Strategic marketing with independent project, 15 credits

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ABSTRACT

Title: Sustainability marketing communication

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Purpose of the study: Understand how the companies build their communication message to achieve their sustainable positioning.

Research Question: How today’s companies integrate sustainability in their communication message to position themselves as a sustainable company?

Method: This study uses a qualitative approach that analyses 3 different case studies of business to consumer (B2C) companies. The empirical data have been collected with a content analysis of the companies’ communication activities.

Results and Recommendations: This study shows how it is important for companies to communicate about their sustainable activities and values, to be relevant, transparent and credible towards the target. This can be done by using communication channels in an integrated way and avoiding negative appeals in the message content.

Keywords: Sustainability Marketing Communication, Sustainability, Message content, Promotion mix.
CONTENT

I- INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................ 1
  I.1. BACKGROUND ...................................................................................................................................... 1
  I.2. PROBLEM IDENTIFIED .......................................................................................................................... 1
  I.3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY ..................................................................................................................... 2
  I.4. RESEARCH QUESTION ........................................................................................................................... 2
  I.5. THESIS’S SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS .............................................................................................. 2

II- FRAME OF REFERENCES ......................................................................................................................... 4
  II.1. SUSTAINABILITY ................................................................................................................................. 4
  II.2. THE COMMUNICATION IN THE MARKETING MIX ............................................................................. 4
  II.3. THE MESSAGE CONTENT AND THE POSITIONING ........................................................................... 5
    a) Message and appeals .............................................................................................................................. 5
    b) Positioning ........................................................................................................................................... 5
  II.4. SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING COMMUNICATION ......................................................................... 6
  II.5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION WITH THE TOOLS OF THE PROMOTION MIX .................... 7
    a) Advertising ........................................................................................................................................ 7
    b) Public relations and third-party verification ....................................................................................... 8
    c) Sales promotion ................................................................................................................................ 9
    d) Personal selling ................................................................................................................................... 9
    e) Direct marketing ................................................................................................................................ 9
  II.6. BARRIERS AND RISKS ....................................................................................................................... 10

III- METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................................................................... 12
  III.1. METHOD USED ................................................................................................................................ 12
  III.2. TYPE OF RESEARCH ......................................................................................................................... 13
  III.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLE ............................................................................................................. 13
  III.4. INSTRUMENT TO COLLECT DATA .................................................................................................... 14

IV- COLLECTION OF EMPIRICAL DATA ..................................................................................................... 16
  IV.1. NATURA, THE BRAZILIAN COMPANY FOR COSMETICS .............................................................. 16
  IV.2. BIOCOOP: THE FRENCH STORE CHAIN FOR ORGANIC FOOD .................................................. 20
  IV.3. INNOCENT: THE ENGLISH FIRM FOR NATURAL BEVERAGES ..................................................... 22

V- ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL DATA .......................................................................................................... 25
  V.1. THE COMPANIES’ POSITIONING AND MESSAGE CONTENT ........................................................... 25
  V.2. THE USE OF PROMOTION MIX’S TOOLS ......................................................................................... 26
  V.3. BARRIERS AND RISKS ....................................................................................................................... 29

VI- CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................................... 30
VI.1. SUMMARY OF CENTRAL CONCLUSION RELATED TO PROBLEM DISCUSSION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ................................................................. 30
VI.2. IMPLICATIONS .......................................................................................... 30
VI.3. FUTHER STUDIES ...................................................................................... 31
REFERENCES .................................................................................................. 32
ANNEXES ........................................................................................................... 33
I- INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter presents a background regarding sustainability, introducing the responsibility of companies, marketing and communication. This will result in the identified problem, the purpose of the study, the research question and finally in the delimitations.

I.1. BACKGROUND

During the last century, the priority of companies and governments was the growth. It was thought that this growth would improve the quality of life of everybody in the world. However, it was not the case and this growth has created more inequality between people on the planet and dramatic effects on the environment (Emery, 2011). The main challenge of our century is to provide an economic growth sufficient to satisfy the needs of the entire world’s population while preserving the environment in a way that it allows the future populations to satisfy their own needs (Laszlo, 2010).

In the today’s society, sustainability is becoming part of everyday consciousness of the consumers, governments and of the businesses which are taking a lot of measures on their own (Emery, 2011). Trojanowski (2014) explains that the companies produce the goods in order to meet the growing needs of the population, and so in return, increase the demand for raw material needed to produce specific product. Lot of people see the big firms and marketing as dangerous for the wellbeing of the society and even responsible for the different problems such as the poverty, the inequality and the pollution (Laszlo, 2010). The influence of the society implies lot of responsibilities for the companies in their development, management, marketing and communication activities. In this way, governments and civil societies recognize the importance of concretely supporting and helping companies to engage them towards sustainable development (United Nations Environment Programme, 2007).

I.2. PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

Barry Emery (2011), shows that there is a contradiction between marketing and sustainability. Indeed, marketing encourages consumption and this overconsumption has caused the problems we have today. John Grant (2007) agrees with that and adds that it is very hard to be credible in a society where people are very sceptical about marketing claims. Green issues want you to consume less and marketing wants you to consume more. However, both authors agree that marketing plays a key role because it has the power to influence all the shareholders in a company and can help to sell new lifestyle ideas. Moreover, Tomasz Trojanowski (2014) says that the aim of marketing is to satisfy human and psychological needs, that is why marketing mix strategies implemented have an important role in making our society more sustainable. Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012), agree with this theory and add that marketing is the interface between the business and the society.

According to United Nations Environment Programme, 2007, lot of public and private actors have already started to invest themselves in sustainability and, for them, the issues of sustainability are also issues of communication. Tomasz Trojanowski, (2014) says that the communication toward buyers has a key role in reaching the company’s objectives such as informing, communicate and selling.
Today lot of companies are not seeing the sustainability as a cost but more as an opportunity or a sustainable advantage (Laszlo, 2010). To reach their target with a sustainable communication, companies must position themselves and convey a sustainable message towards them (Trojanowski, 2014).

According to Barry Emery (2011) marketing communications for sustainability achieve four main objectives. The first one is to change everybody’s life style towards a more sustainable behaviour. Then, it is to make the customers buy in a more responsible and sustainable way. The third one is to inform the stakeholders about the commitment of all the private and public organizations which are involved in sustainable development. Finally, the last one is to convince the customers to buy specific products or services because they have sustainable features.

The United Nations Environment Programme, (2007) explains that there are four main practices for companies who want to do sustainable communication. Indeed, there are the corporate communication which are the brand or company image and reputation, the green marketing about the product, the social marketing to change the customers behaviour and the responsible marketing which are the codes of conduct for communication.

However, Barry Emery (2011) shows there are some brakes for companies to achieve behaviour changes with sustainable communication. In fact, the author explains that despite of the increasing number of sustainable campaigns these ones have still a weak impact on customers behaviour.

Nevertheless, one of the main problem seems to be the use of green washing, which has become very used in the 21st century and can damage permanently a brand reputation (Barry Emery 2011). In fact, the green washing is a big risk for companies doing sustainable communication and it can cause huge reputational damages and reduce the stakeholder goodwill. (Laasch and Conaway, 2014).

I.3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To inform and influence the customers towards a sustainable development the companies need to build a relevant message. Indeed, it seems to be a lack of trust from the customers and a lack of effectiveness of sustainable marketing communication.

The purpose of my study is to understand how the companies build their communication message to achieve their sustainable positioning. To achieve this, we need to discuss the promotion means the companies use and how they use them for sustainability marketing communication.

I.4. RESEARCH QUESTION

How today’s companies integrate sustainability in their communication message to position themselves as a sustainable company?

I.5. THESIS’S SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS
In order to be able to respond to my research question, I have focused my study on the last twenty years which it is the moment when societies have started to be concerned about sustainable issues. Then, I concentrated my researches around the fourth’s P of the marketing mix which is the promotion and around the message content the companies build and communicate. That is why I did not talk about product, price and place in my study. In this way, what I needed to focus on was how companies build their message content to communicate about sustainability and so which tools of the communication mix to they used achieve their objectives. What we need to understand is also what seems to better work and which mistakes should be avoided when doing sustainability communication.

