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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Making sustainability a part of the event

A study on how sustainable marketing communication is applied in the event industry

Master's degree Project
MSc Marketing and Consumption
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Abstract

Purpose This study aspires to add theoretical understanding of how sustainable marketing communication is applied in the event industry's digital media channels. By assessing how events transform their organisational sustainability goals into messages in their digital media channels we aim to understand how different ways of communicating can engage consumers. Thereby, the aspiration is to add to the practical understanding on how to make sustainability a natural part of the consumption of events.

Design/Method/Approach To achieve the purpose of understanding sustainable marketing communication in digital media channels, a netnographic method was applied. Data was gathered from the digital media channels of four events taking place in the Swedish city of Gothenburg: Gothia Cup, Gothenburg Horse Show, Summerburst and Way Out West.

Findings The results indicate that event organisations utilise five different approaches to communicate their sustainability objectives namely *Increase Awareness*, *Empowerment*, *Sustainable Choice*, *Convince* and *CSR*. The former four were suggested by Emery (2012) whereas the latter emerged in the study based on theoretical understanding of CSR (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Event organisers include stakeholders to add credibility to the message. Kilgour, Sasser, and Larke (2015) suggest incorporating influencers which were found alongside *Partners*, *Participants* and *Celebrity Endorsers*. Sustainable Marketing Communication in this context results in similar levels of consumer engagement as regular content in terms of likes, mentions, comments and shares. A less engaged consumer solely likes whereas the more engaged consumers engage in sharing and commenting which is desirable to create sustainable change outside of digital media channels.

Originality The study adds value to existing literature of sustainable marketing communication by providing insights in how it is applied in the events industry.

Keywords Sustainable Marketing Communication, Consumer Engagement, Event, Digital Media Channels

Introduction

Concerts, football games and competitions provide an arena for new encounters, new experiences, and entertainment. The event industry is constantly reporting growing numbers in terms of attendants and revenue and in Sweden it calculated for 9 billion SEK in 2016 (Effect, 2017; Nordevik, 2019). However, there is a flip side to this, both on a local and global level. On a local level, reports show negative environmental impacts as well as reports on social issues such as harassment at the event site (Cavagnaro, Postma, & Neese, 2012; Ferdinand & Kitchin, 2012; Rodriguez,

2015). On a global scale, events impact the environment by food imports and merchandise for consumption during events as well as transportation of participants whilst also impacting the societies from which goods are imported (Ottosson & Parment, 2016). Given the growing size of the industry, this poses societal concerns and a demand for these events and its organisers to act and engage in creating a sustainable society (Kotler, 2011; Ottosson & Parment, 2016). However, as argued by Arcodia, Cohen, and Dickson (2012) events, defined by Getz (2008, p. 404) as being a “*spatial-temporal phenomenon, and each is unique*

because of interactions among the setting, people, and management systems—including design elements and the program”, provide a great opportunity to encourage a large number of consumers to participate in sustainable development. The Brundtland commission (1987) defined sustainable development as the “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Given modern technology, the role of the consumer changes as events no longer solely take place in the event setting but also in a digital context, referred to as “*virtual events*” by Getz (2008, p. 404). The consumer is therefore not only consuming by visiting the physical event but also the content provided by the event in a virtual setting (ibid). Event organisers are thus provided a new arena to engage their consumers in sustainability through their marketing efforts, i.e. Sustainable Marketing Communication, SMC (Martin & Schouten, 2012). SMC addresses how organisations, through their marketing efforts, strive to achieve their sustainability goals whilst engaging the consumers in the issues and possible solutions (ibid). To achieve the goals of SMC, the organisations thus need to create consumer engagement, defined by Hollebeek (2018, p. 43) as “*consumer’s cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social investments into specific brand interactions*”. Consumer engagement in a digital setting is made evident through e.g. likes, shares and comments (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015; Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). Kilgour et al. (2015) argue that consumers need to understand the message to have the capability to relate to it thus, to establish a relationship between the organisation and the consumer.

Way Out West, a yearly music festival in the city of Gothenburg, managed to make the festival completely vegetarian which was communicated through their Facebook-page (Andersson, Jutbring, & Lundberg, 2013). The festival also utilises sustainability causes to promote itself in their digital media channels. Way Out West and three other events taking place yearly in Gothenburg will be analysed in this study. Gothenburg was named the world’s most sustainable destination 2019 by the Global Destination Sustainability index (Global Destination Sustainability Index, 2019; Göteborg & co, 2020). Events in this context are therefore interesting study objects. Hence, the events possibly work with SMC in a successful matter, thus analysing these events could teach us about how to perform SMC to generate consumer engagement.

Problem discussion

People are constantly looking for new experiences to make memories and thus improve the quality of their lives. These experiences oftentimes mean impacting the environment negatively. Events and the organisers can work to improve their sustainability and ensure that the production of the event is sustainable. However, that is not sufficient to ensure the event experience is sustainably consumed. Involving the consumers in creating a sustainable experience with lasting impact will increase the efficiency of the event experience and make sustainability a part of it. Thus, the research question is:

How do event organisations incorporate sustainability into digital media channels to create consumer engagement?

Limited research has focused on Sustainable Marketing Communication in a digital event context, even though it provides great opportunities to reach large groups of consumers (Arcodia et al., 2012). Thus,

studying the event context allows us to learn how sustainable marketing communication can be applied to event organisations' digital media channels to create consumer engagement around sustainability. The study thereby aims at addressing the twelfth sustainable development goal presented by the UN, "*Responsible consumption and production*" (United Nations, 2015). This is addressed by the events engaging in responsible production of the event and how this is communicated to the consumers of the event, both visitors of the physical events as well as everyone consuming their content in digital media channels, to engage them in responsible consumption. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to add to the theoretical understanding of sustainable marketing communication within the event industry. By addressing how events transform their corporate sustainability goals into messages found in their digital media channels, an understanding can be formed on what engages consumers. The aim is thereby to provide practical implications on how this transformation of the message is performed to engage consumers in sustainability issues. Hence, understanding how sustainability becomes a part of the event to improve the sustainable development of society.

Theoretical Framework

Sustainable marketing communication Sustainable Marketing Communication, SMC, is a marketing approach which takes a holistic perspective towards sustainability, i.e. addressing all three components of sustainability; economic-, social-, and environmental impact (Martin & Schouten, 2012; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Economic growth is thus regarded in symbiosis with social- and ecological welfare (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Martin and Schouten (2012) define SMC as "*messages and media directed to any of an*

organization's stakeholders for the purpose of achieving the organization's marketing and sustainability objectives" (p. 185). SMC is distinguished from traditional marketing communication through two additional objectives: establishing credibility to the entire organisation including the brand, products, and services and through educating the stakeholders about sustainability related issues (Martin & Schouten, 2012). To achieve successful SMC, where the goal is to impact consumers, Martin and Schouten (2012) describe three key features: integration, leverage and brand community. Sustainability needs to be integrated into all entities of the organisation, the SMC efforts need to be thoroughly performed to affect people and the organisation needs to build strong relationships with the consumers (ibid). Without these components, the SMC might not be perceived as credible, thus the organisation will not have an impact on the consumers since credibility is "*the stock in trade*" of SMC (Martin & Schouten, 2012, p. 190). Credibility can thus facilitate the process of an organisation's sustainability objectives as the SMC messages likely will be interpreted by the consumers as truthful, thus engage them in the sustainability issues (Martin & Schouten, 2012; Ottosson & Parment, 2016).

Concepts within sustainable marketing

Sustainable marketing builds upon the definition provided in the Brundtland- report (1987). The aspiration is to find a balance between economic growth, the preservation of our planet and social change (ibid). Belz and Peattie (2009) refer to it as sustainability marketing to make it easier to distinguish from "*durable or long-lasting*" marketing (p. 31). However, as sustainable marketing is a more established concept, this study will refer to it as sustainable marketing. As illustrated in Figure 1, sustainable marketing merges multiple branches within marketing to create

a more holistic approach towards the concept of sustainable development within marketing (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Thus, sustainable marketing adopts notions from relationship marketing, traditional marketing as well as drawing on marketing that focuses on social and environmental aspects such as *social marketing* and *green marketing* (Arcodia et al., 2012; Belz & Peattie, 2009; Jutbring, 2018), *Social marketing* addresses how sustainability components can be utilised to alter consumer behaviour (Jutbring, 2018; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). *Green marketing* focuses on the environmental impact of marketing, such as CO2 emission (Rademaker, 2013).

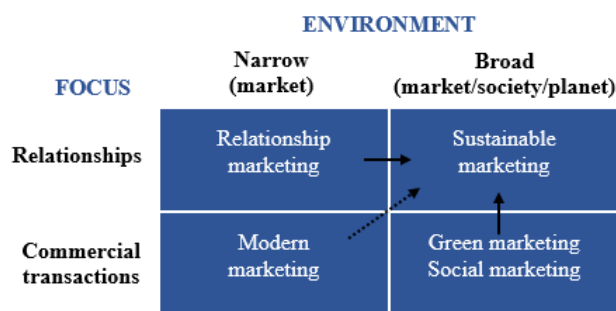


Figure 1: Components of Sustainable Marketing inspired by Peattie and Belz (2010)

Sustainable marketing is oftentimes combined with discussions on *Corporate Social Responsibility*, CSR. Given the closeness of the concepts, it is necessary to distinguish Sustainable marketing from CSR. CSR is a concept frequently applied in the corporate world to explain the organisation's sustainability activities (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Though included in the overall business, it is oftentimes viewed as a separate entity from daily operations which frequently is performed through charity activities (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Ottosson & Parment, 2016; Sanclemente-Téllez, 2017). Some argue, for instance Belz and Peattie

(2009), that CSR is often used to enhance the image of the organisation by providing, for instance, reports and dedicated webpages that inform consumers of the organisation's sustainability performance. A common pattern in these pages and reports is vague descriptions of the performance which oftentimes leads to a lack of credibility for CSR (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Whilst CSR has a strong focus on the own organisation and past achievements, Sustainable marketing takes a broader societal approach and focuses on the future (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Jutbring, 2017).

Sustainable marketing communication objectives

When engaging in sustainable marketing communication, organisations have certain objectives with the communication and thus, shape the content based on these objectives (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Emery, 2012). Belz and Peattie (2009) argue for eight sustainable marketing communication objectives when marketing sustainable products and services which are to generate awareness, inform, remind, persuade, reassure, motivate, reward and connect with consumers (p. 181). Similarly, Emery (2012) found that organisations utilise four main objectives when formulating sustainable marketing communication messages striving to at create awareness of the organisation, whilst engaging in a sustainability cause. These four objectives found by Emery (2012) reflect the ones suggested by Belz and Peattie (2009) and will be referred to as *Empowerment*, *Increase Awareness*, *Sustainable Choice* and *Convince* to facilitate the understanding and usage of them in the study. Emery (2012) characterises these four objectives as follows:

- **Empowerment** - Message meant to encourage consumers to alter their habits to improve their sustainable impact.

- **Increase Awareness** - Purpose of the message is to educate consumers on sustainability related topics thus, create awareness around certain issues.
- **Sustainable Choice** - Encourage consumers to choose more sustainable products and services compared to what they have chosen before.
- **Convince** - Convince consumers to pick a specific product or service, in the study an event, because it is more sustainable than another. Specific to genre.

