimmt.

Interviewer: Denken Sie denn, dass sich das Unternehmen selber im Weg steht, beim Thema nachhaltiger zu werden? Oder dass das eher von äußerlichen Einflüssen kommt, wie z.B. Politik oder Medien?

Interviewee D: Ich halte z.B. die Partei „Die Grünen“ für eine interessante, auch heute sehr wichtige Partei. Ich komme aus dem „CDU“ Haushalt, habe aber immer „CDU-Grün“ gewählt. Das ist ja tatsächlich für die nächste Bundestagswahl auch eine Option. Warum erzähle ich das? Weil im Endeffekt „Die Grünen“ ja immer wieder die sind, die das tatsächlich anstoßen. Gäbe es so eine Partei wie „Die Grünen“ weltweit nicht, dann würden wir wahrscheinlich heute noch irgendwo in der Steinzeit leben. Gedanklich zumindest. Und insofern fand ich diesen Ansatz immer wichtig. Die Frage ist immer, mit welcher Radikalität man daran geht oder mit welcher, mit welcher Intensität man so etwas kommuniziert und in ein Volk rein prügelt. Ich glaube je maßvoller man das macht und je logischer man das macht und je mehr man den Leuten auch Analogien aufzeigt und sagt guck mal, das ist das, was du früher gemacht, das führte dazu, und guck mal, das ist die Lösung, die wir dir heute bieten, umso besser ist es. Man muss von Lösungen her kommen und nicht im Endeffekt

permanent den Finger heben. Das ist das, was die Politik gerne macht den Finger heben und auf einen Missstand hinweisen. Sondern man muss im Endeffekt auf den Missstand hinweisen, aber auch gleich einen Lösungsansatz präsentieren. Und dann funktioniert es auch.

Interviewer: Ja, dann sind wir jetzt am Ende des Interviews. Gibt es noch etwas, was Sie loswerden wollen?

Interviewee D: Eigentlich nicht. Ich glaube ich habe genug gesagt.

Interviewer: Dann danke ich recht herzlich für Ihre Zeit und wünsche Ihnen einen schönen Nachmittag.

Interviewee D: Danke, das habe ich gerne gemacht. Ihnen noch alles Gute.

Interview Company E (German Original)

16.11.2020

Interviewer: Ja, da können wir auch gleich starten. Vielleicht sagen Sie einmal mit Ihren eigenen Worten, was Ihr Unternehmen macht. Wer sind Sie?

Interviewee E: Gerne, ja. Also Company E ist, wie Sie wissen ein spanisches Familienunternehmen, aktiv in allen Aspekten, die die Logistik betreffen. Das heißt, sowohl der Transportteil im Sinne einer traditionellen Spedition, allerdings auch in Bereichen von Lagerung. Was wir Industrial Services nennen, das ist eigentlich hauptsächlich das Assembling von Fahrzeugteilen, also ein traditioneller Automobilzulieferer in dem Aspekt und ein kleinerer Teil unseres Geschäfts beinhaltet auch Luftfracht, Seefracht international, all diese Themen. Wir sind vertreten inzwischen in 16 Ländern weltweit, kommen ursprünglich aus Spanien, sind aber auch gerade in Deutschland sehr stark durch den Zukauf der [Firma X], für die ich verantwortlich bin. Und gleichzeitig sind wir auch sehr stark gewachsen in den letzten Jahren in Übersee, USA, in Südamerika und so nach und nach bewegen wir uns dann in den anderen Ländern weiter. Vielleicht noch dazu: Traditionell sind wir jetzt sehr verbunden mit der Automobilindustrie, wie ich gesagt habe, zum Teil als möglicher Teilelieferant, aber hauptsächlich in der Logistik, was bei uns ungefähr 70 Prozent des Geschäfts ausmacht. Der Rest ist dann Retail, Consumer Goods, Elektronik, all sowas kombiniert.

Interviewer: Welchen Stellenwert besitzt Nachhaltigkeit bei Ihnen im Unternehmen?

Interviewee E: Ich würde sagen, wenn man sich die letzten Jahre mal anschaut, dann hat sich der Stellenwert schon sehr dramatisch nach oben entwickelt in der Prioritäten-Skala. Also bei uns. Zum einen natürlich getrieben auch durch Kunden, die immer höhere Anforderungen stellen. Gerade in einem Geschäftszweig wie wir, wo wir eben auch viel mit traditionellen LKWs durch die Weltgeschichte fahren, ist das ein Punkt, der nicht mehr zu vernachlässigen ist. Deswegen ist bei uns auf der Agenda sehr weit oben und spielt eigentlich in allen Bereichen inzwischen mit rein. Wir sind ja jetzt zum einen auf dem - denke ich mal - sehr guten Weg, erst mal überhaupt unseren ganzen Footprint zu messen. Das ist ja der erste Schritt zu dem Akkreditieren, zu sehen, wo wir sind, um dann womöglich

in den nächsten Jahren oder eben auch schon jetzt und auch schon in der Vergangenheit da auch wirklich Reduzierungsergebnisse vorlegen zu können.

Interviewer: Und welche genauen Maßnahmen haben Sie jetzt schon ergriffen? Was macht das Unternehmen in Bezug auf Nachhaltigkeit?

Interviewee E: Da können wir mal was zusammenstellen, also da kann ich ihnen auch gerne nochmal ein paar Zusatzinfos zuschicken. Ich weiß nicht, ob Sie das gesehen haben: Auf unserer Website können Sie auch den Corporate Social Responsibility Report runterladen. Da ist auch alles dann im letzten Detail beschrieben. Im Großen und Ganzen geht es bei uns eigentlich hauptsächlich darum, die Emissionen durch die LKW-Flotte zu reduzieren. Also wir sprechen da über circa 3000 LKWs, die wir aktiv betreiben, entweder durch unsere eigene Flotte oder durch Subunternehmer. Und wir setzen dort eigentlich auf mehrere Standpunkte. Zum einen geht es darum, das technologisch anzugehen, und zwar schauen wir uns das dann an oder haben wir auch selber entwickelt, beispielsweise im System, das den Fahrer direkt unterstützt, möglichst umweltfreundlich zu fahren. Das heißt, da wird dann die Route berechnet, jetzt nicht mehr nur nach Zeit und nach, beispielsweise der Verkehrssituation oder sonst was, sondern auch nach dem Profil beispielsweise. Welche Steigungen sind dort drin, welche der Geschwindigkeit ist der ideale Opener, um umweltschonend zu fahren? Das sind unsere eigenen Systeme, die wir entwickeln und dann auf der traditionellen LKW-Fahrt, wie man sie kennt, einsetzen. Ein weiterer großer Punkt für uns ist der Umstieg auf eine allgemein umweltschonendere Flotte. Da gibt es dann in unserem Sektor beispielsweise sogenannte Mega Liner, die dann eben mehr Volumen transportieren können und dann umweltfreundlicher zu betreiben sind. In der weiteren Zukunft wird sich das dann noch entwickeln mit Elektroantrieben, Wasserstoffantrieben. Also all das, was sozusagen noch in der Entwicklungsphase ist, was noch keinen wirklichen Impact hat, aber was mit Sicherheit in den nächsten Jahren kommen wird. Wo aber auch die Kunden darauf bestehen, dass das schnellstmöglich passiert. Ist natürlich nicht immer ganz so einfach umsetzbar. Wenn Sie sich jetzt vorstellen, wir fahren natürlich viel zwischen Spanien und Deutschland beispielsweise. Da können Sie nicht einfach einen Elektro-LKW hinstellen, aber beispielsweise, innerhalb eines Landes, wo kurze Routen zu bewältigen sind, ist das schon eher eine Möglichkeit. All das haben wir auf der Agenda und verfolgen wir aktiv. Der dritte Punkt, den ich mal anführen würde, ist einfach der Energieverbrauch, der unser Kernbetrieb verursacht. Beispielsweise haben wir jetzt in unserem Head Office in Spanien grüne Energie verwendet. Es wird hier der Umstieg eingeleitet für die Firmen-

Fahrzeugflotte, dass die hauptsächlich aus Elektrofahrzeugen, hybriden Fahrzeugen und sonstigen umweltschonenden Antrieben besteht. Das ist alles ein Prozess, der jetzt die letzten Jahre angesteuert wurde und der sich kontinuierlich entwickelt in der Wichtigkeit auch die, die wir sehen. Das sind für mich so die Kernpunkte, die wir im Moment verfolgen.

Interviewer: Und wie positioniert sich Ihr Unternehmen derzeit?

