

DON'T USE THE S-WORD

Creating a green marketing service framework for leveraging sustainability certifications into communications and branding

Henri Anundi

Master's Thesis

Master of Managing Sustainability and Systems Change
Master of Business Administration

2025

Master of Managing Sustainability
and Systems Change
Master of Business Administration

Author	Henri Anundi	Year	2025
Supervisor	Marko Korkeakoski		
Commissioned by	Mainostoimisto Puisto		
Title of Thesis	Don't Use the S-word: Creating a green marketing service framework for leveraging sustainability certifications into communications and branding		
Number of pages	72 + 24		

This master's thesis addresses the challenge of Lapland tourism businesses underutilizing sustainability certifications for impactful green marketing. The research aims to create a tailored green marketing service concept for Mainostoimisto Puisto, the commissioner of this thesis, enabling certified businesses to effectively communicate their sustainability efforts to target audiences and foster business growth. The study explores global best practices and emerging trends in sustainability communications, adapting them to the Lapland tourism context.

The research employs a qualitative approach, including semi-structured and theme interviews with case companies (Apukka Resort and Arktikum), benchmarking, ideation workshops, and prototyping workshops. Key findings highlight a significant imbalance between sustainability certification efforts and marketing communications, where companies often resort to greenwashing due to hesitations in communicating their sustainability efforts for fear of greenwashing.

The developed framework is a three-stage green marketing service concept that includes a sustainability communications overview, the creation of tailored communications plans, and a sustainability branding workshop. The framework seeks to empower Lapland tourism businesses to communicate their sustainability credentials transparently and authentically, in a manner that resonates with their target audiences, ultimately driving sustainable business growth through enhanced trust and engagement.

Keywords sustainable tourism, green marketing, sustainability communication, Lapland tourism, greenwashing, sustainability certification, branding

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	7
2	SUSTAINABILITY BRANDING	9
2.1	Environmental sustainability in private business and in tourism	9
2.2	Marketing.....	13
2.3	Green marketing	13
2.4	Greenwashing and greenhushing	15
2.5	Branding, green brands and communications	18
2.6	Sustainability certification	21
3	CASE COMPANIES AND SUSTAINABILITY	23
3.1	Case companies and their sustainability communications	23
3.2	Case company sustainability certifications and labels.....	25
4	RESEARCH PROCESS.....	29
4.1	Thesis purpose, aim and research problem.....	29
4.2	Research approach.....	30
4.3	Methods for conducting the thesis research	31
4.4	Epistemology and ontology.....	35
4.5	Process stages.....	36
5	RESEARCH RESULTS.....	39
5.1	Semi-structured and theme interviews.....	39
5.2	Benchmarking	40
5.3	Ideation workshops with case companies.....	45
5.4	Prototyping workshops at Mainostoimisto Puisto	50
6	DISCUSSION	56
6.1	Key findings and interpretation	56

6.2	Relationship to existing literature	57
6.3	Limitations	59
6.4	Recommendations for future research.....	59
6.5	Conclusion.....	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY		61
APPENDICES.....		73

FOREWORD

I would like to thank my partner Maiski for her patience during my Master's studies and my mother Tarja for her help with the kids upon finalizing this thesis.

1 INTRODUCTION

Humanity faces a global polycrisis – the failure of interconnected natural and social systems around the world that collectively contribute to worsening prospects for life on earth (UNDP 2022, 4). As a result, individuals, organisations, and legislators have increasingly started calling for sustainable development – a term introduced in 1987 – to avert the crisis and steer humanity on a trajectory where present needs are met without compromising those of future generations (United Nations 1987, 16). In 2015, the United Nations published the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global plan of action guiding sustainable development in all countries worldwide through 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the objective of achieving those goals by 2030 (UN General Assembly 2015, 1).

Calls for sustainability extend to the global tourism industry and that of Lapland, a popular holiday destination in Northern Finland. Environmentally conscious Lapland tourism businesses and organisations have adopted sustainable practices and participated in sustainable development schemes, and upon completion, received certificates as testimonies for their actions. However, communicating their sustainable development efforts to consumers is virtually non-existent. Sustainability communication presents both an opportunity and a challenge for Lapland travel businesses. By effectively and openly communicating their sustainable actions to audiences, businesses can achieve growth through successful green marketing. Conversely, miscommunicating or misleading stakeholders on a business' sustainable achievements can lead to accusations of greenwashing and a damaged brand. Hesitating to communicate a business' sustainability initiatives in fear of greenwashing results in a phenomenon called greenhushing.

Recognizing this gap between sustainability efforts and effective communication, this thesis research aims to make a significant contribution by developing a framework for a productized green marketing service offering sustainability communications and branding expertise tailored for Lapland tourism businesses that have achieved sustainability certification. This thesis research addresses the existing limitations by identifying best practices and emerging trends in global

sustainability communications and exploring how these can be adapted to the specific context of the Lapland tourism industry. By doing so, this thesis research seeks to provide a practical toolkit for an advertising agency, Mainostoimisto Puisto, the commissioner of this thesis, to empower its clients in the Lapland tourism sector to effectively leverage their sustainability certifications for impactful green marketing. The motivation for this thesis research stems from the observed need within Puisto's primary operating area, Finnish Lapland, for a service that specifically addresses this challenge.

In this thesis research, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review, exploring key concepts of environmental sustainability, marketing, green marketing, greenwashing, greenhushing, branding, green brands, sustainability communications, and sustainability certification. Chapter 3 examines the two case companies featured in this thesis, Apukka Resort and Arktikum, their state of sustainability communications, and their achieved sustainability certifications. Chapter 4 details the research process, including the chosen innovation research approach, the qualitative methods employed – semi-structured and theme interviews, benchmarking, ideation workshops, and prototyping workshops – and the epistemological and ontological considerations guiding the research. Chapter 5 presents findings from the interviews, benchmarking analysis, and outcomes of the ideation and prototyping workshops. Chapter 6 discusses and interprets these findings, examines them in relation to the existing literature, acknowledges the limitations of this thesis research, offers recommendations for future research, and finally, concludes the thesis by summarizing the key contributions and insights gained from the entire process.

2 SUSTAINABILITY BRANDING

2.1 Environmental sustainability in private business and in tourism

The concept of sustainable development was first introduced in 1987 in the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future – widely known as the Brundtland Report – as follows: “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities.” (United Nations 1987, 16.)

In the 2020's, over three decades after the statement above, sustainability is understood to have a “triple bottom line”, meaning it includes social, economic and environmental aspects (Sander, Föhl, Walter & Demmer 2021, 429). Environmental sustainability can be seen as the bedrock of that bottom line, because clean air and water, as well as clean and productive land, are foundational to a responsible socioeconomic system (Morelli 2011, 4). Achieving environmental sustainability is of paramount global importance for the future of mankind, as all corners of the earth are affected by human activities or pollution (Arora 2018, 1). Solving the global polycrisis requires swift action, and on 1st January 2016, the United Nations published the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a universal roadmap for mankind to achieve a sustainable future. Four of the 17 SDGs directly address environmental sustainability, while others deal with poverty, inequality, peace, and justice, for example. All SDGs are interconnected, and the target for achieving them is the year 2030. (United Nations a, b.) The 15-year plan to reaching the goals is part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a common pledge between all UN member countries to prompt action on issues of critical importance for the future of life on earth (UN General Assembly 2015, 1). For such an immense mission as rerouting the planet to a sustainable track, 15 years is a tight deadline. In August 2023, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: "Halfway to the deadline for the 2030

Agenda, we are leaving more than half the world behind. We have stalled or gone into reverse on more than 30 per cent of the SDGs. Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been." (United Nations c.)

The UN calls on "all countries and stakeholders" to implement the SDGs (UN General Assembly 2015, 1). This includes all walks of life from individuals to communities and governments as well as the public and private sectors. The UN Development Programme's (UNDP) SDG Accelerator brings up private businesses as key players in achieving the SDGs, referencing the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) data that has the private sector accounting for 60% of gross domestic product (GDP), 90% of jobs and 80% of capital inflows. Also, the private sector is an important source of innovations and includes countless businesses from multinational giants to small and medium enterprises. (UNDP.) The UN encourages private businesses to view the SDGs as an opportunity to capitalize on becoming a responsible contributor to society through transparency and accountability, as well as becoming profitable while serving a meaningful purpose beyond making money. Incentives for doing so include gaining competitive advantages through sustainable innovation, becoming an attractive employer by adapting sustainable operating models, paying particular attention to supply chains for sustainability and resiliency, and appealing to investors by being a forerunner in compliance and risk management. (UNDP.)

In Finnish Lapland, the tourism industry has grown significantly in the new millennium and has become a major source of income and employment in the area. In 2023, there were 72 505 registered jobs in Lapland (Tilastokeskus 2024), 7,9% of which were in the tourism industry (MEAE) that also has an impact on jobs and income in many other smaller fields of business. In 2023, tourism services net revenue grew 18,1% from the previous year (Regional Council of Lapland 2024), breaking the one-billion-euro limit and accounting for 6 500 man-years (Lapland Chamber of Commerce 2023). According to a 2022 report by the Regional Council of Lapland, when tourism's impacts on other fields of business are considered, numbers rise to three billion euros and 11 000 man-years

(Lapland Chamber of Commerce 2023). The total net revenue in Lapland in 2023 was 17,7 billion euros (Regional Council of Lapland 2024).

The number of overnight stays in Lapland has been on a steady rise for decades and doubled between 1995 and 2019 from around 1,5 million to three million (Regional Council of Lapland 2022, 16), while net revenue in the tourism industry has quadrupled (Regional Council of Lapland 2022, 2). In 2022, Lapland had 21 direct commercial flight connections through its five airports and received 1,1 million air passengers, of which Rovaniemi accounted for 559 000, Kittilä 336 000, Ivalo 197 700, and Enontekiö and Kemi-Tornio for a combined number of just above 50 000 (House of Lapland). News of record tourism numbers have been a staple in Lapland and national media year after year, with December the most popular month: in December 2023, a record 1,81 million overnight stays were registered by accommodation providers in Lapland (Regional Council of Lapland 2024).

Globally, tourism stood for 9,1% of worldwide GDP in 2023, and is predicted to reach 10% in 2024, and rise above 11% by 2034 (Statista 2023). As tourism had largely reached pre-COVID-19-pandemic levels by 2024 (UN Tourism 2024), the International Labour Organization estimates that 230 million people of the global workforce work in tourism, making up 7,2% of the total (ILO 2023). As UN Tourism states, the tourism sector is both highly vulnerable to climate change while also contributing to it. According to their research, carbon dioxide emissions from the tourism industry are looking to increase by 25% between 2016 and 2030, representing 5,3% of all emissions caused by mankind. (UN Tourism.) To address the impact tourism has on climate change and environmental degradation, the UN has established the Tourism for SDGs platform (T4SDG) to provide all industry operators and stakeholders a space to access expert information, share experiences and research, and get help on concrete action towards sustainable tourism (Tourism for SDGs).

Considering the environmental crisis, the rising emissions from global travel, and the tourism industry's ambition for sustainability, Mark Starik's (1995, 207) introduction of non-human nature as a stakeholder emerges as relevant. The popular stakeholder theory, created by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, addresses

organizational management and business ethics through morals and values (Stakeholder Theory a). The theory is “a view of capitalism that stresses the interconnected relationships between a business, its customers, suppliers, employees, investors, communities and others who have a stake in the organization” (Stakeholder Theory b). In Lapland tourism, nature certainly holds a stake, and a large one at that – one will be hard-pressed to find Lapland marketing materials without imagery of the natural environment. While there has been extensive academic discussion on whether non-human nature should have stakeholder status or not, in Lapland tourism the status is hard to argue against since it is the main attraction with its phenomena and the possibilities for activities it provides; without nature, the booming tourism industry would dwindle dramatically. Driscoll and Starik (2004, 66) argue that traditional stakeholder models focus too much on the social aspect of stakeholders, considering mainly economics and political power, while the interdependence between businesses and ecosystems goes overlooked. Waddock (2011, 193) provides an even broader perspective by declaring that all that we know and have created as humans, including living beings, ecological systems, businesses and enterprises, and future generations, are all stakeholders of the earth and its capacity to sustain life. Kujala et al. (2019, 5) conclude in their overview of stakeholder literature that authors agree on nature not only having a moral right to be included in organizational decision-making, but it should occupy a central position in businesses for its resources and its impact on other stakeholders.

Human consumption of environmentally friendly products and services is often driven by either egocentrism or ecocentrism, and marketers use it to their benefit. Environmentally friendly products are often marketed as either the economical choice such as a reusable bag or a coffee cup that saves you money, or the planet-friendly option that lets you contribute to saving the world. (Green & Peloza 2014, 128.) Whether an individual chooses an environmentally friendly product or service for their own benefit or the planet’s is secondary to them making a more sustainable choice. This is why the developmental part of this thesis focuses on building a green marketing service for the tourism industry in Lapland that emphasises the environmental sustainability measures of client companies.

2.2 Marketing

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is “creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA 2024). Marketing has the dual goal of attracting new customers by promising great value and keeping existing customers by delivering satisfaction, and it is largely seen as critical to the success of businesses and organisations (Kotler, Burton, Deans, Brown & Armstrong 2015, 4). Dolan (1997, 1) reasons a firm should not define itself by what it sells rather than the customer benefit provided. Marketing focuses on the decisions a person makes in a social structure as well as inside personal and social value systems, and thus becomes the instrument of integrating the economy into society to serve human needs (Ifezue 2005, 15).

Stoeckl and Luedicke (2015, 2452–2453) present two perspectives to marketing. On one hand, it can be seen in a purely positive light, generating income for employees, company owners, investors and governments. From this angle, marketing creates valuable services for organisations’ stakeholders, individuals, and society at large. A more critical perspective sees marketing producing more problems than it solves: corporations market and sell products harmful to human health, exploit local communities and engage in activities harmful to the natural environment in their efforts to increase profits. Marketing generally aims at economic growth (Ifezue 2005, 15), something often achieved at the expense of the environment. Holum and Jakobsen (2024, 10) find that people who support environmental protection are wary of its inhibiting economic effects. As environmental protection aspects are set to increasingly influence decision-making on a global scale and governments need to rally for public support (Holum & Jakobsen 2024, 10) for their greener decisions, it is safe to assume that marketers will turn to promoting the positive environmental aspects of their products and services.

2.3 Green marketing

The three pillars of sustainability do not perform equally in advertising that is closely linked to marketing: the environmental aspect brings a positive impact,

while social and governance dimensions impact its efficiency negatively (Weinmayer, Garaus & Wagner 2023, 21–22). Sander et al (2021, 439) corroborate the performance of the environmental aspect of sustainability advertising, stating consumers present a stronger reaction to green messages and that the environmental focus has an impact on brand personality. As factors of the global polycrisis are daily media staples in the 2020's, consumers have increasingly started calling for corporate environmental responsibility. This has resulted in brands and companies communicating their environmental actions to the public while simultaneously trying to win the trust of potential new customers, a practice known as green marketing. (Prakash 2002, 286.) Mishra and Sharma (2014, 78) describe green marketing as a “holistic marketing concept” that accounts for the entire lifecycle of products and services from production to marketing, consumption and disposal, with a focus on reducing the detrimental environmental impact of the entire process. As awareness of global warming, harmful waste, and pollutants has become more widespread, marketers and consumers alike are increasingly calling for switching to greener products and services (Mishra & Sharma 2014, 78). Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017, 1264) put it in simple terms: green marketing is the integration of environmental sustainability into marketing.

According to Leonidou, Katsikeas and Morgan (2012, 8), companies engaging in green marketing programs may improve their reputation and image, and thus avoid negative publicity and even boycotts. They may also increase their sales by finding new customers for whom sustainability issues affect purchasing decisions (Leonidou et al. 2012, 8). For environmentally sustainable products and services to make a significant impact in combating climate change, they need extensive market coverage. Marketing is an indispensable tool for fulfilling that need and can be used to create green markets by further increasing consumer awareness about environmental sustainability and the products and services that help pursue it. (Dangelico & Vocalelli 2017, 1264.) A study by Nittala and Moturu (2023, 92) shows that environmentally conscious consumers use green products, and make more environmentally friendly decisions such as consuming less water and electricity.

Kotler (2011, 133) calls consumers the “ultimate power brokers”, the segment of society that has the leverage to change prevalent marketing practices by demanding responsibility, and by choosing companies and brands that have an environmental profile that shows they care about sustainability issues. Papadas, Avlonitis and Carrigan (2017, 244) build on Kotler’s view that a “green marketing strategy should transcend the whole organization at all decision levels”, introducing a green marketing orientation with three dimensions: strategic, tactical, and internal. According to the research, strategic green marketing orientation refers to long-term management policies involving a company’s corporate and proactive environmental strategies and external environmental stakeholders; tactical green marketing orientation includes greening a company’s short-term marketing mix by reducing the environmental footprint of its products, improving the environmental performance in the supply chain and introducing adjusted pricing for its green products; internal green marketing orientation has green culture penetrating all levels of the organisation through employee training, internal environmental awareness promotion and environmental leadership activities. The researchers highlight the importance of distinguishing between organisations that are holistically driven by sustainable purposes and those driven by greenwashing, performing isolated campaigns to polish their corporate image. (Papadas, Avlonitis & Carrigan 2017, 238.)

2.4 Greenwashing and greenhushing

The term greenwashing was first made public by American environmentalist Jay Westerveld in a 1986 essay in a literary magazine recounting his experience in Fiji, where a local holiday resort urged their customers to reuse their towels to reduce ecological damage to the coral reefs, while simultaneously expanding the resort – an endeavour that likely caused more harm to the local environment than washing more towels (Watson 2016). In the 2020’s, greenwashing has many definitions, all of which have to do with presenting a brand or company in a favourable light when it comes to environmental agency and action, when that might not be true or be only partly true (Ghitti, Gianfrate & Palma 2023, 4). Lyon and Maxwell’s (2006, 6) view on greenwashing reads “selective disclosure of positive information about a company’s environmental or social performance, without full disclosure of negative information on these dimensions”. Glavas,

Grolleau and Mzoughi (2023, 1) regard greenwashing as “misleading stakeholders about environmental achievements”, and add that it is considered harmful to the environment and society as a whole. Generally greenwashing can be viewed as a term with negative connotations, and a faux pas in marketing. Still, some of the world’s biggest companies like Ikea, Coca-Cola and Starbucks keep getting called out for greenwashing (Robinson 2022).