The model displays the circular process of marketing communication where an organisation, i.e. the sender, encodes their goals into messages on various types of channels, both traditional websites and social media as Instagram (Ottosson & Parment, 2016; Shannon & Weaver, 1948). The consumer, i.e. receiver, then decodes the message which leads to response; consumer engagement (ibid). All subprocesses can be disturbed by various noise, both internal, as misspelling, and external as bad internet connection (ibid).

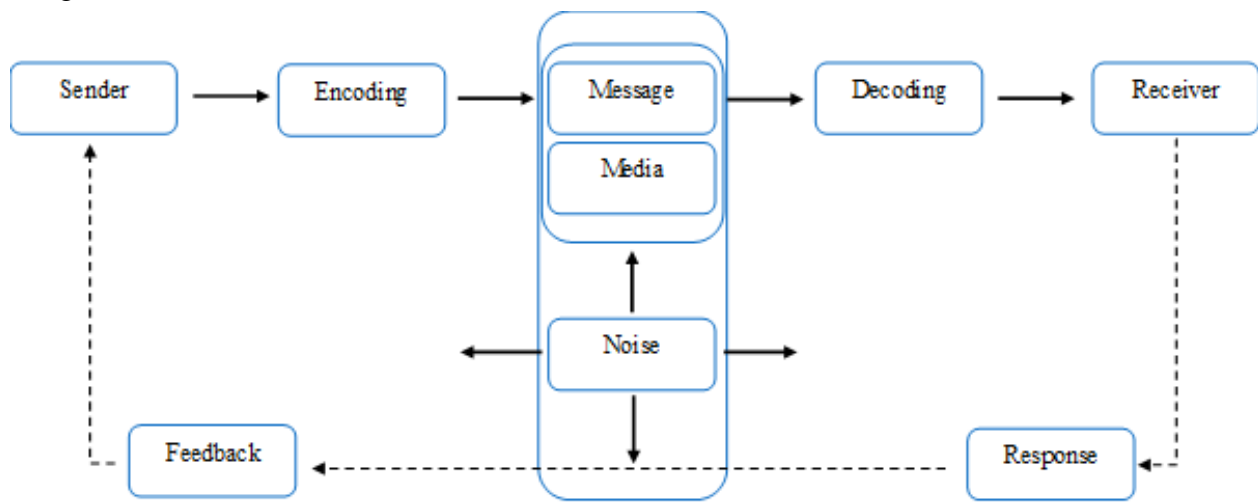


Figure 2: Based on Ottosson and Parment's (2016) interpretation of Shannon and Weaver's (1948) model of communication.

The communication approaches proposed by Emery (2012) incorporate the sustainable marketing objectives proposed by Belz and Peattie (2009) and will therefore form the basis of the study. The communication approaches can thus be applied to understand how event organisers encode their corporate sustainability goals into messages in digital media channels, either by applying them separately or combined Ottosson and Parment (2016). The process of encoding is part of Shannon and Weaver (1948) traditional model of communication, as seen in Figure 2.

Sustainable marketing communication in a digital context

Modern technology has shifted how organisations communicate with the consumers; marketing activities are thus, more than ever done in a digital setting. According to Peattie and Belz (2010) communication, especially two-way communication, is important in SMC to establish relationships with consumers. Marketing in a digital context allows for a traditional, telling approach through, for instance, websites (Majid, Lopez, Megicks, & Lim, 2019; Ryan & Jones, 2012). A two-way communication can also be performed in

social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook (Majid et al., 2019; Ryan & Jones, 2012). Furthermore, all digital marketing outlets in this study will be referred to as digital media channels. These channels provide opportunities to reach a wider audience in terms of numbers and different target groups (Majid et al., 2019; Ryan & Jones, 2012). Digital media channels can process larger amounts of consumer data which facilitates the process of establishing relationships with the consumers as they are more easily understood (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Ryan & Jones, 2012).

According to a study by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014), there are five main approaches in which organisations utilise digital media channels to establish a sustainable relationship with consumers. These are engaging consumers in the brand through activities, communication, introducing products, giving information and advice and lastly customer service (ibid). Oliveira and Panyik (2015) studied digital media channels in the context of tourism events and how they can be utilised to build relationships with the consumers. They discuss the importance of discussion, i.e. dialogues, to strengthen relationships as well as the important role of the messages (ibid). Most powerful are messages by other consumers when assessing various activities as a consumer experience, hence this is more valuable than the message of an organisation behind the activity (ibid).

Kilgour et al. (2015) studied sustainability messages in an online context and how messages should be constructed to be most effective in terms of engagement. They found the *social media transformation process* (Kilgour et al., 2015, p. 334) to be the most efficient, which confirms Oliveira and Panyik (2015) conclusion on the importance of the construction of the message. Through the social media transformation process,

messages are transformed from being an obvious corporate message into a social message addressing a sustainability cause. Similarly, to the results of Oliveira and Panyik (2015), this is most efficiently done incorporating a third party in the message (Martin & Schouten, 2012). Whilst Oliveira and Panyik (2015) argue that participants of the activity are the most suitable, Kilgour et al. (2015) argue that this should be done using an Influencer. An Influencer is an individual who is well-known within its community, thus has the power to influence the choices of this community (ibid).

Consumer engagement

Ultimately, the purpose of SMC is to achieve the goals of establishing credibility and educating consumer to engage in the sustainability cause (Martin & Schouten, 2012). According to Ottosson and Parment (2016), sustainability messages tend to have negative impact on consumer engagement, thus the engagement decreases when sustainability is communicated. Consumer engagement, which originally stems from relationship marketing, addresses how consumers interact with an organisation and how this contributes to the consumer experience and creating awareness of the organisation (Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2018), by creating a sense of connection and belonging. Consumer engagement is oftentimes divided into three components (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013) to explain the relationship an individual has with a brand; “*Cognitive, affective and behavioural*” (Dessart et al., 2015, p. 30). The affective component represents the consumer’s emotions when engaging online, which typically is enjoyment and enthusiasm (Dessart et al., 2015). Whereas the cognitive component explains how a consumer’s attention and absorption-capacity increases when engaged (ibid). Lastly, the behavioural aspects refer to how a consumer behaves

when engaged which is by sharing content with others, learning by helping others or teaching others, and endorsing by showing your approval of the content (ibid).

Creating consumer engagement is difficult due to the large amount of advertisement consumers are exposed to daily, partly because it is difficult to stand out and because consumers are becoming increasingly critical towards it (Ramirez, Gau, Hadjimarcou, & Xu, 2018). Thus, for SMC to be effective in terms of creating engagement it needs to be a credible message suitable of the messenger and the account it is presented in (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009; Ramirez et al., 2018; Syrdal & Bok, 2017; Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). Because a credible source provides the opportunity for two-way communication, hence for a relationship to become established. This allows for companies to receive feedback and continuously improve (Ryan & Jones, 2012). Engaged consumers ultimately lead to consumers who are loyal to the organisation, who trust the messages the organisation sends and who also likely will spread the message of the organisation (Dessart et al., 2015). Therefore, consumer engagement becomes an important aspect of SMC as it can contribute to establishing relationships and knowledge within certain areas of sustainability, thus get consumers to participate in helping different sustainability issues as it develops “*a sense of moral responsibility*” (Dessart et al., 2015, p. 32).

Engagement intensity

Addressing the behavioural aspects of consumer engagement, depending on the type of digital media channels utilised, consumer engagement can be made visible differently, as illustrated in Figure 3 (Brodie et al., 2013; Coulter, Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, & Pihlström, 2012; Dessart et al., 2015). A consumer can manifest *endorsing* by liking a post, i.e. indicating support for that type of content (Dessart et al.,

2015). *Sharing* content to spread the information further is another type of support which can be done by sharing the content to your own consumer profile or through mentioning a friend in the comment section to alert that individual (ibid). Mentions and shares also functions as a type of word-of-mouth online, e-WOM, since mentioning and sharing will spread the word further, similarly to an individual telling a friend about a product (Choi, Seo, & Yoon, 2017). Lastly, *learning* can be achieved by consumers posting their own information under certain hashtags related to the topic of an organisation or through comments made on different posts (ibid). Coulter et al. (2012) argue that the quantity of these different types of engagement indicators are important to assess because they show how engaged the consumers are. i.e. how much they like the content and the message, also referred to as engagement intensity (Brodie et al., 2013).

| Endorsing | Sharing | Learning |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Like | Mention | Comment |
| | Share | Hashtag |

Figure 3: Types of consumer engagement online based on a study by Dessart et al. (2015)

However, one aspect of SMC and digital media channels is that it is accessible by anyone and not all people leave a trace when they engage in content. These consumers who engage in an organisation’s content, by watching it and possibly talking about it, without interacting with the organisation are typically referred to as lurkers (Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2006). It is more difficult for organisations to estimate their impact as they leave no trace, however Syrdal and Briggs (2018) argue that lurking can be equally as effective since these individuals could engage in offline word-of-mouth. Assessing the intensity of lurking is difficult given that it is impossible to know how much they talk about the organisation whereas

quantifying likes, comments and shares allows you to assess the engagement intensity of the published content (Coulter et al., 2012). Hence, given the context of the study, lurking will not be examined.

Online Consumer Engagement in the event industry

Previous studies within this area has shown that digital media channels function as an efficient marketing tool for event organisers (Andersson et al., 2013; Henderson, 2013; Hudson & Hudson, 2013; Williams, Inversini, Buhalis, & Ferdinand, 2015). Henderson (2013) discusses how sustainable touring and marketing can create engagement and could, amongst other perks of it, conclude that marketing online can help build a community and spread the sustainable engagement further. Hudson and Hudson (2013) can also conclude the importance of digital media channels in the event context. Similarly, they argue for the usage of digital media channels to spread awareness of events. However, they also state that these channels have changed the decision process for the consumers by providing the event organisers with a context to share what the event experience could be like for prospective consumers through images and videos (ibid). Engaging in digital media channels thus becomes a crucial part of engaging consumers in attending the events. Higher levels of consumer engagement indicate a higher level of impact on the consumers, thus larger opportunities to engage them in attending the event as well as engaging in the event community and its goals (Williams et al., 2015). Meaning greater opportunities to spread awareness on sustainability causes. This type of opportunity is shown in Andersson et al.'s (2013) study on Way Out West where they decided to make the event completely vegetarian. They communicated this entirely through their Facebook-page to ensure they reached the right target audience with their SMC (ibid). The message was liked

by approximately 8000 consumers and shared 1800 times through the channel indicating high levels of consumer engagement which ultimately has led to more people having the opportunity to learn about, and try, more vegetarian food whilst reducing the ecological footprint of the event (ibid).