During this study, I have used mainly “sustainability marketing communication” rather than “sustainable”. Indeed, sustainable can be used as the adjective to mean durable, which can be disconcerting.

I have only observed the companies’ point of view and not the one of customers for my study. Indeed, I did not talk about how customers receive the message but how companies implement it. For that, I used a qualitative approach that analyses 3 different case studies of business to consumer (B2C) companies, all belonging all to the consumer goods’ sector.

To summarize, I have collected information about what the companies were doing to position themselves as sustainable, in terms of message content, communication campaign and communication mix tools.
II- FRAME OF REFERENCES

This chapter will present the theoretical framework, relevant for my study and will provide to
the reader some knowledge regarding the discussed topic. This knowledge will be linked to
the results of the research and analysed in the following parts. The theories will be presented
in the following order: Sustainability, the communication in the marketing mix, the message
content and the positioning, the sustainable marketing communication, the tools of marketing
mix for sustainable communication and the barriers and risks the company can meet.

II.1. SUSTAINABILITY

According to the WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1990),
the definition for sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the pre-
sent without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sust-
tainable development is « a journey towards a more ecologically oriented and socially equi-
table word” (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

To become more sustainable, a society needs to reduce its global footprint which is the impact
of human activities measured in terms of the area of biologically productive land and water
required to produce the goods consumed and to assimilate the wastes generated (WWF -
World Wild Life Funds, 2016). The key principles of sustainability are the need to maintain a
healthy and sustainable environment, fair distribution of wealth between people, a long-time
perspective and a global environmentalism (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012) explain that sustainability has three interrelated di-
mensions which are environmental, social and economic. If we transfer these dimensions to
the business context, we can speak about the Triple Bottom Line, which means we can eval-
uate the sustainable performances of a company by these three angles (Elkington, 1997).

II.2. THE COMMUNICATION IN THE MARKETING MIX

To influence the buyer’s response, the firm can use the marketing mix which is a set
of controllable variables. These variables are called the 4’P’s: product, price, place, promotion
(McCarthy 1960).

The last one, the promotion is the communication policy choose by the marketing. Peter
Doyle and Philip Stern (2006), define marketing communication by the process of transmitting
messages with the objective of making the products or services attractive to target audiences.
They explain that the different tool a company can use for its communication is called the
promotion-mix and it covers media advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, public re-
lation and sales promotions.

According to Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012), advertising is the paid placement of
messages in a variety of media; personal selling is the face-to-face communication with the
goal of persuading a customer to make a purchase; direct marketing is the mean with which
the marketing message is delivered straight to customer through individually accessed media
such as phone, mail or internet; public relation covers the activities designed to generate commercially favourable publicity or messages, and sales promotion represent the activities designed to stimulate sales in a short term.

II.3. THE MESSAGE CONTENT AND THE POSITIONING

a) Message and appeals

Communication is defined as the process of sending and receiving messages. However, it is effective only when the message is understood and when it encourages the receiver to act or to change its way of thinking (Bovée, Thill and Schatzman, 2004).

The author Christopher Fill (2016), shows that messages which have always relevant and meaningful content are more likely to have a positive influence on the purchase decision making. The message content allows positioning and provides a mean by which individuals perceived value. Green marketing requires to build messages based on ethical arguments that show the qualities of a product (The United Nations Environment Programme, 2007). Trojanowski (2014), adds that to communicate a sustainable message, a company must use materials and equipment which do not impact the social and environmental environment. Every marketing messages use appeal to engage the target and motivate it to respond. There can be noticed three types of appeals: rational, emotional and moral. Rational appeals target the customer self-interest for sustainability with benefits like healthier or more economical; the emotional appeals are using feelings to communicate, and moral appeals emphasize the sense of right and wrong (Belz and Peattie, 2012). It has been demonstrated that it is not working to use guilt or fear appeals for sustainability communication. Marketers should emphasize the product’s benefits instead of negative guilted-based messages, give a positive self-image for the customer and being informative but also interactive, playful and entertaining (Ludwig, Hilborn and Walters, 1993). In fact, people respond better to add that put sustainability in a common sense rather than political or moral context. Finally, it is better to use appropriate humour and sense of collective effort rather than guilt empathic and to use emotional rather than technical words (Pauly, 2009). Advertising must use rational appeals or emotional appeals or both, to influence audiences’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours with respect to sustainability (Martin and Schouten, 2012).

The most powerful advertising campaigns are those that tell a compelling story that encourages retelling, especially when the story is appreciated and is repeated by customers. We speak about storytelling and it especially works when doing sustainable communication. (Martin and Schouten, 2012). Storytelling involves getting to a single insight that interprets the brand and makes a personal connection. Many advertisers use this new format which is different to “hard sell” methods as it enables the customer to draw its own vision about the product benefits (Clow and Baack, 2016).

b) Positioning
The positioning refers to the competitive position that a product or a company occupies on the market and in the minds of consumers in comparison to its competitors. Positioning sustainable products in the minds of customers aims at gaining competitive advantage (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

The challenge for marketers when they want to position as sustainable is to know if the product’s competitive advantage in terms of ecological and social performances, should be communicated to customers and if it more important or not to communicate about the product performances and price. The authors distinguish four options for positioning sustainable products.

- Focus on the social and environmental performances instead of individual benefits for customers
- Put an equal emphasis on performance, price and sustainable aspects
- Communicate the socio-ecological value added as an integral part of the product quality
- Not communicate about the social and environmental benefits

II.4. SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING COMMUNICATION

We call sustainability marketing a process in which all the activities are designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges aimed to satisfy human needs or wants, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment” (Polonsky, 1994). The six keys elements of sustainability marketing are socio-ecological problems, consumer behaviour, sustainability marketing values and objectives, sustainability marketing strategies, sustainability marketing mix and sustainability marketing transformations (Belz, and Peattie, 2012).

We can also speak of “green” marketing, however, this one is more focused on environmental problems while sustainable marketing emphasizes the triple bottom line (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

According to Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012), a sustainable marketing communication uses messages and media directed to any of an organization's stakeholders with the purpose of achieving the organization’s marketing and sustainability objectives. Sustainable promotional activities do not cause threats to the environment and social conflicts and they should not affect the way of living of the future generations (Trojanowski, 2014).

The company communication strategy is fundamental when doing sustainability. If it fails to communicate its own strategies, the company could lose the sales due to the increasing number of socially and environmentally conscious consumers. (Baldassarre and Campo, 2016).

To have an efficient sustainable campaign, Barry Emery (2011) suggests that the company should first match with the customers’ expectations and so understand what they want and what they want to know. Oliver Laasch and Roger N Conaway (2014) agree on that and add that the firms must clarify the purpose, state the message clearly, stay on topic, be complete and accurate, establish goodwill and communicate with credibility. Additionally, the company has to have strong ethical values and has to share these values with stakeholders. (Baldassarre and Campo, 2016).
Moreover, a sustainable communication campaign should be integrated to be effective and reliable (Martin and Schouten 2012). Integrated marketing communication describes the process of using an organization’s full range of communication and marketing tools in an interconnected manner for building stakeholder goodwill. (Laasch and Conaway, 2014). Finally, credibility and trust are the key determinants for a successful sustainability communication (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

Customers and investors have the right to be informed regarding the true sustainability performances of the company. In fact, they have the right to know and either reward the companies of punishing them (Baldassarre and Campo, 2016). In fact, the United Nations Environment Programme highlights the importance of the respect of sincerity and transparency towards the target market.

II.5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION WITH THE TOOLS OF THE PROMOTION MIX

a) Advertising

Advertising is the means which can reach the most people, but it is also the less customized. According to Tomasz Trojanowski (2014), the use of mass media such as radio, TV, newspaper, prints or internet can be very helpful to communicate messages aimed to improve the quality of life of populations and of the natural environment.

However, following a study about sustainability and advertising, advertising is viewed as using such ads misleading claims use « moral » appeals to position sustainability consumption « as the right thing to do » (Kotler and Amstrong, 2004). Lot of challenges seems to be likened to use of mass media advertising to communicate sustainability (Belz and Peattie, 2012). Moreover, a big number of the companies involved in sustainability do not have yet the budget to do big advertising campaign (Simon Wright, Diane McCrea, 2008).