With environmental awareness increasing and green marketing gaining ground, greenwashing is more common and has taken forms that are harder to detect than outright false claims of environmental performance, such as reporting claims that are unverifiable or using seemingly green labels on packaging (de Jong, Huluba & Beldad 2020, 40). To combat greenwashing and restore consumer trust, legislators are looking to set common rules for environmental claims. In March 2023, the European Commission adopted a proposal for the Green Claims Directive, a legislative act for all EU member countries to ban greenwashing and to make green claims universally comparable across the EU. The directive covers generic environmental claims without proof to back them up, claims of a product’s neutral, reduced, or positive environmental impact through the producer’s offsetting of emissions, and sustainability labelling not based on approved certification schemes or established by authorities. (European Parliament 2024 a, b.) For businesses, this means backing up their environmental claims and labels with uncomplicated criteria and current scientific evidence (Publyon 2024). The directive also includes that companies demonstrate the significance of their claims’ impacts and performance from a life-cycle perspective, demonstrate whether the claim applies for the whole product or only parts of it, demonstrate that the claim includes more than what is required by law, informs whether the product performs better environmentally than its equivalents, informs if its positive impact causes a negative impact elsewhere, requires transparent emissions reporting, includes accurate information, and adheres to requirements for comparative claims (European Parliament 2025).

The constantly tightening regulation can be viewed as a positive development for the public, leading to more trustworthy environmental information on products and services. However, for companies and organisations committed to sustainability efforts, navigating the do’s and don’ts of sustainability

communications presents tougher challenges and can lead to unintentional greenwashing, something that can occur, for example, through internal miscommunication or communicators not being up to date on the latest terms and definitions (Faber & Sick 2022, 8). Well-advised businesses scrutinize their procurement, production, marketing, and sales from a sustainability perspective, as well as assess their risks of being accused of greenwashing (Publyon 2024). Conversely, this can lead to greenhushing – not communicating sustainability efforts due to fear of being held accountable for greenwashing despite noble intentions (Peacock 2023, 375). According to Dias, Bagatini, and Perin (2025, 407–408), greenhushing is still relatively little known, but is beginning to gain notice in sustainable communication literature, and companies that execute sustainable practices understand its significance. Greenhushing can result in businesses and organisations not engaging in greener practices due to being exposed to heightened critique of corporate practice (Peacock 2023, 375). Font, Elgammal and Lamond (2017, 1007) maintain that greenhushing is the opposite of greenwashing, as it entails the deliberate withholding of information from stakeholders on sustainability practices that an organisation carries out. They argue that organisations can resort to greenhushing to realign to social norms, not wanting to take too strong a stand for a cause to not appear seeking moral ground higher than their potential customers (Font et al. 2017, 1020). Dias et al. (2025, 406) bring up the tourism angle to greenhushing, where operators might not want to instill guilt in consumers for not acting sustainably on their holidays, therefore opting to stay silent on their sustainable practices. Adopting a silent approach to sustainable actions, the researchers state, may have negative implications like losing opportunities such as potential sales and investors, as well as diminished employee and stakeholder engagement.

Some see greenwashing as an opportunity to propel those guilty of it – intentionally or not – towards a path to genuine sustainability. Glavas, Grolleau and Mzoughi (2023, 1, 5–6) propose “greening the greenwashers” might be a more fruitful approach than punishment. Their proposals revolve around raising awareness and normalizing sustainability issues when greenwashing is detected as well as encouraging discussion between all stakeholders and allowing regulators to suggest fitting sustainability practices to avoid repeat offending

(Glavas, Grolleau and Mzoughi 2023, 7–8). An exposed case of greenwashing holds potential for a learning experience for all parties.

2.5 Branding, green brands and communications

For something to be a brand, it must be branded. Bastos and Levy (2012, 349) say “at the root of all branding activity is the human desire to be someone of consequence, to create a personal and social identity, to present oneself as both like other people (e.g. to belong) and unlike other people (e.g. to stand out), and to have a good reputation.” We’re bombarded with countless brands each day, and people identify with brands that resonate with their values. Essentially, brands reflect who we are and the choices we make from the numerous alternatives available. As Kornberger (2010, 5) expresses it, brands “are used by corporations and those who fight them”. According to Gardner and Levy (1955, 4), complete brands possess “a public image, a character or personality that may be more important for the over-all status (and sales) of the brand than many technical facts about the product.” We engage with brands: “if brands are seen as having personalities comparable anthropomorphically to those of people, it follows that people can have relationships with them” (Bastos & Levy 2012, 357).

The brand is an intangible asset and the most important one to many businesses. It influences all stakeholders from customers to employees and investors to authorities. The brand has economic impact; it’s crucial for commercial success, it reflects an individual’s choices and creates value for shareholders. That is what brands are largely seen as: value creators. (Lindemann 2003, 27–28.) However, competing views that see brands as value destroyers exist. Bertilsson and Rennstam (2018, 267) present a heuristic model where branding can be understood as hypocrisy: organisations presenting themselves as something that has little to do with the actual activities of the organisation, an image decoupled from reality. Hypocritical organisations separate branding and production, for example a fast food retailer emphasizing health aspects of its product, when in fact their offerings are unhealthy. Or an organisation appearing as sustainable when its actions are not – which takes us back to greenwashing. (Bertilsson & Rennstam 2018, 270.)

In part, global consumer brands are to blame for the accelerated destruction of natural resources. Think brands like Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Starbucks, H&M, IKEA – all have been exposed for unsustainable practices and greenwashing in the past decades, many brands even several times (Brown, Pellegrino 2023). Towards the end of the 20th century, a counterculture formed in opposition to global brands promoting a destructive consumer culture. Investigative book releases such as Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (1999) and Erick Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (2001) validated the anti-corporate culture that turned into a global social movement. (Holt 2002, 70.) As a result, consumers no longer trust brands blindly. Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005, 188) define trustworthy brands competent in providing consumers its promised value "through the way the product is developed, produced, sold, serviced and advertised." In the 2020's, consumers are more empowered than ever through direct public interaction channels with brands and other members of the public. Consumers can hold brands accountable and dictate the terms of their relationships with brands, which has led to increased calls for transparency and put pressure on brands to stand out and find new ways for building trust with their audiences (Licata 2023).

With sustainability a megatrend in modern society (Gaudig, Ebersberger & Kuckertz 2021, 1), it is only logical that businesses tweak their brands to incorporate it. Doing so can result in associations to values such as responsibility, social and environmental stewardship, and morality. Hence, businesses can have a better appeal to sustainability-oriented customers by implementing sustainability practices in their operations, communicating them to customers, and transforming them to associations that become a part of their brand image. (Kumar & Christodoulopoulou 2013, 9.) In the 2020's, people's relationships with brands have new dimensions, and brands are expected to do their part for sustainable development. Hence, brands have expanded their roles and pronounce their stands on important societal issues (Nascimento & Loureiro 2024, 234). Sustainable branding has been shown to increase engagement, stimulating co-creation and circular economy, for example (Nascimento & Loureiro 2024, 235). Despite countless cases of corporate greenwashing, business and industry have recognised their roles in striving towards sustainable societies. According to the 2024 Gartner CEO and Senior Business Executive

Survey, 69% of the 400 CEO's that participated viewed sustainability as a leading business growth opportunity, with environmental sustainability a key competitive factor (Gartner 2024). Kadam (2024, 2314) also points out that sustainability has moved to the centre of branding and corporate policy as a result of mankind's need for drastic change, and that sustainable attributes are constantly gaining significance in the valuation of brands. The gravity of the polycrisis we're facing has resulted in calls for technological innovation, and the awareness can be a way to creative sustainable solutions. Brands can be a major factor in the public adopting positive attitudes towards sustainability and bringing about profound change in people's lives, while businesses are looking to employ holistically sustainable practices and embracing transparency for building trust. Even though businesses use the term "sustainable" too often for referring to environmental sustainability, highlighting environmental matters in branding a business sustainable is a smart starting point. (Kadam 2024, 2314.) This leads to green brands; brands that cater for environmentally aware consumers by communicating brand attributes focusing on the organisation's efforts for minimizing their environmental impact and concentrating on the brand appearing as environmentally healthy (Simão & Lisboa 2017, 188). Grubor and Milovanov (2017, 80–81) bring up a classification of green brands into four groups introduced by Landor Associates, Newsweek, and Penn Schoen Berland:

1. *Unsung Heroes* – brands that conduct strong green practice, but with insignificant public awareness.
2. *Free Passers* – brands that conduct limited green practice, but with distant brand echo that drives green reputation.
3. *Losers* – brands that conduct limited green practice, with public recognition of the limitations.
4. *Winners* – brands that conduct strong green practice that is recognized in public.

The case companies featured in this thesis belong to category 1 – they have the certificates to prove their sustainable development efforts, but the work remains

unknown to the public. The service development work of this thesis research aims at creating a service that directs Lapland tourism businesses towards category 4.

Brands and communications go hand in hand. In fact, Feldwick (2003, 127) says “everything a brand does is communication.” Brand communications can feature everything from brochures, newsletters, and online channels to sponsoring an organisation, cause, or event, as well as executing visual design and advertising. Short-term goals of brand communications often focus on the effects on sales and business, in other words, quick results, while long-term goals revolve more around brand building such as marketplace performance and the ability to resist competitive pressures. (Feldwick 2003, 127–129.) When sustainable brands, or green brands, communicate their sustainability efforts, they venture into sustainability communications. At the centre of sustainability communications lies transparency about an organisation’s sustainability engagement, and sustainability communications are part of the marketing strategy with a holistic objective to reach corporate goals and long-term sustainable development goals. (Tölkes 2018, 10.)

2.6 Sustainability certification

Engaging in environmental sustainability certification schemes lead to organisations acquiring ecolabels that identify products or services that meet varying environmental criteria or standards. Ecolabels are developed by governments, manufacturers, and third-company organisations, and in contrast to green symbols or claims, are only awarded to applicants after set criteria are met. (Initiative, Golden, Vermeer, Clemen & Nguyen 2010, 14.) According to the International Institute of Sustainable Development (2024), there are over 400 voluntary sustainability standards (VSSs) in the world, and the high number has to do with consumers’ willingness to pay for eco-certified products, as well as certificates contributing to green brand equity.

Most sustainability certifications and the schemes behind them are voluntary and privately controlled. They often carry four basic components: standard requirements, standard-setting process, implementation, and governance. Standard requirements describe the sustainability criteria of the certification,

which are defined by the standard-setting process. Implementation refers to the applicant organization executing the standard requirements on-site and in practice, while governance indicates ownership and management of the certification scheme. (Tröster & Hiete 2018, 1035–1036.)

Sustainability certification labels on products and services are an important means for businesses and organisations to demonstrate their accountability (Amundsen 2022, 1), but the sheer volume of them runs the risk of reducing their perceived value. The risk of value reduction stems from eco-opportunism, meaning some businesses are tempted to abuse certification systems by engaging in greenwashing (Nygaard 2023, 1, 9). Consumer trust is central to ecolabel success, and the many forms, sponsors, governance structures, and ownership arrangements of labels has led to confusion and diminished consumer trust in ecolabels (Gorton, Tocco, Yeh & Hartmann 2021, 1, 8). However, as Dragomir, Mazilu, and Marinescu (2018, 149) point out, certification is not a goal itself, it merely provides tools and motivation for committed companies to improve their sustainable performance, the communicating of which is what this thesis research aims to build on.

3 CASE COMPANIES AND SUSTAINABILITY

3.1 Case companies and their sustainability communications

This thesis research features two case companies: Apukka Resort and Arktikum. Apukka Resort is a full-service holiday destination located 17 kilometres north of Rovaniemi, the regional capital of Lapland. The business has grown rapidly since its inception in 2017 and leading up to 2024. According to company executives, the growth is set to continue. Apukka Resort is a typical Lapland travel destination of the 2020's, offering accommodation in glass-roofed igloo-style buildings, as well as activities such as husky sled dog tours, reindeer rides, snowmobile tours, and northern lights hunting. (Apukka Resort a, b, c.)

Arktikum is a science centre and museum in central Rovaniemi and one of the city's most popular attractions. The building features a long, glass-roofed corridor that is an architectural landmark easily recognized in the cityscape. Arktikum houses two institutions, the University of Lapland's Arctic Centre and the Regional Museum of Lapland, both of which host their respective exhibitions in spaces located on each side of the glass-roofed corridor. The Arctic Centre's exhibitions present scientific information on Arctic issues such as climate change and globalization and their effects on Arctic nature, animals and people. The Regional Museum of Lapland's exhibitions showcase objects and artifacts related to the history of Finland's largest and northernmost province from thousands of years ago to the present day. (Arktikum a, b.)

The high season in Apukka Resort is winter, ranging from December to March. According to Apukka Resort, 2023 saw 17 581 guests visit the destination and only 2,5% of them were domestic travellers. Like most Lapland destinations, the main selling points for holidays to Apukka Resort are nature experiences and Lapland nature itself, and most guests at the resort are international visitors – from 120 different countries in 2023 – that travel to Finland and Lapland by plane. International air travel can hardly be deemed sustainable; in 2022, global aviation emitted an estimated 800 megatons of carbon dioxide, 2% of total annual global emissions (International Energy Agency 2023). Thus, the conundrum of Lapland travel destinations is attracting visitors from abroad without sacrificing the delicate

nature the visitors are attracted by. Air travel is largely considered a “necessary evil” in the international tourism business, and responsible businesses look to sustainable solutions in their direct environment.

Enter sustainability certifications and labels. Apukka Resort has two: Green Key and Sustainable Travel Finland (Apukka Resort d). But communicating the company’s sustainable development efforts is left at a few social media posts, one informational page on their website and the certification labels in the footer.

While Arktikum draws audiences locally and nationally, it is a significant cultural attraction for international travellers to Rovaniemi, who make up 57% of total annual visitors that, according to Arktikum, rose to 134 470 in 2023. Therefore, Arktikum can be regarded as an operator in the tourism field – an aspect that is highlighted by the company’s marketing communications being executed both in Finnish and in English. This makes the aforementioned tourism business sustainability conundrum apply to Arktikum as well. Arktikum has completed two sustainability certifications and labels, EcoCompass and Sustainable Travel Finland. Communicating the efforts made to achieve the certifications has been left at a dedicated section of a page on the website, where the certification labels are also displayed. (Arktikum c.)

Both case companies report a notable imbalance between the concrete efforts required to achieve sustainability certifications and reaping the rewards by communicating them to the public and engaging audiences through green marketing. Benchmarking other related Lapland organisations implies this is more a rule than an exception. On their website, Apukka Resort (d) has a page headlined “Sustainability” that contains information on their certifications and labels, on-site sustainable actions and policies as well as sustainability angles to their offered services. The content is commendable, but hard to find: the user must first navigate to “About”, then “Info”, under which lies the “Sustainability” page. If items in the main menu are considered level 1, the “Sustainability” page is on level 3 with tens of other pages. It can be argued that sustainability is hardly a selling point for Apukka Resort, although gaining both the Green Key and Sustainable Travel Finland labels took a full year and required a significant number of working hours. Communicating sustainability efforts on various

company outlets such as newsletters and social media are scarce or non-existent. Arktikum reported that they had one employee working full-time for three months on the EcoCompass certification alone and acquiring the Sustainable Travel Finland label required its own significant efforts. Arktikum do not communicate their sustainability work through any of their online or social media channels, save for a two-paragraph section on the “Visit” page featured in the main menu of their website, describing the motivations for acquiring the two certifications. The “Sustainability” section lies at the bottom of the page and requires considerable scrolling by the user – something few of them do according to website analytics.

Both case companies expressed frustration regarding communicating or branding their sustainability efforts, with reasons ranging from customer indifference to fears of being accused of greenwashing, and general uncertainty or lack of expertise in sustainability issues. When asked what the status of sustainability should be in their brand hierarchy, both companies replied that it belongs right at the top. Unprompted, both implied that sustainability issues should shine through at all levels of brand communications and be a “cross-sectional brand theme”, to quote one informant.

3.2 Case company sustainability certifications and labels

Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) is a sustainable tourism development programme developed by Visit Finland (Visit Finland a), a state-funded organisation that promotes international travel to Finland (Visit Finland b). STF is a seven-step development programme aimed at domestic travel businesses and travel destinations, with regularly evolving criteria that urge businesses and destinations to constantly update their sustainable development efforts (Visit Finland a). The programme features the “triple bottom line” of sustainability as it addresses economic value, social and cultural impact, and environmental impact (Visit Finland c).

To support the journey towards sustainability, taking part in the STF programme is aided by a guide to sustainable development. The aforementioned seven steps of the programme are commitment, building knowledge and skills, certification,

sustainability communications, measuring, devising a development plan, and applying for the STF label. For this thesis, particularly interesting stages are certification and sustainability communications. In the STF programme, certification requires the applicant organisation to have completed a prior sustainable travel certification such as Green Key or EcoCompass. (Visit Finland a.) Both case companies in this thesis have the STF label, and Apukka Resort has Green Key while Arktikum has EcoCompass as a prior certification. The STF programme encourages participants to execute their sustainability communications openly and transparently to international audiences, “completely eliminating greenwashing” (Visit Finland a). Also included in the STF materials is a collective 10-point sustainability principles manifest by tourism operators, with one point dedicated to communications, where communicating the challenges in sustainability efforts is encouraged along with the successes (Visit Finland e). Mart Veliste, an expert at the European Union funded interregional cooperation programme Interreg Europe, complements STF’s clever approach as the leading national industry sustainability label that manages to incorporate various sustainability certification schemes into one framework, leading the sustainability journey for Finnish travel businesses while simultaneously promoting economic advantages (Interreg Europe 2024).

According to Visit Finland, research has shown that sustainable businesses present higher rates of customer satisfaction as well as a higher perceived level of quality. Visit Finland states that the most important sustainability indicators for travel service customers are water and energy efficiency, waste management, using local products and services, employing locals, preserving cultural heritage, and acknowledging local people. (Visit Finland c.)