Interviewee E: Wie wir uns positionieren? Man kann schon sagen, dass wir unsere Umwelt-Vorreiterrolle schon aktiv herausstellen. Also wie ich vorhin schon erwähnt haben. Heutzutage ist das das A und O, was Entwicklung von Kundenbeziehungen, auch Gewinnung von Neukunden, angeht. Da kommen sie nicht mehr weiter, ohne da gut aufgestellt zu sein. Das sind eigentlich inzwischen wirklich Kernkriterien, die auch jeder Supplier vor allem im Automobilbereich erfüllen muss. Die Punkte, die ich jetzt gerade genannt habe oder es gibt sicher noch zig weitere kleinere Initiativen, die wir betreiben. All das steht bei uns im Fokus, dass wir uns gegenüber Kunden, Mitarbeitern und allen Stakeholdern positionieren.

Interviewer: Und haben Sie als Firma ein Positioning Statement? Oder ist das eher offengehalten?

Interviewee E: Nein, das haben wir schon definiert. Das kann man sich auch anschauen bei uns. Lassen Sie mich mal gucken. Auswendig kann ich das natürlich nicht. Also wir haben das hier bei uns quasi gesplittet in Mission Statement, Value Statement usw., wie man das ja kennt. Was wir sagen als unsere Mission ist quasi „create value in a sustainable manner“. Das können Sie sich gerne anschauen bei uns auf der Website. Ein paar Punkte sind da noch in Unterpunkte gegliedert, aber was wir halt als Sustainable bezeichnen, hat natürlich auch einen Effekt auf die Umwelt, auf die Nachwelt. Und dass das jetzt immer so nochmal konkret ausformuliert ist, also das ist Teil der Firmenphilosophie.

Interviewer: Welche Probleme oder Herausforderungen entstehen bei so einer Integration? Sie positionieren sich ja nachhaltig. Was sind da die Probleme und Herausforderungen, die entstehen, damit man sich nachhaltig positioniert?

Interviewee E: Also es ist halt ein schmaler Grat, da ist ja immer viel Marketing dabei, bei solchen Themen, da wirklich dann das konkret zu verankern in der täglichen Denkweise der Mitarbeiter, dass das wirklich dann auch so umgesetzt wird, wie man sich das von oben

vorstellt. Das ist nicht immer ganz leicht. In so einem alteingesessenen Geschäft wie unserem ist da schon ein großer Wandel dahinter. Dieser Wandel ist aber auch mit teilweise enormen Kosten verbunden. Wenn ich jetzt sehe, wenn wir uns das Jahr 2020 anschauen, sehen wir ja alle, dass da doch unvorhergesehene Ereignisse eintreten können, die einen riesigen Effekt haben auf die Entwicklung der Geschäftstätigkeiten und bei solchen Themen dann auch den Fokus zu behalten oder den Weg beizubehalten, den wir eingeschlagen haben, bedarf natürlich gewisser Standhaftigkeit und das wird aber bei uns – wenn ich für unsere Firma rede - wird das auch gelebt. Auch von ganz oben, also von den Inhabern wird das vorgegeben. Da wird auch nicht von abgewichen jetzt in einer Krisensituation sage ich mal. Im Prinzip sind das aber alles Themen, die natürlich immer dazu beitragen, dass der Fokus vielleicht auch mal woanders liegt, wenn wir natürlich die Mitarbeiter in Kurzarbeit schicken müssen und die Gewinne wegbrechen, ist dann auch der Umweltgedanke vielleicht zweitrangig in den Köpfen der Leute. Das immer wieder reinzukriegen ist natürlich eine Herausforderung. Wo ich aber sagen muss, die wir meiner Meinung nach bisher sehr gut bewältigen und mir sicher bin, dass wir da auch dieses Jahr unserem Ziel treu bleiben können. Das ist für mich also das Grundproblem, das eben auftaucht bei solchen Projekten. Was natürlich auch die Ergebnisse nicht unbedingt direkt positiv im Ergebnis sehen, sondern wahrscheinlich erst mal ein bisschen in die andere Richtung planen müssen.

Interviewer: Wie genau gehen Sie diese Probleme an? Wie versuchen Sie das zu lösen?

Interviewee E: Also für mich ist da jetzt bei uns, wie ich das wahrnehme, kein wirkliches Problem. Also dieser Gedanke Umweltbewusstsein oder Social Corporate Responsibility im Allgemeinen ist schon recht weit verankert bei uns. Und wie gesagt, im täglichen Geschäft und der Beziehung mit den Kunden kommt das immer wieder hoch. Also wir sind schon an einem Punkt inzwischen im Jahr 2020 meiner Meinung, wo wir das verinnerlicht haben, dass das weitergehen muss. Aber im Grundprinzip ist es eben was, was von oben herab gelebt werden muss. Aber das funktioniert nicht, wenn wir jetzt sagen, hier macht man mal ein bisschen Sustainability und hier ein bisschen sowas. Fünf Jahre später frage ich dann: Und wo sind wir jetzt? Da steht dann doch bisschen die Zugkraft und das ist bei uns, wie gesagt, Teil der Philosophie geworden und wird dann auch so wird dann auch so gelebt.

Interviewer: Meinen Sie, dass später noch mehr Herausforderungen kommen werden in diesem Thema? Oder ist es eher so, wenn man sich schon nachhaltig positioniert und das relativ gut integriert hat, dass das dann eher einfacher wird?

Interviewee E: Also ich gehe schon davon aus, dass wenn man die Vorarbeit konsequent umgesetzt hat in den letzten Jahren und auf diesen Weg gesetzt hat, dass man dann langfristig davon profitieren kann und wird das dann auch. Die Entwicklung wird immer schneller werden, die Technologie vor allem wird sich in den nächsten zehn Jahren nochmal deutlich weiter entwickeln von dem, was wir jetzt sehen. Egal was wir uns vorstellen können, gerade in unserem Bereich. Aber es ist klar, dass das, wenn Sie jetzt noch nicht angefangen haben, sind Sie schon sehr spät dran, da mit noch auf den Zug aufzuspringen. Wir sind uns hier sicher, dass es das ist, da es keinen Weg zurück mehr gibt. Also das ist klar. Und wie ich gesagt habe, die Kunden, mit denen wir arbeiten, erwarten einfach auch da eine zumindest mal ein Mindestmaß an Engagement, das wird sich nicht mehr in die andere Richtung drehen. Und ich gehe schon davon aus, dass wir durch die Arbeit, die wir bisher da reingesteckt haben und die Entwicklungen, die wir angestoßen haben, da schon sehr gut aufgestellt sein werden, auch gegenüber vielen Konkurrenten und uns da in Zukunft dann leichter tun, als das andere tun werden.

Interviewer: Und der Nachhaltigkeitsgedanke, wird der eher von der Kundenseite aus getrieben? Schauen Sie da auf Trends oder ist das etwas, was vom Inneren, von der Strategie des Unternehmens kommt?

Interviewee E: Also beides geht Hand in Hand. Da ist zum einen natürlich externe Erwartungshaltungen, die ganz klar bestehen. Da gibt's natürlich auch eine Spannbreite, da gibt's Kunden, die arbeiten sehr viel wirklich mit Global Playern zusammen, beispielsweise mit Volkswagen, mit Coca-Cola auch. Und das sind einfach Firmen, die eine Erwartungshaltung haben, wenn sie die nicht erreichen, dann kommen sie auch nicht mehr in die Auswahl. Das ist alles schon Zwang, wenn Sie da erfolgreich sein wollen, dann müssen Sie in die Richtung investieren und sich positionieren. Und gleichzeitig ist das aber auch. Sagen wir mal als Hintergrundinfo: Bei uns hat sich in den letzten Jahren ein Wechsel vollzogen vom Inhaber geführten Unternehmen zu einem Konzern, wo sich dann die Familie aus dem operativen Geschäft raushält, aber immer noch die Strategie natürlich und ihre Ideen mit reinbringt. Das heißt von unserer obersten Management-Ebene ist die nachhaltige Entwicklung die Top-Priorität und natürlich auch profitabel sein ist klar, aber ohne die Entwicklung in Nachhaltigkeitsbereiche geht es einfach nicht mehr. Aus meiner Sicht für unsere Unternehmen ist das ganz klar von beiden Seiten ganz stark getrieben dieses Thema.

Interviewer: Und wenn Sie so auf externe Faktoren schauen, wie z.B. politische Entscheidungen, irgendwelche Regeln, die es in Ihrer Branche einzuhalten gilt, sehen Sie das eher als hemmende Faktoren, um nachhaltiger zu werden oder gibt es da schon eine große Unterstützung?