The solution to this problem could be the use on online advertising to communicate sustainability. Online advertising is today a very effective method to reach the customers, and it is the fastest-growing advertising medium. It includes banner advertising, classified and media video advertising and Search Engine marketing (Clow and Baack, 2016). Search engine marketing is the process of increasing the visibility of a company website on the search engines (Anonymous 2008). There are two types of search engine, the SEO is one of them and there is also the pay-per-click (PPC), (Kritzinger and Weideman, 2013). The SEO is organic (free) and the pay-per-click is paid, that is mean that the organization has paid a fee to gain a placement in the listing (Gudivada, Rao and Paris, 2015).

Belz and Peattie (2012), explain that using online tools is now better than using traditional media because these one can be used for interaction and relationship building. There are also better to communicate about the complex story and activities of the company as they allow to put more content and are less expensive. Furthermore, they have the potential to show the world behind the product and so all the sustainable activities of the company or all the products information such as where does it come from and how it has been transported. Online promotion tools can make the whole product life cycle transparent.
Some trends can be identified in terms of companies’ online communication, such as the blogging. To be successful, a blog needs to have a charismatic founder that people are interested in following, or to be a brand with a strong brand personality. Besides, more and more companies establish a separate website to inform and educate consumers about the sustainability issues related to a brand. Finally, bigger companies have used web to launch «online ideas». This means is very useful as it generates interactions and the public group is asked to submit ideas, concept or projects relating to sustainability (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

Another part of online advertising can be done through social media. Social media includes any digital tools or venue that allows individuals to socialize on the web. Besides, social media marketing is the utilization of social media to market a product, company or brand. The most common are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram. Social media marketing aims to keep the customer engaged with a brand, increase the brand exposure, drive traffic, boost the Search Engine Optimization, collect customer intelligence, increases sales and stimulate brands loyalty (Clow and Baack, 2016). Moreover, according to Belz and Peattie (2012), social media can help for instant communication response and can help to funnel traffic towards online stores. About sustainable marketing and use of social media, social media provide an ideal advertising medium for green advertisers because consumers can self-select into sustainable lifestyle groups (Minton, Lee, Orth, Ulrich and Kim, 2012).

b) Public relations and third-party verification

Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012), advice businesses to use professional Public Relations and celebrities to build credibility for their social and environmental activities and to try to avoid negative publicity. Also, partnerships with legitimate and independent organizations help to build credibility for the sustainable company (The United Nations Environment Programme 2007).

Belz and Peattie (2012) agree and say that public relations are very important for companies when doing sustainable communication, as they provide credibility. In fact, company can provide press release, do celebrity endorsement, hosting an event, finance sponsorship and implement activities that create a link between the company and its community. Also, public relations are more and more important in terms of online communication. Finally, companies can use a third-party verification which the labelling. Labels can be national, international, specialized in an industry, in a product or way of production or transportation. Moreover, labels have lot of dimensions such as mandatory or voluntary, single or multiples issues or about the level of information they provide (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

Martin and Schouten (2012), Emery (2011), Belz and Peattie, (2012) and The United Nations Environment Programme, (2007) agree on the fact that the use of the third-party verification via the labelling enables to communicate efficiently with the target and to be more credible.

Consumers want trust and want third party verification to provide them information that will allow them to make confident decisions. Labelling has a crucial role in terms of generating credibility. Today, labels have become one of the most widely employed communication techniques that aim to influence consumer behaviour. Indeed, they can be communicated on the packaging and the store when the purchase final decision is mainly made. To communicate
effectively, being credible and trustworthy a label should be based on certain standards and
certification processes (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

According to John Grant (2007), the key when doing public relation is to stay factual, ann-
ounce what you are doing, use credible partners by eco-labels and partnering with charity
and NGO.

c) Sales promotion

Many sustainability-related sales promotions are done online and are designed to drive
customer traffic to company websites. Sampling is a particularly effective way to encourage
customers to try new products such as green products (Diane Martin and John Schouten,
2012). According to Genchev and Todorova (2017), sales promotion is a really effective mean
and has a real impact on the client’s intention to buy a product. However, Belz and Peattie
(2012) say as it is mostly oriented towards increasing consumption, sales promotions do not
seem to be a relevant choice for a sustainable communication. Nevertheless, sales promotion
can be used to encourage sustainable behaviours such as « cash back offers » (Belz and
Peattie, 2012).

d) Personal selling

According to Belz and Peattie (2012), personal selling is a source of reliability and trust for
the customer. As sustainable selling is founded on truth and transparency, the sales people
need to be well educated about the environmental factors and features of their product (Mar-
tin and Schouten, 2012). It has been shown that the communication via “word of mouth” in
the form of personal or professional recommendation has a big influence when communi-
cating about sustainability (Wright and McCrea, 2008). The key issues about personal selling
are to make sure that the sales staff understand the issue related to the sustainability perfor-
mance and can answer customer's questions. This can be ensuring by doing extensive training
(Belz and Peattie, 2012).

e) Direct marketing

The direct mailing is one of the major communication tool employed by environmental
organizations, but it is very criticized because of « junk mail ». The solutions to reduce the
environmental footprint when doing mailing would be to ensure that the mail is accurately
targeted, to use recycled paper or produced from sustainably managed forests, to use vege-
table-based printing instead of oil-based and to do “hybrid mail” (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

For Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012) it is better to use the phone call when doing direct
marketing. If the mail must be used, it must follow some rules such as have an updated data
base or use ecologic delivering and printing techniques.
II.6. BARRIERS AND RISKS

There can be noticed some barriers and risks for companies when doing sustainability. The barriers can prevent an efficient sustainable communication towards the customer and the risks can discourage the companies to do sustainable communication.

Regarding the brakes or barriers companies can meet, there can be noticed first that the green products are often more expensive than the other products. In this way, even with a good product and a good communication their launch can easily be a failure (The United Nations Environment Programme, 2007).

Furthermore, there can be noticed a lack of trust from the customers toward the companies regarding their sustainable campaigns. Indeed, only 10% of customers trust what companies say about climate changes and 25% trust what companies claim regarding energy-efficient products and services (Martin and Schouten, 2012). The authors add also that the credibility is hard to obtain for companies when doing sustainable marketing communication. In fact, marketing communications receive social criticism for its role in promoting conspicuous consumption and encourage overconsumption. Communication for sustainable marketing could be difficult to handle because of the bad image of advertising which is to make everybody thinking the same, to be pervasive, intrusive and to display unrealistic stereotypes (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

The reasons to this problem can be the use of negative emotional appeals for campaigns such as guilt or fear and the use of rational appeals which are not well received by customers. (Barry Emery 2011). Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012), explain that some companies only focused on sustainability and so forget the main benefits of the product and the brand main image. Moreover, some sustainable campaigns do not differentiate the target segments in the total green market. Of course, they are all sensitive to sustainability, but they must be differentiated because they have other different needs.

About the third-party verification, there are so many that the consumer does not know anymore which one is reliable or not. Diane Martin and John Schouten (2012) explain that the value of label is skewed the big number of eco-seals and certifications now on the market. In fact, the Ecolabel Index, the largest global directory of ecolabels, is currently tracking 463 ecolabels in 199 countries, and 25 industry sectors (http://www.ecolabelindex.com/). The United Nations Environment Programme (2007), agrees on that point and adds that too much labels can create confusion in consumer’s mind, especially when the labels are created by the company itself.

Finally, it can be said that regarding the wood used for press or the obsolete electronic equipment used in radio and television, these media are not very relevant when doing sustainability (Trojanowski, 2014). Belz and Peattie, (2012) show that there are lot of critics about the amount of resources advertising, print media and direct marketing with mailing use.