Methodology

Based on the theoretical framework, a modified version of Ottosson and Parment's (2016) interpretation of Shannon and Weaver's (1948) model of communication, see Figure 4, was created to illustrate the process of communication and the ethnographic study. The senders, i.e. the events and the organisers, were the case organisations of the study and alongside their corporate sustainability goals it provided an understanding of the cases and what they wanted to achieve with their sustainability work, i.e. *what* they attempted to encode in their digital media channels. *How* they encoded their sustainability goals into sustainable marketing communication was explained applying the communication objectives proposed by Emery (2012). Whereas, how the messages were adapted to digital media channels was addressed through the social media transformation process presented by Kilgour et al. (2015). To conduct this study, the event organisers' websites as well as the events' websites, Facebook- and Instagram- pages were studied. Given the research question, the receivers, i.e. consumers, was addressed as a collective community rather than individuals which means that the decoding process was not analysed. Instead, consumer engagement was addressed as Feedback and Response by applying Dessart et al.'s (2015) discussion on the behavioural aspect of consumer engagement. Hence, given the chosen method, the cognitive and affectionate approach was not studied in-depth. Possible sources of noise were addressed however, not

analysed in-depth given the collective approach towards consumers.

prerequisite of economic sustainability, e.g. Kulturkalaset (Göteborg & co, 2018),

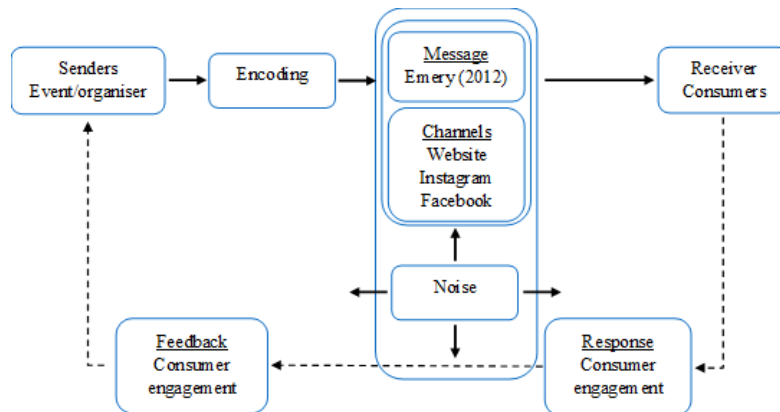


Figure 4: The methodology based on Shannon & Weaver (1948) and Emery (2012)

Case Companies

The study focused on understanding how digital media channels were utilised for sustainable marketing communication by events to create consumer engagement. A purposive sampling technique was applied when choosing the cases for the study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Events from the city of Gothenburg were chosen as this context, given Gothenburg's position as the world's most sustainable destination (Global Destination Sustainability Index, 2019), provided an interesting opportunity to gain valuable insights in how these events communicate. This is because events in this context was assumed to work well with sustainability, thus could provide as a guide for other events. In terms of number of events studied, again a purposive sampling technique was utilised (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Given the understanding of sustainable development, it was assumed that all events build on economic sustainability as they want to keep existing. Thereby, as economic sustainability builds the foundation, events with a social- and environmental sustainability focus were chosen, and events without the fundamental

were excluded in this study. To find patterns and to be able to provide recommendations from this context, a decision was made to study two events of each category (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Eysenck, 1976). Apart from the geographical- and sustainability-criteria, the two other criteria were that the events had to be of larger scale, i.e. a festival and not a private party, and the events had to be of different categories, i.e. not solely music festivals.

The purpose of studying large events and event organisers was due to its assumed larger impact, and thus providing a better opportunity to understand and draw qualitative conclusions and compare events. Large events were also assumed to have more resources to engage in digital media channels which formed the basis of the study. In terms of the events' belonging to different categories it was a choice to understand if there were differences in different categories. The authors' previous knowledge about the events can be argued to create a bias however, given the method chosen this adds value to the understanding of the sustainable marketing communication in the different digital media channels (Jutbring, 2017). Based on these criteria, four events, as seen in

Figure 5, were chosen to study. These events were judged to be sufficient based on the principle of saturation, i.e. more events would not add additional value (Kozinets, 2020).

festival. The music festival brings international DJ's to a weekend festival at the Ullevi-arena. The festival thus, emphasises the social togetherness with challenges being how to achieve that as well as addressing equality and safety at the

| Event | Event Organiser | Sustainability focus | Period of study | Amount of posts studied |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gothenburg Horse Show | Got Event | Environmental | August 26, 2019- February 23, 2020 | IG: 129 FB: 123 |
| Gothia Cup | BK Häcken | Social | April 13, 2019- February 12, 2020 | IG: 207 FB: 268 |
| Summerburst | Live Nation | Social | May 21, 2019- February 17, 2020 | IG: 198 FB: 174 |
| Way Out West | Luger | Environmental | March 3, 2019- February 4, 2020 | IG: 482 FB: 150 |

Figure 5: Overview of the events studied

Gothenburg Horse Show, referred to as GHS, is one of the largest international equestrian competitions taking place every year in the arena Scandinavium (*GothenburgHorseShow*, 2020i). The competition brings current and future equestrian stars to the city for a week filled with competitions (*ibid*). This poses certain sustainability challenges in terms of transporting competitors, spectators, and supplies. GHS works “*actively to minimize the environmental issues from arenas and events*”, thus having an environmental approach towards sustainability (*GothenburgHorseShow*, 2020c). *Gothia Cup*, the second sports event of the study, is the world’s largest football tournament for youths which takes place every year in July (*GothiaCup*, 2018). The tournament emphasises the social aspects of sustainability by being “*A meeting place for the world’s youth, irrespective of religion, skin color or nationality, with football as the common denominator*” (*ibid*). Thus, their sustainability focus is to strive for equality. *Summerburst* follows *Gothia Cup*’s emphasis on social sustainability by bringing people together through a yearly house music

festival. Lastly, *Way Out West*, referred to as WOW, was the second music festival of this study. WOW is one of the biggest music festivals in Sweden which takes place in the park Slottsskogen. During a weekend each year, the festival brings some of the biggest singers of the world to Gothenburg (*WayOutWest*, 2020b). The festival puts emphasis on environmental sustainability and their goal is that “*The festival’s ecological footprint should be reduced for every year*” (*WayOutWest*, 2020c).

Hence, these events provided the context of the study. Another important aspect addressed was the structure of the event industry. The industry consists of major event organisers and smaller ones, who usually are owned by the bigger ones. In the case of WOW, Luger is owned by Live Nation and for GHS, Got Event is owned by Göteborg & co, who in turn is owned by Gothenburg city. In this study, the focus was to look at the direct link between the event organiser and the event rather than the entire chain, thus this is what was analysed.

Nethnographic research method

A qualitative research method was applied to gain a deeper understanding on how sustainable marketing communication is used to engage consumers in the event context, to make sustainability a part of the events. The combination of sustainable marketing communication and consumer engagement had not been addressed in this context before thus this study took an exploratory approach through a qualitative research method (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). When understanding how sustainable marketing in digital media channels created engagement, the most applicable qualitative research method was netnography since this is the only method observing activities online. *“Netnography is participant-observational research based on online hanging-out, download, reflection and connection”*, meaning that the researcher can interact with and observe the communities and what they are doing (Kozinets, 2015, p. 67). Hence, an ethnographic study performed in a digital context. This method has proven to be valuable when analysing various online behaviours, as stated by Kozinets (2015) *“Netnography has been found immensely useful to reveal interaction styles, personal narratives, communal exchanges, online rules, practices, and rituals, discursive styles, innovative forms of collaboration and organization, and manifestations of creativity”* (p. 3). Hence, whilst netnography has its limitations when studying individual behaviour, it is the most applicable approach for analysing online communities. Therefore, given the nature of this study this made netnography the most suitable method (Kozinets, 2020).

The utilisation of netnography in the study

Nethnographic research can, according to Kozinets (2020), be conducted using five different engagement strategies where this study utilised an *“Intellectual engagement strategy”* (p. 250). This approach

to netnography meant studying different channels online to gain deeper insights about them. This strategy is the most applied nethnographic study within scholarly articles as it is the least invasive (ibid). Meaning that the researcher observed content and the consumers of it over a period of time, thus getting fully engaged with the content whilst not interrupting the consumers by announcing the presence as a researcher (ibid). Thus, during the three-month period of studying the digital media channels, a comprehensive understanding was formed about the communication patterns, i.e. the communication culture, of the different events.

The event organisers' websites were analysed to gather data on their sustainability goals and digital media channels belonging to the events were analysed, in order to see how the event organisers' sustainability goals were presented in the different events' digital media channels. Moreover, data was collected from three different digital media channels: the events' websites, Instagram, and Facebook. These were chosen based on strategic selection as they provided enough data whereas channels as YouTube and Twitter were excluded because these events did not utilise these channels sufficiently. Instagram and Facebook were further analysed to examine the consumer engagement. The periods of study, as presented in Figure 5, were chosen based on the principle of saturation (Kozinets, 2020). i.e. the content gathered and analysed consisted of information from before, during and after the event until more data did not provide additional insights (ibid). Data was gathered on how the events communicated through their content about sustainability as well as comments on posts to, which provided an overview on how the comment sections of the different digital media channels were utilised (Kozinets, 2015). Data was also gathered and analysed on what type of

consumer engagement was generated in the different digital media channels by studying likes, shares, comments as well as if the comments consisted of e-WOM; referred to as mentions, implementing symbolic netnography (ibid). Hashtags in the comments were not further studied since the study did not observe the decoding of the events' communication. However, hashtags were instead observed in the context of how the events were communicating since this is utilised to reach more consumers.

Data collection

Data was collected on all content that could be linked to sustainability as per the theoretical understanding of the concept. First, the event organisers' and events' websites were examined, and texts, photos and videos linked to sustainability were collected since all of these types of media are ways to communicate sustainability messages (Kozinets, 2015). The data was inserted to different documents based on event and type of media. The next stage in the data collection process was to look at the events' Instagram and Facebook pages. Here, photos, videos and captions were, as with the websites, collected and inserted into different documents. The videos were recorded on the authors' phones with a screen recorder. Moreover, the total number of posts during the time periods was collected for each event as well as the number of posts about sustainability, to get an impression of how many of the posts were related to sustainability. When consumer engagement was addressed, all types of consumer engagement: comments, likes, shares, and mentions, were gathered from the events' Instagram- and Facebook pages. The websites were excluded from the consumer engagement as this was not visible in these channels. First, the number of likes, comments, and shares of all the posts within the time period were stored in an Excel-file, including both sustainability posts and posts

which were not connected to sustainability, to be able to see if there was a significant difference. Then, comments from posts with high engagement were copied and inserted into separate documents for each event.

Data analysis

To facilitate the process of analysing the large amount of data, Atlas.ti was utilised (Kozinets, 2015). All the documents containing data from the different digital media channels were inserted into the Atlas.ti software. The first data analysed was the one from the event organisers' websites to detect their sustainability goals. To find themes, coding was applied as the analysis method (ibid). That meant that the texts, photos, and videos were highlighted and categorised. The codes used from the beginning were based on literature. However, during the process of coding and understanding the data, other themes emerged which were added to the codes and applied throughout the process of analysing (ibid). Thus, throughout the process, as new codes emerged, the data needed to get analysed multiple times to ensure all data suiting the different codes were coded properly. This also ensured that both authors of the study went through all the data to ensure nothing was missed and to avoid bias. Through coding, the data was divided into different categories which facilitated the process of comparing and comprehend it. The names of the codes were also changed during the process to get more descriptive codes. Furthermore, after coding the event organisers' websites, coding of the events' websites, and the content on the events' Instagram and Facebook pages were conducted. The results of the codes applied in the study was divided into four different themes; Communication Approach, Channel, Post and Sustainability as illustrated in Figure 6.