By December 2024, there were 487 companies that had successfully completed the STF programme, 147 of which were based in Lapland. 56 of those were based in Rovaniemi, two of which are Apukka Resort and Arktikum. (Visit Finland d.) A travel destination, for example Rovaniemi where both Apukka Resort and Arktikum lie, is required to have 51% of its partner companies labeled with STF to achieve the destination label (Visit Finland a). December 2024 had Rovaniemi at 53% (Visit Finland c).

Green Key is a certification awarded for environmental responsibility and sustainable operation in the tourism industry (Green Key a). Green Key was founded in Denmark in 1994, and since 2002 the international programme is run by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), an environmental education organisation established in 1981 that has more than 100 member organisations in over 80 countries (Green Key b, Foundation for Environmental Education) and Green Key National Operators in more than 40 countries, including Finland (Green Key d). Green Key prides itself on its high standards and strict criteria, of which there are over 100 in 13 categories: staff involvement, environmental management, guest information, water, energy, washing and cleaning, food and beverage, waste, administration, indoor environment, green areas, green activities and corporate social responsibility (Green Key b).

Once the applicant company provides documents as proof of compliance with the Green Key criteria, an on-site audit is conducted annually in the first two years and every third year thereafter. The decision of awarding the certification is made by a third party and is valid for a year with a requirement for annual renewal. (Green Key b.) By March 2024, more than 5 000 establishments spread over more than 60 countries held the Green Key certification (Green Key e). Green Key addresses all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations in 2015 (Green Key d).

Green Key follows the eight educational principles set by the FEE. They can be summed up to focus on motivating participant businesses to learn and internalise sustainable practices as well as critically evaluating sustainability information. Also, the principles aim at engaging businesses in constantly monitoring and developing their sustainability practices and sharing ideas with fellow certificate holders. One principle touches on communicating the experiences of participants' sustainability work, encouraging certification holders to share inspirational stories of both their successes and failures, as well as their values. (Green Key a.)

EcoCompass is an environmental management system (EMS) and a certification suitable for all industries. Owned by the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, EcoCompass is a tool for managing environmental matters in all aspects of business and is tailored to fit the operations of each participating

organisation. EcoCompass provides participants with an online application for managing the system and its indicators. (Ekokompassi a.) The EcoCompass certification is awarded to the participant organisation after building the EMS and passing an audit by an independent third-party operator. The audit examines whether the organisation complies to the 10 criteria the EMS is built on. Many of the EcoCompass criteria are based on following national legislation, and some on keeping staff up to date with environmental sustainability knowledge and information, as well as following an organisational environmental development program. After receiving the certification, the organisation is required to annually report on implementing the environmental development program, and independent follow-up audits are conducted every three years, which is how long the certificate is valid upon passing each audit. (Ekokompassi b.)

The EcoCompass EMS and certification have no mention of sustainability communications, but EcoCompass offers their expertise in the field as an additional service. The service is described as helping organisations highlight their sustainability efforts, communicating them, and producing sustainability-related content on their website. The main target of EcoCompass sustainability communications is to make organisations' operations transparent. (Ekokompassi c.) Arktikum's EcoCompass EMS includes a section on sustainability communications that features pledges of regular sustainability-related communications and events, keeping stakeholders and customers up to date on sustainability efforts, favouring partners that engage in sustainable practices, highlighting eco-certified products in their restaurant and catering operations, and communicating openly and honestly on their website and social media channels. Plans also include compiling an annual calendar for sustainability communications and briefing staff on EcoCompass policies both face-to-face and through internal on-site and digital channels. (Arktikum d.)

4 RESEARCH PROCESS

4.1 Thesis purpose, aim and research problem

The purpose of this thesis research is to develop a framework for a productized sustainability communications and branding service that empowers Lapland travel businesses to effectively leverage their sustainability certifications for green marketing.

The aim is to develop for Mainostoimisto Puisto a process aimed at businesses and organisations that have completed one or more sustainability certifications but are not reaping the potential marketing benefits. The businesses targeted by the service have shown sustainability initiative by completing a certification scheme and committing to premeditated steps towards sustainable operations by following a roadmap required for renewing the certificate. The sustainability communications – or lack thereof – can be determined through researching the operators' online channels before approaching them with a proposal for green marketing services.

The motivation for developing such a service comes from company owners and staff, as no equivalent exists in Puisto's primary operating area, Finnish Lapland. Puisto, as a micro business, is motivated by the opportunity to attract more clients with a unique service that aligns with their values of supporting sustainability-driven business. Puisto wants to help sustainability-driven businesses with their design, branding and marketing expertise, but also influence client company personnel to re-examine their actions at work and, subsequently, in their personal lives.

Unfortunately, "saving the world" is rarely a good selling point. But the world is changing; according to a study by McKinsey & Company, brands of different sizes achieved growth making ESG-related claims – ESG stands for environmental, social, and governance (Frey, Bar Am, Doshi, Malik & Noble 2023). Also, companies that conduct corporate environmental activities achieve a higher advertising efficiency (Weinmayer et al. 2023, 21). These are important selling points for Puisto when pitching their new service for prospective clients. Hence, the research problem reads:

An increasing number of Lapland travel businesses are acquiring sustainability certifications, but struggle to effectively translate these efforts into engaging green marketing that resonates with target audiences and drives business growth.

This thesis does not examine the detailed actions and efforts required by companies and organisations to achieve their sustainability certifications. Instead, by examining the global state of environmental sustainability communications in spring 2024, gaining knowledge and ideas from the two case companies and their experiences from sustainability communications, this thesis research identifies best practices and future trends that can be adapted to Lapland's tourism industry. The analysis aims to contribute to the development of Puisto's service offering, making sure it incorporates the most relevant and current approaches to green marketing, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of the service for Lapland travel businesses. The research questions are:

- How can Mainostoimisto Puisto develop an adaptable green marketing service that identifies and implements the right strategies for diverse businesses?
- What best practices and emerging trends in global sustainability communications can be adapted to help Lapland travel businesses effectively brand and communicate their sustainability efforts to their target audiences?

4.2 Research approach

The motivation for Mainostoimisto Puisto to develop a green marketing service is rooted in promoting company values and attracting new business. In addition, the company wants to enhance its profile among competitors by bringing a new service to the market. Hence, the chosen research approach for this thesis is innovation research. As Moilanen, Ojasalo, and Ritalahti (2022, 64) put it: "Innovations are sources of creativity, renewal, economic growth, competitiveness, and well-being. They can change the world." The innovation research process of this thesis focused on service innovation due to the nature of the desired outcome. Service innovation has largely been seen as a useful way

for organisational differentiation and growth (Heinonen & Strandvik 2020, 102), while it also helps companies launch new products and services as well as increase their demand and profitability (Moilanen et al. 2022, 107). Services tend to be tailored products – demonstrated in this thesis research by the differing needs of the two case companies – to which more traditional product-based innovation measurements are not suitable (Durst, Mention & Poutanen 2015, 66). For Puisto, designing for the end customer, or consumer, has always been central, and Moilanen et al. (2022, 64) also point out that “the customer is the most important motivator for innovations”.

Researchers have defined innovation as introducing a new method, idea or device, or simply introducing something new (Gopalakrishnan & Damanpour 1997, 16). As sustainability branding and communications plans already exist, accomplishing an innovation in the field required idea generation to develop something that wasn't already there. The research and idea generation process aimed at creating a service that could be implemented as part of Puisto's business operations as soon as the thesis research and service development work was completed. A micro business, Puisto is agile to quickly adapt and commercialise the end product. An idea becomes an innovation only when it is commercialised or implemented in some way (Moilanen et al. 2022, 107). Kahn (2018, 453–455), debunks the belief that innovation needs to be a radical step forward and continues to explain that product and service innovation include taking current offerings to new markets and new uses. Li (2018, 56) also mentions that “localization is innovation based on imitation”. Hence the innovation process in this thesis would not stray away from adapting suitable sustainability branding and communications practices to the Lapland travel industry, while also aiming to create new ones.

4.3 Methods for conducting the thesis research

The methods chosen for carrying out the thesis research are qualitative: semi-structured interviews, theme interviews, benchmarking, ideation workshops with case companies, and prototyping workshops with Puisto staff.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted for gaining background information on the sustainability certification processes at the case companies. The goal was to understand the efforts required by a company's employees for completing sustainability certification. The semi-structured interview suited the purpose, since open-ended questions create space for the informants to recap their experiences, providing rich and even provocative data as well as a narrative to use as a foundation for more rigid questions (Galletta 2013, 47). The interviews were designed to be conversational, as prior knowledge allowed planning the content of the questions to touch on both the informants' personal experiences in acquiring the sustainability certifications and more theory-driven questions (Galletta 2013, 46). Due to its flexible nature, the semi-structured interview allows for adapting the main structure and themes to the different informants while maintaining control of the course of the interview (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi & Syam 2022, 22).

The theme interviews were conducted for gathering information on the state of sustainability communications at the case companies upon commencing the service development work. Like the semi-structured interview, the theme interview is neither structured nor unstructured, but it does not require predetermined questions rather than a list of themes to go through (Eskola, Lätti & Vastamäki 2018, 29-30). Another similarity to the semi-structured interview is the space given to the respondents' personal narratives, with a focus on interaction and a safe environment when conducting the interviews (Palonen & Kylmä 2022, 281). The theme interview was chosen because it is a fitting method when the subject under research is somewhat familiar and enables recognising themes relevant for the interview (Palonen & Kylmä 2022, 285). Previous research had been done on company websites, relevant sustainability certification websites and informal conversations with case company representatives. The theme interviews allowed the informants to recount their experiences unhinged and thus gain data that reflects their true thinking (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 65). The semi-structured and theme interviews made up the first stage of the service development, as the following stages required background information on the case companies' sustainability efforts.

The benchmarking phase was planned to focus on relevant sustainability communications plans that could point the case companies in their right directions. Benchmarking is an ideal method for knowing where and how others in one's chosen field are operating. It is a process of finding the knowledge of others and learning from their experiences and results to develop new and fresh ideas (Lankford 2002, 57). Kozak (2004, 5) states that the many definitions of benchmarking by authors and organisations essentially reach the same conclusion that a benchmark is a standard that serves as something others can compare themselves to, and that the benchmarking practice is a continuous process of measuring one's own against top competitors to find the best practices for reaching superior performance. Although benchmarking might still be seen as imitation by some, Dattakumar and Jagadeesh (2003, 176) refer to Thompson and Cox (1997) in stating that it's "a concept that helps in innovation rather than imitation". For this thesis research, it was a necessary method for delving into existing sustainability communications plans and guidelines to know what has already been done and what could still be improved on. Benchmarking is also motivational as it feeds curiosity and provides a lane for continuous learning. It helps finding best practices and discovering alternative ways of doing things, as well as fostering a collective developmental spirit that was central in this thesis research. (Niinikoski 2005, 7–12.) There are many types of benchmarking procedures, some of which include internal, external, competitive, and functional benchmarking. This thesis research applies best practice benchmarking, a type that is called the most powerful of them all. It focuses on a four-phase cycle that answers key questions: Planning – what to benchmark; Data collection – who is the best; Data analysis – how do they do it; Adaptation – how are we going to do it? (Jetmarová 2011, 77–80.)

The ideation and prototyping workshops had to be designed with the case companies' status quo in mind, but with an objective for discovering the elements of something new while also mapping the service development process for Mainostoimisto Puisto. The workshops were planned to involve the thesis commissioner and both case companies in collaborative ideation that builds on the findings of the interviews and benchmarking phases. For the ideation methods, design thinking was applied to support intelligent innovation and

change (Curedale 2016, 48). Design thinking is creative problem solving, and Puisto, a creative agency, should foster environments that reflect and reinforce adaptability and continuous innovation (Brown 2009, 32) both internally and when working with client companies – something the ideation workshops do by design. Design thinking is used for both service development and improvement as well as improving the innovation process (Curedale 2016, 54). The design thinking process involves five phases which Ling (2015, 29) describes as follows:

1. Emphasize – understand your customers or users.
2. Define – define clear project / business objectives.
3. Ideate – explore ideas and solutions.
4. Prototype – build and visualize ideas and solutions.
5. Test – review and decide.

Naturally, the ideation workshops drew methods from the Ideate phase, as the Emphasize and Define phases were addressed in interview discussions with the case companies. Puisto's internal workshops were to focus on the Prototype phase, and the Test phase would be left outside the scope of this thesis research, although executed with the case companies as soon as the concrete service materials were completed.

Central to design thinking are the concepts of divergent and convergent thinking. Divergent thinking refers to creating choice, or coming up with many ideas, while convergent thinking is about making choices and deciding among existing alternatives (Brown 2009, 66–67). While both divergent and convergent thinking are often applied throughout the phases, Ling (2015, 32) defines the Emphasize phase as applying divergent thinking that leads to convergent thinking in the following Define phase. Divergent thinking again characterises the Ideate phase – in this research the ideation workshops with the case companies – while convergent thinking returns in the Prototype and Test phases, in this case Puisto's internal workshops, where the multitude of ideas created in the previous Ideate phase were narrowed down to possible solutions (Ling 2015, 32).

4.4 Epistemology and ontology

Schraw (2013, 2–3) provides definitions of epistemology and ontology, as well as related concepts collected from several scholars' research. According to Schraw, epistemology is “the study of knowledge and beliefs about knowledge”. Epistemological beliefs, in turn, are particular beliefs about aspects of knowledge, and are part of a broader epistemology – something the author refers to as “origin of knowledge”. Epistemological world views are beliefs or theory about knowledge, its acquisition, and its justification. In turn, Schraw's definition of ontology is “the study of the nature of reality and being”. Ontological beliefs are specific beliefs about aspects of reality, and ontological world views are beliefs or theory about reality or being, for example social constructivism.

This thesis research is executed using qualitative methods and case companies. As the case companies both have their agendas in participating in the work – furthering their own public image by sustainability communications – a constructivist view on carrying out the research was plausible. Constructivism is based on the belief that all people have agency, and their actions are guided by subjective meaning, which in this research can be the interview responses and ideation workshop input, for example. (Morris 2009, 210.)

The knowledge in this work is not only passively received but actively constructed (Ben-Ari 2001, 45), representing a constructivist epistemology; the innovation process' qualitative methods involved social processes between the case companies, the researcher, and Puisto representatives in the interviews and workshops phases. Also, the researcher's own perspectives and interpretations influence research findings and thesis research outcome. Ontologically, the innovation process is not a technical invention or discovery rather than a social process of creating meaning and continuously constructing reality. Constructivist ontology views reality as something that is not fixed or objective, but a reflection of personal perspectives, experiences, and interactions, and is constantly reconstructed. (Shrestha & Sharma 2024, 38.)

As per constructivist epistemology, knowledge is contextual and situated, meaning it is relative to the people and social context involved, and might not

directly translate to other environments. In this research, however, the representatives of the case companies and Mainostoimisto Puisto can be regarded as typical of the travel industry as well as the design and advertising industry in Lapland, and therefore the results can provide valuable knowledge to the practices of meaning-making, social construction and social action involved in the innovation process of this thesis. (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl & Vaara 2010, 63–64.) A constructivist ontological stance in qualitative research acknowledges that there can be multiple socially constructed realities and, hence, many different interpretations of what innovation is and what it can do. Like reality from a constructivist ontological perspective, the perception of innovation is an evolving process, as it is adapted and reinterpreted within diverse social contexts. (Moroi 2021, 128–129.)

In this research, constructivist ontology and epistemology support and strengthen one another. The constructivist ontology implies that innovation is a socially constructed reality, and the constructivist epistemology suggests that the knowledge on innovation is likewise socially constructed. These unifying perspectives support the chosen qualitative methods as tools for understanding the subjective and social processes that form the reality of innovation.

4.5 Process stages

The research process started in November 2023 with an initial idea of trying to figure out how sustainability, communications, and branding could be developed and packaged into a functioning product or service for a design and advertising agency. Discussions with Mainostoimisto Puisto owners about company direction, potential client needs and realistic goals for the thesis research led to deciding on the research direction. The question of involving case companies quickly arose, and the alternative of developing the idea further seemed nigh impossible without the interaction with and feedback from case companies. It was decided that two case companies was the ideal number and they should ideally come from existing Mainostoimisto Puisto client base. In January 2024, the first five potential case companies were contacted via email, and both Apukka Resort and Arktikum replied within 10 minutes, indicating keen interest in taking part and,

unprompted, expressing their frustration on not knowing how to approach sustainability communications and thus resorting to greenhushing.

The astonishingly quick and painless process of acquiring the two case companies, both financially significant clients in the Puisto portfolio, installed confidence in the researcher and the chosen development direction by discovering concrete needs. Soon after, interviews and ideation workshops with the case companies were booked for February and March 2024, providing further motivation for the then-ongoing phase of building the knowledge base. The semi-structured and theme interviews provided key insights and angles for the benchmarking stage and designing the ideation workshops. The ideation workshops were encouraging as they received positive feedback from the case companies and further solidified the potential of the service development through face-to-face interaction about the difficulty of turning the organisations' considerable sustainability efforts to engaging green marketing. The research results were processed April through June 2024, and preliminary prototyping workshop sessions at Mainostoimisto Puisto were held where relevant for determining the direction of the service development. July and early August 2024 were reserved for summer holidays and time off the thesis research.

In late August 2024, processing the research results and preliminary prototyping workshops results was continued and developing the concrete green marketing service finally started. November and December 2024, as well as January and February 2025, were spent on further research and designing the concrete service materials with regular prototyping workshop meetings at Mainostoimisto Puisto as schedules permitted. March 2025 saw the first versions of the green marketing service materials take shape, concluding the scope of this thesis research for Mainostoimisto Puisto. Next steps at the company would involve testing the service in practice with the case companies and collecting feedback, followed by designing the launch and marketing of the service to potential clients with sustainability certifications. The "Don't Use the S-word" green marketing service marks the first ever internally productized service at Mainostoimisto Puisto since its inception in 2008. The main stages of the thesis research process are summarized in Figure 1.