In another hand, companies do not dare to communicate about sustainability because there are too much risks who can lead to loss of customer trust and bad buzz.
In fact, many firms are afraid of being accused of greenwashing (Baldassarre and Campo, 2016). The United Nations Environment Programme (2007) defined Green Washing as “the communication operations designed to display social or environmental commitment despite the absence of actions to match this communication”. This practice is very risky for the companies, it can lead to be found out and so lose value trust and pretention to leadership (John Grant, 2007). Greenwashing has become a central issue of sustainability marketing communication, even some «awards » has been given to companies and their campaign for use of greenwashing (Belz and Peattie, 2012).

Also, some companies also scared that sustainable communication would give too much information to competitors and too much control to consumers and other influencers who are active on social media channels (Baldassarre and Campo, 2016).

The United Nations Environment Programme (2007) shows that the main risks for a company when doing sustainability communication are the use of inadequate information and false claims, the reach of “dangerous targeting” and the communication about unsustainable forms of consumption.

Companies must avoid Inappropriate communication strategy and so use justified and relevant arguments, do not exaggerate the benefits and being careful with when doing labelling. Besides, they should carefully plan their communication plan, not being too restrictive when targeting and ensure the follow up of their communication campaign (The United Nations Environment Programme, 2007). Finally, the increase of online communication has increased the risk of loss the control for the companies (Belz and Peattie, 2012).
III- METHODOLOGY

This third part will present and argue for the methodology used for this study. First, it will introduce the method used and the type of research. After will be presented the samples and the reasons why they have been chosen. Finally, the instruments to collect the data and the guideline employed will be introduced.

This study was focused on how companies build their message content to communicate about sustainability.

This study uses a qualitative approach that analyses 3 different case studies of business to consumer (B2C) companies. These companies are all selling consumer goods and belong to the cosmetic, beverages and food processing sectors.

III.1. METHOD USED

There can be distinguished to types of data: qualitative and quantitative. By analysing the fundamental differences between these two methods, we can be able to choose which type of research will be the most relevant for this study.

Quantitative research are basically data in numerical forms which can be using to construct tables or graphs. These types of research aim to establish general laws of behaviour and phenomenon across different contexts (McLeod, 2008). In this way, quantitative research emphasizes the quantification in the collection and analyse of data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Quantitative researches are done to test predetermined hypotheses based on existing theories and so they use a deductive approach (Weathington, 2012).

The qualitative research by opposition, emphasize more the words rather than quantifications and most of the time the relationship between the theory and the research is inductive (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In fact, most of the time qualitative research aims to develop theory from the data that are collected (Weathington, 2012). The purpose of qualitative research is to understand in a deep way the individuals, event or cultures. The qualitative research aims to explain “how” and “why” a phenomenon appears in a particular context (McLeod, 2008). In this way, this type of research will mostly involve the collection and analysis of detailed observations, stories or narrative histories, sounds, pictures, or videos (Weathington, Bart L, 2012).

The aim of my study was to collect information about what the companies are doing to position themselves as sustainable. In this way, I did not collect figures or did statistics, but I have focused my researches on facts and actions and analysed them in the given context. That is why I have used a qualitative approach for this study. In fact, the purpose is to understand what the companies are doing build their sustainable message content. However, the approach has been more deductive as I have compared the predetermined theories with what I found about the companies’ activities.
III.2. TYPE OF RESEARCH

There can be noticed three types of research nature: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory.

Exploratory research is the research conducted for a problem that has not been studied more clearly, intended to establish priorities, develop operational definitions and improve the final research design (Shields, Patricia and Rangarjan, 2013). Descriptive researches are used to describe systematically and accurately the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest (Dulock, 2013). Finally, explanatory researches are conducted in order to identify the extent and nature of cause-and-effect relationships. They focus on an analysis of a situation or a specific problem to explain the patterns of relationships between variables (Dudovskiy, 2012).

Exploratory studies help in understanding and assessing the critical issues of problems. It is not used in cases where a definite result is desired. An exploratory research is an informal process that help in defining the identified problem (Sreejesh, Mohapatra, Anusree, 2013).

In this way, the nature of my research was exploratory because I was not looking for a definite result, but I was looking for how companies how the companies build their communication message to achieve their sustainable positioning.

III.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

A population in researches, is basically, the universe of units from which the sample is selected. The sample is the segment of the population that is selected for investigation, a kind of subgroup of the population. Segments can be chosen by probability or non-probability methods. A non-probability sample is a sample that has not been selected by using a random selection method. That implies that some units in the population are more likely to be selected than the others. There are 3 types of non-probability samples:

- Convenience: available to the researcher by their accessibility
- Snowball: the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contact with others
- Quota: build a sample which reflects a population in terms of the relative proportion of people in different categories (gender, origins, ages)

Byrman And Bell, 2015

In my case, the population would be all the companies which does exists.

This study was focused on the activity of 3 different companies. I decided to choose companies with different areas, country of origin and size. Their similarities are their positioning and their involvement in sustainability. In this way, the samples for my study have not been chosen randomly but by judgment and so I used non-probability samples chosen by convenience. In fact, they are all communicating about their sustainable values and they create original campaigns which create a differentiation. Finally, I have chosen big and well-known companies because they communicate a lot and so lot of information are available about them. I decided to study the activity of the Brazilian company Natura, the British company Innocent...
and the French company Biocoop. The choice of these companies for this case study is relevant because they all have been focused in sustainability since their creation. There can be noticed in their history lot of actions that show their involvement is socially and environmentally responsible activities.

Natura is a Brazilian company which produce and distribute cosmetics products. The firm is known for pioneering initiatives, such as: annual reports on corporate responsibility beginning since 2001, provide products that are 100% free of animal raw materials by 2005; and using plastic produced from sugarcane, a plant and a renewable energy source, in all packs of refills by 2010. It has been rewarded in 2013 for one of the world’s most ethical companies and ranked by the Corporate Knights as the second most sustainable company in the world, (De Abreu Sofiatti Dalmarco 2015).

Biocoop is a French company specialized in the distribution of organic food. It is known for being the first French distributor for organic products (http://www.biocoop.fr/Biocoop/Histoire-et-valeurs/Historique). Furthermore, the company has been rewarded in 2015 as the business of the year in France and received the societal initiative price. Biocoop claims to want the "organic agriculture for all" and inscribes its approach at the heart of a charter applied by all actors in the network (https://www.lanef.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Biocoop_R-Awards).

Innocent is a British firm specialized in beverages, especially juices and smoothies. The brand claims the values of eating healthy and of sustainability. It has set up “the Innocent foundation” in 2004 which is aimed to redistribute 10% of the brand annual’s profit for NGO projects in developing countries (https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/our-story).

III.4. INSTRUMENT TO COLLECT DATA

Many tools can be used to collect the data such as the case study, the focus group, the survey or questionnaire.

The case study is an empirical research approach which is aimed to investigate un phenomenon, an event or a group of individuals selected in a non-randomly way. It is not dedicated to a limited number of subject and to statistics. The case study gives the advantage to discover better phenomenon which are hard to measure (Roy 2003). Often a case study studies a rare or unusual event, but it may also be a description of a classic situation that can be used as a model. Case study can be single or multiple (Zach, 2006).

A multiple case studies can be used in most situations and it is better to obtain more robust results. A case study can be global or embedded; multiple cases studies may consist of both holistic and embedded cases (Bengtsson, 1999). Multiple case-study designs have become increasingly common in business and management research. The different cases help and allow help the researcher to compare the results of each cases (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

In this way, the multiple case study seems to be adapted for my study.

I have done a content analysis which is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts
that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manners. For this content analysis I have used primary data collected from the companies’ websites, social media, blogs and advertisements. Primary data are new information collected directly while secondary data are already existing information collected by others (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Secondary data have also been used for this study. These data can be obtained from magazines, journal, online articles or company literatures and need to be analysed by the researcher (Sreejesh, Mohapatra, Anusree, 2013).

In fact, I have collected information about how the three companies I chose integrate sustainability in their communication message to position themselves as a sustainable company. In order to find these information, I have observed and studied the companies’ websites and accounts on social media, press articles, companies’ annual reports and press reviews.

For the content analysis, I have used the following guideline.