Interviewee E: Für die Logistik-Industrie allgemein sehe ich das schon sehr als externen Push, sage ich mal. Für mich selber, habe ich bisher noch keinen riesen Effekt dadurch gesehen, weil wir sowieso versuchen, ein Schritt weiter zu sein als der Rest. Das heißt, ich gehe mal davon aus, dass wir das auch beibehalten können, dass wir nicht wirklich von externen Einflüssen soweit abhängig sind. Man weiß natürlich, was sich da noch tun wird, aber im Moment sehe ich da jetzt noch nicht wirklich etwas. Das ist ja eigentlich ein Nebenfaktor. Würde ich mal sagen.

Interviewer: Alles klar. Dann war's das auch schon. Gibt es sonst noch irgendwas, was Sie hinzufügen wollen? Irgendwelche Kommentare? Was Ihnen noch einfällt?

Interviewee E: Eigentlich denke ich, habe ich das mal so grob umrissen. Wenn das jetzt an Details ausreicht für Sie, können wir es gerne dabei belassen. Wenn Sie noch Nachfragen haben, können Sie sich gerne bei mir melden. Dann könnte ich auch nochmal in Erfahrung bringen wirklich die Details, wo wir gerade stehen. Aber das würde ich ihnen überlassen. Nur leider ist das erst einmal eigentlich alles, was ich zu berichten hätte.

Interviewer: Ja, das war auf jeden Fall schon aufschlussreich. Vielen Dank für Ihre Zeit.

Interviewee E: Gern geschehen.

Appendix B – Interview Transcripts (Translated into English)

Interview Company A (English Translation)

05.11.2020

Interviewer: In your own words, describe what your company does.

Interviewee A: Exactly, so Company A is the digital division [of the parent company], which means we are responsible for the online shop and are more or less the extended arm of the branch. We have promotional goods, not only during the promotional period, but also for a little longer. We then call that the fixed-list range and now it's just a matter of increasing awareness a bit as an online shop itself and not just as a website [of the parent company], and to interlink the offline world with the online world.

Interviewer: How important is sustainability to your company?

Interviewee A: So, of course, sustainability is a bit more difficult to implement in the online shop than in the branch. I can only tell you that sustainability is a big topic in the store. We also have to move with the times. This also includes the fact that we published a sustainability report on our own initiative - not because you had to. I think that also shows that we want to go full throttle. In the online area, we try to use sensible recycling concepts to ensure that goods can be resold, so that as little as possible has to be thrown into the bin. That's how I would sum it up.

Interviewer: What are the specific measures your company takes with regard to sustainability measures?

Interviewee A: We try to centralize the warehouse locations. That you practically don't have to drive from one warehouse to another and have to push goods back and forth because there is always a truck on the way. Then we try to reduce the packages. This means that if you order something, you will receive three boxes for three items on different days. It is on our agenda that we have to minimize this significantly. So that we basically only send one package to the customer. On the one hand, this saves costs for the service provider, but it also saves on cardboard packaging and CO2 emissions. Then we try to reuse cardboard boxes in the warehouse. We are trying to reduce the number of flyers. They call themselves package flyers. We say it doesn't make any sense to put the order magazine, the travel

magazine, the wine magazine in the package. I think we send over a million packages a week. And that's a lot. And if you then throw in all the flyers and the customer throws it away anyway, we have now reduced it to a flyer with everything on it. What else is there? Then we have a deal going on with credit card providers where we always plant one tree per order. This also shows that these service providers are interested in sustainability. Actually, these are the big issues. We have most of the measures in logistics. Drive less, send less and return as few as possible. It starts with the user experience, that in the shop you already know what the goods look like and whether they will really fit, so you don't send them back. We generate the majority of sales through fashion. And the return rate is usually very high.

Interviewer: How is the company currently positioned?

Interviewee A: So in the online area we are not positioning ourselves in our division of the company on the subject of sustainability. But the company itself has created a sustainability report. Overall, we want to have the value chain from A to Z. That means we produce the chocolate ourselves and see that the products have been grown accordingly and according to the good terms and conditions for the employees there. On the other hand, with the acquisition of [a recycling company], we ensured the recycling of plastic bottles. Our private brand even has an advertising campaign where we say how the bottles are recycled and reused, which gives us a positive footprint. Then we also have waste, we not only recycle, we also dispose it. We are buying up more and more companies that take care of the disposal of materials. The private garbage drives, for example, are very simple. We also have a goal of getting our plastic volume to minus 20 % by 2025, i.e., reducing it by 20 %. There's also a progress report there too. Energy consumption, that we make sure that the offices are not only opened in the Corona crisis just because they should be opened.

Interviewer: How should your brand be perceived by customers? What is the goal?

Interviewee A: The main target is the online discounter. Always be able to shop at the best price-performance ratio with the best quality. If you ask about sustainability then we will, at the moment we are not doing anything, inevitably have to attach ourselves to the sustainability offensive. If [the parent company] specifies this in the in-patient facility, we do it as well. We are not communicating this at the moment, and I cannot yet say how we will position ourselves in this regard. Just so much that we make sure that they are used sensibly and that we buy the products in such a way that they are sustainable.

Interviewer: Does the positioning with regard to B2B customers differ?

Interviewee A: We don't actually have any B2B customers. Or what do you mean by B2B customers in the sense of discounter?

Interviewer: Let's not say B2B, but rather the manufacturers of the goods or the partners.

Interviewee A: In the course of this sustainability offensive, they were of course also measured. We have a certain market power, and we like to use it for such topics. When we say sustainability is important to us or organic products. Then the suppliers and manufacturers have to implement this according to our specifications. Definitely one of the requirements is that they have to produce sustainably, and we use this position of power.

Interviewer: You said that in the future you will focus on sustainability in your brand positioning. What challenges and problems do you see with the integration?

Interviewee A: In the backend, the issue of costs is always a different matter. So, if you want to build something sustainably, it automatically becomes a little more expensive. Since you always have to reckon with a very low margin in the discount area and even less online because you have much more fixed and variable costs there, this is the greatest challenge for us as a company. That you say, despite the increased costs, okay, I'll do it anyway, because it makes total sense.

Interviewer: Is that practically the main problem?

Interviewee A: Exactly. Cost pressure and still the goal of promoting sustainability. That conflicts sometimes.

Interviewer: Is it mainly the cost or do other factors also play a role? Internal difficulties, for example.

Interviewee A: That's really cool in our company. There is practically a ruler. It's actually a family business. The announcement is very clear that we have to take care of the issue. Then this will be carried out and enforced right down to the bottom. Like the [Organic Brand] Initiative, for example, everything is organic. That was also given that way, strategically. Even if the costs are a little higher in procurement and in sales, this does not always suit a discounter. It is always dictated by philosophy that we take care of it. And that's how I see it

when it comes to sustainability. Internally there is actually no resistance because it was predetermined.

Interviewer: You mentioned the higher costs. How do you try to approach that, how do you try to keep that within limits? How are such initiatives implemented, despite these high costs?

Interviewee A: I recently read that 40 % of customers want more sustainability or at least options for sustainability in the range. This is a group that is expanding more and more, and they are also willing to pay more. If this willingness is increased, we automatically have more options to implement it. Then you offer higher-priced products with the “sustainably produced” seal, for example. But now I can’t say specifically in the online segment where we are doing this. We sell so-called non-food goods, everything except food, except wine and liquors, and I think you can only tell the manufacturer to pay attention to this. We are basically the ones who design the product, and someone then produces it. This is where you can most pay attention to during production.

Interviewer: In the long term, do you think your company will face more challenges in integrating sustainability? Or do you think that as a sustainable company it will be easier for you to position yourself sustainably?

Interviewee A: So, we are almost 98 % known. If you have the approach, and we have, of reducing waste, reducing energy, you can do it quite easily. We have almost 4,000 stores in Germany and if you start there and equip all stores with LEDs, you have a very high effect at 4,000 stores. That's why I believe that we initiate trends and maybe also steer them. In the online segment, we first position the brand itself and then we take care of branding. A brand value is sustainability. But sustainability currently does not stand out in the online segment, first and foremost price-performance quality stands out. In the local stores we are already further there, and you can see that quite clearly.

Interviewer: Do impulses for more sustainability arise internally or externally?

Interviewee A: So, we always orient ourselves to the market at this point. There is a group of people out there and they are looking on the trends. A small example now has nothing to do with sustainability. No one had known such a “stand-up paddle” three years ago. We then saw that it made sense and we bought it and it went like hell. With something like that, of

course, we have to go with the trends. But also, organic movement. If you had resisted it, you would have had fewer customers.