Process stages



Figure 1. The research and development process in a nutshell.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 Semi-structured and theme interviews

The results of both the semi-structured and theme interviews conducted with the two case companies were analysed using thematic analysis. This qualitative method is commonly used for identifying patterns or themes within the collected data to reduce the data in a flexible way (Castleberry & Nolen 2018, 808). Thematic analysis emerged as a suitable choice for organising the interview transcriptions into themes when designing the ideation workshops for case companies.

The interview data was first reduced from the entirety that included topics irrelevant to this thesis – mostly touched on in the conversational flow of the theme interviews – to relevant material. The next phase was open coding, where themes were arranged to categories that represented concepts occurring in the data. Due to the limited volume of the material – both interviews only had two respondent groups, the case company representatives – no special coding software was needed, and all transcriptions were grouped together simply in Microsoft Word. The interview topics were quite strictly restricted to sustainability certification efforts and sustainability communications (or lack thereof) at case companies, with themes revolving around few issues, making the coding less laborious. Two iterations of colour coding were done for the interview data until 14 key points were reached and divided into three categories – acquiring certifications, consumer interest, and sustainability communications – under the sustainability certification communications theme. Next phases included establishing relationships and patterns within the 14 key points to summarize the findings from the case company interviews. The results were condensed to bullet points under the three categories to provide both data and inspiration for developing the case company ideation workshops using design thinking methods. (Baralt 2012, 229–234.) Figure 2 shows the final summary of interview results.

SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION COMMUNICATIONS

INTERVIEW RESULTS TO INSPIRE IDEATION WORKSHOP PLANNING

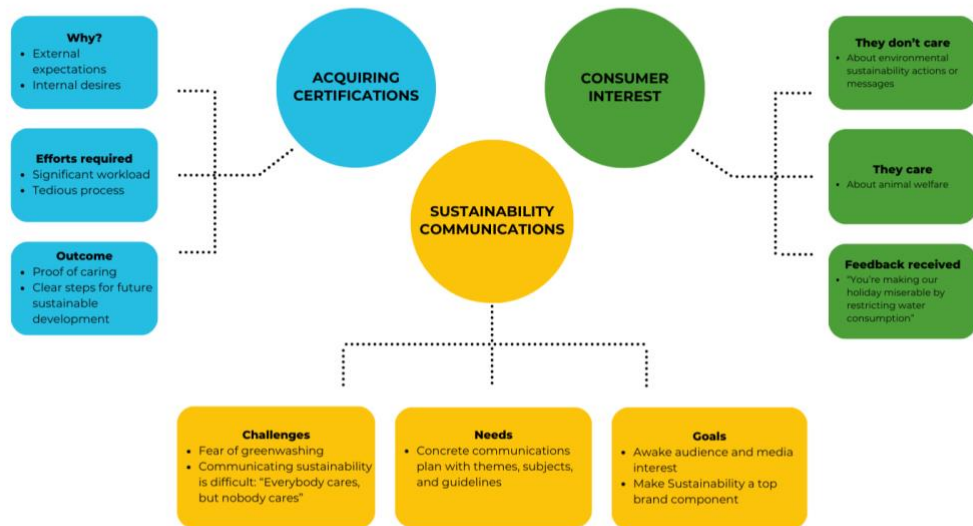


Figure 2. Interview results summary to guide case company ideation workshops planning.

5.2 Benchmarking

The benchmarking process included delving into the sustainability communications guidelines, strategies, and plans of 21 companies, organisations and educational institutions worldwide. While one was clearly above others, common themes arose from nearly all samples, and they were compiled into a 10-point list (Figure 3) for additional food for thought for the internal prototyping workshops at Puisto.

Benchmarking

10 key takeaways for sustainability communications

ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS

There is no sustainability communication without sustainable action.

TRANSPARENCY IS KEY

Communicate your achievements but be open about your challenges and even mistakes to build trust with your audience.

ACCURACY IS PARAMOUNT

Substantiate your claims with facts.

AVOID COMPLEX SCIENTIFIC TERMS AND JARGON

People need to know in simple terms why topics concern their own lives.

AVOID GREENWASHING

At all costs.

DON'T SUBMIT TO GREENHUSHING

The act of muting yourself in fear of greenwashing.

NO DOOMSDAY

Communicate positively and offer tips for improvement.

COMMUNICATE THE PRESENT

Narrate the situation here and now, not a dystopia for future generations.

AVOID VISUAL CLICHÉS

Do sustainability topics always have to be green?

DON'T USE THE S-WORD

Truly sustainable brands hardly ever say "sustainability". They communicate concrete topics.

Figure 3. 10-point list shows common themes from 21 benchmarking sources.

The most convincing guide of all the benchmarked materials was Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers

by the NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business (CSB) and Edelman, published in June 2023. The research report was a result of the NYU Stern CSB and communications company Edelman partnering with “nine iconic consumer brands” across different industries and conducting a literature review for concrete insights into sustainability communications (NYU Stern CSB & Edelman 2023, 4). The methodology featured an online study for a sample of the general population of the USA, where respondents were asked to evaluate 30–35 claims related to the brands in question (NYU Stern CSB & Edelman 2023, 5). Key findings revolved around what consumers cared and did not care about. According to the study, consumers cared most about themselves and their families, especially on issues concerning health and money. Second came local farmers and producers, placing regard for children and future generations third. Animal health appeared fourth on the list, with sustainable sourcing and local sourcing ranking fifth and sixth, respectively. (NYU Stern CSB & Edelman 2023, 13–20, 22–28.)

To summarize the consumer findings of the study, it can be argued that people care first and foremost about the welfare of themselves and their close ones, followed by other people and animals. This would hint at favouring emotional angles in communications, as technical and scientific claims did not resonate well with consumers, save for Generation Z that stood for the only demographic exception in responding well to scientific claims. There were no other demographic exceptions in the study, as all age groups seemed to respond rather similarly to sustainability claims.

According to the Effective Sustainability Communications guide, sustainability claims expand brand reach by 24–33% by bringing in new consumers. The guide also presents best practices for execution. Key takeaways from the perspective of this thesis research include that sustainability is a supporting claim to core performance claims. Claims that communicate the function of the product – “tastes good” or “performs well” – are most important to consumers. Sustainability claims benefit the marketing of the product when coupled with performance claims: “100% sustainably farmed for great taste”. (NYU Stern CSB & Edelman 2023, 8–11.) Sustainability claims should also be presented from human and health benefits angles where applicable: “Made without chemicals harmful to human health” and “good for the planet and future generations”. Likewise, animal

health should be presented when relevant: “no animal testing,” “cruelty-free”. Monetary benefits also resonate well: “longer life,” “less waste,” “lower energy bills”. Scientific aspects are easier to understand when linked to reasons to care: “carbon neutral to reduce the impact of climate change”. Also, quantifying scientific aspects have greater impact as it helps people understand the scale of things: “using one million tons of ocean-recovered plastic bottles”. Finally, people do not find sustainability certifications interesting per se, but certifications build trust and guard against greenwashing: “100% sustainably sourced and certified by the Rainforest Alliance”. (NYU Stern CSB & Edelman 2023, 38–41.)

Before going into the internal prototyping workshops at Puisto, the benchmarking phase presented valuable building blocks for developing a green marketing service. Considering the nature of the case companies as well as Puisto’s main operating area, Finnish Lapland with its plethora of travel businesses offering nature-related holiday experiences as well as businesses in various fields that must consider the natural environment of their homestead, the points that emphasize human and animal aspects over cold scientific data were especially relevant. Benchmarking the plans and guidelines provided key insights to the nature of sustainability communications and its connection to journalistic approaches, where global and local phenomena are often presented through individuals to help the reader understand the effects on regular people.

For businesses, acquiring sustainability certification is only the beginning of sustainability work and leveraging certifications into marketing assets is a key selling point for Mainostoimisto Puisto upon the completion of the green marketing service. As the NYU Stern CSB and Edelman study presents, people care first and foremost about themselves and the people around them but can empathise with people they don’t know. An interesting point for sustainability communications here is that people don’t understand what saving X amount of water or minimising food waste means in everyday life – these facts need to be communicated through their effects on people and the environment, for example “we save a local pond’s worth of water every year” or “reducing food waste annually saves us the ingredients that feed a family of four for six months”, or something of a similar nature. Also, people are very sceptical about sustainability claims due to countless public accounts of greenwashing, which is why claims

must be substantiated with facts presented in an understandable way. “Reducing carbon emissions by amount X” means nothing to people, but “we’ve turned down our indoor heating by one degree to reduce our carbon footprint – we’re still comfortable and the footprint is down 10%” gives people an idea of the concrete actions of a business and its effect on people and the planet.

In their interview replies, both case companies expressed their inclination to greenhushing, stating they were so afraid of being called out for greenwashing that they’d rather not say anything, even though both have two sustainability labels. Challenges and mistakes of sustainability work should be openly communicated to encourage audience feedback and interaction, building trust and engaging with stakeholders in the process. This way the message becomes “we’re in this together and we need everyone to right the ship on its course”.

Sustainable solutions should never come at the expense of functionality, as people want products that perform, food that tastes good, and services that make their life easier. From an individual’s perspective, sustainability is secondary, but if it comes as an additional feature to functionality, it is something to favour and broadens the potential customer base for the business in question. People want to do good, but not reduce their quality of life while doing it. Sustainability is often a good business decision as consuming less is cheaper; consequently, if it is a business strategy, it should be the marketing strategy and brand strategy as well. As both case companies stated in the interviews, sustainability should be an omnipresent brand factor. It should be incorporated in the brand in a fashion that considers all above learnings, and without saying the S-word – frankly, people are tired of hearing “sustainability” in marketing communications, since it can mean a plethora of things. Sustainability communications should always be company and brand specific, and based on real, concrete actions that help steer clear of using the S-word. Five central guidelines from Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers are presented in Figure 4.

Benchmarking

Key takeaways from “Effective Sustainability Communications - a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers”

Consumers value themselves and close relations most

Use emotional angles in communication.
Care for other people and animals should also be favoured.

Sustainability claims expand brand reach

Sustainability supports core performance claims – combine performance with sustainability.
Use human and animal health perspectives.
Highlight monetary benefits and reliability.

Sustainability certification is just the beginning

Turn certifications into green marketing assets.
Avoid greenwashing by communicating concrete actions.

Sustainability shouldn't reduce usability

Products and services must be functional and effective.

Sustainability communication must be brand and company-specific

Openly discuss your organisation's challenges and mistakes.
Avoid overuse of the word "sustainability".

Figure 4. List displays central points from the Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers by the NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business (CSB) and Edelman.

5.3 Ideation workshops with case companies

The ideation workshops with case companies were designed to encourage creative thinking and inspire the flow of ideas through design thinking methods. The workshop materials and methods were identical for both case companies – a Miro board designed beforehand using design thinking tools. The sessions opened with a welcoming speech and a check-in round to ensure all participants felt comfortable and experienced the atmosphere as open, safe, and non-judgmental. The concepts of divergent and convergent thinking were explained: the ideation workshops were to focus on divergent thinking, creating choice and

volume, while the internal prototyping workshops at Mainostoimisto Puisto would later focus on crystallising that volume into key ideas through convergent thinking. Next, workshop rules were presented: we have no agenda, we keep an open mind, there are no bad ideas, there is no need to stress, and finally, have fun and let your ideas flow.

The ideation was opened with a five-minute warm-up through Dream World Thinking, an exercise that encouraged participants' out-of-the-box thinking through guiding questions "What would your sustainability communications be like if there were no limitations?", and "What type of impact would those communications make?" Next, the participants were asked to spend five minutes describing their typical customer to remind who sustainability communications were ultimately aimed at, followed by five minutes of listing the company's customer touchpoints to discuss all the potential interfaces for sustainability communications. Another five minutes were spent on the Customer Problem Statement, a five-box grid that helped the group formulate the company's main sustainability communications challenge from a customer point of view.

The customer problem was then used as a basis for Reverse Brainstorming, where the problem was reversed to urge the group to think of things that could make the problem worse instead of searching for solutions. Results yielded many bad ideas that were discussed and, in turn, reversed into positive solutions to the original problem. The solution ideas were again discussed and rated – each participant had three votes – to find the top two ideas for the next stage.

The 20-minute How Might We? Brainwriting exercise took the two chosen ideas and turned them into questions, for example "How might we inform customers why sustainability issues matter to us?" Under each question lie a 5x5 grid of coloured blank post-it notes, where each participant follows their assigned colour. Everyone writes down their initial idea in two minutes and moves down the grid to elaborate on someone else's idea for two minutes. The steps continue until all participants have contributed to each initial idea and the grid is completed. The two questions produced a total of 10 ideas, all with contributions from each participant.

After a rather demanding 20 minutes, a five-minute interphase of discussing the company's main internal sustainability communications problem took place. The problem that emerged was then taken to initialize the final phase of the workshop, the Lotus Flower, a method used for generating and refining ideas. First, the initial problem is placed inside a circle in the centre of the flower with four petals around it. Inside each petal, participants generate an idea around the theme in the circle, and upon completing the first flower, pick the best idea from the four petals and place it inside the circle of the next lotus flower. After three completed lotus flowers, the final refined idea is placed on an idea card with explanatory bullet points and illustrations ready to be introduced to the other participants. When everyone has presented their idea to the group, each participant gives a vote to three of their favourite ideas.

Workshops for both case companies took around two and a half hours each and were carried out in a supportive and conversational manner. Immediate feedback after both was positive, highlighting the detailed planning of the phases and the comprehensible instructions before entering each phase. The results for each case company were compiled from the Miro board to a list on Microsoft Word and arranged by workshop phase as well as the theme of the result or idea. As with the interviews, themes were colour coded and analysed using thematic analysis.

In the Dream World Thinking phase, where companies were asked what their sustainability communications would be like if they could decide without limitations, both saw themselves as forerunners of sustainability who communicate their actions openly, innovatively and engagingly. Both also envisioned a holistic approach with all staff members committing to sustainable action and communications, as well as involving their customers and other stakeholders in a dialogue where sustainability information and tips are exchanged both ways. Likewise, both saw the need for their grassroots sustainable actions to be holistic, thus easing the communications efforts both on-site and online – you simply need to tell people what you do, why and how.

The Reverse Brainstorming and How Might We? Brainwriting phases produced, understandably, differing results between the two companies as both came up with ideas related to their specific field of business and operational surroundings.

The Reverse Brainstorming phase was preceded by the Customer Problem Statement, where each company's main sustainability communications challenge from a customer point of view was discussed collectively. Apukka Resort's problem was their guests' lack of interest towards the company's sustainability efforts, with some even complaining that the resort's 20-minute limit for hot showers was making their holiday experience miserable. Central to Apukka Resort's business is adventure, and many ideas revolved around extending the brand theme to sustainability issues to boost customer interest. Ideas included gamifying sustainability issues on-site at the resort as well as extending information sharing to most if not all brand touchpoints in a 360-degree fashion, including a social media post series and a video series, on-site customer interaction and tour guides' verbal information to guests, and illustrating environmental change through local evidence inside the resort buildings. The Arktikum building, in turn, is home to the Arctic Centre, a University of Lapland research centre that conducts research on the Arctic area from various perspectives, including climate change. In the interviews and the ideation workshop Arktikum repeatedly lamented the lack of communication and cooperation between them and the Arctic Centre, as Arktikum would be the most suitable outlet for popularising the sustainability data produced by the Arctic Centre. Thus, their Customer Problem Statement was formed around wasting their premium potential for sustainability communications. Solution ideas revolved around mending the lack of cooperation and starting a significant project involving Arktikum and the Arctic Centre in popularizing sustainable development information in Arktikum and presenting world-class sustainability research data to the public in an interesting, understandable, and accessible way. Ideas stretched to seeking funding, looking for cooperation opportunities with local schools for sustainability education, and "making science cool", as well as involving high-profile persons to amplify the messages and promote the project.

Prior to entering the final workshop phase, the Lotus Flower, where participants would ideate concrete solutions to their sustainability communications, both companies formulated their main internal sustainability communications problem. For Apukka Resort, it read "We need a sustainability ambassador", and solutions included making an internal hire for a sustainability ambassador, having an

internal ambassador with a rotating partner so all staff members would get an introduction to communicating sustainability for creating a holistic approach to the subject inside the company, and involving the tens of social media influencers that visit the resort annually in promoting Apukka's sustainability efforts. Arktikum's internal sustainability communications problem remained in the previous subject matter with "We must claim our place as sustainability leader", with solutions reiterating the importance of collaboration with the Arctic Centre, innovative on-site presentation of sustainability data, and applying for funding for a project of significant scale. Interestingly, both companies were in favour of creating an AI agent trained with their own sustainability efforts, data, and brand information. Ideation workshop results are summarized in Figure 5.

SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION COMMUNICATIONS

IDEATION WORKSHOP RESULTS TO INSPIRE PROTOTYPING WORKSHOP PLANNING

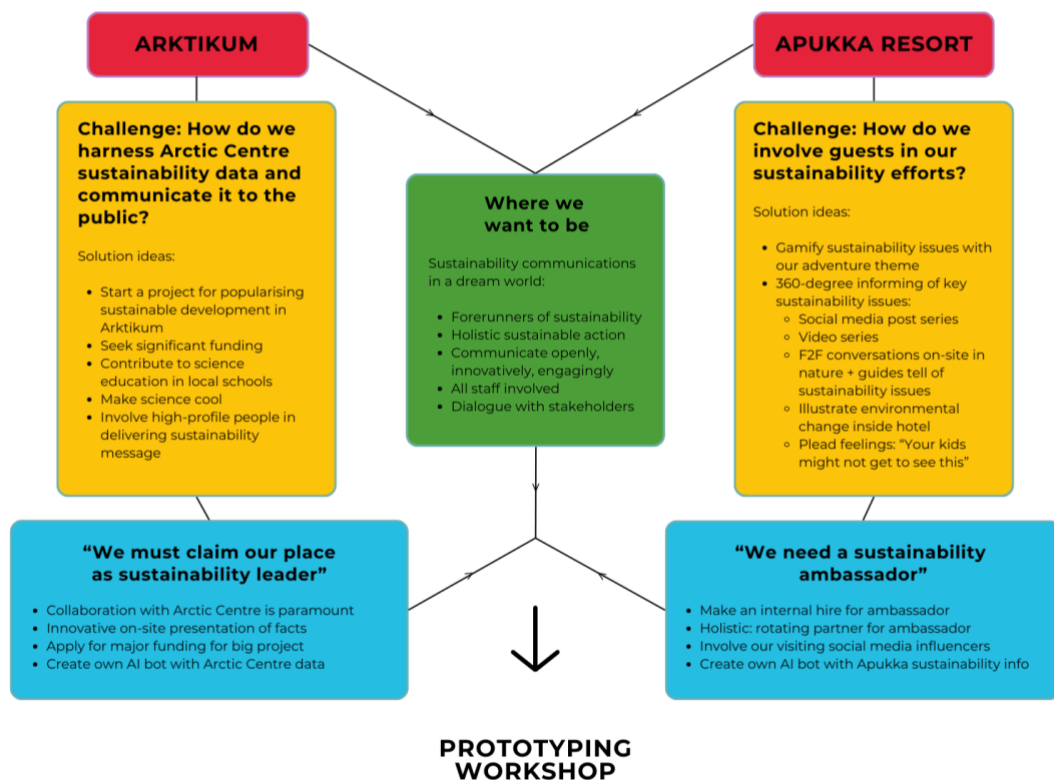


Figure 5. Ideation workshop results summary to guide the planning of internal prototyping workshops at Mainostoimisto Puisto.

5.4 Prototyping workshops at Mainostoimisto Puisto

Prototyping the green marketing service at Mainostoimisto Puisto started with a planning session featuring the author of this thesis and the two partners that own the company. The first session focused on presenting the findings of the research process so far for the two partners: knowledge base, interviews, benchmarking, and ideation workshops with case companies. As Puisto is a customer-oriented business by nature, discussing the prototyping started with case company expressions on their fundamental problems concerning sustainability communications to determine the type of solutions that Puisto should consider offering their clients. The solution ideas presented by the case companies were also investigated enthusiastically. Summaries from the benchmarking phase were discussed and reflected against the findings of the interviews and knowledge base.

Different options for proceeding with the prototyping phase were discussed. The need for simultaneously developing the internal process at Puisto while also offering clients a relevant and beneficial service led to deciding that a service blueprint would be the most suitable way to visualize both internal and external processes regarding the service. A service blueprint would also help in mapping the materials Puisto would need to produce for future client workshops, presenting the results, and providing the clients with concrete plans for sustainability communications and branding. According to the Interaction Design Foundation (2016), a blueprint for a new service allows creating service prototypes and assists with service design and the broader concept of brand management. Although focused on design, Puisto ultimately aims at guiding brand management at client companies.

As for the innovation part of this thesis, it was decided that adapting and adjusting the benchmarked sustainability communications practices to the geographical area of Lapland and specifically the tourism industry would be a sensible developmental step and set up a learning process with the first few customerships for refining the service in the long run. In plain terms, we did not want to bite off more than we could chew at this stage. Focusing on the Lapland tourism industry would also give Puisto a limited number of sustainability certifications to master

and thus ease the introduction of the new service. As mentioned earlier, product and service innovation include taking current offerings to new markets and new uses (Kahn 2018, 453–455).

Based on the discussions in the planning session, a first draft of the service blueprint was created by the author for the first internal prototyping workshop. A blueprint template was readily available in Miro, the application used for the development process, and the template needed only slight modification to suit the task requirements. The template's five horizontal columns listed the actions required by involved parties: support processes, back of stage interactions, front of stage interactions, client actions, and physical evidence for client. The vertical columns featured the 11-stage process from client acquisition and setting meetings to running workshops and delivering the final sustainability communications plan or branding workshop results. More than 40 steps were mapped in the first prototyping workshop, accompanied by eight points in the process where Puisto's efforts for producing materials were identified.

For the second prototyping workshop, a refined version of the service blueprint was presented to the two Puisto partners. In between the two prototyping workshops, the summer holidays had allowed for two months of time off the development project, and the whole team could approach the subject at hand with rested brains and fresh sets of eyes. The service blueprint needed only few minor tweaks which were discussed and implemented on the spot. After agreeing on the nature of the service presented in the blueprint, focus was shifted on practical implementation and garnering interest from potential clients.

The primary question revolved around how to present the service to potential clients, and discussing alternatives quickly led to decisions. The service would be offered in three packages, or stages, and clients could opt for purchasing Stage 1 only, Stages 1 and 2, or Stages 1–3. Stage 1 would be a sustainability communications presentation that includes discussion on the client company's acquired sustainability certifications and the efforts required, as well as insight into the nature of sustainability communications and some practical tips based on this thesis research. Stage 1 plays the role of an attraction service, designed to give the client an overview of sustainability communications and practical

execution tips. The client can then decide whether they received the information they were looking for or if they want to proceed to the next stage. Stage 2 would involve designing a sustainability communications plan tailored to the client's specific needs. The sustainability communications plan would draw from the research findings presented in Stage 1 as well as interactions with client company staff to understand their audiences and ideal brand messaging from a sustainability angle. Again, the client can evaluate whether a sustainability communications plan is enough for them or if they want to further incorporate sustainability into their brand and operations. Stage 3 would feature a sustainability branding workshop, where the client's current brand, values, stakeholders and sustainability efforts would be re-examined, and consequently realigned into a new brand with sustainability incorporated. The procedure of designing each stage of the service was agreed to involve the author drafting versions based on his research and presenting them at regular meetings with the two Puisto partners for collective evaluation from a business and internal process perspective.

As for producing the concrete service materials, Stage 1, the attraction service, is a conversational presentation (Appendix 1) that delves briefly into the state of the client's sustainability work as well as their acquired certifications, followed by examples of their sustainability communications (or lack thereof) to spark conversation on the status of sustainability and attitudes towards it inside the organisation. Next, Stage 1 draws from the benchmarking phase of this thesis research and presents a summary of consumer views on sustainability communications, the 10 key takeaways for sustainability communications presented earlier in Figure 3, and nine key points presented by researchers in *Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers*. Stage 1 ends with three key takeaways of the presentation: Act first, communicate second; Be open, transparent and sincere; Remember people and animals. The final slide of the presentation encourages questions, feedback and discussion from the audience.

Stage 2 features creating a sustainability communications plan based on clients' individual needs. It was collectively decided that a specific template was not the best approach for this phase, as Mainostoimisto Puisto's previous experience has

shown that clients' communications requirements vary significantly based on their line of business, organisation size, target audiences and their number of communications channels. As communications plans require a great deal of individual tailoring, and Mainostoimisto Puisto has existing templates ranging from service blueprint grids to monthly marketing clocks and annual communications calendars, updating them when applicable would be the most efficient way to approach executing Stage 2 for clients. However, An AI prompt template was created, featuring sustainability communications guidelines, green marketing instructions and an EU Green Claims checklist to assist in designing future sustainability communications plans.

Stage 3 is the most in-depth phase of the service, where a client organisation's brand is designed or redesigned to incorporate sustainability. Stage 3 is a branding workshop with Mainostoimisto Puisto and a client, and each workshop will be tailored to clients' requirements. Therefore, what was produced at this stage is a sustainability branding workshop template (Appendix 2) that is easily modified to suit a diverse range of clients. Each workshop begins with an introduction into why sustainability is an increasingly important factor globally and how it affects people and businesses, followed by an explanation of what sustainability branding is. The plan is to have the workshop session by open fire, for example in a typical Lapland-style kota hut. This because a change of environment from a standard office will likely have a positive impact on approaching the subject as well as dropping hierarchical roles participants may have. Also, the etymology of the word "brand" stems from fire and burning; Bastos and Levy (2012, 351) give examples of branding connected to fire from ancient history to the 20th century, and the word "brand" itself means "fire" or "burning" in modern German and Swedish, for example. One historical use of branding through burning is cattle branding. The element of fire is also inherent to Lapland and basic-level wilderness survival skills that many visitors to the area encounter in one form or another. After the introductory phase, a deeper look into branding is presented via various visual tools to prepare the participants to discuss their organisation's future brand via brand archetypes, brand personality features, brand positioning in relation to competitors, organisational values, and desired brand image. Next, the organisation's stakeholders are discussed followed by a

briefing of the “nature as stakeholder” paradigm and a proposition to officially include it in the organisation’s documents. The sustainability section of the workshop addresses efforts made by the organisation, discussion on acquiring and updating certifications, as well as sustainability as a business strategy. Finally, the organisation’s sustainability vision is discussed; what are their goals, why do their sustainability efforts interest and benefit customers and stakeholders, and what parties might be worthy of contacting in teaming up for sustainability efforts and communications. Before closing the workshop, next steps like presenting the workshop summary and drafting a schedule for new brand applications are to be discussed collectively. Shaping the green marketing service in Mainostoimisto Puisto prototyping workshops is summarized in Figure 6.

Prototyping workshops

Shaping the green marketing service

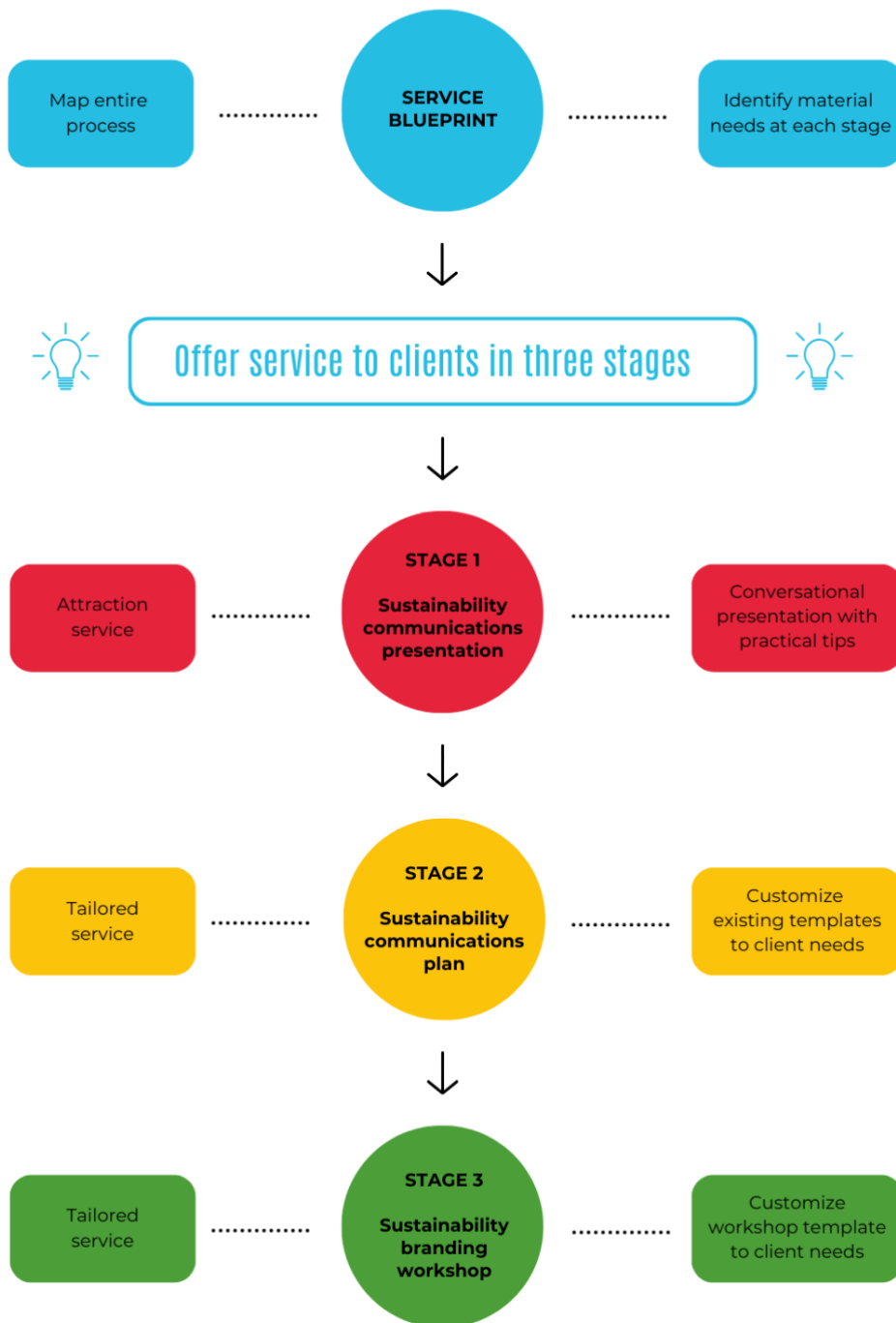


Figure 6. Prototyping workshops in Mainostoimisto Puisto resulted in the shaping of the green marketing service.

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Key findings and interpretation

The main research problem addressed in this thesis research is that Lapland travel businesses that have acquired sustainability certifications struggle to translate their efforts into engaging green marketing that resonates with their target audiences and drives sustainable business growth. The thesis research aimed to create a framework for a green marketing service offering sustainability communications and branding that empower travel businesses to effectively leverage their sustainability certifications.

The thesis research found a significant imbalance between the efforts required to achieve sustainability certifications and the subsequent marketing communications of the invested efforts. Focus on case companies Apukka Resort and Arktikum revealed the considerable commitments required to achieve sustainability certifications and labels such as Green Key, EcoCompass, and Sustainable Travel Finland. Both companies had limited sustainability communications, mostly buried low on their website content hierarchy and with infrequent mentions on their other communication channels. This was indicative of the travel business in Lapland in general, where most businesses are not effectively leveraging their sustainability credentials for green marketing purposes.

The semi-structured and theme interviews brought forth the curiously uniform case of greenhushing in the case companies, where both hesitated to communicate their sustainability efforts due to fears of greenwashing accusations or lacking expertise in the field. This aligns with broader concerns about unintentional greenwashing and the challenges of navigating the delicate and complex field of sustainability communications. However, both companies expressed keen interest in making sustainability a recurring theme in their marketing communications.

The benchmarking phase underscored several interesting themes, particularly favouring emphasis on human and animal aspects over purely scientific data. Factors like people caring mostly about themselves and their close ones as well

as their money and health suggest that sustainability should focus on emotional angles and relatable impacts rather than abstract data that people have difficulty putting in context. Thus, the key to substantiating sustainability claims is providing understandable facts to audiences. Moreover, sustainability claims should never override core performance claims, meaning a service or product appeals to audiences when it serves its purpose well, and supporting sustainability claims may increase its desirability. Regarding sustainability certifications, they are not of primary interest to consumers but help in building trust with audiences skeptical of sustainability claims. Ultimately, the benchmarking phase pushed this thesis research towards building a green marketing service that encourages clients to execute real, concrete actions first and then presenting them openly to audiences through company and brand-specific messaging, avoiding overuse of the term “sustainability”. In short: act sustainably first, and communications follow naturally.

In addition to a plethora of practical ideas for future sustainability communications and on-site operations, the ideation workshops with the case companies provided one key takeaway regarding the final green marketing service: a tailored approach. Although both companies indicated a desire to be sustainability leaders among their competitors and execute sustainability holistically as well as communicate their actions openly, their challenges were unique: Apukka Resort faced guest indifference and Arktikum a lack of internal cooperation. These differences sealed the decision to develop the green marketing service to have a tailored approach to address the specific communication barriers and leverage unique strengths of each business.

6.2 Relationship to existing literature

This thesis research builds on the existing body of knowledge on sustainable development, green marketing, and branding. Since first introduced in the Brundtland Report in 1987, sustainable development has evolved to include social, economic, and environmental aspects, with environmental sustainability as the bedrock. This thesis research aligns with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those addressing environmental

sustainability, and supports the role of private businesses in achieving these goals.

The existing literature emphasizes the importance of open and transparent sustainability communication, which is in line with the case companies' desire to place sustainability at the core of their brands. Likewise, the key findings of this thesis research resonate with previous literature regarding the case companies' struggle to effectively utilize sustainability certifications as a source for green marketing. The companies' limited ability to communicate their sustainability efforts is related to the broader challenge of green marketing, where businesses face fears of greenwashing and end up greenhushing. The thesis research findings also align with the literature on green marketing that places focus on the importance of integrating environmental sustainability into marketing strategies (Dangelico & Vocalelli 2017, 1264). The case companies' desire to find innovative ways to communicate sustainability is also consistent with the literature, which highlights creativity and distinctiveness in branding and marketing (Bastos & Levy 2012, 349).

The potential indifference of consumers towards sustainability issues defined by the case companies is partly in conflict with the literature, which states that consumers' environmental awareness is growing and they expect environmental responsibility from companies (Mishra & Sharma 2014, 78). However, the study by NYU Stern CSB and Edelman emphasizes that consumers are primarily interested in their own well-being and that of their close ones, which supports the case companies' observation that sustainability communications should be meaningful to the recipient. The results of this thesis research confirm the view of the literature that sustainability certifications themselves build trust but are not perceived as interesting. The findings also connect with the stakeholder theory, emphasizing interconnected relationships between businesses and stakeholders, including non-human nature as introduced by Starik (1995, 207), which is particularly relevant in the context of Lapland's tourism industry.

By exploring the aforementioned subjects, the results of this thesis research add value to the existing literature by providing a concrete example from the Lapland tourism sector of how companies strive to navigate the complex relationship

between sustainability, green marketing, and branding. The results also aim to provide insights for Lapland travel businesses to effectively communicate their sustainability efforts and connect with target audiences, an issue also highlighted in the tourism industry by Nascimento and Loureiro (2024, 241). Furthermore, the findings of this thesis research contribute to the literature on green marketing, addressing the need for environmentally friendly tourism services as well as the challenges of greenwashing and greenhushing.

6.3 Limitations

This thesis research has several limitations. Limited sample size: The thesis research focused on two case companies in Lapland, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Qualitative approach: The qualitative methods, while providing rich insights, may not be representative of the broader Lapland tourism industry. Researcher bias and recall bias: The researcher's and the informants' perspective and interpretations may have influenced the findings and research outcome especially in the interviews and workshops phases. Benchmarking, while a great tool for comparative analysis, may not consider the unique contextual factors of each benchmarked sample. Lack of quantitative data: The thesis research does not include quantitative data on the impact of sustainability communications on business growth. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying them to other contexts. (Mwita 2022, 621–623.)