First, I have given a brief presentation of the company activity and features. Then, the first part shows the company message content and positioning. In fact, I have tried to understand how they position themselves on the sustainable market and which sustainable values they want to communicate regarding the dimensions of the Three Bottom Line. Moreover, I had a look at which tone, corporate identity and appeals they use to reach their target. Then, the second part is focused on how the companies studied send their sustainable message to their customers. By that, I mean the online and offline tools of the promotion mix they use for their sustainable campaign. Finally, I have had a look at the problems or barriers they could have met when doing sustainable communication.
IV- COLLECTION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

This part will present the information which have been collected. Each company’s activity in terms of sustainable communication will be presented one by one, following the guideline chosen.

IV.1. NATURA, THE BRAZILIAN COMPANY FOR COSMETICS

Natura is an international cosmetic company founded in 1969 in São Paulo. The Brazilian firm sells perfumes, make-up and body products. The company’s turnover in 2016 was 4 billion of USD. It is implanted in Brazil, Argentine, Peru, Mexico, Colombia and France. Natura belongs to the groups Natura & CO which also owns BodyShop and Aesop (https://www.naturabrasil.fr/en-us/about-us/our-history). Natura creates innovative products providing well-being and based on the biodiversity of the Brazilian flora (Natura annual report, 2016 - Antunes, 2014). These products are targeted towards middle-age women, city dweller and interested in sustainability.

Message content and positioning

a) Positioning

The company positions itself as an innovative, sustainable and eco-friendly company and aims to put an equal emphasis on performance, price and sustainable aspects to communicate about its products.

b) Sustainable values communicated

Natura claims to generate integrated Triple Bottom Line results (three sides of sustainability – economic, social and environmental), (Manfio, Garnica and Diogenes, 2017). First, regarding the social side of sustainability, the value they communicate in their website is the respect of all the women. In fact, on their website they display the sentence: “in all aspects of its products and communication Natura wants to celebrate women, beautiful and strong regardless of their age, their, origin or their lifestyle” (https://www.naturabrasil.fr/en-us/). In the Natura website we can also find the environmental commitments of the company. In fact, the company shows by explicating texts its commitment towards the forest preservation, the reduction of carbon emissions, the reduction of wastes by using recycled plastic for their products, the use of organic alcohol which does not damage the environment and its involvement against animal testing (https://www.naturabrasil.fr/en-us/our-values/sustainable-development).

c) Tone and corporate identity

The firm uses an informative tone to communicate, “Since 2007, Natural Brazil, a pioneer in sustainable development has been 100% carbon neutral” (https://www.naturabrasil.fr/en-us/). Regarding the corporate identity and style guide, Natura uses warm and natural colours, mainly yellow and orange and natural symbols such as leaf, a tree or an earth. They use clear presentations easy to read for the customer and the letter type is rather playful than strict.
d) Appeals used

Natura aims to use positive appeals related to simple things in life to communicate towards its target (Cosmeticosbr, 2015).

Tools used to send the message

a) Advertising

In 2016, the company has launch a campaign « live your beauty live » that shows that the perfect beauty does not exist and provides a concept of beauty without rules and stereotypes. The company used mass media such as posters and magazines to display this campaign (http://www.cosmeticosbr.com.br/conteudo/en/natura-lanca-nova-campanha-que-celebra-a-beleza-viva/). In 2015, Natura has created the campaign « Chame Natura, chame que vem » which is a 60 seconds movie. This campaign uses positive appeal to simple things in life and presents the new ways for customer to be connected with the company (Cosmeticosbr, 2015).

Regarding its online promotion, the company owns a website that it uses to sale and communicate. In the “about us” part, all the actions and company’s commitment regarding sustainability are summarized. We can find a lot of information about sustainability in their website, but company’s products and their features are more important and highlighted.

The company is using digital channels which are efficient and have less impact on the environment than the traditional channels (De Abreu, Dalmarco, Hamza, Aoqui, 2015). The media strategy recently implemented by the company, has a direct impact in the product offerings and helps to create relevant content to each consumer. In fact, the company has increased their digital budget in more than 100%, and the online sales have increased of 150% (Gabriela Strioli, 2017). Regarding the social media, the presence of the company is still weak and low on Facebook and Instagram if we compare to other international firms such as L’Oréal Paris. Nevertheless, Natura use Instagram to communicate about its involvement in sustainability and about its values (https://fr-fr.facebook.com/Natura.Brasil/, https://www.instagram.com/naturabrasilfr/?hl=fr). About the Search Engine Optimization, Natura does not use paid advertisements, only its retailers use it. If we are looking for its relationship with sustainability on Google, its website, its 2016 annual report and the website “champion of earth” appear first.

b) Third party verification

To show its involvement in sustainability the company uses famous people as influencers for the brand such as the world champion of snowboard Anne-Flore Maxer for Natura France (https://www.naturabrasil.fr/fr-fr/journee-femme-2018). The firm also supports the education for everybody with the participation to educational projects for more than 500.000 students in the world. Furthermore, Natura show that it has developed ethical trade partnerships to support communities in Brazil (https://www.naturabrasil.fr/en-us/our-values/sustainable-development). Regarding certifications, the Brazilian company has recently obtained the
“Benefit Corporation” (B Corp) sustainability certification, a certification run by a non-profit American organization and designed to encourage high standards of environmental and social administration and transparency among business (Anderson Antunes, 2014). Finally, the firm has the Certification neutral carbon ISO 9001 since 2007 and has adopted the model Global Reporting Initiative, which advocate transparency regarding companies’ communication. In fact, the company publishes four times per year an annual report to update his customers about its sustainable performances (https://www.natura.com/).

c) Personal selling

To sell its products Natura uses personal relations. The company operates with a network of 1.7 million sales consultants, “the Avon ladies”, all around the world (Anderson Antunes, 2014). The brand wants to make the customer advisers the main link between Natura and the final consumer. Natura’s managers try to make the communication integrated between these channels to allow the company to be more reliable (company’s annual report, 2016). The direct sales network creates a good customer service level. There is complete transparency with the sales force about promotional plans, sales forecasts and new product design.

Natura has successfully adopted a business model mainly dependent of direct sales (door to door sales techniques). The company differentiates itself in the market by quality of its relationships and its adherence to environmental and social principles. Natura salesforces are consultant who carry out direct sales in the communities in which they deliver (Belz and Peattie, 2012). The Natura sales persons are very important because they can collect the feedback from customers and allow the company to always improve itself. (Natura Annual report 2014 and 2013 - Company Website: www.natura.net). In fact, the company has implement a system to enable the customer to relate to the Natura consultants. This system uses the SMS and internet with the “Natura network”. This shows the company’s drive to be as close as possible with the customers (Cosmeticosbr, 2015).

Risks and barriers met

Regarding the annual report of the company in 2016, Natura didn’t receive any warning regarding non-compliance with regulations and laws related and any related to marketing communications, including advertising, promotional actions and sponsorships. The company has received lot of messages from customers who wanted the truth about the animal testing cause. In fact, cruelty-free shoppers wanted to know if Natura was hiding behind meaningless statements, or if it was truly committed to ending animal testing for cosmetics. However, the company has responded and announced that they have implemented a Fixed Cut-Off Date animal testing policy (naturewatch.org, 2017).
To summarize, the company has built its message around social and environmental sustainability. To communicate about its values and its activities toward its customer, the company uses its website, advertising, events, personal selling famous people, charitable organizations and labelling. The company integrates the process of product development and marketing communication in a manner that focused on raising consumer awareness of sustainable consumption and use a communication strategy that invites to better consumption habits (Natura annual report, 2016 - Dalmarco, Hamza, Aoqui, 2015).
IV.2. BIOCOOP: THE FRENCH STORE CHAIN FOR ORGANIC FOOD

Biocoop is a French company found in 2002 and specialized in the distribution of organic food products with a fair-trade label. The company is born from a collaboration of consumers and producers who wanted to support an organic agriculture and consumption. Now, the chain of stores owns 345 shops in all the French territory and has generated a turnover of more than 560 million euros in 2016 (https://www.lsa-conso.fr/biocoop/).