Interviewer: If you try to become more sustainable and try to integrate this into the corporate culture, are there external inhibitions? Examples would be political decisions, such as legal regulations that restrict you.

Interviewee A: I think less because it's relatively easy with us. Avoid plastic, recycle, avoid waste and throw fewer products in the bin. That you buy really sensible, so that not so many goods are left over. We can also offer goods that were not sold in the store in the online shop. This also helps us to optimize this flow of goods and also the sales. But I see few external influencing factors that could somehow represent a disadvantage for us.

Interviewer: Then we are now at the end of the interview. Do you have any additional comments?

Interviewee A: So, I really believe that you can get the most out of a discounter through the goods and the range. So, for example, the specifications to no longer have plastic bags. You have to keep track about that. And actually, the discounters are always a bit faster than the full-range retailers. This is also what sets us apart, the speed with which external factors can be implemented. I think that's important to mention. So that the discounter is actually faster in implementing and mostly already thinking ahead.

Interviewer: Then I thank you for your time and I wish you a nice day.

Interviewee A: Thank you, gladly, I wish you that too.

Interview Company B (English Translation)

27.10.2020

Interviewer: How important is sustainability at Company B? What role does that play?

Interviewee B1: If we look at the pre-Corona period, it was an important topic and, in addition to innovations, it was actually the topic that we wanted to advance. Company B has already been introducing measures at the strategic corporate level for many years, such as fuel consumption programs that are reduced, which simply means that the most direct routes possible, the most optimal, in weather conditions, air pressure conditions are always chosen in regard to lower fuel flow. Then the whole fleet was equipped with these winglets, which also have higher aerodynamics and thus also with lower resistance and thus to save fuel again. Then in 2018 we already started to exchange the trolleys for light-weight trolleys. Several tons have already been saved. And that continues automatically, one after the other. Then with many [Boeing] NGs in our fleet we have one of the youngest fleets in Europe for a low-cost carrier. With the addition of the [Boeing] MAX, which is to be expected, a renewal of the fleet was also planned. The [Boeing] MAX also has its implications. But that is exactly the strategy that you just make an exchange towards a modern, efficient fleet. And the [Boeing] MAX, all problems aside, is simply one of the most efficient airplanes out there today. Then we have already taken measures on board. On World Environment Day we banned all plastic items from the aircraft and replaced them with wood and paper, paper cups, etc. We are trying to remove all plastic materials from board according to the EU regulation by January 2021. So, these measures all have a high priority and also reforestation of forests, which started in Turkey as a corporate social responsibility project. So very diverse; the fleet, in-flight service, but of course also in the offices. So high value, immensely important. That was precisely the subject of the positioning last year with the words: "Company B strives to be the most innovative low complexity airline, constantly enhancing the customer experience and taking on environmental responsibility along the corporate complete value chain." So actually, a topic that we have pursued along an entire value chain, which we will of course continue to do, but was somewhat neglected as a communicative element in marketing in the context of the Corona situation.

Interviewee B2: Then, I am currently joining in. The topic of sustainability, as Interviewee B1 already said, is of course extremely important to us. And it actually has to be. But also, with a view to the target group, especially with a view to the millennials and younger people, who place extreme importance on whether a company not only deals with the topic of marketing, let's say in the direction of greenwashing, but also approaches and implements things. So that's a topic, that, or maybe in my generation, it might also be a topic where greenwashing quickly influenced you in a positive way. The younger target group, when I look at their generation, it's just like that, everything is questioned. Does it have to be like this? Can't it get any better? What does it do with the environment, etc. And it is extremely important for us to take millennials, the younger target groups, with us and win them over as future customers of ours. That you not only deal with this topic, but actually implement things.

Interviewer: You have just mentioned the positioning statement. How does Company B want to appear to the outside world? Should Company B be perceived as a sustainable company or is the main focus elsewhere?

Interviewee B1: It's just included because it doesn't make sense for us as an airline to completely focus on sustainability. We fly; we will always dump kerosene. It's not environmentally friendly. In this respect, one can cynically say that this is the greatest contribution we are likely to ever make. No, but it's an important site note that sets us apart and gives us a competitive advantage that we also use. But as an airline, you still have other priorities that you just have to set. As I said, the business model in and of itself will never be a completely sustainable business model in terms of environmental protection. Even with electric planes you might have the batteries, they have to be disposed and that's not so good, I think.

Interviewer: If we look at the B2B business. Are there any significant differences in the positioning?

Interviewee B1: Yes, we have two different types of B2B here, that is the tour operator business, and the other is ethnic traffic or ethnic agencies. At Tour Operator, as interviewee B2 already said, you pay more and more attention to it. Is a decision criterion and is likely to become more and more of a decision criterion. In Ethnic traffic this will not be such a strong decision-making criterion because there are simply other motivations in the foreground.

B2C, as I said, is definitely one of these USPs alongside innovations that we as an airline claim and want to claim.

Interviewer: That means, on the one hand, it is of great importance in B2B business, but in principle not much is paid into it for Ethnic traffic.

Interviewee B1: There are simply things that are much more important for Ethnic Traffic. But even there the generation is growing up where we cannot rule out that they say: it's nice that they have great expertise in Turkey and that they are sustainable too, I think that's wonderful.

Interviewee B2: And there is the motivation. Why does someone have to or want to fly? If you speak of the younger generation, then many will certainly ask: Why do you have to fly? And there is the difference between those in the target group via the tour operator or directly B2C, what Interviewee B1 has just said, has those who fly with us on vacation, for example. You have other motivation problems and other opportunities that are given to you. Versus the Ethnic traffic, where the "visiting family and friends" program rules and simply have completely different priorities behind it, why you want or have to fly to this place at exactly that time? That kind of a supplement to the point.

Interviewer: If we now look at all of these measures and also this sustainable positioning, what challenges and problems are there? What are the biggest problems?

Interviewee B1: To actually find the right middle ground, that as an airline you blow a lot of kerosene into the air, is then also credible? Of course, I can tell great stories. It already existed. So, I kind of fly with very little fuel, but it doesn't work, because you just need a certain approach, otherwise you won't fly. And that is why this mediocrity can be found. What is believable and how much is believable in my view is the premise.

Interviewee B2: Plus, to actually see the entire customer journey, so sustainability and airlines are often seen as a contradiction, which does not have to be mandatory, provided that it really lives at the different touchpoints of the customer journey. Of course, this is the most important segment, but before and after there is also a huge, even large area where action has to be optimized. And I think that's a challenge all of its own. To illuminate the various steps accordingly and to consider what the sustainable factor is and how it can be lived.

Interviewer: You just mentioned credibility. Do you think that is the main problem?

Interviewee B1: That is industry specific. There are branches where it's wonderful. You can catch up with that quite well. But there are also industries where it's just difficult. And that's what I just said, so credibility is not the problem, but at what point can an airline adjust the screw? That's what I mean by credibility. As I said, an electric plane wouldn't help either. Also, would be the wrong approach or not the approach. So, we will never be able to fly 100 percent green. So, as Interviewee B2 said, you have to look along the customer journey. But that is not in our hands. A different approach is then required. Namely, that the authorities and the airports work better together. Then with digitization there are many ways to make a lot of paper and processes easier, etc. And that is the challenge. So certainly, this cooperation, which is necessary to make the entire customer journey, but then really how much you can give as an airline. We'll never be 100 percent green, but it's an important issue. But it has to be followed up or communicated to the extent that it is credible. Credibility per se is not the biggest problem, but rather the approaches to find. That's the biggest problem.

Interviewer: How do you then approach such challenges? How are you trying to solve this?

Interviewee B1: You have to look at which points you can compensate and there is also this CO2 offset. We also work with atmosfair. That's a huge benefit according to the motto so and so much kerosene emissions. We work with startups. Last year the hackathon was completely themed around that. That means, we are constantly looking at what innovations are there, what are the options. It's more like a little puzzle with lots of little elements than one big topic. The sum of the small elements makes it then complete.

Interviewee B2: So constant optimization of processes and products, so to speak.

Interviewer: Do you think these problems or challenges are getting bigger? That it will be more difficult to absorb sustainability. Or will that level off when you work with it?

Interviewee B1: The crisis simply brought some things to a halt. It's just stupid. That of course throws us back. But I think if you have the claim to sell innovations and then just look at what possibilities there are with innovations, it will get you further in the process. We once planned to work with a startup where the entire customer journey could be presented on social media. From home to the airport to the holiday destination and in the taxi, so that you can understand what your carbon footprint is and what you were able offset. That's the way it is. Those are models that already exist. There will be more and more ideas

and innovations. I think you have to look at innovation more than trying to keep up with traditional stories like fuel saving. Then the limit will be reached at some point. But I really believe that these big innovations, which put an airline in a different position, really run through young companies, through startups.