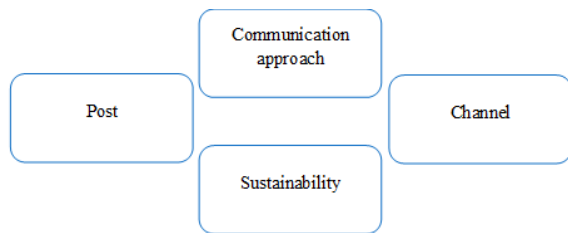


Figure 6: Themes found in the process of collecting and analysing data

Thus, each post consisted of one of each of these coding themes: channel (type of event's digital media channel or organiser's website), post (e.g. photo, caption, video), sustainability and communication approach. The communication approach theme was based on Emery (2012) four objectives of sustainable marketing communication as well as approaches of communication that did not properly fit into any of the other ones. These were added as a result of the inductive approach, where there was a continuous development of codes that could add value to the understanding of the sustainable marketing communication. When the documents and videos had been coded, an analysis to get the frequency of the codes on the different digital media channels for the different events and the event organisers, was executed with the help of Atlas.ti. This was done to get an overview on what type of sustainability events were talking about, and which communication approaches that were applied and to what degree they were used. Thus, to confirm the understanding of the communities which were emerged during the process of gathering data.

Moreover, the next step was to analyse the data collected on consumer engagement from the events' Instagram- and Facebook- pages. In line with previous research, by for instance Brodie et al. (2013), Pathak and Pathak-Shelat (2017) and Zanini et al. (2019), the average levels on engagement was assessed in terms of likes, comments and shares on all posts, both containing sustainability messages as well as regular

posts. This was done to get an understanding on if sustainability generated engagement or not. This provided a better understanding on what type of content that created consumer engagement which enabled utilising Atlas.ti again to code the posts that had generated engagement above average. In this way, the content that created more engagement could be analysed to get an understanding on what type of engagement was created in terms of the different sustainable communication approaches. As well as getting a clearer picture on how the consumers in the different communities engaged and what level of intensity the different ways of engaging had.

Ethical Considerations

This study was made in various digital media channels and given the consumer engagement aspect of it, a large amount of comments was observed and processed. As the focus was on observing how the communication was performed, we did not want to affect the communities by announcing our presence (Kozinets, 2020). Thereby applying an intellectual engagement strategy (ibid). The data observed was found on pages that were open to the public, hence the consumers participating in these communities were aware of the possibility that others would see what they had posted as they agreed to these terms by participating in these channels (ibid). However, the names were made anonymous in the study as the names of the participants were not of importance to the study given the approach of viewing consumers as a collective community rather than individuals (ibid). The data analyses process was made multiple times by both authors to ensure all data was properly categorised using different codes as well as eliminating the possibility of any bias (ibid).

Results and Analysis

Based on the theoretical framework, this chapter will present the results and

analysis of the study. Each event will be presented separately, starting with GHS. Which is followed by Gothia Cup, Summerburst and lastly WOW. They will be presented in terms of how they encode their corporate goals and how these are adapted into social messages, i.e. applying theories by Emery (2012) and Kilgour et al. (2015). Given the collective consumer approach, the process of decoding will not be addressed. However, consumer engagement will follow the sustainable marketing communication to present the response and feedback as per the model of communication (Ottosson & Parment, 2016; Shannon & Weaver, 1948). Response and feedback are evident through consumer engagement in terms of likes, comments, mentions and shares. The response simply is observed as these and feedback is represented through the levels of consumer engagement, e.g. more likes equals positive feedback and less likes is negative feedback (Dessart et al., 2015). The concept of noise can interrupt all processes in the model of communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1948). Whilst the study focuses on consumers as a collective, thus individual noise is not identified, some sources of noise are identified during the process of analysing and gathering the data which will be addressed and discussed.

Gothenburg Horse Show

GHS focuses on environmental sustainability in their sustainable marketing communication. This builds upon the organiser Got Event's corporate goal to "create Europe's leading sustainable events city" where they specify taking "an active role in making an environmental impact on society" (GotEvent, 2020). GHS has received Svensk Miljöbas' environmental sustainability certification four times (GotEvent, 2019). One of their largest sustainability initiatives is found in their project *Lövsta Future Challenge*

(GothenburgHorseSHow, 2020f). This project works to support Sweden's future within the sport as well as presenting an award towards sustainability projects within the equestrian industry (GothenburgHorseShow, 2020g).

Sustainable Marketing Communication

Understanding how GHS works with sustainable marketing communication becomes interesting as Got Event's goal also involves the entire city of Gothenburg. Different patterns of communication can be found in their channels, where the first example is their collaboration with Vida (gothenburghorseshow, 2020j).

"Vidas bedding-products consists of renewable Swedish forest raw material of good quality, primarily spruce from their own sawmill 🌲. A sustainable product both for our dear horses as well as the environment. This is why we are very happy to once again present @vidastallstro as our official provider of bedding products ❤️ #visespåscandinavium #gothenburghorseshow" (gothenburghorseshow, 2020j), translation

They present a sensation of pride to partner with Vida because their stable bedding is made from renewable material. GHS thus informs consumers on how they work with sustainability whilst also informing about a product with positive environmental impact. A similar approach is found in their discussion about food during the event.

"Not only equestrian stars in Scandinavium, star chefs will also enter the arena! The tourist council VästSverige and GHS invites the west Swedish profiles Sofia B Olsson and Thomas Sjögren to guest the GHS 2020. During the event, a west Swedish tasting experience will be offered in the Premium Lounge with focus on local products 🐾 Horse and amazing food, is

there a better combination? Link to the news in the bio! #visespåscandinavium #gothenburghorseshow #gothenburg” (gothenburghorseshow, 2019c), translation

GHS informs consumers about the locally produced food tying it to the west Swedish cuisine by incorporating famous chefs, Sofia B Olsson and Thomas Sjögren, to strengthen the interest of the message (gothenburghorseshow, 2019c). Whilst emphasis is put on environmental sustainability, they include social sustainability projects to approach sustainability holistically (Belz & Peattie, 2009).



Picture 1 - “Yesterday we, together with @agriasponnyklubb and Anton visited the children at @barnsjukhuset. It was a fantastic afternoon where Anton spread a ton of joy to those who needed it the most ❤️ Not only that, we also spent a day at @nordstan_gbg together with @hooksofficial for a fun hobbyhorse-jumping! What a day 😁 See more of the day in the story! #glädjeläker #drottningssilviasbarnsjukhus #nordstan #glädjeläker #drottningssilviasbarnsjukhus #nordstan #hooks #gothenburghorseshow” (gothenburghorseshow, 2020a), translation

Consumers are addressed on GHS’s activities supporting Queen Silvia Children’s hospital. They inform consumers about their efforts at the hospital, together with Agria, and at the

shopping centre Nordstan with Hööks (gothenburghorseshow, 2020a). These efforts spread joy for children and to strengthen this and spread the message in other channels they apply hashtags, such as #glädjeläker (#happinessheals) (Dessart et al., 2015). These posts illustrate how GHS informs consumers on different sustainability topics. Thus, GHS applies the Increase Awareness approach proposed by Emery (2012) to encode their messages. Which supports Dessart et al.’s (2015) argumentation on consumers’ desire to acquire knowledge. Furthermore, GHS also encodes their sustainability goals by providing knowledge on how to engage in sustainability, such as their collaboration with the Swedish train operator SJ (gothenburghorseshow, 2019b).

“We care about the environment and also want to encourage and inspire our visitors to do it. Therefore, it feels extra to together with SJ now be able to offer a 10 % discount if you choose to travel by train to GHS. Book via our websites to take advantage of the offer! @resmedsj” (gothenburghorseshow, 2019b), translation

Through a discount, consumers are empowered to choose a more sustainable mode of transportation. Similarly, GHS use their website to encode their goal through more detailed descriptions on how consumers can engage in the Lövsta Future Challenge sustainability award (LövstaFutureChallenge, 2019).

“The award can be resented to initiatives, organisations, individuals or companies but also to products and services that can contribute to positive change and a sustainable sport and horse industry. With sustainable we mean things that, for a long time to come, creates better opportunities for the planet and everything that lives here

whilst being economically viable” (LövstaFutureChallenge, 2019), translation

These examples illustrate how GHS incorporates educating consumers on how to make more sustainable decisions. Thus, applying an Empowerment approach to get consumers engaged in their sustainability goal (Emery, 2012). Sharing knowledge adds credibility to the sustainability work as it illustrates a certain level of knowledge within the area (Martin & Schouten, 2012). Whilst evidence of Empowerment and Increase Awareness are found in all their digital media channels, another approach is found only applied on their websites.

“During this year’s competitions extra efforts are made towards good logistics, a thorough sorting of waste, more vegetarian alternatives and digital solutions instead of paper” (GotEvent, 2019), translation

“For the fourth year in a row the smart “sustainability-obstacle”, Ecoestrian, takes place in Scandinavium during GHS and this time in denim! We have developed this idea and concept of recycled material further.....” (GothenburgHorseShow, 2020b), translation

These examples illustrate how GHS approaches sustainable marketing communication by focusing on addressing their differentiating factors compared to earlier years, such as waste management and obstacles. Thus, applying a Sustainable Choice approach (Emery, 2012). This approach aims at encouraging consumer to make more sustainable choices. Thus, *“digital solutions instead of paper”* is an example of how this is applied to illustrate GHS becoming more sustainable and thereby a better choice (GotEvent, 2019). This approach is limited to the website which could be explained by the uniqueness of each consumer (Ottoosson & Parment, 2016). The

message needs to be correctly formulated to be perceived as credible and given different experiences of consumers what is perceived as the truth can differ (ibid). If the message lacks credibility it can negatively impact consumer engagement (ibid).

On the website, GHS oftentimes emphasises its own importance in society, focusing on explaining that they are doing everything possible for sustainability. For instance, by addressing how *“A large focus is put on spreading more sustainable solutions in the arena and for the event. Amongst other there is an event specific environmental policy from this year forward”* (GothenburgHorseShow, 2020h), translation

Another example is when they address the environmental impact of the events.

“The usage of renewable energy sources to the largest extent possible (As a step towards a fossil free Gothenburg) ... Make transports more effective. Ensure they are performed with as little environmental impact as possible.....Work to ensure the food served during the event is responsibly produced and delivered to generate as low of environmental impact as possible” (GothenburgHorseShow, 2020e), translation

A vague language is utilised to stress the sustainability impact by GHS which does not suit any approach proposed by Emery (2012). However, it suits the theoretical understanding of CSR (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Ottoosson & Parment, 2016). This type of communication is typically applied to enhance the image of an organisation and its efforts (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Kotler, 2011). Applying CSR thus adds value to the organisation and its position within sustainability. However, by being explicit, other events, organisers and consumers can learn more about sustainability by becoming inspired on how to engage.