6.4 Recommendations for future research

Future research could address the limitations of this thesis research and explore new avenues. Expanding the sample: Conduct a survey or multiple case studies involving a larger sample of Lapland travel businesses to quantitatively assess the impact of sustainability communications on business performance. Longitudinal study: Conduct a longitudinal study to track the effectiveness of different sustainability communications strategies over time. Consumer behaviour analysis: Investigate consumer behaviour and preferences related to sustainable tourism in Lapland, including willingness to pay for eco-certified products and services. Impact of AI: Further explore how AI agents can help

make sustainability efforts, data, and brand information more accessible. Comparative study: Compare sustainability communication practices in Lapland with those in other tourism destinations to identify best practices and emerging trends. Further studies are necessary using larger sample sizes from multiple sites to confirm the generalizability of the findings.

6.5 Conclusion

This thesis research contributes to understanding the challenges and opportunities of sustainability communications and branding in the Lapland tourism industry. By developing a practical framework for a green marketing service, it empowers businesses to leverage their sustainability certifications and connect with target audiences effectively. The research highlights the importance of transparency, authenticity, and a tailored approach to sustainability communications. While limitations exist, the findings provide valuable insights for businesses, policymakers, and researchers interested in promoting sustainable tourism in Lapland and beyond.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, W.C. 2015. Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. In K.E. Newcomer, H.P. Hatry and J.S. Wholey (eds.) *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 491–505. Accessed 15 March 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19>.

Alasuutari, P. 1999. *Laadullinen tutkimus*. Tampere: Vastapaino

American Marketing Association 2024. Definitions of Marketing. Accessed 6 September 2024. <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>.

Amundsen, V. S. 2022. From checking boxes to actual improvement: A new take on sustainability certification. *Aquaculture*, Volume 548, Part 1, (2022). Accessed 13 March 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aquaculture.2021.737672>.

Apukka Resort a. Stay. Accessed 14 March 2024 <https://apukkaresort.fi/stay>.

Apukka Resort b. Activities. Accessed 14 March 2024 <https://apukkaresort.fi/activities>.

Apukka Resort c. Story. Accessed 15 March 2024 <https://apukkaresort.fi/about-apukka/info/story>.

Apukka Resort d. Sustainability. Accessed 15 March 2024 <https://apukkaresort.fi/about-apukka/info/sustainability>.

Arktikum a. Arktikum. Accessed 15 March 2024 <https://www.arktikum.fi/en/visit.html#Arktikum>.

Arktikum b. Exhibitions. Accessed 15 March 2024 <https://arktikum-2016.sivuviidakko.fi/en/exhibitions.html>.

Arktikum c. Sustainability. Accessed 15 March 2024 <https://www.arktikum.fi/en/visit.html#Sustainability>.

Arktikum d. Arktikumin ja Korundin ympäristöohjelma kaudelle 2022–2024. Private email 7 February 2024. Recipient: Henri Anundi.

Arora, N. K. 2018. Environmental sustainability – necessary for survival. *Environmental Sustainability Vol 1*, 1–2. Accessed 14 December 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42398-018-0013-3>.

Baralt, M. 2012. Coding qualitative data. In A. Mackey & S.M. Gass (eds) *Research methods in second language acquisition: A practical guide*. Chichester, England: Blackwell Publishing, 222-244.

Bastos, W. & Levy, S. 2012. A history of the concept of branding: Practice and theory. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol 4 No. 3, 347–368. Accessed 11 November 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1108/17557501211252934>.

Ben-Ari M. 2001. Constructivism in Computer Science Education. *Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching*, 20(1), 45–73. Accessed 17 January 2025 <https://learntechlib.org/primary/p/8505/>.

Bertilsson, J. & Rennstam, J. 2018. The destructive side of branding: A heuristic model for analyzing the value of branding practice. *Organization*, 25(2), 260–281. Accessed 23 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508417712431>.

Brown, E. 5 companies caught greenwashing. OPOH. Accessed 23 October 2024 <https://www.opoh.co/5-companies-caught-greenwashing>.

Brown, T. 2009. *Change by design: how design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation*. 1st edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Castleberry, A. & Nolen, A. 2018. Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, Vol 10 Issue 6, 807–815. Accessed 17 May 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019>.

Curedale, R. A. 2016. *Design thinking process and methods guide*. 2nd edition. Topanga: Design Community College Inc.

Dangelico, R. M. & Vocalelli, D. 2017. “Green Marketing”: An analysis of definitions, strategy steps, and tools through a systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 165, 1263-1279. Accessed 7 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.07.184>.

Dattakumar, R. & Jagadeesh, R. 2003. A review of literature on benchmarking. *Benchmarking: An International Journal* Vol 10 No 3 (2003), 176–209. Accessed April 10 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1108/14635770310477744>.

Delgado-Ballester, E. & Munuera-Alemán, J. L. 2005. Does brand trust matter to brand equity? *Journal of Product & Brand Management* Vol. 14 No. 3, 187–196. Accessed 26 May 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420510601058>.

Dias, L.P.F, Bagatini, F.Z. & Perin, M.G. 2025. Green “Under-Communication:” A Systematic Literature Review on Greenhushing. *ReMark-Revista Brasileira de Marketing*, 24(1), 387-414. Accessed 21 March 2025 <https://doi.org/10.5585/2025.26718>.

Dolan, R. 1997. *Note on Marketing Strategy*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Dragomir, L., Mazilu, M., & Marinescu, R. 2018. The connection between sustainable tourism and certification systems. *Forum geografic*, XVII(2), 146-151. Accessed 6 December <http://dx.doi.org/10.5775/fg.2018.032.d>.

Driscoll, C. & Starik, M. 2004. *The Primordial Stakeholder: Advancing the Conceptual Consideration of Stakeholder Status for the Natural Environment*.

Journal of Business Ethics 49, 55–73. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Durst, S., Mention, A-L. & Poutanen, P. 2015. Service innovation and its impact: What do we know about? *Investigaciones Europeas de Dirección y Economía de la Empresa*, Volume 21, Issue 2, 65-72. Accessed 8 April 2024
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iedee.2014.07.003>.

Ekokompassi a. Ympäristöjärjestelmä. Accessed 22 March 2024
<https://ekokompassi.fi/ymparistojarjestelma>.

Ekokompassi b. Sertifikaatti. Accessed 22 March 2024
<https://ekokompassi.fi/sertifikaatti/>.

Ekokompassi c. Vastuullisuusviestintä. Accessed 23 March 2024
<https://ekokompassi.fi/lisapalvelut/vastuullisuusviestinta/>.

Eskola, J., Lätti, J. & Vastamäki, J. 2018. Teemahaastattelu: Lyhyt selviytymisopas. In R. Valli (ed) *Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin 1: Metodin valinta ja aineistonkeruu: virikkeitä aloittelevalle tutkijalle*. Jyväskylä, Finland: PS-kustannus, 27–51.

Eskola, J. & Suoranta, J. 1998. *Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen*. Tampere, Finland: Vastapaino.

European Parliament 2016. Barriers to SME growth in Europe. Accessed 6 December 2023
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/583788/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)583788_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/583788/EPRS_BRI(2016)583788_EN.pdf).

European Parliament 2024 a. Think Tank. 'Green claims' directive: Protecting consumers from greenwashing. Accessed 8 October 2024
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)753958](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)753958).

European Parliament 2024 b. Topics. Stopping greenwashing: how the EU regulates green claims. Accessed 8 October 2024
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20240111STO16722/stopping-greenwashing-how-the-eu-regulates-green-claims>.

European Parliament 2025. Substantiating green claims. Accessed 21 March 2025
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-european-green-deal/file-substantiating-green-claims>.

Faber, G. & Sick, V. 2022. Identifying and Mitigating Greenwashing of Carbon Utilization Products. Global CO2 Initiative, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Michigan. Accessed 8 October 2024
<https://doi.org/2027.42/171930>.

Feldwick, P. 2003. Brand communications. In R. Clifton and J. Simmons (Eds) *Brands and Branding*. London: Profile Books Ltd, 127–142.

Font, X., Elgammal, I. & Lamond, I. 2017. Greenhushing: the deliberate under communicating of sustainability practices by tourism businesses. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, Vol. 25, No. 7, 1007–1023. Accessed 8 October 2024 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1158829>.

Foundation for Environmental Education. Our Mission & History. Accessed 22 March 2024 <https://www.fee.global/our-mission-and-history>.

Frey, S., Bar Am, J., Doshi, V., Malik, A. & Noble, S. 2023. Consumers care about sustainability—and back it up with their wallets. McKinsey & Company 6 February 2023. Accessed 6 December 2023 <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/consumers-care-about-sustainability-and-back-it-up-with-their-wallets>.

Galletta, A. 2013. *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*. New York University Press: New York.

Gardner, B. & Levy, S. 1955. The Product and the Brand. *Harvard Business Review* March-April 1955. Accessed 8 December 2023 https://static.squarespace.com/static/52f06caee4b0c058f6084354/t/539070a1e4b0b4380bb48719/1401974945820/Levy_ProductandBrand.pdf.

Gartner 2024. Gartner Survey Reveals 69% of CEOs View Sustainability as a Growth Opportunity. Press release 6 June 2024. Accessed 22 October 2024 <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2024-06-05-gartner-survey-reveals-69-percent-of-ceos-view-sustainability-as-a-growth-opportunity>.

Gaudig, A., Ebersberger, B. & Kuckertz, A. 2021. Sustainability-Oriented Macro Trends and Innovation Types—Exploring Different Organization Types Tackling the Global Sustainability Megatrend. *Sustainability*, 13, 11583. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132111583>.

Ghitti, M., Gianfrate, G. & Palma, L. 2023. The agency of greenwashing. *Journal of Management and Governance*, July 2023. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-023-09683-8>.

Glavas, D., Grolleau, G. & Mzoughi, N. 2023. Greening the greenwashers – How to push greenwashers towards more sustainable trajectories. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 382. Accessed 8 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.135301>.

Golsorkhi, D., Rouleau, L., Seidl, D. & Vaara, E. 2010. *Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gopalakrishnan, S. & Damanpour, F. 1997. A Review of Innovation Research in Economics, Sociology and Technology Management. *Omega*, Vol 25 Issue 1, 15–28. Accessed 12 March 2024 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-0483\(96\)00043-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-0483(96)00043-6).

Gorton, M., Tocco, B., Yeh, C-H. & Hartmann, M. 2021. What determines consumers' use of eco-labels? Taking a close look at label trust. *Ecological*

Economics, Vol 189, 1–10. Accessed 6 December 2024
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econ.2021.107173>.

Green Key a. Our Programme. <https://www.greenkey.global/our-programme>.

Green Key b. The Green Key Brochure. Accessed 22 March 2024
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55371f97e4b0fce8c1ee4c69/t/6479caed95234d3172591a31/1685703409769/Green+Key+Brochure+2023.pdf>.

Green Key c. Green Key and Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030. Accessed 22 March 2024
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55371f97e4b0fce8c1ee4c69/t/56e684cfcf80a14323d24945/1515420105017/Green+Key+and+the+Sustainable+Development+Goals+%28SDGs%29.pdf>.

Green Key d. Our Structure. Accessed 22 March 2024
<https://www.greenkey.global/our-structure>.

Green Key e. Green Key. Accessed 22 March 2024
<https://www.greenkey.global/>.

Green, T. & Pelozo, J. 2014. Finding the Right Shade of Green: The Effect of Advertising Appeal Type on Environmentally Friendly Consumption. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(2), 128–141. Accessed 27 September
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2013.834805>.

Grubor, A. & Milovanov, O. 2017. Brand Strategies in the Era of Sustainability. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*, 2017, 15(1), 78-88. Accessed 13 January 2024 <http://dx.doi.org/10.7906/indecs.15.1.6>.

Heinonen, K. & Strandvik, T. 2020. Reframing service innovation: COVID-19 as a catalyst for imposed service innovation. *Journal of Service Management* Vol. 32, No. 1, 101–112. Accessed 8 April <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-05-2020-0161>.

Holt, D. B. 2002. Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29 No. 1, 70–90. Accessed 23 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1086/339922>.

Holum, M. & Jakobsen, T. 2024. Economic growth versus the environment: government spending, trust, and citizen support for environmental protection. *Environmental Sociology*. Accessed 13 September
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2024.2398503>.

House of Lapland. Air traffic in Lapland 2022-2023. Accessed 24 September 2024 <https://www.lapland.fi/uploads/2023/08/aafbf482-air-traffic-2022-2023.pdf>

Ifezue, A. 2005. The Role of Marketing in Economic Development of Developing Countries. *Innovative Marketing* Vol 1, Iss 1, 15–20. Accessed 13 September
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265352943_The_Role_of_Marketing_in_Economic_Development_of_Developing_Countries.

Initiative, C. S., Golden, J. S., Vermeer, D., Clemen, B. & Nguyen, M. 2010. An overview of ecolabels and sustainability certifications in the global marketplace. Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions. Duke University. Interim Report Document, 10-1. Accessed 6 December 2024 <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=332b0a08728279c0661769b8f08fc1ba9e3031d4>.

Interaction Design Foundation – IxDF 2016. What are Service Blueprints? Accessed 23 August 2024 <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/service-blueprint>.

International Energy Agency 2023. Aviation. Accessed 6 September 2024 <https://www.iea.org/energy-system/transport/aviation>.

International Institute of Sustainable Development 2024. Market Coverage. Accessed 13 March 2024 <https://www.iisd.org/ssi/market-coverage/>.

International Labour Organization 2023. How data can bolster decent work in the tourism sector. ILO 26 September 2024. Accessed 27 September 2024 <https://ilostat.ilo.org/blog/how-data-can-bolster-decent-work-in-the-tourism-sector/>.

Interreg Europe 2024. Sustainable Travel Finland. Accessed 21 March 2025 <https://www.interregeurope.eu/good-practices/sustainable-travel-finland-stff#>.

Jetmarová, B. 2011. Comparison of Best Practice Benchmarking Models. *Problems of Management in the 21st Century* Vol. 2 (2011), 76–84. Accessed 10 April 2024 https://scientiasocialis.lt/pmc/files/pdf/Jetmarova_Vol.2.pdf.

de Jong, M.D.T., Huluba, G. & Beldad A. D. 2020. Different Shades of Greenwashing: Consumers' Reactions to Environmental Lies, Half-Lies, and Organizations Taking Credit for Following Legal Obligations. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, Vol. 34(1), 38–76. Accessed 8 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651919874105>.

Kadam, P. V. 2024. Embracing the Future: Unveiling the Role of Sustainability in Innovative Branding. *Educational Administration: Theory And Practice*, 30(6), 2312–2318. Accessed 23 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i6.5733>.

Kahn, Kenneth B. 2018. Understanding Innovation. *Business Horizons* Volume 61 Issue 3, 453–460. Accessed 23 August 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.01.011>.

Kornberger, M. 2010. *Brand Society: How Brands Transform Management and Lifestyle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kotler, P. 2011. Reinventing Marketing to Manage the Environmental Imperative. *Journal of Marketing* 132, Vol. 75, 132–135. Accessed 7 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.75.4.132>.

Kotler, P., Burton, S., Deans, K., Brown, L. & Armstrong, G. 2015. Marketing. 9th edition. Frenchs Forest: Pearson Australia.

Kozak, M. 2004. Destination benchmarking: concepts, practices and operations. Cambridge: CABI Publishing.

Kujala, J., Heikkinen, A., Nieminen, J., Jokinen, A., Tapaninaho, R. & Mäkelä, H. 2019. Engaging with the natural environment: Examining the premises of nature-inclusive stakeholder relationships and engagement. Proceedings of the International Association for Business and Society: Border Crossing: Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Meeting: San Diego, California, March 21-24, 2019. International Association for Business and Society, 2019.

Kumar, V. & Christodouloupoulou, A. 2013. Sustainability and branding: an integrated perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management* 43, 6–15. Accessed 6 December 2023 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2013.06.008>.

Lankford, W. M. 2002. Benchmarking: Understanding the Basics. *The Coastal Business Journal*, Volume 1 Nr 1, Article 8, 56–62. Accessed 10 April 2024 at: <https://digitalcommons.coastal.edu/cbj/vol1/iss1/8>.

Lapland Chamber of Commerce 2023. Lapin matkailun nousukiito tuo myös elinvoimaa. Lapland Chamber of Commerce 31 October 2023. Accessed 24 September 2024 <https://lapland.chamber.fi/lapin-matkailun-nousukiito-tuo-myos-elinvoimaa>.

Leonidou, C., Katsikeas, C. & Morgan., N. 2012. “Greening” the marketing mix: Do firms do it and does it pay off? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, March 2012. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-012-0317-2>.

Li, Y. 2018. Elementary Introduction of Way of Localization of Composite Sliding Bearing for Hydroelectric Engineering. *Journal of Water Resources and Ocean Science*, Vol. 7 No. 3, 55–59. Accessed 31 January 2025 <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.wros.20180703.15>.

Licata, RJ. 2023. Declining Brand Trust: What It Is and How to Fix It. *Terakeet* 14 March 2023. Accessed 26 May 2024 <https://terakeet.com/blog/brand-trust>.

Lindemann, J. 2003. Brand valuation. In R. Clifton and J. Simmons (Eds) *Brands and Branding*. London, England: Profile Books Ltd, 27–45.

Ling, D. 2015. Complete design thinking guide for successful professionals. Singapore: Emerge Creative Group LLP.

Lyon, T. & Maxwell, J. 2006. Greenwash: Corporate Environmental Disclosure Under Threat of Audit. *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, January 2006. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-9134.2010.00282.x>.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (MEAE). Employment in tourism. Accessed 24 September 2024 <https://tem.fi/en/employment-in-tourism>.

Mishra, P. & Sharma, P. 2014. Green Marketing: Challenges and Opportunities for Business. *BVIMR Management Edge*, Vol 7 No 1, 78–86. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://shorturl.at/cEKV8>.