Interviewer: Okay, then we've come to the end of the interview. I have no more questions. But if you have any comments or want to get rid of one or two points, you can still do so now.

Interviewee B1: In January I started a project with the strategy department. It was precisely about sustainability for Company B with all these parts. We can only function as a puzzle.

Interviewee B2: Yes, and you also reach your limits. Like you said before saving kerosene. You can influence this to a certain extent. When you say I'll make the seats or trolleys lighter and points like that. You still have an opportunity to influence that. But what kind of innovations are there on the technical side that we are ultimately driven by aircraft manufacturers. And all such aspects.

Interviewee B1: Yes, these OEMs, a Boeing no longer has any capacity to put into innovation, and things don't look much better at Airbus either.

Interviewer: Do you think that there are external regulations that can also inhibit you in the sustainability process?

Interviewee B1: I don't see what an airline can do in sustainability as a problem of regulations. Ultimately, you have to organize air traffic. And that's just a safety issue. It's more of an investment and too much focus on the cabin and aircraft and the like instead of just thinking "out of the box". As I said, the hackathon was really cool. That would have been fun. And this topic will be taken up again.

Interviewer: Then thank you for your time and I wish you a pleasant day.

Interviewee B1: Thanks also and bye.

Interviewee B2: See you then and thank you.

Interview Company C (English Translation)

10.11.2020

Interviewer: Then, I would start right away. Could you say something about your company in your own words. Who is your company and what does your company do?

Interviewee C: Yes, I've been with the company for almost ten years and have been responsible for sustainability, and I've been in purchasing for almost five years. And that is particularly about the topic of green products. Yes, to further develop sustainable products across the various product groups, but I also have a lot to do with communication. So, in the direction of marketing or what we are communicating to the press and so on about sustainability. I also coordinate this with my colleagues. But the real focus is on sustainable products.

Interviewer: And how important is sustainability in your company?

Interviewee C: For us, this has actually been a very central focus of our corporate strategy for many years. We have belonged to the [parent company group], where the subject is generally regarded quite highly, for ten years. It's part of the company's strategy. We have a four-pillar system in the area of sustainability, which means that we not just somehow have a staff unit that takes care of it, but in addition to this pillar of green products, there is also the pillar of energy, climate and the environment. The colleagues there tend to be more concerned with resource efficiency in the stores. So how energy-saving are we on the road? How can we improve waste management and so on. Then there is the employee pillar, who takes care of it, how can you support employees in the various phases of life they go through, and the social commitment pillar, where the point is that we as a company want to take on even more responsibility. Also, for things that are perhaps important in society and that we also find important. And then this pillar takes care of it. Since I've been here, that's been lived in these four pillars and has been continuously expanded. I think you can see that this is very important to Company C.

Interviewer: What special measures do you take with regard to sustainability?

Interviewee C: Yes, if I focus back to the products now. Basically, we always look at the supply chains or the life cycle of a special product group and first try to find out what the so-

called hotspots are in the supply chain or in the life cycle and try to start there and then make the whole thing better. We also have our own sustainability label, which you may have stumbled upon. This is generally a label for sustainable private label products from the [parent company group]. First and foremost, the approach is then to really look where the challenge from a sustainability point of view lies with any product and what must be done to improve it. It is very important that we have a [sustainability label] advisory board, which then awards it independently, so various NGOs sit on it, such as NABU, consumer initiative, etc. So, we have not given ourselves the label. Yes, and that can be extremely different from product group to product group. So sometimes the social aspects are important when you think about working conditions, in the area of natural stones, for example, that come from China or India or “Fair Trees” Christmas trees is also a topic where the aim is to make the harvest fairer and safer to design. When it comes to other topics, we're more into the area of housing and health. If you then think of paints or floor coverings and so on, then maybe the emissions in the use phase of the product play a role. Then it is more likely to reduce that or in the wood sector is more the issue of the environment, i.e. that forestry is sustainable towards FSC/PFC certification, etc. That always differs greatly from product group to product group. We always really try to find out what the big challenge is. And only when we have really improved that, then we communicate it as sustainable.

Interviewer: Are there any internal measures in the company?

Interviewee C: There are definitely also measures. Digitization is of course an important aspect. Whether it is, for example, that you get the pay slip electronically, where in the past the statement was actually sent to all employees in paper form. We only use the Blue Angel recycled paper internally, e.g. for printouts. There are many measures, especially from this pillar, employees who also deal with them. So, in my department we tend to look towards consumers, but then a lot is done internally.

Interviewer: And what is the current positioning of the company? Can you describe them once?

Interviewee C: We currently have a so-called triple benefit since this year. That means good for me, good for the environment and good for my wallet. The environment is taken up again extremely in this positioning. I would now interpret that in terms of sustainability, this environmental benefit, this triple benefit. The company is really positioning itself even more

strongly in the direction of really taking up this claim, where you can really say it is a central topic for us. And there is always the challenge for us, if we now use this claim, for example in connection with products, that we then always have to prove that it is really better for the environment. We then do this via labels like [sustainability label] or FSC etc. From my point of view, this is extremely important in order not to make yourself vulnerable, as there is of course a lot going in the direction of greenwashing, as many companies naturally try to position themselves somehow. In communication, we have always been very careful to ensure that this can be proven.

Interviewer: Do you have a special brand positioning statement or value proposition?

Interviewee C: The triple benefit will be manifested on the website, I assume. It's more of a communication topic. But that is definitely defined what that means for us.

Interviewer: And you probably have a share of business customers too. So B2B, I assume, are you also active in communication there when it comes to sustainability?

Interviewee C: Actually, we have very few business customers. If so, they might be craft businesses or something. But we're not going in the direction of wholesale or B2B.

Interviewer: Well, it's not really that big of a business field for you.

Interviewee C: No, no.

Interviewer: How do you want customers to perceive Company C? What is the most important thing?

Interviewee C: Well, for me it is important that we ultimately try to do it better for the customers and to become really more sustainable. And for me it is absolutely okay if the customer takes away the fact that we are continuously trying to get better and of course there are a thousand different levers, and that is not the case here either. is completely sustainable for tomorrow. So, if he takes the fact that we're working on it and trying to become more sustainable in as many areas as possible, that's actually enough for me. When you deal with the topic, there are ten other examples for everything that you do better, where you have not done anything yet or where there is still room for improvement. That is why for me the topic of sustainability in general is the message for me that you are easy on the way and try to do it continuously better.

Interviewer: You have already said that the company is already positioning itself sustainably. What do you see as challenges and problems when you try to integrate sustainability into your brand positioning?

Interviewee C: A big challenge is that the customers are not necessarily familiar with all the topics in depth. It can happen that we put a lot of resources into individual projects to improve something in the supply chain, for example, and that the customer must first be told why it is important to pay attention to it. That's just a big challenge, I think. As a company, to take this seriously and really first of all to make it clear to the customer what the challenge is we actually have and what are we doing to make ourselves better. When you think about the natural stones again, for example, we have really improved working conditions in China and India and also made the entire supply chain transparent. But if you ask customers on the street about natural stones, they don't know the challenges in winter. In addition to expanding sustainable products, that is the greatest task of continuously communicating these things to the customer.

Interviewer: So, the communication to the customer is the main problem or the biggest challenge?

Interviewee C: Yes, I think, in general, customers are already sensitive when it comes to greenwashing, etc. I believe that it is also a challenge to get across that you are really serious about it and that you really want to do it and execute it. Since, of course, as I said, every company communicates something on the subject of sustainability. So, I think it's a challenge to convey the seriousness. Then of course you always fight against other characteristics that are important to the customer. In the hardware store sector, for example, proximity is a crucial factor. If I have DIY store X next to me then I don't voluntarily drive ten kilometers further because something is done differently at DIY store Y now. The price is of course also a challenge, because market research institutes always say that customers want to pay more for sustainable products. But in practice it has to prove itself properly. So, don't do it with moon prices that sell sustainable products because they are then not bought. Of course, these are again global challenges that you always have.

Interviewer: And how do you deal with such challenges? How are you trying to solve this? Also, with regard to this greenwashing.