Hence, the results show that GHS applies Increase Awareness, Empowerment and Sustainable Choice as proposed by Emery (2012) as well as CSR to encode their sustainability goals (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Applying Increase Awareness and Empowerment provides a deeper understanding for sustainability and the organisation which, according to Dessart et al. (2015), tends to generate consumer engagement. Messages are adapted to digital media channels by including different stakeholders (Kilgour et al., 2015). Examples of stakeholders included are partners, such as Agria and Svensk Miljöbas, celebrities as the chef Thomas Sjögren and participants in images. These facilitate the transformation from a corporate message into as social, which is necessary to establish credibility (Kilgour et al., 2015; Martin & Schouten, 2012). Credibility is necessary to create consumer engagement (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Adding partners is also valuable as the choice of partners can define an organisation's position in sustainability (Martin & Schouten, 2012).

Consumer Engagement

Addressing GHS's levels on consumer engagement there is no observed difference between ordinary and sustainability content. However, there are some differences in the overall level of consumer engagement in between the Instagram- and Facebook page where the content on Facebook shows higher levels of consumer engagement. In terms of what type of consumer engagement consumers engage in all way possible. When, for instance, addressing social sustainability through an Increase Awareness approach by including photos and text about the a "family day" the consumers respond, mainly through comments and shares.



Picture 2- "The family day – for both big and small. The Wednesday is dedicated to all horse loving families with a program full of Open Arena, police horses, crafting, hobby horses and of course the week's funniest show jumping– Sverigeponnyn." (GothenburgHors eShow, 2020d)

Another post, incorporating both Increase Awareness and Empowerment, is a competition where the consumers have the opportunity to win tickets to GHS when donating money to a charity event called "Musikhjälpen" (GothenburgHorseShow, 2019a). Consumers get rewarded for engaging in sustainability which generates comments and shares. This indicates that consumer approve of this type of content (Dessart et al., 2015). Whilst engagement is lower on Instagram compared to Facebook, consumers still engage in the sustainability content. An example of an Instagram post which generates engagement is when GHS applies Empowerment to encourage consumers to use more environmentally conscious modes of transportation with the caption: "*We care for the environment and want to encourage and inspire our visitors to do the same. Therefore it feel extra to now, together with SJ be able to offer 10% discount if you choose to go by train to GHS. Book through our website to access the offer!*" (gothenburghorseshow, 2019b). This illustrates how they emphasise environmental sustainability to generate consumer

engagement, which particularly generated comments. How engaging Sustainable Choice is cannot be assessed given that it is only applied on websites. The websites do not offer two-way communication; thus, consumer cannot show how they feel about the encoding by applying Sustainable Choice (Ottosson & Parment, 2013).

The observed difference between Instagram and Facebook could be explained by the channels' different receivers (Shannon & Weaver, 1948). Meaning that the communities may differ in the channels and thereby create different levels of consumer engagement. Regardless of level of engagement, the engagement intensity is similar on both channels with many comments and mentions on the sustainability posts. Consumer engagement indicates that consumers are affected by the content, thus functioning as feedback to the organisation (Williams et al., 2015). Consumer engagement is not only an indicator of the consumer approving of the content (Dessart et al., 2015) but also an indication that the content is perceived as credible (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). Thus, when consumer engagement is lower, it becomes difficult to convince consumers that the messages are credible. However, all content presented by GHS is in Swedish despite its international status. This is likely to cause noise for the potential international crowd. Thus, whilst there is consumer engagement around sustainability, communicating in English could make sustainability part of the event experience to a wider audience than today.

Gothia Cup

Gothia Cup, emphasises social sustainability and the organiser, BK Häcken, wants to create sustainable change through football by stating their goal as: *“With football as the common denominator, we want to create meetings; Meetings that provide knowledge and leads to self-development both on and off*

the playing field here at home or abroad” (GothiaCup, 2020a). BK Häcken's efforts led to the tournament being nominated for the prestigious Gyllene Hjulet-award in 2019 (GothiaCup, 2019b). One of the most prominent projects is their *“Meet the World”*-project, sponsored by SKF, which aims at giving as many youths as possible the opportunity to be a part of the Gothia Cup experience (GothiaCup, 2020b). Which they describe as *“When you go to Gothia Cup, you might fulfil your dream of playing football in front of 60000 screaming fans. You will travel, meet people from all over the world and focus on your love of football for a whole week”* (ibid).

Sustainable Marketing Communication

Football as a method to bring people together is reflected in their sustainable marketing communication. One approach to how Gothia Cup encodes their sustainability goal is evident in the case of Diyan.

“Eight-year-old football lover Diyan Ramos is at Heden right now, selling bracelets. All the money goes to the rebuilding of football pitches in Lebanon, so that children who have fled war can get the chance to play football just like him. Diyan will be at Heden until Friday!💙💜 #gothiacup #warchild @ Heden” (GothiaCup, 2019a)

They provide the story about a child who escaped war and found consolidation in football who now wants to help others by making and selling bracelets together with the organisation War Child (ibid). Thus, consumers are encouraged to engage by purchasing bracelets. A similar approach is found in their collaboration with McDonald's.

“During Gothia Cup @mcdonaldssverige will donate 3 SEK to the Gothia Cup Foundation for every cup of coffee sold at any of their Gothenburg restaurants ☕️ ⭐️”

[#gothiacup #mcdonalds](#)" (gothiacup_official, 2019a)

When buying coffee from McDonald's, consumers become engaged as 3 SEK is donated to Gothia Cup Foundation for every cup sold. Thereby, consumers are provided a method to engage in making Gothia Cup a possible experience for more youths. Gothia Cup also encourages consumers to participate in the tournament and thereby become a part of the Gothia Cup experience and atmosphere.



Picture 3 - "Gothia Cup is the world's largest and most international youth football tournament. A unique football experience that you can be a part of. Our tournament is open for all teams and academies in the age category of 11 to 18 years old - both boys and girls. No matter what country you're from, no matter what skill level you're at - You are invited. See more and register your team at <https://www.gothiacup.se/>" (GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2020b)

Consumers of their digital media content are encouraged to have their team sign up for the tournament. This caption is accompanied by a video illustrating the experience of previous participants. Based on these examples we can observe that Gothia Cup applied Empowerment as a sustainable marketing communication approach (Emery, 2012). Gothia Cup applies Empowerment to engage consumers in their partners' sustainability projects as well as showing consumers that they can create change by participating in the

tournament. Incorporating previous participants to transform the message into a social (Kilgour et al., 2015) is found to be widely applied by Gothia Cup. Another example of it is when they inform consumers about Paul through images and stories.

"Through sports and social activities, the leaders at CF Gothia, the sports school in Brazzaville, want to keep children off the street – a life often characterized by violence and crime. Ten-year-old Paul is one of those kids. In conversation with our volunteer on site, Sture Genemo, he says that he only dreams of one thing: "I want to become a football professional like Messi!" he says. Read [more](#) 📖" (GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2020a)

Paul attends CF Gothia, a school run by Gothia Cup in Congo. Gothia Cup provides information about life in Congo through Paul's perspective. This was communicated through short posts on Instagram and Facebook with links to an in-depth article on the website. In this way, Gothia Cup allows consumers to get a better understanding of life in different parts of the world whilst presenting their sustainability projects, e.g. CF Gothia. This is also evident when they interview a former participant and partner, Sumet Kaetipnet.

"Sumet Kaewtipnet has dedicated his entire adult life caring for orphans. Through his own soccer club, Thamrong Thai, thousands of children has been giving a better future. Read [more](#) 📖" (GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2019e)

Sumet is a coach in Thailand who has participated in the tournament multiple times. Through his efforts of creating and maintaining a football club he has helped many children by giving them a purpose and a future. Hence, Gothia Cup incorporates previous participants to illustrate different

social situations to increase the knowledge of their consumers. This is also evident in examples of Gothia Special Olympics Trophy where they, as part of their goal on inclusion, want to shed light on intellectual disabilities (GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2019c; gothiacup_official, 2019c).

“Opening Ceremony for Gothia Special Olympics Trophy! A tournament that offers young people with some form of intellectual disability the opportunity to participate in the World Youth Cup! Former Sweden international Kim Källström started the tournament 9 years ago. Now it has teams from 15 different countries! ⚽️👉 The group stage is played at Kviberg 8 and the finals on Thursday at Heden! ☆”
(gothiacup_official, 2019c)

“Next year there will be a new girl class in Gothia Special Olympics Trophy. Read more and take a look at our new movie that shows what Gothia Special Olympics Trophy is all about - integration in action.”
(GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2019c)

These examples illustrate how they create awareness about the tournament to increase knowledge on intellectual disabilities as well as interest for the tournament by, for instance, including Kim Källström, a former international football star. The topic of gender equality is also addressed by announcing a specific class for girls. Consumers are thereby made aware, and educated, of these topics. Hence, Gothia Cup applies Increase Awareness in their sustainable marketing communication (Emery, 2012). Which is a common approach to addressing sustainability as knowledge is vital when building an understanding of the need to act and engage in sustainability (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Besides educating consumers on social issues and providing tools on how to

engage, Gothia Cup also communicates sustainability by addressing their own role.

“Being involved in children’s issues away from football and outside Sweden has always been an important element of the Gothia Cup. Our significance beyond the sideline has increased. The schools in the Congo are an example of this. Another is the initiative known as the Gothia Special Olympics Trophy, a class for young people with developmental problems. A third is the Meet the World tournament, which is run in partnership with SKF in more than 20 poorer countries. All this is included in the Gothia Cup Foundation, a cooperation between Gothia Cup and the enterprise”
(GothiaCup, 2018)

They stress the importance of the event’s existence by stating that *“Our significance beyond the sideline has increased”* and provide information on their previous work. Another example of this is found in their website- article about the football team Thamrong Thai:

“Thamrong Thai has won the Gothia Cup twice over the years. However, this summer Sumet visited Gothenburg without a team. To run the club has oftentimes been tough and costly and at one point both houses and pitches were ruined in a flooding. Gothia Cup did for a few years sponsor the club through the Gothia Cup Village project however now Thamrong Thai is put on hold”
(GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2019e)

They emphasise the importance of their engagement by illustrating how they have helped improve lives of youths, globally, through their investments. This way of communicating sustainability is in accordance with what researcher is calling CSR (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Ottosson &

Parment, 2016) to provide a positive image of the organisation and the event by addressing former achievements and stressing the importance of their own existence.

Thus, to encode their sustainability goal, Gothia Cup utilises three different approaches: Increase Awareness, Empowerment (Emery, 2012) and CSR (Belz & Peattie, 2009). By utilising digital media channels, they can reach a wider audience and to reach further they also utilise hashtags (Dessart et al., 2015). Examples of this is found in posts about Diyan as well as McDonald's. Additionally, to facilitate the transformation from corporate to social message, they apply stakeholders (Kilgour et al., 2015). Whilst Kilgour et al. (2015) propose using Influencers, Gothia Cup mainly incorporates celebrities, e.g. Kim Källström, partners as SKF, as well as cases of participants. These stakeholders not only help spread the sustainability messages, but they also add value in terms of adding credibility to the messages (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Martin & Schouten, 2012).

Consumer Engagement

There was no observed difference between regular posts and sustainability related posts during the period of study in terms of consumer engagement. However, minor differences could be observed between the different communication approaches. Content applying an Empowerment approach tends to generate more comments as consumers oftentimes are encouraged to comments by teaching others different things. e.g. an Instagram post where consumers are asked to share what the football term Nutmeg is in their own languages.