Moilanen, T., Ojasalo, K. & Ritalahti, J. 2022. *Methods for development work: new kinds of competencies in business operations*. Helsinki: Books on Demand GmbH.

Morelli, J. 2011. Environmental Sustainability: A Definition for Environmental Professionals. *Journal of Environmental Sustainability*, Vol 1 Iss 1, Article 2. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://doi.org/10.14448/jes.01.0002>.

Moroi, T. 2021. Quantitative and Qualitative Research and Philosophical Assumptions. *Journal of Bunkyo Gakuin University, Department of Foreign Languages* (20), 127–132. Accessed 24 January 2025 https://www.bgu.ac.jp/assets/old/center/library/fsell%202020_127-132.pdf.

Morris, Z. S. 2009. The Truth about Interviewing Elites. *Politics*: Vol. 29 (3), 209–217. Accessed 17 January 2025 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2009.01357.x>.

Mwita, K. 2022. Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research in social science studies. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* 11(6), 618–625. Accessed 21 March 2025 <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i6.1920>.

Nascimento, J. & Loureiro, S.M.C. 2024. Mapping the sustainability branding field: emerging trends and future directions. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 33 No. 2, 234–257. Accessed 22 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-02-2023-4349>.

Niinikoski, S. 2005. *Benchmarking tutkintorakennetyön työkaluna*. Tampere: Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto.

Nittala, R. & Moturu, V. R. 2023. Role of pro-environmental post-purchase behaviour in green consumer behaviour. *Vilakshan – XIMB Journal of Management*, Vol. 20 No. 1, 82–97. Accessed 7 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1108/XJM-03-2021-0074>.

Nygaard, A. 2023. Is sustainable certification's ability to combat greenwashing trustworthy? *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 2023, Vol 4. Accessed 13 March 2024 <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2023.1188069>.

The NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business, Edelman, 2023. *Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers*. Accessed 3 May 2024. <https://www.stern.nyu.edu/experience-stern/about/departments-centers-initiatives/centers-of-research/center-sustainable-business/research/research-initiatives/effective-sustainability-communications-best-practice-guide-brands-marketers>.

O'Neill, S. What is the difference between CSR and ESG? Corporate Governance Institute. Accessed 8 December 2023

<https://www.thecorporategovernanceinstitute.com/insights/lexicon/what-is-the-difference-between-csr-and-esg/>.

Palonen, M. & Kylmä, J. 2022. Avoin haastattelu ja teemahaastattelu aineistonkeruumenetelminä laadullisessa hoitotieteellisessä tutkimuksessa. *Hoitotiede* 34(4), 281–294. Accessed 20 December 2024 <https://journal.fi/hoitotiede/article/view/128992/78035>.

Papadas, K., Avlonitis, G. J. & Carrigan, M. 2017. Green marketing orientation: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 80, 236–246. Accessed 7 October 2024 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.05.024>.

Peacock, C. 2023. Misleading Markets: Consumer Protection in the Age of Climate Washing. *West Virginia Law Review*, Vol. 126, 367–393. Accessed 8 October 2024 <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvlr/vol126/iss1/12>.

Pellegrino, S. 2023. Explainer: Household brands accused of greenwashing. *Capital Monitor* 10 March 2023. Accessed 23 October 2024 <https://www.capitalmonitor.ai/analysis/explainer-household-brands-accused-of-greenwashing>.

Prakash, A. 2002. Green marketing, public policy and managerial strategies. *Business Strategy and the Environment* 11, 285–297. Accessed 16 March 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.338>.

Publyon 2024. EU Green Claims Directive: its impact on business operations. Accessed 21 March 2025 <https://publyon.com/eu-green-claims-directive-its-impact-on-business-operations>.

Regional Council of Lapland 2022. Lapin matkailun kumulatiiviset aluetalousvaikutukset -selvitys. Regional Council of Lapland 15 January 2022. Accessed 24 September 2024 <https://lapinluotsi.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/1705-lapinmatkailunaluetalousraporttilopullinenfinal.pdf>.

Regional Council of Lapland 2024. Matkailu Lapin elinkeinoelämän valopilkkona vuonna 2023 – teollisilla sektoreilla laskusuhdanne. Regional Council of Lapland 20 May 2024. Accessed 24 September 2024 <https://www.lapinliitto.fi/matkailu-lapin-elinkeinoelaman-valopilkkona-vuonna-2023-teollisilla-sektoreilla-laskusuhdanne/>.

Robinson, D. 2022. 10 Companies Called Out For Greenwashing. *Earth.org* 17 July 2022. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://earth.org/greenwashing-companies-corporations/>.

Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M., Alhabsyi, F. & Syam, H. 2022. Semi-structured Interview: A Methodological Reflection on the Development of a Qualitative Research Instrument in Educational Studies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, Vol 12 Iss 1, 22–29. Accessed 9 April 2024 DOI: 10.9790/7388-1201052229.

Sander, F., Föhl, U., Walter, N. & Demmer, V. 2021. Green or social? An analysis of environmental and social sustainability advertising and its impact on brand personality, credibility and attitude. *Journal of Brand Management*, Vol 28, 429–445. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-021-00236-8>.

Schraw, G. 2013. Conceptual Integration and Measurement of Epistemological and Ontological Beliefs in Educational Research. *International Scholarly Research Notices*, Vol. 2013, Article ID 327680, 19 pages. Accessed 17 January 2025 <https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/327680>.

Shrestha, B. K. & Sharma, L. R. 2024. Discerning the Distinctive Characteristics of Key Research Paradigms and their Constituents. *Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, Vol. 7 No. 2, 30-44. Accessed 17 January 2025 <https://doi.org/10.3126/njmr.v7i2.68191>.

Simão, L. & Lisboa, A. 2017. Green Marketing and Green Brand – The Toyota Case. *Procedia Manufacturing*, Vol. 12, 183-194. Accessed 24 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.promfg.2017.08.023>.

Stakeholder Theory a. About. The Stakeholder Theory 2018. Accessed 27 September 2024 <http://stakeholdertheory.org/about/>.

Stakeholder Theory b. Front page. The Stakeholder Theory 2018. Accessed 27 September 2024 <http://stakeholdertheory.org>.

Starik, M. 1995. Should Trees Have Managerial Standing? Toward Stakeholder Status for Non-Human Nature. *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 14 No. 3, 207-217. Accessed 13 December 2024 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25072639>.

Statista 2023. Share of travel and tourism's total contribution to GDP worldwide in 2019 and 2023, with a forecast for 2024 and 2034. Statista 30 August 2024. Accessed 27 September 2024 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1099933/travel-and-tourism-share-of-gdp/>.

Stoekli, V. & Luedicke, M. 2015. Doing well while doing good? An integrative review of marketing criticism and response. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 68 Iss. 12, 2452–2463. Accessed 13 September 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.06.032>.

Tilastokeskus 2024. Lapin suhdannekatsaus – katsaus vuoteen 2023. Accessed 24 September 2024 lapinluotsi.fi/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/lapin-suhdannekatsaus-katsaus-vuoteen-2023.pdf.

Tourism for SDGs. The T4SDG platform. Tourism for SDGs. Accessed 27 September 2024 <https://tourism4sdgs.org/the-platform/>.

Tröster, R. & Hiete, M. 2018. Success of voluntary sustainability certification schemes – A comprehensive review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Volume 196 (2018), 1034–1043. Accessed 13 March 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.05.240>.

Tölkes, C. 2018. Sustainability communication in tourism – a literature review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, Vol. 27, 10-21. Accessed 25 October 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.04.002>.

UN Tourism. Transport-related CO2 emissions from the tourism sector. UN Tourism. Accessed 27 September 2024 <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/tourism-emissions-climate-change>.

UN Tourism 2024. International tourism reached 97% of pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2024. UN Tourism 21 May 2024. Accessed 27 September 2024 <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-reached-97-of-pre-pandemic-levels-in-the-first-quarter-of-2024>.

United Nations 1987. *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*. Accessed 8 December 2023 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>.

United Nations 2004. *Who Cares Wins – Connecting Financial Markets to a Changing World*. Accessed 8 December 2023 https://www.unepfi.org/fileadmin/events/2004/stocks/who_cares_wins_global_ompact_2004.pdf.

United Nations a. *The Sustainable Development Agenda*. Accessed 20 September 2024 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda-retired/>.

United Nations b. *Take Action for the Sustainable Development Goals*. Accessed 20 September 2024 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

United Nations c. *Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform our World*. Accessed 20 September 2024 <https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/page/sdgs-17-goals-transform-world>.

United Nations Development Programme. *Business and the SDGs*. Accessed 20 September 2024 <https://www.undp.org/sdg-accelerator/business-and-sdgs>.

United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific 2022. *Polycrisis and long-term thinking: Reimagining development in Asia and the Pacific foresight brief*. Accessed 22 March 2025 <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/polycrisisand-long-term-thinking-reimagining-development-asia-and-pacific-foresightbrief>.

United Nations General Assembly 2015. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1*. Accessed 20 September 2024 <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2015/en/111816>.

Visit Finland a. *Sustainable Travel Finland*. Accessed 16 March 2024 <https://www.visitfinland.fi/liiketoiminnan-kehittaminen/vastuullinen-matkailu/sustainable-travel-finland>.

Visit Finland b. About us. Accessed 17 March 2024 <https://travel-trade.visitfinland.com/en/contacts/>.

Visit Finland c. Sustainable Travel Finland tilastot. Accessed 17 March 2024 <https://www.visitfinland.fi/suomen-matkailudata/sustainable-travel-finland-tilastot>.

Visit Finland d. Vastuullinen matkailu. Accessed 17 March 2024 <https://www.visitfinland.fi/liiketoiminnan-kehittaminen/vastuullinen-matkailu>.

Visit Finland e. Kestävän matkailun periaatteet. Accessed 17 March 2024 <https://www.visitfinland.fi/liiketoiminnan-kehittaminen/vastuullinen-matkailu/kestavan-matkailun-periaatteet>.

Waddock, S. A. 2011. We are all stakeholders of Gaia: A normative perspective on stakeholder thinking. *Organization & Environment* 24(2), 192–212. Accessed 27 September <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026611413933>.

Watson, B. 2016. The troubling evolution of corporate greenwashing. *The Guardian* 20 August 2016. Accessed 8 October 2024 <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/aug/20/greenwashing-environmentalism-lies-companies>.

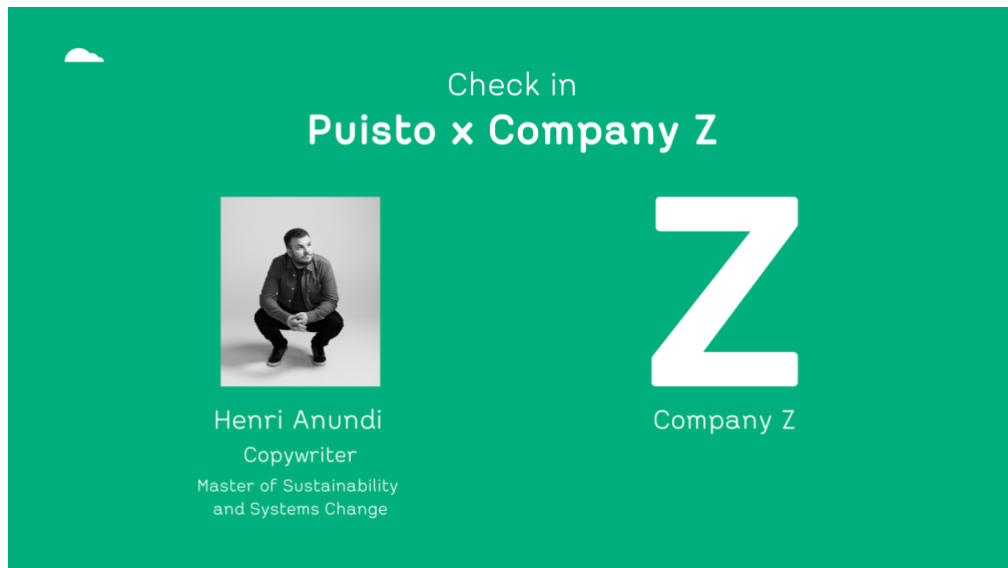
Weinmayer, K., Garaus, M. & Wagner, U. 2023. The impact of corporate sustainability performance on advertising efficiency. *OR Spectrum*, March 2023. Accessed 1 December 2023 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00291-023-00717-z>.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Green Marketing Service Stage 1 – Attraction service:
Sustainability Communications Presentation

Appendix 2. Green Marketing Service Stage 3 – Branding workshop
template: Sustainability Branding Workshop

Appendix 1 1(12)



Contents

Sustainability @ Company Z

Green marketing

EU Green Claims Directive

Sustainability communications

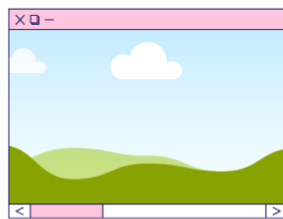
Research, best practices,
and practical execution tips

Sustainability @ Company Z

Sustainability efforts Company Z



Sus comms samples Company Z



Website



Social

Appendix 1 3(12)

Discussion

How do you experience sustainability efforts in your work?

How about communicating your company's sustainable actions?

What is the role of sustainability in your company brand?
Where should it be?

Green marketing

Green marketing – what?



The integration of environmental sustainability into marketing



Holistic marketing concept

- Accounts for the lifecycle of products and services: Production → Marketing → Consumption → Disposal
- Goal: to reduce the negative environmental impact of the entire process

Appendix 1 4(12)

Green marketing – why?

- ! Consumers want corporate environmental responsibility
- ! Attracts sustainability-oriented consumers
- ! Consumers react to green messages

Green marketing – why?

- ! Environmental focus has an impact on brand personality
- ! Improves reputation and image
- ! Increases consumer awareness on environmental issues

EU Green Claims Directive

Appendix 1 5(12)

EU Green Claims Directive



Legislative act for all EU member countries to ban greenwashing and to make green claims universally comparable across the EU.



For businesses, this means backing up environmental claims and labels with uncomplicated criteria and current scientific evidence.

EU Green Claims Directive



- "We are a carbon-neutral company"
- "Our packaging is made up of 50% recycled plastic"
- "Our company's environmental footprint has reduced by 30% since 2020"

EU Green Claims Directive



Companies will have to ensure the reliability of their voluntary environmental claims, and communicate their claims in a transparent way.



Their claims will need to be checked by an independent verifier against the requirements of the Directive.

The verifier will then issue a certificate of compliance recognised across the EU.

Appendix 1 6(12)



EU Green Claims Directive

- Green claims must take a **life-cycle perspective**.
- Companies must specify whether the claim concerns the **whole product, a part of it, or all or only some** of the company's activities.
- Claims must be based on **widely recognised scientific evidence**, using accurate information and international standards.
- The assessment must take into account **all the significant environmental aspects and impacts**.
- It must be demonstrated that the claim is **not equivalent to requirements imposed by law**.



EU Green Claims Directive

- Information must be provided on whether the product or company performs **significantly better than is common practice**.
- It must be checked that a **positive achievement has no harmful impacts** on climate change, resource consumption and circularity, sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, pollution, biodiversity, animal welfare and ecosystems.
- **Greenhouse gas offsets** must be reported transparently: **emissions and offsets must be separated**.
- The assessment **must use primary information** (directly measured or collected by the company) and, **if necessary, secondary information** (based on other sources such as literature studies).



EU Green Claims Directive

- **Comparative environmental claims** must meet additional requirements, such as the use of **equivalent information and data**, covering the same stages along the **value chain**, and taking into account the same **environmental impacts**.
- The **communication of environmental claims must cover only substantiated claims**, and if the use phase is the most relevant, instructions for proper use must be provided.
- Information on the product or company and the substantiation (e.g., standards used) must be available in physical or digital form.

Appendix 1 7(12)



EU Green Claims Directive

-  2026 (?)
-  Any companies operating in the EU
 - More than 10 employees
 - Annual turnover of more than € 2 million



EU Green Claims Directive

- **Audit existing claims**
 - Review communications and marketing materials for credible evidence.
- **Ensure all communications are transparent**
 - Clearly communicate your claims in a way that's easy for consumers and regulators to understand.
 - Back up all claims with evidence.

What should we do?



EU Green Claims Directive

- **Prepare for new certification standards**
 - Check that your sustainability certification meets the upcoming EU requirements for "certificate of compliance".
- **Get ready for implementation**
 - Make sure you have a clear plan for the Directive's deadline.

All claims will need to be assessed by a third-party verifier before being marketed!

What should we do?

Appendix 1 8(12)



Sustainability communications

Consumers

Care



- Themselves and their families
- Children and future generations
- Animal welfare
- Local producers
- Sustainable sourcing
- Local sourcing

Don't care



- Scientific causes (people care about effects)
- Traceability
- Certifications
- Packaging

Source: New York University Stern Center for Sustainable Business & Edelman 2023. Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers

Sustainability communications

Consumers and Company Z



How do our sustainable actions affect people's

- Quality of life?
- Wellbeing?
- Health?

How about the animals?

Source: New York University Stern Center for Sustainable Business & Edelman 2023. Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers

Appendix 1 9(12)



Sustainability communications

Practical execution

10 tips from professionals



Sustainability communications

10 practical tips from professionals

1. Action speaks louder than words

There is no sustainability communication without sustainable action.

2. Transparency is key

Communicate your achievements but be open about your challenges and even mistakes to **build trust** with your audience.

3. Accuracy is paramount

Substantiate your claims with facts.



Sustainability communications

10 practical tips from professionals

4. Avoid complex scientific terms and jargon

People need to know in simple terms why topics concern their own lives.

5. Avoid greenwashing

At all costs.

6. Don't submit to greenhushing

The act of muting yourself in fear of greenwashing.

7. No doomsday

Communicate positively and offer tips for improvement.

Appendix 1 10(12)

**Sustainability communications**

10 practical tips from professionals

8. Communicate the present

Narrate the situation here and now, not a dystopia for future generations.

9. Avoid visual clichés

Do sustainability topics always have to be green?

10. Don't use the S-word

Truly sustainable brands hardly ever say "sustainability". They **communicate concrete topics**.