Interviewee C: We have clearly defined that we really want to be credible. With the products first and then also in communication, that we really only want to communicate more sustainably what we can then prove and what is really more sustainable from our point of view. And from my point of view that is actually almost the only way to be believable that you can keep it that way. And on the other hand, you always have to communicate the topic out loud, otherwise it always fades into the background. So, these are actually the two things that you really communicate continuously and loudly and on the other hand really only credible and secure.

Interviewer: And do you see that as something more long-term or if you are already positioning yourself sustainably, perhaps also with the customers, which is already anchored, is it something that you work on all the time? Or will these challenges no longer exist at some point or will they decrease?

Interviewee C: Well, in the next few years I don't see that you could lean back or lean back on the image, of course you have to prove again and again that it is somehow like that and there will be rather more than less challenges in the future. I think that's really something that, if you want to focus as a company on it, you really have to do it continuously.

Interviewer: We have already talked about some measures on the products, how to make them more sustainable. If you set up special measures, does the impulse come more from market trends or customer concerns? Or is that more of an internal incentive?

Interviewee C: That is also a very different balance. Sometimes it can be the customers. We also notice when topics become stronger such as organic or something, what has now spilled over from the food sector into the hardware store. You notice that the demand is increasing, then of course you see for yourself that the product ranges are being expanded further. Sometimes the impulses come from outside, from NGOs or something like that, who communicate any new scientific findings to us, which we then take as an opportunity to check the range. But we also have a strong internal driver to keep bringing new products to the markets, e.g. cover supply chains and so on. This is basically a triad of customers and really external stakeholders, NGOs, science and so on, but also the internal drive to constantly address new topics.

Interviewer: Do you sometimes get the feeling with such measures that there are also external challenges? So, with regard to, let's say, special political decisions, special rules that

you have to adhere to as a company, that you are prevented from being more sustainable. Or is that rather not the topic?

Interviewee C: No, I can't think of an example. You can tell that politics is moving more and more in that direction. If you now see this legislation on the subject of packaging, for example, that the requirements of the Packaging Act are being tightened or to focus on the subject of climate change. That more and more laws and so on are geared towards climate change and the EU's climate strategy and so on. Or if you think of us as a supply chain law, which should come soon. But that's more in the direction of sustainability, simply more transparency in the supply chains. Companies should take on more responsibility. That is more of a driver for the topic, I think. But I don't think I can think of any example that we are being inhibited by it.

Interviewer: And you are now the company's Sustainability Manager. That was right?

Interviewee C: Exactly. With the focus on the products.

Interviewer: How big is your department? How many people work directly in that department?

Interviewee C: We are three colleagues in this department. But we still have two colleagues in our plant division who are also dealing with the topic. And that is now really only for the products. As I said, these pillars of sustainability are distributed throughout the company and colleagues from other departments are still working on them. Since we belong to the [parent company group], you are in contact with your colleagues. Also works on topics together. You have a lot of interfaces.

Interviewer: Then we are now at the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Interviewee C: I think it's a good topic and a nice topic for a master's thesis. As I said, I think the topic has become more important over the years and now you can see that it really is.

Interviewer: Yes, that's right. Then thank you very much for your time and I wish you a nice afternoon.

Interviewee C: Thank you. You are welcome. I wish you that too.

Interview Company D (English Translation)

30.10.2020

Interviewer: Can you tell me in your own words what your company does?

Interviewee D: The company is called Company D and deals in the broadest sense with new audio solutions. I used to work in executive positions on the radio for a long time and got to know all sorts of media genres. Last year, through friends I met again, I got the idea: We create a company for audio solutions and essentially podcasts too because the podcast is a very sustainable medium in the end. I'll be happy to come back to why this is so later. But we don't just do podcasts, we've also developed audio formats that we believe make sense in terms of usage today. Of course, we also come from marketing. So, I'm actually a marketing person and so is my team. But everything that you want to market is much better when you look at it from the usage side. Quite simply, because you can then get out the USPs for the respective customer much better. An example would be that we offer newsletters audibly, i.e., audio newsletters. So far, newsletters have been sent digitally, and very few are being printed out and sent by post. So e.g., my tax advisor is still sending me his monthly briefing on 20 pages, which when I receive it ends up in the paper bin. And the problem is that user behavior, not a problem for us rather the advantage for us, is developing more strongly in these audio areas. People read less and less because they get more and more information. People or humans work very intensively in the office and are forced to read a lot at work and are actually happy when something is audibly presented to them. In this respect, we have developed formats such as audio newsletters and audio presentations. Why does a presentation always have to be a PowerPoint presentation? You can also present your company audibly, with funny voices, with good speakers. We develop and sell all of this and such formats. That's actually a little bit about it, behind it. It has now taken us six months for an IT solution and for development. It's a solution that lifts the podcasts we produce for our companies out of the relatively anonymous world of Spotify and Apple Podcast and Google Podcast. These platforms are in themselves small streaming services, but you have to know the name of the podcast that you are looking for or need. You have to enter topics. And since the Spotify search engine does not work like a Google search engine as an example, but actually only finds things that you know, different levels are delivered as a result, e.g., music, playlists, albums or podcasts. We take that out of these search engine algorithms of

the streaming services and put it on our own platform on the largest search engine in the world, Google, and position a podcast in the search engine via SEO using various keywords that we take out of the podcast texts as building blocks. Then we program the landing page so that when you enter certain search terms, e.g., if you enter “Bafög” or “KfW Student Loan”, you will quickly come to our podcast, which we made for [a bank]. And with this, the company positions itself compared to other banks, which of course also offer similar things, but afterwards significantly better. So, all of these are things that we ultimately develop.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. And how important is sustainability in your company?

Interviewee D: Sustainability is a very strong umbrella term. You can define sustainability from the top down to the smallest element. As the name of Company D suggests, it actually has a completely sustainable character. The formats that we develop in the podcast area are sustainable in that, as I said, user behavior is very much taken into account, but the focus is also essentially on the listener's added value. So, we develop e.g., formats for recycling companies that explain to people which garbage actually goes into which bin and why or how do I make cosmetics myself. But also, everything else in the recycling area. Why does a company recycle? Or e.g., we have developed a format for gold, but not gold primarily as a sales tool. So, don't buy gold and you'll be happy, we rather tell the story of gold. Why was there this gold rush in America back then? What do currencies have to do with gold in interaction? What if the stock markets rise or fall? How does gold relate to this? Does it make sense to keep gold bars at home or in a locker? All such topics are sustainable in that they offer the listener added value. This is the challenge we made.

Interviewer: And you said that sustainability is thematically dealt with in the podcasts. Are there any other measures that you as a company are taking with regard to sustainability?

Interviewee D: So, we have e.g., our entire bookkeeping switched to an online system so that we no longer have to print out any invoices at all, the conventional thing that was done in the past. We did it that way at the beginning. You get an invoice or write an invoice. Then you print them out. You can simply attach invoices as PDF to an email. But there are still enough companies that ultimately send invoices through the post. We have done this with almost all of our service providers and all of our partners, which we have changed, including the tax office, so that we ask them to do everything in digital form and work with one system. This is called "DATEV Company Online". I will tell you that here in particular it is one of the

largest, if not one of the great monopolists in the tax system. And they offer a system for companies where you can link all the system's invoices to your bank account. So, it is a bit time-consuming at the beginning because you first have to inform the bank that you are participating in a procedure with DATEV. They know that, but then they link it. That means you can still pay all your bills online, but you don't have to print out bills, send bills or print out bills for the tax advisor so that he can use them again. So, in that respect we have actually done away with any form of paper printing. That's why we make all presentations ourselves in an auditory form. So, we produce audio designs and products as a presentation and also go into face to face presentations that have now subsided a bit due to Corona. But otherwise, we always go into presentations with an auditory approach and no longer distribute handouts, as it used to be, I know that. Everyone then has a PowerPoint presentation on the table. Let's stop doing that because it just doesn't make sense.

Interviewer: Okay, I see. And how is your company positioned, how would you like to be perceived?

Interviewee D: First and foremost, because of the resurgent fascination with hearing and the podcast ... Our business model is relatively unique. There are few companies that have this approach, from conception to production, distribution and a marketing tool, to design the whole topic of podcasts for companies. Companies either do their own podcasts because they simply have a strong PR or communications department, but they also have little idea because they never get out of their own circle. And we? We are practically outside of every company and consider the company completely neutrally and position ourselves as a partner, as a service provider for the company with the corresponding know-how. And this model exists. So, I watch the market every day. There are one, two, three, four companies that do it that way. But they are more production-controlled. That means you go there with the podcast concept and produce this podcast there or use someone's studio or look for someone to pick out speakers for you. We offer that too. But that is only a part of our overall service, so that we see ourselves as a 360-degree service provider and position ourselves there. We only use Google as a platform. So, we also have communication channels through our homepage. You can also write to us if you have any questions or want an offer or whatever. But if so, then everything digitally.