“Tunnel! Nutmeg! What do you call it in your language?#gothiacup”(gothiacup_official, 2019d)

Gothia Cup empowers learning from others to build a strong community. Which is evident in other examples, for instance, when they run their campaign *“Celebrate the game”* (GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2019a). This aims at educating spectators, specifically parents, to support children in a positive manner (ibid). This gained shares and comments from the consumers (ibid). On Facebook, a common approach to consumer engagement is through comments where consumers show support to teams (GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2019b).

Facebook user 1: *“Good luck to all. Especially Australia’s Northern Redbacks Womens Soccer Club. Already making friends.”* (ibid)

Facebook user 2: *“Good Luck to all teams from almost every corner of the world. I especially wish the team from Moçambique a great stay. ⚽ Força 🍀”* (ibid)

In turn, Increase Awareness generates more likes and shares. Dessart et al. (2015) argue that knowledge leads to consumer engagement, thus explaining why these approaches are applied and engaging consumers. The eagerness to share information further explains why consumers oftentimes mention friends (ibid), as for instance displayed in a video showing Ordin FC from Brazil *“demonstrating their football-tennis skills”* (gothiacup_official, 2019b). Similarly, a video portraying different teams from the *“SKF- Meet the world”*- project dancing and singing together (GothiaCup-TheWorldYouthTournament, 2019d), illustrating the spirit of Gothia Cup, leads to many likes. Consumers thereby show appreciation of the content (Dessart et al., 2015). As argued by Dessart et al. (2015), another sign of appreciation is sharing the content with others. These posts are thereby observed to be shared to a larger extent. Whilst no differences can be observed

between sustainability- and regular content, there are differences between their Facebook- and Instagram pages. Even though the Facebook-page has three times more followers, the amount of for instance likes is higher on Instagram. The third approach, external to the four proposed by Emery (2012), is mainly applied to Gothia Cup and BK Häcken's websites thus does not allow for visible consumers engagement.

Based on the theoretical understanding of consumer engagement (Dessart et al., 2015) as well as observing the Gothia Cup community, liking a post seems to be the lowest level of engagement. Whereas mentioning a friend indicates that you want to share knowledge with a friend (ibid). More engaged consumers thus engage in commenting or sharing content to engage deeper with the event. However, Gothia Cup does not engage further with consumers in the comment section. Thus, questions by consumer remain unanswered. According to Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014), digital media channels, such as Instagram and Facebook, are social networks to establish relationships with the consumers. Gothia Cup should therefore answer comments and engage with consumers further than simply providing content (ibid). Otherwise they risk losing potential future engagement (ibid).

Summerburst

Summerburst focuses on inclusion and having fun, i.e. social sustainability, thus working towards the organiser Live Nation's mission of "*strengthening the Earth*" (LiveNation, 2020). However, few posts about sustainability are found in their digital media channels and this is the only event that does not have a webpage dedicated to sustainability. Despite little communication about sustainability, they do engage in sustainability projects. The main project is a collaboration with the organisation Dare to Care where they work to "*involve the*

audience to create an audience culture that promotes communication, reciprocity and interplay in sexual relations" (Summerburst, 2020a). Additionally, they offer free tickets to people accompanying people with disabilities (Summerburst, 2020b), to ensure the event is available for everyone.

Sustainable Marketing Communication

The collaboration with Dare to Care is visible in all of their digital media channels through pictures, videos and texts. On Instagram they have a photo of individuals who are Dare to Care volunteers who are at the event to inform about for instance how to act if you see someone getting sexually harassed:



Picture 4- "*Do you want to become a Dare to Care volunteer? ... During the festival, you will be able to talk to RFSU-educated Dare to Care volunteers about how you can read signals, how you better communicate about sex and how you can act if you see someone risk being exposed to sexual harassment*" (summerburst_festival, 2020b), translation

In addition, a video named "*Stop sexual abuse – 6 way to act*" was published four days before the festival took place (summerburst_festival, 2020a; SummerburstFestival, 2019c). The video displays festival consumers together with information on how to think and act if someone is harassed. Summerburst also utilises their website to provide information on what to do: "*Take care of each other! If you see anything that deviate from the normal or anyone who needs help?*

Find Summerburst staff who are on site. The security staff is dressed in red/orange vests.” (Summerburst, 2020a). In these ways, Summerburst encodes the corporate message to a social message (Kilgour et al., 2015) by informing consumers what they are doing to prevent sexual harassment and how to seek help on the festival. Meanwhile, they encourage consumers to change their behaviour regarding sexual abuse by providing them with tools, such as becoming volunteers and how to think at Summerburst, before coming to the festival. The event is thus applying two of the communication objectives that Emery (2012) refers to; Increase Awareness and Empowerment. Hence, the two approaches are combined, which supports Ottosson and Parment’s (2016) discussion and adds credibility to the message by displaying a deeper knowledge. The purpose of the posts with mixed communication approaches, is to first inform consumers about sustainability issues and then give them tools to act. However, these approaches are also used separately. Through for instance Summerburst’s partnership with SJ, consumers are offered a package deal if they take the train to the festival:

“SJ and Live Nation will have two special passenger wagons to Gothenburg from Stockholm with a really good offer and happenings on the train!” (Summerburst, 2019)

The event is thus using the partnership to encourage consumers to change their transportation habits. Moreover, on Valentine’s Day, Summerburst posts a Facebook video of participants at the festival showing couples and groups of friends, together with a heart (SummerburstFestival, 2020). The message of the video is to encourage consumers to mention friends and write nice things about them. Hence, utilising SMC to engage consumers in sustainability issues (Martin & Schouten, 2012), by

applying Empowerment as a way of communicating (Emery, 2012). By providing consumers with tools to become more sustainable, both socially and environmentally, they thereby take a holistic sustainability approach (Belz & Peattie, 2009).

Consistent with their goal of inclusion, there is a short series of videos together with an Influencer called Lady Silver (SummerburstFestival, 2019b). The videos follow this 80-year old woman backstage at the festival, learning how to DJ from another DJ. Hence, informing consumers that everyone is welcome, regardless of age. Furthermore, after the event took place, they posted a video called “Summerburst Gothenburg 2019”. A compilation of videos from the event showing participants dancing and DJs performing, emphasising happiness and joy. Thus, informing consumers of the fun of visiting the event. Lady Silver and the video are thus examples of Summerburst utilising Increase Awareness on their digital media channels as a communication objective (Emery, 2012) to get consumers involved in sustainability issues (Martin & Schouten, 2012). Hence, in regard to how Summerburst communicates sustainability, they apply two of the communication approaches to encode their corporate goals (Emery, 2012); Increase Awareness and Empowerment, which are used both separately and combined.

As displayed, Summerburst has a focus on social sustainability in their communication, however, the event organiser; Live Nation, has a more environmental focus. Since the corporate message needs to be transformed into a social message both in general when it comes to SMC (Martin & Schouten, 2012; Shannon & Weaver, 1948) and to create engagement (Kilgour et al., 2015), this shows that Summerburst’s approach to SMC would not generate engagement since there is no

clear link between the event organiser's and the event's sustainability work. Moreover, it is also evident that there is a focus on visually communicate sustainability related issues and strengthen this with captions in relation to stakeholders. In this way, Summerburst tries to transform Live Nation's corporate message to social messages (Kilgour et al., 2015). It is important to create a social message for the consumers to understand, and an effective way is by utilising a third party (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). Additionally, the use of third parties in the sustainability communication strengthens the organisation's credibility (Martin & Schouten, 2012; Ottosson & Parment, 2016) thus Summerburst's sustainability posts with partners as Dare to Care and SJ, influencers as Lady Silver, celebrities as DJs and participants adds credibility by creating social messages.

Consumer Engagement

Even though Summerburst's sustainable marketing communication is limited, the existing posts generate high consumer engagement (Dessart et al., 2015). On September 3rd 2019, the event announced a "tribute concert for mental health awareness" in memory of Avicii, which would take place later that year (SummerburstFestival, 2019a). The caption says "... All income from the evening goes in favour to initiatives within mental illness and suicide prevention." Thus, focusing on social sustainability by emphasising the topic of mental health and providing the consumers with means how to support the cause, hence applying Increase Awareness and Empowerment. These posts generated great amounts of likes, comments, shares and mentions both on Facebook and Instagram, which indicates that the consumers approve the content (Dessart et al., 2015). The consumers are thus contributing with response (Shannon & Weaver, 1948) to the event, which can be valuable feedback to utilise in future work. The social sustainability communication is also creating

engagement in a post of a woman dancing, with a caption emphasising having fun together:



Picture 5- "GET EXCITED PARTY PEOPLE! The wait is soon over! What an amazing weekend we will have in Gothenburg! Sun! 10 points artists! And of course! WE GET TO HAVE YOU THERE! Together we will create nice memories for life! ..." (summerburst_festival, 2019)

This Empowerment post generates consumer engagement, especially in terms of likes, which indicates that the event has been successful in transforming the corporate message to a social message (Kilgour et al., 2015). While also having a clear connection between the event and the social message (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). Thus, when Summerburst post content about, for instance, togetherness and mental health in their digital media channels, they focus on providing a clear link between the event and the message, so the consumers receive it as intended. Furthermore, the high engagement could imply that the two communication approaches used, Increase Awareness and Empowerment, are efficient when creating consumer engagement. By using Increase Awareness and Empowerment on the sustainability-related posts, Summerburst is thus able to get important information through the engagement (Ottosson & Parment, 2016), which they can use in developing the event (Ryan & Jones, 2012). Moreover, every fifth sustainability post seems to have a clearly higher engagement

level than the others. In addition, the communication appears to provide more engagement on the sustainability posts compared to the other posts published, both on Instagram and Facebook. Hence, this is showing that these two communication approaches could be the most applicable ones when talking about sustainability in an event context.

Furthermore, Summerburst has significantly more mentions than comments when looking at the engagement intensity. Since, mentioning is a common engagement when consumers most likely will purchase something (Choi et al., 2017), this indicates that Summerburst's communities consist of consumers who have the intention of going to the festival. At the same time, the sustainability posts generate many shares, proving that the content is something consumers embrace and want to stand for (Dessart et al., 2015), and thus sharing with their friends and family. As consumers tend to share posts when the message is well connected to the organisation and the organisation reaches the right consumers (Kilgour et al., 2015), it appears that Summerburst succeeds with these aspects when informing consumers about sustainability and providing advice on how to deal with it.

Way Out West

WOW's primarily focus is environmental sustainability and the event organiser Luger formulates their goal as to work with *"sustainability issues at large and to reduce our own ecological footprint"* (Luger, 2020). The festival is regarded as quite ground-breaking since their decision, in 2012, to serve only vegetarian food (WayOutWest, 2020a). They aim to become *"the world's first climate transparent music festival"* in 2020 (WayOutWest, 2020c) and one step towards achieving this was replacing all single-use plastic plates, cutlery and straws in 2019.