Message content and positioning

a) Positioning

The company claims to be the pioneer of organic food-processing products in France and to be very engaged in sustainability. Regarding its positioning, the company is mainly focused on the social and environmental performances of its products instead of the individual benefits for customers.

b) Sustainable values communicated

The company's values are the GMO free, the wrapping reduction, the fair trade, the fair relationships with the producers, the priority to local product and faire prices for the consumer (https://www.biocoop.fr/). There can be noticed that the three sides of sustainability are reached.

c) Tone and corporate identity

The company communicates toward its target with a fun tone and an off the wall humour. The corporate identity is based on a very colourful and playful style. The company logo is composed by a draw of the earth with a light bulb shape and the fruits and veggies are humanized in the advertisements (Annexe page 1).

Tools used to send the message

a) Advertising

In April 2016, Biocoop has launched “la campagne responsable” (responsible campaign) which aims to be the most environmentally respectful possible. The campaign is made up of a movie, five posters and a website (www.lacampagneresponsable.fr/) and shows the company's values around five topics: the organic agriculture, the “North-North” fair trade, the reduction of wrapping, the GMO and the local products. The communication managers wanted to reinvent the way of doing advertisement by creating a campaign environmentally responsible and respectful in all its aspects. In this way, they decided to reduce the shooting team for the movie and to use real producers as actors. Moreover, they used as much as possible non-polluting means of transport to move between the shooting places, like bikes or trains. Then, they tried to reduce the energy consumption and to use recycled equipment for the video show and the soundtrack. To create the posters, they have used organic paint, vegetal paper and recycled cameras. Finally, the website is very light in data, without pictures, and was created on recycled computer. Thanks to all these actions, the carbon footprint has been divided by three in
comparison to a normal campaign (http://www.saveursaisons.com/newsletter/article/de-couvrez-la-campagne-responsable-276, 2016). What’s more, the company has launched a video campaign called “ordinaries heroes” in Autumn 2016. The videos show normal people doing simple daily things good for the environment. The aim of this campaign was to provide solutions to the customer towards best consumption practices and shows the main values of the company which are short-channels and organic products (https://www.lsa-conso.fr/biocoop-lance-une-nouvelle-campagne-de communication,246627). The campaign is made up of a fifty seconds movie and of prints which present the “heroes”. The prints are very simple and aim to be without modifications and artifices. The campaign has been broadcasted on cinema ads, on the company’s website, on social media and in the shops. Furthermore, Biocoop also creates activist campaigns aimed to make the customer changing his consumption habits. For example, it has implemented a campaign against plastic bottles consumption in 2017, aimed to convince the consumer to remove them from his daily life. Once more, the company has used a poster campaign, social media and its website on which the customers could calculate their water bottle consumption per year (Fossé, 2017). Finally, the firm implements very engaged campaign about worldwide and European issues on social media such as the use “glyphosate” or the Monsanto scandal (l’ADN, 2017). The Biocoop website is not a selling website but there are a lot of information about the company, its shops and its products. In fact, the customers can have access to explanations about the Biocoop sustainable activities, about its values and about how it is doing and implementing fair trade. The figures, the turnover, the percentage of faire trade are showed with transparency and there is the possibility for the customer to upload the report of the company (https://www.biocoop.fr/). The company’s sustainable activities and its drive to be transparent are very highlighted on the website. Regarding the social media usage, Biocoop communicates a lot on Facebook and Twitter and via its YouTube channel. The posts and videos are about the company’s products and the sustainable actions it supports. The French company also post fun caricatures about serious subjects to trigger a reaction from the customer (https://twitter.com/biocoop, https://fr-fr.facebook.com/Biocoop/, https://fr-fr.facebook.com/Biocoop/). Regarding the Search Engine Optimization, only organic results appear. Then, when looking for its sustainable activity on Google, the websites of the company and the reports appear first.

b) Third party verification

In addition, Biocoop has four labels regarding the organic products and nine for the fair trade which are highlighted in the company’s website and packaging.

c) Personal selling

The selling members of the company are known to be good advisers and the company creates events to invite the customer to meet them and learn about their expertise (Biocoop.fr).

d) Direct marketing

The company uses direct marketing such as emailing and SMS to communicate the birthday of its shops.
**Risks and barriers met**

Regarding the risks of doing sustainable communication, Biocoop has been sued by apples producers about its campaign about non-organic apples in 2016. The campaign has been judged as anti-competitive and as a boycott against non-organic apples (Sybille de La Roque, 2016).

To summarize, Biocoop employs mainly poster campaigns, social media and internet to communicates sustainability. It always attempts to highlight its commitment and to make its customers react and change their consumption habits.

**IV.3. INNOCENT: THE ENGLISH FIRM FOR NATURAL BEVERAGES**

Innocent was founded in 1998 in London and it is specialized in beverages such as smoothies or juices. Its owner is now the American company Coca-Cola with 90% of ownership. The firm's international turnover was more than 300 million USD in 2016. ([https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/our-story](https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/our-story)), ([https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/824543/Innocent-Drinks-smoothies-breaks-300-million-annual-sales-barrier](https://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/824543/Innocent-Drinks-smoothies-breaks-300-million-annual-sales-barrier)).

**Message content and positioning**

**a) Positioning**

The company claims to produce 100% natural beverages and to use quality products from organic agriculture. In this way, the brand communicates the socio-ecological value added as an integral part of the product quality.

**b) Tone and corporate identity**

To attract its target which is quite young, Innocent uses off the wall humor, simplicity and authenticity. The company’s corporate identity and style guide is based on fun, playful and colorful elements ([https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/](https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/)). The company aims to differentiate itself by its way of communicating. For example, in France in 2016, Innocent has launch a poster campaign in the Parisian metro. All the posters were composed of funny compliments such as “you didn't miss your train, it missed you” ([http://www.ladn.eu/news-business/actualites-annonceurs/campagne-innocent-revient-bon-comme-un-compliment/](http://www.ladn.eu/news-business/actualites-annonceurs/campagne-innocent-revient-bon-comme-un-compliment/), 2017).

**c) Appeals used**

To communicate toward its customer, Innocent invests a lot in storytelling and use mainly emotional appeals rather than rational appeals. Moreover, the fruits are humanized in their packaging or advertisements (company press release, 2015). For example, the logo of the company is an apple represented like an angel with a halo on its head. This could be interpreted as the desire of the company to be transparent and honest towards its customers.
Tools used to send the message

a) Advertising

Regarding the advertising tools to communicate about sustainability, Innocent uses normal above the line media such as TV, cinema or radio. The communication managers explain that the product packaging is their first media. In fact, the packaging is very colorful and highlights the company and products’ labels. Indeed, the Innocent’s bottles are created in a way that they differentiate from the competition in supermarket shelves (Annexe, page 1). Finally, the brand is known to hide funny sentences in the packaging of their bottle (La Reclame, 2016). On its website, Innocent communicates about its environmental and social values on its website. In fact, the company shows that its commitment is “reflected in everything it does”, from the use of green electricity, its partnership with local farmers or its support towards charity organizations. Moreover, it has displayed in the “being sustainable” section on their website the most frequently asked question by customers and the answers. (https://www.innocent-drinks.co.uk/us/press/about-innocent). The brand is known for favouring social media communications and experiential events for its communication. In fact, the company is very active on social media, especially on Twitter on which it communicates about its products and sustainable actions (https://twitter.com/innocent). The managers explain that they prefer engage people and have conversation with them instead of using above-the-line media. The brand does a lot of video campaigns that are displayed on social media and they use mainly humour and originality. It has also launch a campaign called “Snow and Grow” which aims to teach to children where the food comes from. The company has decided to promote this campaign on kid’s products packaging and to do a partnership with a famous cooking chef, (Roderick, 2016). About the Search Engine Optimization, as the other companies, Innocent does not use paid advertisement on Search Engine. When writing the keywords “Innocent” and “sustainability” on the search engine, the website of the British company appears first and then there are articles about the sustainable activity on the company. Finally, the brand communicates online through its blog, https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/blog which is currently updated with articles about their sustainable activities.

b) Third party verification

Instead of fair trade or organic labels Innocent has only the label “Rain forest alliance” which is own by an American NGO which aims to “rebalance the planet through sustainable transformation in agriculture, forestry, and tourism (https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/). Moreover, it gives 10% of its turnover to charitable organizations every year.

c) Sales promotion

Finally, when doing sales promotion, Innocent aims to provide a unique customer experience by implementing a natural scenery, doing free tasting and contests with prices to win. These animations in shops purpose to provide a good experience to the customer and enable him
to learn about the company’s products. For example, Innocent implemented a sales promotion campaign in 2015 in France with the store chain Carrefour (https://www.lsa-conso.fr/les-meilleures-animations-commerciales-du-25-mai-au-7-juin-2015,212420).