Interviewer: And do you have some kind of positioning statement or a value proposition?

Interviewee D: We have only been around for a year. And we are now in the process of holding talks for many new projects next year. So, the business is starting to boom, because of course people are discovering podcasting for themselves even in Corona times and saying I have to discover new communication channels in order to reach my customers. But we would only be able to do the positioning in the next steps.

Interviewer: And are you planning to consciously include the topic of ecological sustainability in your positioning? Or is that more something that happens around it and does not necessarily go into the special positioning?

Interviewee D: If we were to do that, it would be a very complex line of argument in this area. I also often think about what to do and to make greater use of this, especially due to the name of the company. But it's incredibly difficult because it's so complex. I'll give you an example, if you think about how badly publishers, I mean newspaper publishers, how badly they are today, and when you think about it, why is that? Then that's the way it is, because in the end the publisher did not understand it and I mean the big publishers too. So, we're talking about a change process that we're going through right now. And the change process is faster for one person and slower for another. But in any case, in my opinion, we are in a short to medium-term change process of at least ten years until people understand this. So, a change is e.g., the field of electric mobility. We also produce a podcast for a magazine. It's all about electric mobility. So that's all about sustainable driving. But back to the publishers. The publishers have not understood how they can ultimately better position their journalistic and editorial power, which they certainly have, in relation to the market. You only know old models; the podcast has a very large reach. All the models that the publishers have ultimately built up in the digital sector are the subscription models. They want you to pay 99 cents for an article if you want to read it. But if you're probably digging a little further behind the scenes with Google, you can get that for free from another provider. In other words, the industry is actually cannibalizing itself permanently and will therefore fail. So, the big publishers are dying. "Springer" will survive, because "Springer" positioned itself digitally very strongly years ago. But "Spiegel" and so on will eventually get into a very big problem. And of course, we're talking about different target groups. They can already grasp the whole topic in a much more sustainable way by actually wanting to link market power, journalism and editing with the market power of marketing. Today a salesman at a publishing house goes to a customer and sells them or continues to try to sell them an ad. At best a banner on the homepage or in the newspaper. But that's not what the customer wants. Today's

customers want other digital solutions. And they also want editorials. He wants content. He wants what he actually does for a living. He wants his company and his brand to be presented in depth. He doesn't just want a pure history of the offer, but ultimately wants the whole thing as a holistic solution. And that's what a change process is all about. People also understand many things better when they are informed holistically. But a publisher no longer offers that. A publisher is not sustainable at this point either. They can tell a lot there too. They just aren't. And nobody is buying a publisher today. So even one euro is too much, because the losses that you incur every year with a publisher are immense. This is an example from our world that we see every day and of course that is also a bit of competition from us, but again not because they do not go actively, like we do, with certain concepts, including sustainable concepts, to the customer. They are still selling old, established, learned, analog, partly in hybrid analog digital packages, but these do not work successfully.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. That is understandable. And if you look at your company now, what do you think, what are the greatest challenges and problems with regard to the integration of this ecological sustainability?

Interviewee D: Good question, so if we look at it ecologically, we are already sustainable with our almost one hundred percent digital approach. The question that should also be asked is what other sustainable measures we could use in the company. One could e.g., of course, think about buying a hybrid company vehicle or maybe organizing the lunch breaks differently or using other things. But that is, I believe, very detailed. Afterwards it becomes so fragmented that in the end the question of whether it will bring anything, but in itself, given the company's orientation with the purely digital approach, one can of course argue about whether a podcast is more sustainable than a printed article because energy is also required here. For example, electricity and whatever. You could of course offset that against each other. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that we would do better than a publisher.

Interviewer: But are you actively looking, in your daily business, for opportunities to become more sustainable?

Interviewee D: If there were any approaches to this, or if there are any cooperation partners that we have here, we would always do that. The problem is, of course, that this continues to get lost in daily business. So that's the reason for the change process, which in my opinion takes years. Things are going faster in some industries and a little slower in others. I think

we are quite far with ourselves in this change process. So, when I look at other companies, we're actually very far. And the problem is, if you have the feeling that you are further than others, it leads to the fact that you sometimes lean back a little and say, I'll let the others catch up a bit now to see what's up because of new possibilities. And our world is so fast-paced today that almost every week there is actually a new opportunity to make sustainable ecological changes. The only question here is how practical will it be in terms of implementation afterwards? And does it actually have the desired effect? Or was it more effective in the past?

Interviewer: How do you deal with that? So how do you counteract this?

Interviewee D: Well, as I said, I come from marketing. As a marketer, you never have a chance to sit back and relax. Because the products we offer do not sell by themselves, they have to be actively sold and designed. And be provided with marketing tools. For this reason alone, leaning back is not possible for us. And in this respect, we will always look where there are opportunities to act sustainably. For example, the Corona time is actually a blessing and a curse for us at the same time, because we no longer have to meet our interview partners, whom we process in a podcast or whom we let have their say, in person; but we will never record any video conferences via Zoom or Teams or Blue Jeans or whatever, because the quality is poor. This means that we send our transmission technology to the respective location of the interview partner and then always record an interview and then he sends it back. Of course, there will always be CO₂ emissions, even with the vehicle that drives the device back and forth. But we still avoid driving it back and forth personally. So that's just keeping the balance. That is the problem with sustainability. You try to be sustainable yourself, but the system does not yet allow it 100 percent.

Interviewer: Do you think that it will be more difficult or even more complex to be sustainable in the future?

Interviewee D: As I said, we are relatively sustainable, and others are not. Others try. But I think that sometimes, as I understand it, it is the politics that are driven by this thought of demanding too much from people and also from companies. There are reasons why carmakers in Germany cannot yet build an electric car like Tesla. There are reasons for why that is. It's not as if they couldn't do it. The German engineering skill is certainly further on. If you look at the cars that they have now developed, then they are always much nicer than

Tesla's and probably also more effective. But to stick with the example, it was a pioneer. It will be incredibly difficult to apply this pioneering role to all companies. And that's why there are smaller sustainability benchmarks for each individual area. And they also have to be accessible. It makes no sense to talk about phasing out coal in 2030 or 2035 if, in the end, you are in a European network in the electricity supply sector and the other countries do not follow. That's why it doesn't make any sense afterwards. And then, in the end, this European idea comes up, which I share and which I also like. You have to give the people, the people outside, and it is in my opinion much easier for young people than older people, the time to internalize and follow along and not use the market as a yardstick, but ultimately the people as a yardstick, to which the market would have to subordinate. But right now, it's a bit shifted the other way round. At the moment you are trying to subordinate people to the market. I think that's very difficult because there are those Corona idiots who are now also noticeable who are of the opinion that all of this is nonsense, and all of this is conspiracy theories. This arises from the fact that in the end you keep chewing on people a little too much or have a good influence in the media too.

Interviewer: Do you think that the company is getting in its own way to become more sustainable on the subject? Or that this comes more from external influences, such as Politics or media?

Interviewee D: I think e.g., the party "The Greens" is an interesting party that is still very important today. I come from a "CDU" household but have always chosen "CDU Green". That is actually an option for the next federal election. Why am I telling this? Because in the end, "The Greens" are always the ones who actually initiate it. If there wasn't a party like "The Greens" worldwide, then we would probably still be living in the Stone Age somewhere today. At least in thought. And so, I always found this approach important. The question is always with what radicalism you approach it or with what intensity, with what intensity you communicate something like this and beat it into people. I think the more moderate you do it and the more logically you do it and the more you show people analogies and say look, this is what you did earlier, that led to it, and look, this is the solution that we offer you today, the better it is. You have to come from solutions and not end up lifting your finger all the time. That is what politics like to do to raise the finger and point out a grievance. In the end, you have to point out the grievance, but also present a solution. And then it works too.

Interviewer: Yes, then we are at the end of the interview. Is there anything else you want to mention?

Interviewee D: Not really. I think I've said enough.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time and I wish you a nice afternoon.

Interviewee D: Thank you, I was happy to do that. All the best to you.

Interview Company E (English Translation)

16.11.2020

Interviewer: Yes, we can start right away. Could you describe what your company does in your own words. Who are you?