Though not as visible, WOW include social sustainability projects in their strategy as they collaborate with West Pride and Dare to Care by making sure everyone feels safe and welcome at the festival whilst also LGBT certifying the event. The efforts and projects contribute to their *"ISO 20121 certification"*, showing that they work with sustainability holistically and WOW was, in 2013, the *"the first music festival in the world"* to receive this certification (WayOutWest, 2020c).

Sustainable Marketing Communication

WOW's collaboration with its partner Dare to Care is communicated in all digital media channels, for instance in this post on Instagram:



Picture 6-“Dare to care this weekend! Here are 6 ways to prevent sexual harassment and assault. Read them through and spread the word.”

(wayoutwestfestival, 2019b)

The caption, encouraging consumers to care this weekend, is combined with six images providing information on how to act to prevent harassment and assault. Thereby raising awareness on the social issue whilst providing information to fight it. WOW is thus transforming Luger's corporate message into a social message (Kilgour et al., 2015) by utilising both Increase Awareness and Empowerment, presented by Emery (2012). In addition, on their website they state: *"In the project Dare to Care we work closely with RFSU and Svensk Live to create a safe*

environment without sexual harassment and assault within the live music world – and society at large”(WayOutWest, 2020c). Hence, they are informing the consumers about their position in this issue as well as what they do to create a safe festival. Furthermore, the consumers are enlightened about sustainability when WOW on an Instagram post writes “*We’re becoming climate transparent*” (wayoutwestfestival, 2019a).



Picture 7- (ibid)

The photo communicates the change in textual form together with an image of participants at the festival. Thus, Increase Awareness is applied (Emery, 2012) both on this post and on their website, to inform the consumers about social and environmental sustainability and how the event is taking action in these matters.

Moreover, WOW has an Instagram post of a tram where the caption is: “*When in Gothenburg, get on the tram*” (wayoutwestfestival, 2019g), thus encouraging consumers to use the public transportation offered in Gothenburg. This approach is also evident on Facebook where they are announcing their collaboration with SJ with a picture of the event and SJ’s logos, together with a caption: “*Start your festival experience on the train ride! Book the WOW festival train from Stockholm to Gothenburg and enjoy the pre-party with entertainment and delicious vegetarian food*” (wayoutwestfestival, 2019e). These posts

illustrate how WOW encourages consumers to change their behaviour which goes in line with the communication approach Empowerment (Emery, 2012). These cases, focusing on environmental sustainability, are addressed by including third parties. Which, according to Kilgour et al. (2015) is an effective tool to create consumer engagement. Moreover, these posts illustrate how WOW utilises their digital media channels; capturing the consumer’s attention through pictures with a caption developing the initial message further to create a deeper understanding, oftentimes through a collaboration with a stakeholder. Additionally, it can be observed that when communicating sustainability on their Facebook and Instagram, they tend to use videos. One example being their collaboration with Zoégas:



Picture 8- “*ZOÉGAS wants to do their part in contributing to a waste free WOW. This year, they are introducing this edible cup! It both looks AND tastes just like a waffle and you can eat it after you have enjoyed a refreshingly warm and tasty cup of ZOÉGAS coffee.*” (wayoutwestfestival, 2019h)

This campaign provides the consumers with an opportunity to use edible mugs instead of using paper mugs to minimize waste. WOW also has an Instagram series called “*Sunday Recipe*”, where they post vegan- and vegetarian recipes every Sunday in collaboration with professional- and amateur chefs, i.e. both celebrities and influencers, to show options to a more environmentally

sustainable diet. Since Sustainable Marketing Communication is used to impact consumers' sustainability actions (Martin & Schouten, 2012), WOW is in two different ways showing people what sustainable choices they have in terms of food and beverages. Hence, applying Sustainable Choice as a communication approach (Emery, 2012). WOW is thus encouraging people to join their sustainability goals by choosing more sustainable alternatives.

On the website, WOW announces: "*As the only festival in Sweden, and as the first music festival in the world in 2013, WOW holds an ISO 20121 certification.*" (WayOutWest, 2020c). Here, WOW wants consumers to know that the event is sustainable, thus indicate that consumers should pick WOW over other events that are not sustainable. This is an indication of them applying the communication objective Convince (Emery, 2012) to encode their sustainability goals. This approach is rarely applied, only four times on WOW's website and once on Facebook during the period of the study. Thus, it is primarily used through a telling approach on the website rather than transforming it to a social message on Facebook and Instagram. Since two-way communication is important in Sustainable Marketing Communication (Belz & Peattie, 2009; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014), this shows that this communication approach is not used in a way that can strengthen the event's relationship with its consumers. Because the consumers are not able to engage and communicate with the event when Convince is applied.

Furthermore, another type of sustainable marketing communication can be observed. For instance, on the website, they write that "*It is a matter of course for us to care for the planet, our audience and society at large. This is something we work with on a daily basis in all aspects of the festival*"

(WayOutWest, 2020c). The event does not specify how they work with sustainability but rather gives the consumers a vague description. This way of communicating does not fit in any of the four communication approaches proposed by Emery (2012) but is rather another way of doing it. The vagueness in the communication is a common characteristic for CSR (Kotler, 2011; Ottosson & Parment, 2016; Sanclemente-Téllez, 2017), hence this is what this example can be referred to.

As illustrated, WOW utilises all four communication approaches proposed by Emery (2012) to encode their sustainability goal in their digital media channels. Given their position as a sustainable event, this could be a good approach. However, further studies are needed to determine the most effective approach. They are also utilising different stakeholders in their communication to create a social message, which is in line with Kilgour et al.'s (2015) argumentation. This way of communicating is thus giving the event credibility (Martin & Schouten, 2012), which contributes to engagement (Kilgour et al., 2015). Which is an explanation for having celebrities as for example professional chefs, partners as SJ, influencers as amateur chefs and participants, in their different channels.

Consumer Engagement

In the context of this study, posts incorporating sustainability on WOW's Facebook generate higher level of response and feedback (Shannon & Weaver, 1948) than regular posts. Evidence of this is, for instance, found in a post announcing the singer Solange. The caption in the post, applying an Increase Awareness approach, describes how she writes about "*afrofuturistic symbolism and scenes from the Third Ward neighbourhood where she grew up*" (wayoutwestfestival, 2019f) which generates high consumer engagement in terms of likes, comments, mentions and

shares. Another example from Facebook is when WOW utilises Empowerment to tell consumers how the festival is available to everyone through a new streaming service.

“For those of you who can't join us in Slotsskogen next week – we are proud to announce that TV4 Play will live stream selected performances from our two main stages in Slotsskogen.” (wayoutwestfestival, 2019c)

This type of post creates a high degree of likes and shares, hence showing that the consumers agree on this content (Dessart et al., 2015). On their Instagram page, no distinction can be made between regular and sustainability posts. However, it can be observed that comments are a frequent consumer engagement approach, e.g. in their post with the partner Spendrups when they announce their organic beer “Norrlands Guld Ljus”, thus applying Sustainable Choice, with a caption saying: *“When WOW in 2014 requested an organic beer, an odd item at the time, they responded to the challenge by producing the Norrlands Ljus beer especially for the festival”* (wayoutwestfestival, 2019d). Getting consumer engaged through for instance comments is the goal of Sustainable Marketing Communication as this is a step towards engaging in these sustainability issues (Martin & Schouten, 2012). This can only happen if the message is presented appropriately in a suitable media, which seemingly is done successfully by WOW (Calder et al., 2009; Ramirez et al., 2018; Syrdal & Bok, 2017; Syrdal & Briggs, 2018). Whilst Increase Awareness, Empowerment and Sustainable Choice prove to be engaging in this study, Convince is barely generating any type of consumer engagement. The only post applying Convince on Facebook says: *“Choosing to take the train to Way Out West is not only a smooth way to travel, it's also the most climate smart option. Buy your tickets at*

www.sj.se” (wayoutwestfestival, 2019e) and generates few comments and likes and no shares or mentions. Not presenting content utilising this approach in a channel offering two-way communication can be regarded as noise as it is not possible for consumers to provide feedback (Shannon & Weaver, 1948). Given the one example, it indicates that applying the Convince approach may not be appropriate for their digital media channels as it does not generate consumer engagement (Kilgour et al., 2015). However, given that it is only applied in a channel offering two-way communication once, it requires further studies.

On the point of two-way communication, when consumers on WOW's Facebook and Instagram engage through comments, it is both questions to the event and comments on what they think about the post. In the Zoégas campaign for example, a consumer writes: *“Is it gluten free?”* (wayoutwestfestival, 2019h). Even though Facebook and Instagram enable two-way communication, the event never responds to the consumers' comments. However, in partnership-posts, the partner sometimes engages in responding to the consumer instead, such as when Zoégas replies to this question by writing:

“Unfortunately not! This is the first edible cup that is good enough. Though we have made the supplier aware that we wish to have it gluten free so that everyone can eat it. It is however vegan. Though, we will have gluten free options.” (ibid)

Dialogues when communicating sustainability is important (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Ottosson & Parment, 2016) and in this way, two-way communication is performed, even though the communication is not between the consumers and the event. Overall, consumer engagement in the channels, especially when applying Increase

Awareness and Empowerment is high. These approaches provide a higher engagement intensity with more shares and comments compared to the other two approaches. High levels of consumer engagement are signs of WOW being perceived as credible and knowledgeable within the field of sustainability (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). Hence, this can be an indication that the event is communicating in an efficient way to create engagement among its consumers.

Discussion

Based on the results, the most frequent approaches towards encoding the sustainability goals into sustainable marketing communication messages are by applying Increase Awareness and Empowerment (Emery, 2012). Regardless of event or sustainability focus, these are the most applied approaches as well as the only approaches identified in all the events. This supports Dessart et al. (2015) as they argue consumers are eager to learn which tends to increase levels of consumer engagement. As argued by Oliveira and Panyik (2015) increased levels of consumer engagement is a signal of the message being credible. With credibility having a central in sustainable marketing communication (Martin & Schouten, 2012) this is therefore important. Hence, based on this study, Increase Awareness and Empowerment becomes the most applicable sustainability approaches. Although Sustainable Choice and Convince are found within the context of this study they are not as widely applied. Hence, whilst the results support previous research (Dessart et al., 2015; Oliveira & Panyik, 2015) future research could test the efficiency of the different approaches as well as addressing sustainable marketing communication in other types of events and cultural contexts.

Based on the theoretical understanding of events as individualistic and unique

experiences (Getz, 2008; Page & Connell, 2014) this could serve as explanation as to why Sustainable Choice and Convince are not widely applied by the events. Sustainable Choice and Convince builds upon comparisons (Emery, 2012). Comparing unique experience could therefore be more difficult to achieve. Given the need to establish credibility (Martin & Schouten, 2012) when addressing sustainability to engage consumers, this could be difficult through Sustainable Choice and Convince. For instance, when GHS and WOW apply Sustainable Choice it is oftentimes done when addressing food and partners. Partners help establish credibility and the topic of vegetarianism, or veganism, having a positive impact on the environment is well established. Hence, the events can feel fairly certain they provide the correct information, thereby being more comfortable applying these approaches in this context (Ottosson & Parment, 2016). However, to establish an understanding on why these approaches have not been applied to a larger extent by the events this needs further research.