Risks and barriers met

Regarding the risks and barriers of doing sustainable communication the company explains that they pay lot of attention about how their content is displayed on the web and try to avoid unsavoury websites or places where people might have extreme views (Roderick, 2016). In the past the company has known some problems due to its sustainable communication. In fact, Innocent has been accused of greenwashing in 2008 which has provoked a “bad buzz” for the company and the loss of customer's trust. Some environmental groups have denounced the company’s misleading claims about the origin of production of the fruits it uses (Nastu, 2008).

To summarize, the brand aims to speak to people in a human but also clear and relevant way (Roderick, 2016). Innocent claims to be sustainable in the way it does its business. However, the company does not use sustainability as its main topic to communicate towards its target. In fact, it aims to communicate with humour and authenticity by using mainly social media and the packaging of its products.

*In the following part I have connected the results of my research with the previous frame of references and try to find out the similarities and the differences.*
V- ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL DATA

This chapter will analyse the collected data from the empirical study which will be linked with the presented theoretical framework. This part will aim to follow the guideline of the frame of references presented in part three.

V.1. THE COMPANIES’ POSITIONING AND MESSAGE CONTENT

This first part is aimed to show in what the studied companies are sustainable and on what they build their message content.

First, we can see that the three companies aim to have a sustainable activity which means an activity «that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1990)”. In fact, it could be by the preservation of the natural environment, the fair trade or by offering organic products. Regarding the positioning, Belz and Peattie (2012) have noticed four ways of positioning when doing sustainable communication. The three companies studied use different ways of position themselves on the sustainable market. Indeed, Natura puts the emphasize of the both sustainable and performances sides, Biocoop communicates mainly about the environmental and social performances of the product and Innocent does not use sustainability as the main topic to communicate towards its target.

Then, we can recognize the three dimensions of sustainability in their different activities (Elkington, 1997). For example, Natura claims to generate integrated Triple Bottom Line results with the three sides of sustainability economic, social and environmental.

As it has been mentioned by The United Nations Environment Programme, sustainability marketing requires to build messages based on ethical arguments that show the qualities of a product. In this way, Natura creates innovative products providing well-being and based on the biodiversity of the Brazilian flora. Moreover, the firm has a commitment towards the forest preservation, the reduction of carbon emissions, the reduction of wastes by using recycled plastic for their products and against animal testing. Biocoop, as for it, has GMO free, wrapping reduction, fair trade, local product and faire prices values and aims to provide solutions to the customer towards best consumption practices. Finally, Innocent claims to produce 100% natural beverages and to use quality products from organic agriculture.

Trojanowski (2014) mentioned that sustainable campaigns must use materials and equipment which do not impact the society and the environment. Biocoop has based one of its campaign on this element with “la campagne responsable” which aims to be the most environmentally respectful possible. In fact, the French company has used non-polluting means of transport to move between the shooting places, reduced its energy consumption, used recycled equipment, organic paint and vegetal paper.

In the theoretical background, we learned that to be efficient sustainability communication should match with the customer’s expectations, have a clear message, show the company’s strong ethical values, be completely integrated, use credibility and trust and be the most transparent as possible.
The companies all tend to communicate a clear message about the advantage they provide to the customers. In fact, Natura wants the respect of all the women and the Brazilian biodiversity. Also, Bicoop claims to be pioneer in organic food in France and to use short channel for its production. Finally, Innocent claims to produce 100% natural beverages and to use quality products from organic agriculture. In this way, the companies all have strong ethical values that they highlight in their communication campaigns.

We saw that a sustainable communication campaign should be integrated to be effective and reliable (Martin and Schouten 2012). Indeed, Natura aims to have an integrated campaign between all its channels to allow the company to be more reliable. Moreover, I noticed during my study that all the companies tend to keep the same way of communicating and the same values for all the channels they use.

Regarding the transparency, Natura and Biocoop aim to be transparent towards their customer by publishing their annual report and figures about the company. To finish, it can be noticed that the Biocoop’s drive to be transparent is especially highlighted on its website.

Moreover, the authors have mentioned the importance to not use fear or guilt appeal but rather emotional appeals. The British company Innocent bases its messages on emotional instead of rational appeals to attract the customers with humour and compliments in its campaigns. Natura, the Brazilian firm, uses mainly positive appeals to communicate.

Then, it is advised to use appropriate humor and be playful to communicate sustainability. We saw that Biocoop communicates toward its target with a fun tone and an off the wall humour, even for its very engaged campaigns. As well, Innocent has made of humor, simplicity and authenticity its main trademark.

Diane Martin and John Schouten said that the most powerful advertising campaigns are those that are using storytelling especially when the story is appreciated and is repeated by customers. Indeed Innocent, invests a lot in storytelling, the fruits are humanized in their packaging or in their advertisements and recognized by customers.

Regarding the corporate identity and style guide, the three companies use a colourful and playful style rather than serious and strict. Besides they use nods relative to sustainability in their logo such as the leaf for Natura, the “angel apple” for Innocent and the earth for Biocoop (Annexe, page 1).

V.2. THE USE OF PROMOTION MIX’S TOOLS

This part will analyse how the studied companies use the promotion mix tools to send their sustainable message.

In the theoretical background, the authors have mentioned the distrust of consumers regarding the use of traditional advertising tools such as television, radio or poster campaign to communicate sustainability.
Despite of these barriers and challenges, there can be noticed that the three companies are using mass media to communicate, and this does not seem to have an impact on the efficiency of their campaign. In fact, the three companies use a lot of poster campaigns to communicate about their sustainable products. Besides, Natura uses magazines and Biocoop and Innocent employ cinema adds. Moreover, it has been said in the theoretical background that, the use of mass media can be very helpful to communicate messages aimed to improve the quality of life of populations and of the natural environment (Trojanowski, 2014).

There can be noticed that radio and television are not the main above-the-line media used by the brands for sustainability communication. Finally, as it has been said before, Innocent uses its bottles' packaging as its first media to communicate about its sustainable products and to differentiate from its competitors.

Regarding online advertising, the companies all use their selling or non-selling website to show their commitment, values and what they do about sustainability. Natura and Innocent both want to increase their use of digital channels to communicate instead of traditional above the line media. Moreover, Biocoop and Innocent use a lot of video campaigns displayed on internet. Clow and Baack, (2016) have said that online advertising is today a very effective method to reach the customers, and it is the fastest-growing advertising medium. The three companies seem to prefer online advertising than the other traditional media. Indeed, Belz and Peattie (2012), explain that using online tools is now better than using traditional media because these one can be used for interaction and relationship building.

Regarding the Search engine strategy, there can be noticed that the three companies do not use paid adds as only organic results appear when looking on search engine. Moreover, the companies’ website or their annual report are all ranked at the first position on search engines when using their brand’s name and the terms sustainability as keywords (Annexe, page 2). It can be concluded that the three company are making real efforts on Search Engine Optimization and on keywords to obtain credible results when the customers are looking for their sustainable activity on Google.

The authors Belz and Peattie (2012), have mentioned the trends of using separated websites or blogs to communicate about sustainability. Indeed, we can see that Biocoop has created a separated website for its campaign “la campagne responsable” (www.lacampagneresponsable.fr/). Furthermore, Innocent communicates online through its blog, (https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/blog) which is currently updated with articles about their sustainable activities.

Finally, the last big trends about online advertising is the use of social media. We saw in the theoretical background that social media are an ideal mean for sustainable communication because consumers can choose themselves their sustainable lifestyle groups. Indeed, Biocoop and Innocent communicate a lot on social media such as Facebook and Twitter and via their YouTube channel. As it has been said before, the posts and videos are about the company's products and the sustainable actions it supports. They also post funny caricatures about serious subjects to trigger a reaction from the customers. As well, Innocent is known for favouring social media communications. In fact, the company is very active on social media, especially
on Twitter on which it communicates about its products and sustainable actions by displaying lot of video campaigns. However, Natura seems to be a bit late regarding social media communication compare to its competitors.