Interviewee E: Sure, yes. So, Company E, as you know, is a Spanish family business, active in all aspects of logistics. That means both the transport part in the sense of a traditional forwarding agency, but also in the areas of storage. What we call industrial services is actually mainly the assembly of vehicle parts, so a traditional automotive supplier in that aspect and a smaller part of our business also includes air freight, international sea freight, all of these topics. We are now represented in 16 countries worldwide, originally from Spain, but we are also very strong in Germany through the acquisition of [Company X], for which I am responsible. And at the same time, we have grown very strongly in the last few years overseas, in the USA, in South America and so little by little we are moving further into other countries. Perhaps moreover: Traditionally we are now very connected to the automotive industry, as I said, partly as a possible parts supplier, but mainly in logistics, which accounts for around 70 percent of our business. The rest is then retail, consumer goods, electronics, everything combined.

Interviewer: How important is sustainability in your company?

Interviewee E: I would say that if you look at the last few years, then the status has risen very dramatically in the priority scale. So, with us. On the one hand, of course, also driven by customers who are placing ever higher demands. Especially in a business like us, where we drive a lot through world history in traditional trucks, this is a point that can no longer be neglected. That's why it's very high on our agenda and actually plays a role in all areas. On the one hand, we are now on the - I think - very good path of measuring our entire footprint in the first place. That is the first step towards the accreditation, to see where we are, in order to then possibly be able to present reduction results in the next few years or even now and in the past.

Interviewer: And what exact measures have you already taken? What is the company doing in terms of sustainability?

Interviewee E: We can put something together, so I can also send you some additional information. I don't know if you've seen that: You can also download the Corporate Social Responsibility Report from our website. Everything is then described in the last detail. By and large, our main focus is actually on reducing emissions from the truck fleet. So, we're talking about around 3,000 trucks that we actively operate, either through our own fleet or through subcontractors. And we actually rely on several points of view there. On the one hand, it is about tackling this technologically, and we then look at it or we have developed it ourselves, for example in the system that directly supports the driver in driving as environmentally friendly as possible. This means that the route is then calculated, now no longer just according to time and according to, for example the traffic situation or something else, but also according to the profile, for example. Which gradients are there, which speed is the ideal opener for driving in an environmentally friendly way? These are our own systems that we develop and then use on the traditional truck ride as we know it. Another big point for us is switching to a generally more environmentally friendly fleet. In our sector there are, for example, so-called mega liners, which can then transport more volume and can then be operated in a more environmentally friendly way. In the further future this will develop with electric drives, hydrogen drives. In other words, everything that is still in the development phase, so to speak, that has no real impact yet, but that will certainly come in the next few years. But where the customers insist that this happens as quickly as possible. Of course, it's not always that easy to implement. If you imagine now, we of course drive a lot between Spain and Germany, for example. You can't just operate an electric truck there, but, for example, within a country where short routes have to be covered, that's more of a possibility. We have all of this on the agenda and we are actively following it. The third point I would make is simply the energy consumption that causes our core operations. For example, we now have green energy in our head office in Spain. The switch is initiated here for the company vehicle fleet, which mainly consists of electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles and other environmentally friendly drives. This is all a process that has been driven for the last few years and which is continuously developing in the importance of the one we are seeing. For me, these are the key points that we are currently pursuing.

Interviewer: And how is your company currently positioned?

Interviewee E: How do we position ourselves? One can say that we are already actively emphasizing our environmental pioneering role. So, like I mentioned earlier. Nowadays this is the be-all and end-all when it comes to developing customer relationships, including

acquiring new customers. You won't get any further without being well positioned. In the meantime, these are really core criteria that every supplier must meet, especially in the automotive sector. The points that I have just mentioned or there are certainly umpteen other smaller initiatives that we are running. We focus on all of this so that we position ourselves towards customers, employees and all stakeholders.

Interviewer: And do you have a positioning statement as a company? Or is that kept open?

Interviewee E: No, we have already defined that. You can also see that with us. Let me have a look. Of course, I can't recall it by heart. So, we have basically split it up here in mission statement, value statement, etc., as you know it. What we say as our mission is "create value in a sustainable manner". You can have a look at it on our website. A few points are broken down into sub-points, but what we call sustainable naturally also has an effect on the environment, on posterity. And that this is now always formulated in concrete terms, so that is part of the company philosophy.

Interviewer: What problems or challenges arise with such an integration? You position yourself sustainably. What are the problems and challenges that arise in order to position yourself sustainably?

Interviewee E: Well, it's just a fine line, there is always a lot of marketing involved with such topics, so that it really has to be firmly anchored in the daily mindset of the employees so that it is really implemented as it is from above. It's not always easy. In a long-established business like ours, there is already a big change behind it. However, this change is sometimes associated with enormous costs. When I see now, when we look at 2020, we can all see that unforeseen events can occur that have a huge effect on the development of business activities and on such topics then also to keep the focus or to stick to the path, which we have adopted, of course, requires a certain steadfastness and that is what we do - when I speak for our company - it is also lived. This is also specified from the very top, i.e., by the owners. There is no deviation from now in a crisis situation I say. In principle, however, these are all topics that of course always contribute to the fact that the focus may be somewhere else, if we naturally have to send employees on short-time work and the profits break down, then the environmental concern may also be of secondary importance in people's minds. Getting that in again and again is of course a challenge. But where I have to say that, in my opinion, we have managed very well so far, and I am sure that we can remain

true to our goal this year as well. So, for me that is the basic problem that arises in such projects. Which of course the results don't necessarily see directly positive in the result, but probably have to plan a little in the other direction first.

Interviewer: How exactly do you approach these issues? How are you trying to solve this?

Interviewee E: Well, for me, the way I perceive it is not a real problem. So, this idea of environmental awareness or social corporate responsibility in general is already very well anchored in us. And as I said, this comes up again and again in day-to-day business and in relationships with customers. Well, we are already at a point in my opinion in 2020, where we have internalized the fact that this has to go on. But in the basic principle it is something that has to be lived from above. But that doesn't work if we now say that you do a little sustainability here and something like that here. Then five years later I ask: And where are we now? There is then a bit of traction and, as I said, that has become part of our philosophy and it will be that way also lived that way.

Interviewer: Do you think that there will be more challenges later on in this subject? Or is it more like that, if you have already positioned yourself sustainably and have integrated that relatively well, that it becomes easier?

Interviewee E: Well, I assume that if you have implemented the preparatory work consistently in recent years and have relied on this path, that you can and will benefit from it in the long term. The development will get faster and faster, the technology above all will develop significantly further in the next ten years from what we are seeing now. No matter what we can imagine, especially in our area. But it is clear that if you have not started now, you are very late to jump on the bandwagon. We are sure here that it is, as there is no turning back. So that's clear. And as I said, the customers we work with simply expect at least a minimum level of commitment here too, and that won't turn the other way. And I am already assuming that the work that we have put into this so far and the developments that we have initiated will be very well positioned, and that it will be easier for us than for many competitors.

Interviewer: And the idea of sustainability, is it more driven by the customer? Are you looking at trends or is that something that comes from the inside, from the company's strategy?

Interviewee E: So, both go hand in hand. On the one hand, there are of course external expectations that clearly exist. There is of course a wide range, there are customers who really work a lot with global players, for example with Volkswagen, and with Coca-Cola too. And these are simply companies that have expectations that if they do not achieve them, then they will no longer be selected. All of this is compulsory, if you want to be successful there, you have to invest in the direction and position yourself. And at the same time, it is. Let's say as background information: In recent years, we have changed from an owner-managed company to a corporation, where the family then stays out of the operational business, but still naturally brings in the strategy and their ideas. This means that from our top management level, sustainable development is the top priority and, of course, being profitable is clear, but without the development in sustainability areas it simply doesn't work anymore. From my point of view for our company, this is clearly driven by this topic on both sides.

Interviewer: And if you look at external factors like that, political decisions, any rules that have to be observed in your industry, do you see these more as inhibiting factors to become more sustainable or is there already a lot of support?

Interviewee E: For the logistics industry in general, I see it as an external push, I'll say. For myself, I haven't seen a huge effect from it yet, because we're trying to be one step further than the rest anyway. That means, I'm assuming that we can maintain that, that we don't really benefit from external influences as far as they are dependent. Of course, you know what's going to happen there, but at the moment I don't really see anything. That's actually a minor factor. I would say.

Interviewer: All right. Then that's it. Is there anything else you want to add? Any comments? What else can you think of?

Interviewee E: Actually, I think I've outlined that roughly. If that is enough of the details for you, we can leave it at that. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Then I could really find out the details of where we are right now. But I would leave that to them. Unfortunately, that's actually all I have to report for now.

Interviewer: Yes, that was definitely revealing. Thanks for your time.

Interviewee E: You're welcome.