An interesting addition to the four communication approaches, proposed by Emery (2012), in the study is the emergence of a fifth approach which is referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR. Based on the theoretical framework it is evident that events, when encoding their corporate goals, apply CSR to their sustainable marketing communication. Previous achievements are addressed to illustrate the organisations' important role in building a sustainable future for society (Belz & Peattie, 2009). Through a vague language they provide information on their achievements which, as argued by Kotler (2011) and Belz and Peattie (2009) oftentimes is done to build a positive image of the organisation. An image of the organisation being an important member of society given their contributions to it (Belz & Peattie, 2009). This approach is mainly

applied on the organisations' websites and most frequently appearing in the pages dedicated to sustainability. Hence, Summerburst is the only event which does not apply CSR nor has a webpage dedicated to sustainability. Whether this is an indication that they do not want to apply a CSR-approach to their sustainable marketing communication (ibid) or have no desire to be transparent about their sustainability efforts and the organisation's impact (Martin & Schouten, 2012) needs future research. By applying CSR solely to the website, the other events thus, apply a telling approach rather than opening up for a dialogue. Thereby proving difficult to assess in terms of consumer engagement. However, given the understanding of need for credible communication (ibid) and CSR as generally being viewed as an approach not perceived as genuine (Ottosson & Parment, 2016), it is possible it has limited effect on consumer engagement. However, this needs future research given the lack of CSR applied to channels offering two-way communication.

Moreover, the results of this study contradict Ottosson and Parment's (2016) argument on sustainability having negative impact on consumer engagement. The results of this study illustrate that sustainability content has the same, and sometimes higher, engagement than regular content. This can be due to the events applying Increase Awareness and Empowerment which displays the events' expertise within the certain topics (Martin & Schouten, 2012). This contribution of the study needs future research to validate the results by being tested in different cultural and events contexts.

Additionally, credibility plays a central role in sustainable marketing communication, as argued by Martin and Schouten (2012), where a clear link between the corporate and social message is important (Kilgour et al., 2015). Oliveira and Panyik (2015), amongst others,

support this statement by arguing the need for the message to suit the sender, i.e. the need for a clear connection, for the message to be perceived as credible. An interesting finding is therefore Live Nation's emphasis on environmental sustainability whereas Summerburst focuses on social aspects of sustainability. This thus contradicts previous research since Summerburst's content on sustainability tends to generate high consumer engagement. Based on this study, the understanding of Summerburst is that their content incorporating sustainable marketing messages have a close connection to the event. So does the partners they include. This indicates the need for a connection between the event and the messages and not the organiser, thus the role and dynamics of the organiser and the event needs to be further studied.

Continuing the importance of credibility, this study supports previous statements of third parties adding value to the sustainability work (Martin & Schouten, 2012). According to Kilgour et al. (2015) organisations should incorporate Influencers to transform the corporate message into social messages. This is because social messages create more consumer engagement (ibid). Whilst Influencers are found to be incorporated in the study, three other major stakeholders are also found: Partners, Celebrity Endorses and Participants.

- *Partner* - A sponsor, paid partnership, or collaboration with another organisation, e.g. SJ for GHS.
- *Celebrity Endorser* - A famous person used in collaboration to use their fame to spread the word, e.g. Kim Källström for Gothia Cup.
- *Participant* - A paying consumer of the event, e.g. a football player at Gothia Cup or the music event audience at Summerburst.

The most utilised partner found in this context is partners which, based on Kilgour et al.'s (2015) study could be counterproductive due to them oftentimes being other organisations trying to sell products. Based on the theoretical understanding, applying participants could be a more appropriate approach to illustrate the experience of the events. However, partners can add credibility as they illustrate where the event's position is within certain areas of sustainability (Martin & Schouten, 2012). Such as the case with Vida Stallström found in GHS where GHS illustrates their view on horse keeping and sustainability. However, given this ambiguous understanding of third parties and stakeholders this needs future research.

Furthermore, sources of noise, as proposed by Shannon and Weaver (1948), could be identified on a more general level. All events are large international events, attracting consumers from all over the globe. However, some of the events provide information solely in Swedish which is considered noise (ibid) as most people, globally, do not comprehend the language. Thus, when GHS solely communicate in Swedish on their Facebook- and Instagram pages, this disturbs the opportunity to interact with, and spread sustainability knowledge to, international consumers. Building relationships is one of the purposes with utilising these channels as relationships allows for the organisations to spread information (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). The relational aspects also provide a second source of noise which is the events' lack of engagement in their channels. None of the events engage in replying to comments which can jeopardise the relationship with the consumer as they may feel neglected (ibid). However, whether this affects the consumer engagement in the events' different digital media channels or not needs further research as this did not fit the frame of the study.

The type of engagement and engagement intensity was however studied. The goal of sustainable marketing communication is to engage consumers (Martin & Schouten, 2012). A higher level of engagement intensity indicates that consumers are more engaged in the message, thus more willing to act upon the messages (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). The results of this study could identify different levels of engagement intensity supporting previous research by, for instance, Dessart et al. (2015). This study contributes to the understanding by illustrating the levels of engagement intensity, see Figure 7, found in these events' digital media channels.

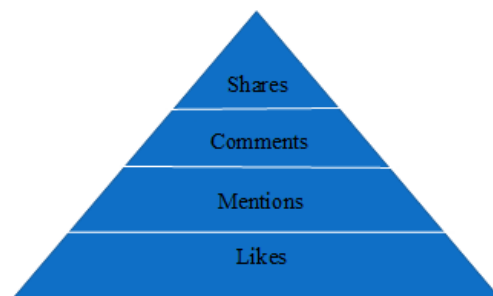


Figure 7: Levels of engagement intensity

As illustrated, the lowest level of engagement found is liking the content. This shows approval of the content (Dessart et al., 2015). Mentioning a friend in the comments shows that the consumer approves of the content whilst wanting to share it with a friend (ibid). A distinction is made between mentions and comments as comments in this context indicates that the consumer engages in deeper relationship building with the event and the content than when simply mentioning (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Sharing content is, as illustrated, the highest level of engagement intensity because the consumer not only approves of the content but is also willing to share the message with its own communities (Dessart et al., 2015). Events should thus aspire to create content which is shared by the consumers because this means consumers find the message credible (Martin & Schouten, 2012) hence more willing to act

(Belz & Peattie, 2009; Williams et al., 2015). Content which is shareable is also likely to reach a wider audience as the content is shared in more communities (Williams et al., 2015). This type of content that creates this engagement intensity seen in this study are posts which incorporate both Increase Awareness and Empowerment. Evidence of this is found in, for instance, the Dare to Care-campaign presented by Summerburst and WOW as well as the “Celebrate the game” presented by Gothia Cup where consumers can become informed and learn what to do at the same time. Overall results of studying the consumer engagement indicated higher levels of engagement intensity in the music events, Summerburst and WOW. However, target groups were not regarded in this study. The message needs to suit the sender as well as the receiver (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Ottosson & Parment, 2016). Studying how these approaches suit different digital media channels and target groups could, in future research, provide understanding on why, for instance, Gothia Cup, with a younger crowd, has more engagement on Instagram than Facebook. This deeper understanding could provide valuable insights into what communication approach suits which receiver.

Conclusion

To conclude this study the research question “*How do event organisations incorporate sustainability into digital media channels to create consumer engagement?*” will be addressed. Five different communication approaches are found to be utilised in encoding the corporate message which are the four based on previous research by Emery (2012): Increase Awareness, Empowerment, Sustainable Choice, Convince and the addition based on the context of the study; CSR. Empowerment and Increase Awareness are the most utilised and, based on this study, the most efficient in terms of generating high

levels of consumer engagement. To facilitate the transition from a corporate message into a social message, suitable for different digital media channels, the event incorporates four different types of stakeholders; Partners, Influencers, Celebrity Endorses and Participants. Partner is the most commonly incorporated stakeholder however, given theoretical understanding and the context of the study it might not be the most efficient. This is because the goal is to create a social message which engages consumers and adding a partner solely adds another corporation to the message. Instead utilising Participants is likely an approach which provides consumer with a better view on how they can make sustainability a part of the event experience as it becomes more credible.

In terms of how this creates consumer engagement, four different types of engagement were found and studied; likes, comments, mentions and shares. Given the context of this study, the least engaged consumer “likes” posts to show appreciation as per previous research by Dessart et al. (2015). However, when consumers perceive the content to be more interesting and engaging, they mention friends to share the content with them. Even more engaging content generates comments where consumers engages with the event and is shared on the consumers’ own accounts. The events and their organisers do not engage in answering comments from the consumers and as discussed by Oliveira and Panyik (2015), the main point of utilising digital media channels as Facebook and Instagram is to engage in communication with consumers to establish relationships with them. Hence, the events’ approach to not respond can affect the amount of consumer engagement.

Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to existing literature by providing an understanding on how event

organisers translate their sustainability goals into their digital media channels. Besides identifying the four communication approaches proposed by Emery (2012) the main contribution of this study is the addition of the fifth approach, CSR. Events not only communicate sustainability to engage consumers in sustainability related issues but also to enhance the image of the organisation as a responsible entity of society. The study also shows the importance of a clear link between the communication and the event and credibility, when creating consumer engagement, being in accordance with theories by Calder et al. (2009), Ramirez et al. (2018), Syrdal and Briggs (2018), Syrdal and Bok (2017). Moreover, the results contradict Ottosson and Parment's (2016) argument that sustainability has negative impact on consumer engagement as it shows similar or increased levels on consumer engagement. It is desired for consumers to engage at a higher intensity, through comments and shares, as this indicates more engaged consumers, thus more likely to engage further (Dessart et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2015).

Managerial Implications

Based on the results of this study, event organisers need to consider the importance of incorporating sustainability in their digital media channels. Because it allows for a wider audience to be reached, thus a larger amount of people impacted by the efforts, which means an opportunity to work towards UN's goal of "*sustainable consumption and production*" (United Nations, 2015). There are various ways in which communication can be encoded, however to achieve incorporating sustainability in the event experience, organisers should focus on the Increase Awareness and Empowerment approaches, i.e. focus on educating consumers about sustainability causes whilst also providing tools on how to engage. This not only results in a more credible image of

the event, but consumers are also more likely to engage in the content.

To facilitate the transformation from a corporate goal into a social message, stakeholders should be utilised as this adds credibility to the message, hence likely to be more engaging. Especially Participants and Influencers should be incorporated; Participants as they provide a credible image of participating in the event and Influencers who are credible and well established within their communities. Lastly, all events should examine how they utilise their digital media channels, since they as of now do not engage in conversation with the consumers, which is the main purpose of existing on channels such as Facebook and Instagram. This makes the consumer feel ignored, contributing to that the consumer will not engage in the future. Hence, events that want sustainability to be a part of the event experience, need to build relationships through conversations.

Limitations of the study

Given the explorative nature of the study, it comes with some limitations. The study is limited to events in Gothenburg, thus should be tested in other settings to provide deeper insights in differences of cultural aspects as communication could be different between regions in Sweden as well as globally. Events of other themes, sizes and frequencies should also be further studied to be able to provide implications for the entire industry, since this study is limited to four events and their characteristics. Lastly, the analysis of the events' websites shows how events apply sustainable marketing communication, though does not provide insight on the consumer engagement due to the chosen method. Thus, consumer engagement in websites using one-way communication needs future research.

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