Let’s turn now to the below-the-line tools of the promotion mix which are public relation, sales promotion, personal selling and direct marketing.

The authors in the theoretical background advice businesses to use professional Public Relations, celebrity’s endorsement and partnerships with legitimate and independent organizations to build credibility for the company avoid negative publicity (Martin and Schouten, 2012 and The United Nations Environment Programme, 2007). In this way, Natura participates to educational projects, has developed ethical trade partnerships to support communities in Brazil and uses famous people has influencers for the brand. Innocent also gives 10% of its annual turnover to charity and have done a partnership with a famous cooking chef for one of its campaign.

Then, most of the authors agreed on the use of labelling as a very useful mean to provide credibility for sustainability communication. Indeed, all the studied companies use labelling on their product packaging. Natura and Biocoop use internationally recognized labels about environment, organic agriculture and fair trade while Innocent uses only one national and some private labels.

Regarding the sales promotion, the authors are very divided regarding its effectiveness to communicate sustainability. Innocent is doing animations in shops and aims to provide a unique customer experience by implementing a natural scenery, doing free tasting and contests with prices to win.

As another tool to communicate, companies can use the personal selling. We found in the theoretical background that to be efficient the personal selling should be found on trusts and transparency and the sales people should be well educated about the companies’ sustainable values (Martin and Schouten, 2012). Natura sales force is known for the quality of its relationships with the customers, for being a very good adviser and for its adherence to environmental and social principles. Indeed, communication via “word of mouth” in the form of personal or professional recommendation has a big influence when communicating about sustainability (Wright and McCrea, 2008). Natura aims to be very close with its customers by using SMS technology and the “Natura network”. As well, Biocoop’s the selling members are known to be good advisers and the company creates event to invite the customer to meet them and learn about their expertise.

Finally, the last tool is the direct marketing. The authors advice to use rather phoning than mailing (Belz and Peattie, 2012; Martin and Schouten, 2012). For the companies studied, it can be noticed that they use mainly online direct marketing such as Biocoop which uses emailing and SMS to communicate. That is make sense because the online means have less impact on the environment than the others.
V.3. BARRIERS AND RISKS

This last part is designed to analysis the barriers and risks the companies can met when doing sustainability marketing communication and how they can avoid them.

We learnt in the theoretical background that the breaks when doing sustainability communication could be the lack of trust and credibility from customers, the use of wrong appeals such guilt and fear, and the oversight of the main features of the product.

To provide trust and credibility, our companies aim to use emotional appeals such as Innocent and to use third party verification and transparency. Then Natura or Innocent do not put sustainability as their main competitive advantage but «convenient and fun smoothies» for Innocent and «sensory experience and travelling feelings» for Natura.

Furthermore, we learnt that the big number of labels on the market could be a brake as well. In this way, the companies studied choose to use admitted labels such as international or public. Finally, the critics about the amount of resources used by media were also mentioned. That is why the three companies are trying to use the tools with less impact on the environment like digital media or ecological printed papers.

Regarding the risks linked to this type of communication, Fabrizio Baldassarre, Raffaele Campo (2016) said that many firms are afraid of being accused of greenwashing which can provide “bad buzz” or loss of customer trust. In fact, Innocent has been accused of greenwashing in 2008 and Biocoop has been sued in 2016. To avoid these risks, companies try to stay honest and to make efforts. For example, Natura has implemented regulations on its animal testing policy.

Finally, there can be noticed that there are more risks when doing sustainability communication on internet due to less control power for the companies. In this way, Innocent’s managers explained that pay lot of attention about how their content is displayed on internet.
VI - CONCLUSION

The conclusion is based on the content presented in the theoretical framework, the empirical study and the analysis. This last part will give the central conclusion, the implications and the further studies possible.

VI.1. SUMMARY OF CENTRAL CONCLUSION RELATED TO PROBLEM DISCUSSION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

We know now that social, environmental and economical sustainability has become essential for the well-being of the current society and the future generations. Lot of companies have understood this point and are trying to make their business more sustainable and more respectful towards the planet and the society. However, it is not easy to implement, and it brings lot of challenges for today’s companies. Nevertheless, we also learnt that sustainability can bring lot of benefits for a business such as a better customer loyalty and a better image for the company. This study was focused on how companies communicate their sustainable activity towards their customers. More precisely, this study aims to show how three big actors of the consumer goods and sustainability market are creating their content, sending their message and positioning themselves in order to communicate sustainability towards the customers and make them change their consuming behaviour.

During this study I tried to understand how today’s companies integrate sustainability in their communication message to position themselves as a sustainable company by making researches about the communication strategy of three companies offering consumer goods. We can conclude that most of the companies use a mix of different media from the promotion mix. It mainly depends of their communication objectives, their target, their type of products or the type of industry in which they belong. We can say that there is not only one best media to communicate sustainability, the most important seems to be consistent and inspire trust and reliability to the targeted customers.

Each company studied has its own way to communicate sustainability. Nevertheless, there can be noticed some tendencies regarding the media used by sustainable companies to promote their activity. In fact, most of the time companies tend to use more internet social media and poster campaigns to communicate. Moreover, as it was advised by the authors, the companies used positive appeals and humour to communicate about sustainability.

For this research I tried to link the theoretical framework with the data I observed. We can conclude that despite some differences between the concrete and the theoretical, the reality seems to be close from the theorical background gave by the authors I have studied.

VI.2. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the research’s results, companies should base their message on ethical arguments. What’s more, they should use materials and equipment that respect the environment to communicate a sustainable message. Then, the communication should be integrated within all the channels used.

Regarding the sustainable message, it must be clear and consistent in order to communicate the sustainable values of the company.
The most important for companies when doing sustainability communication seems to be credible towards the customers and as transparent as possible regarding their global activity. Finally, the messages should be communicated by using positive appeals, humour, playful tone and storytelling.

Besides, the online advertising with the websites, social media and blogs appears like the most compelling means to communicate sustainability.

Nevertheless, companies must take into consideration all the other “below the line” tools and integrate them to their communication strategy. To summarize, companies must use these means to send sustainability messages as they would use the advertising tools. That means the communication should be integrated and the company’s values should be all communicated in the same way. Indeed, the labelling, the celebrity endorsement and all the tools belonging to Public Relations seem to be the best way to provide credibility for companies. Finally, it is very important to maintain virtuous relationships with customer when doing sustainability communication. That is why, companies should not neglect the personal selling and the direct marketing.

Firms do not have to fear the risks linked to sustainability communication and do not have to be slowed by the barriers they could meet. The most important is to have the maximum of control about what their message says, how and where it is displayed and how it is interpreted by customers.

VI.3. FUTURE STUDIES

As I have collected the data mainly on internet it would have been great to interview the communication managers of the companies studied to get more information about their message content and their communication strategy. Then, I have chosen only big companies as lot of information were available about them and as their communication campaigns are famous and reach a lot of people. However, it would have been interesting to analyse how smaller companies communicate sustainability and compare it with the big firms’ strategies. In fact, smaller companies have less means and resources to communicate so they must find other ways to reach their customers. Finally, other studies could be done about other areas than consumer goods such as other types of industries or Business to Business companies.

Finally, it has been noticed the increasing use of internet, social media and mobile advertising for companies’ communication. In this way, further studies could be done regarding the use of these tools to communicate sustainability. It could be done also some researches about the corporate style to adopt on internet when communicate sustainability.
REFERENCES


De Abreu Sofiatti Dalmarco Denise, Hamza Kavita Miadaira, et Aoqui Cassio. « The Implementation of Product Development Strategies Focused on Sustainability: From Brazil—The


ANNEXES
Logo of the companies

Biocoop Campaign in 2011: “our organic products have nothing to hide”


Innocent bottles

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French student with a bachelor level in marketing, interested in sustainable development and believing in a better future.