**Sustainability communications**

Practical execution

9 tips from researchers

Source: New York University Stern Center For Sustainable Business & Edelman 2023: Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers

**Sustainability communications**

9 practical tips from researchers

1. Sustainability is a supporting claim to core performance claims

Claims that communicate the function of the product – "tastes good" or "performs well" – are most important to consumers.

2. Sustainability claims benefit the marketing

of the product when coupled with performance claims: "100% sustainably farmed for great taste".

3. Sustainability claims expand brand reach

by bringing in new consumers – 24–33% according to the study by NYU CSB & Edelman.

Source: New York University Stern Center For Sustainable Business & Edelman 2023: Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers

Appendix 1 11(12)



Sustainability communications

9 practical tips from researchers

4. Sustainability claims should be presented from human and health benefits angles

"Made without chemicals harmful to human health".
"Good for the planet and future generations".

5. Monetary benefits resonate well

"Longer life," "Less waste," "Lower energy bills".

6. Animal health should be presented when relevant

"No animal testing," "Cruelty-free".

Source: New York University Stern Center for Sustainable Business & Edelman 2023. Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers



Sustainability communications

9 practical tips from researchers

7. Scientific aspects should be linked to reasons to care

"Carbon neutral to reduce the impact of climate change".

8. Quantifying scientific aspects have greater impact

It helps people understand the scale of things: "Using 1 million tons of ocean-recovered plastic bottles".

9. Certifications are not interesting, but they build trust and guard against greenwashing

"100% sustainably sourced and certified by the Rainforest Alliance".

Source: New York University Stern Center for Sustainable Business & Edelman 2023. Effective Sustainability Communications – a Best Practice Guide to Brands & Marketers



Sustainability communications

3 key takeaways

Act first, communicate second

Be open, transparent and sincere

Remember people and animals



Appendix 1 12(12)

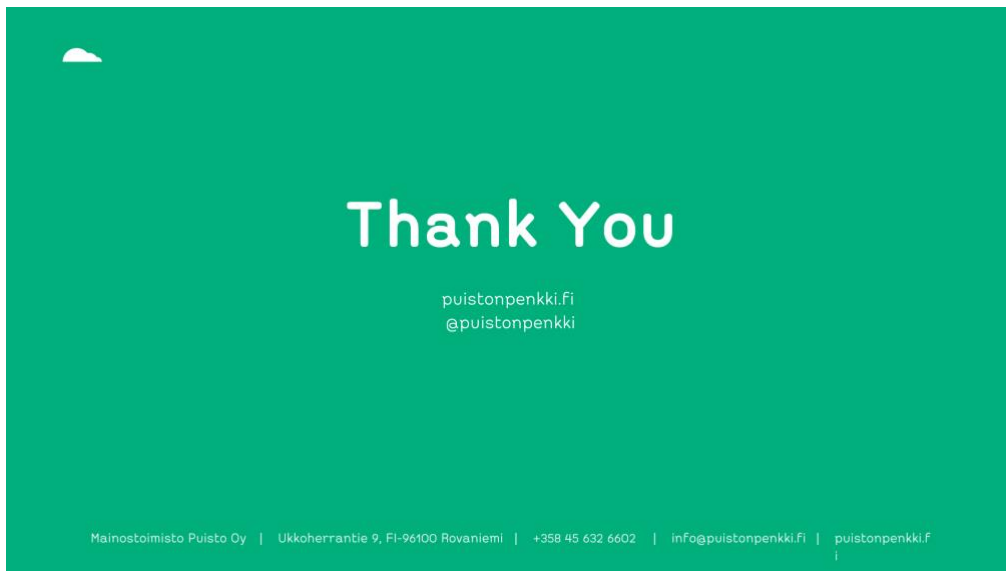
An underwater scene with a diver in the center, surrounded by bubbles. The background is a gradient of blue. In the top left corner, there is a small white icon of a sun or moon. In the top right corner, there is a date placeholder "DD.MM.YYYY".

DD.MM.YYYY

Don't Use the S-word
Puisto Green Marketing

Want to explore further?

Mainostoimisto Puisto Oy | Ukkoherrantie 9, FI-96100 Rovaniemi | +358 45 632 6602 | info@puistonpenkki.fi | puistonpenkki.fi

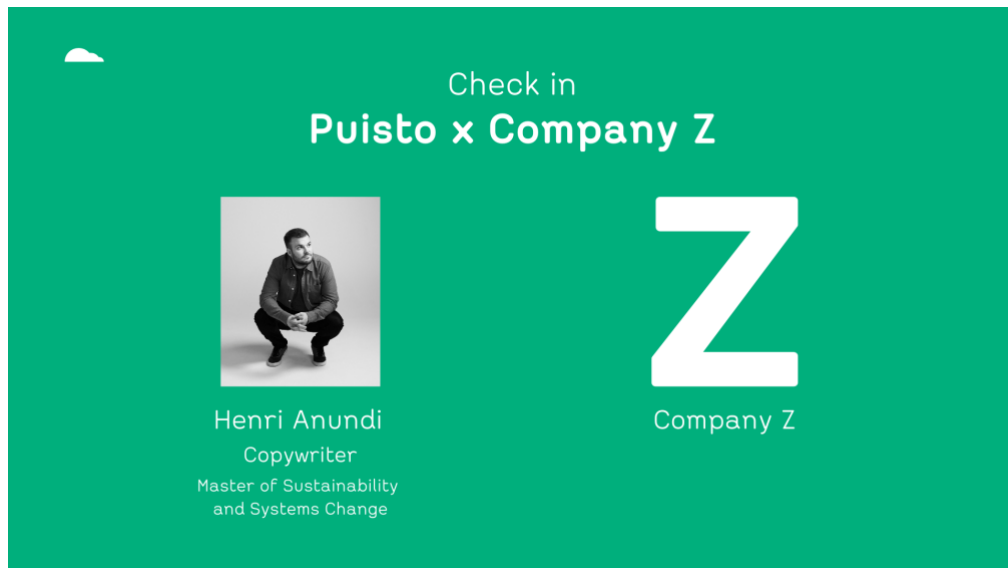
A solid green background with white text. In the top left corner, there is a small white icon of a sun or moon.

Thank You

puistonpenkki.fi
@puistonpenkki

Mainostoimisto Puisto Oy | Ukkoherrantie 9, FI-96100 Rovaniemi | +358 45 632 6602 | info@puistonpenkki.fi | puistonpenkki.fi

Appendix 2 1(11)



Contents

Introduction

Brands and branding

What type of brand are we?

Company values

Stakeholders

Sustainability work

Appendix 2 2(11)



Introduction

People have become aware of the environmentally damaging activities of companies and organisations.

Consumption habits are changing.

Sustainability efforts are expected from companies and organisations.

This is an opportunity to make a long-term investment for the environment, people, and the economy.



Introduction

Sustainability branding is a process that focuses on identified **environmental, economic, and social** issues and **integrates** them into the **company's operations**.

Sustainability efforts help create and maintain a **brand** that **offers the benefits** of sustainability **to customers and the planet**.



Introduction

Why by fire?

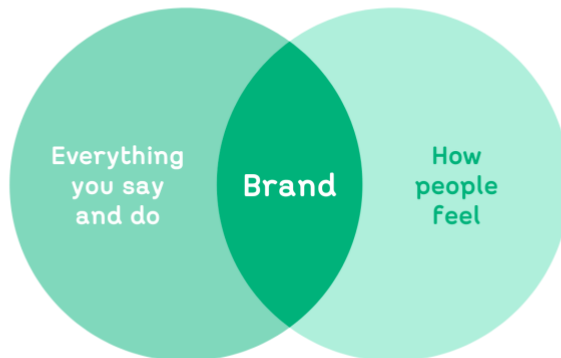
Brand = Fire, burning (SE = brand, FI = palo)

Branding = Think cattle branding

"Modern brands are branded in the brain"

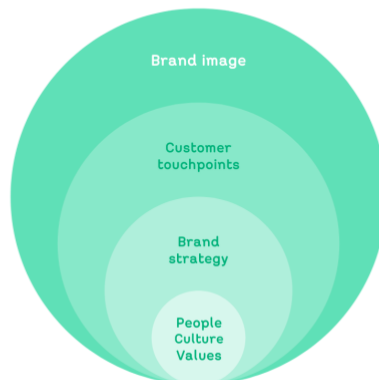
Brands and branding

What is a brand?



mbe.fi/blogi/brandistrategian-keskiossa-asiakaskokemus

What is a brand?

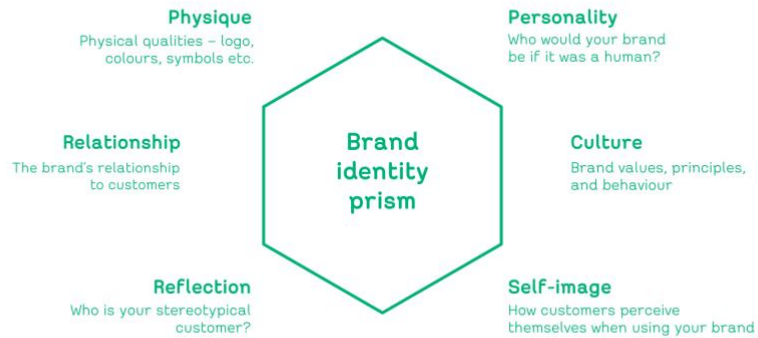


mbe.fi/blogi/brandistrategian-keskiossa-asiakaskokemus

Appendix 2 4(11)



What is a brand?



Kapferer, 1986



What type of brand are we?

Brand archetype and personality



Brand archetypes

The **12 brand archetypes** are based on **Carl Jung's** definition of **personality archetypes**.

Archetypes help in creating **more engaging, profound, and consistent brands**.

Appendix 2 5(11)



<https://www.canny-creative.com/what-are-brand-archetypes-and-how-to-use-them>

Brand archetypes

The Outlaw

Desire Revolution
Branding style Bold, disruptive, shocking to go against the norm
Traits Change, disruptive, liberator, confrontational
Fears Uniformity, conformity, rules, rigidity
Examples MTV, Red Bull, Urban Outfitters, Diesel

The Hero

Desire Mastery
Branding style Being stronger, making the world a better place
Traits Honesty, bravery, candidness, development
Fears Cowardice, deterioration, incompetence
Examples Nike, Under Armour, GoPro, Duracell

The Magician

Desire Power
Branding style Wonder and mysticism, making dreams come true
Traits Discovery, charisma, imaginative, idealistic, transformation
Fears Boring, doubt, ignorance, repetition
Examples Walt Disney, MAC Cosmetics, Dyson, Starbucks, Apple

The Lover

Desire Intimacy
Branding style The declaration of beauty and worth, a luxury/ VIP experience
Traits Affection, love, closeness, intimacy, indulgence
Fears Rejection, loneliness, invisibility
Examples Tiffany and co, Chanel, Victoria's Secret, Calvin Klein, Hallmark

The Creator

Desire Innovation
Branding style Being original, using imagination, doing something unique
Traits Vision, originality, expression, creativity
Fears Repetition, stagnation, familiarity
Examples Apple, Lego, Google, Tesla, Nintendo

The Jester

Desire Fun
Branding style Humor, entertainment, and living in the moment
Traits Happiness, laughter, belonging, positivity
Fears Boredom, negativity, loneliness
Examples Nickelodeon, Dollar Shave Club, Old Spice, Skittles, Denny's

<https://www.canny-creative.com/what-are-brand-archetypes-and-how-to-use-them>

Brand archetypes

The Everyman

Desire Belonging
Branding style Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment, promoting a sense of belonging
Traits Equality, inclusion, togetherness, connection
Fears Isolation, exclusion, hostility
Examples IKEA, Levi's, Toyota, Subway, Kellogg's

The Ruler

Desire Control
Branding style Showing dominance over others and leadership
Traits Leadership, control, ambition, status, success
Fears Failure, poverty, weakness
Examples Rolex, Mercedes-Benz, Hilton, Chanel, Microsoft

The Explorer

Desire Freedom
Branding style The celebration of continued learning and development
Traits Liberation, independence, exploration, adventure-seeking, curiosity
Fears Confinement, predictability, routine, stagnation, missed opportunities
Examples Patagonia, The North Face, NASA, Airbnb, Jeep

The Caregiver

Desire Service
Branding style Doing things for the greater good, others before self
Traits Warm, caring, reassuring, gratitude, service
Fears Neglect, blame, helplessness
Examples WWF, Unicef, Pampers, Johnson & Johnson, Tide

The Sage

Desire Freedom
Branding style The celebration of continued learning and development
Traits Knowledgeable, assured, wise, expert
Fears Ignorance, inaccuracy, powerlessness
Examples National Geographic, New York Times, Harvard, University of Oxford, BBC

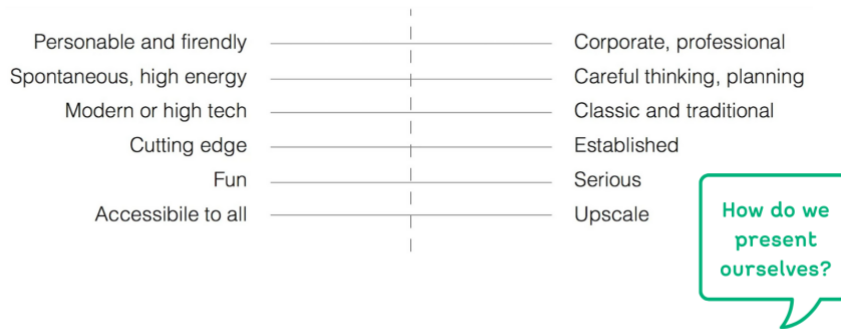
The Innocent

Desire Safety
Branding style Positive, feel-good, the promotion of wholesome values
Traits Happiness, simplicity, honesty, positivity
Fears Complexity, deceit, negativity
Examples Innocent Smoothies, Dove, Hello Kitty, McDonald's, Ben & Jerry's

<https://www.canny-creative.com/what-are-brand-archetypes-and-how-to-use-them>

Appendix 2 6(11)

Brand personality spectrum



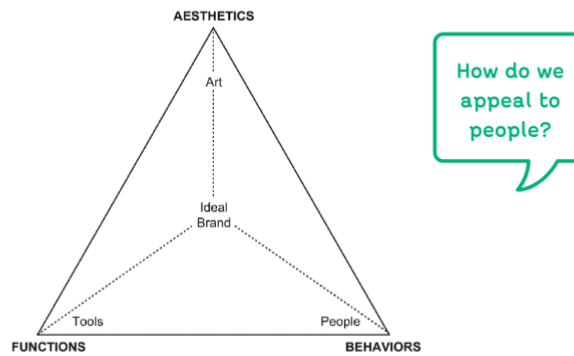
<https://evolutiondesign.com.au/how-to-choose-the-right-colours-for-your-brand>

Brand colour psychology



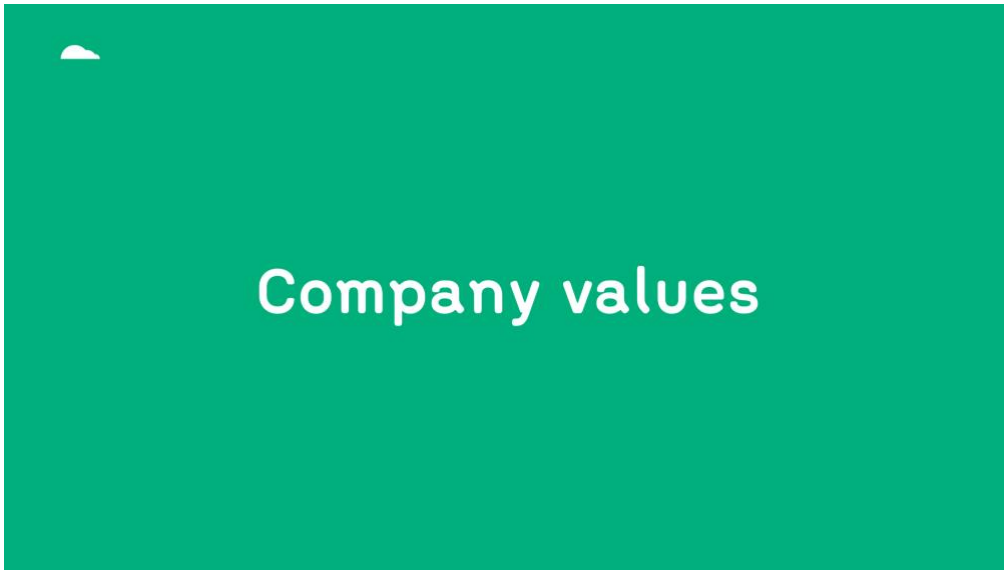
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/endeavour-marketing-llp>

Desired brand image



Ideal Brand Pyramid – Bastos & Levy, 2012

Appendix 2 7(11)



Our values

Discussion

Why does our company exist?

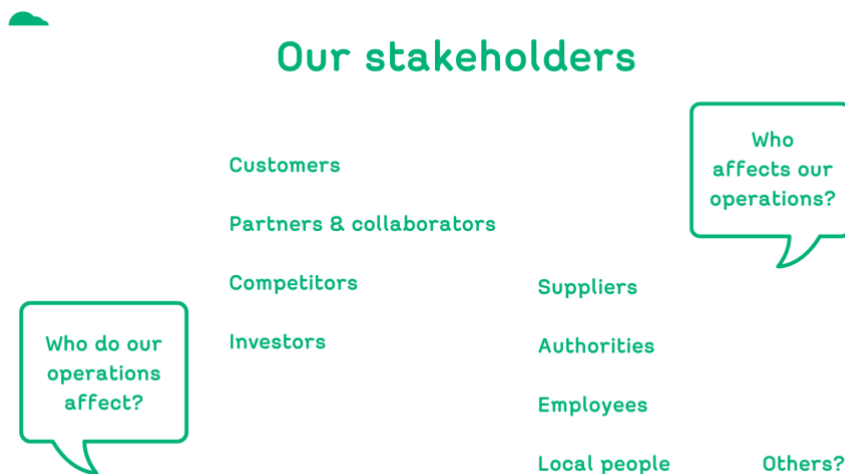
What is our role/agency in the world?

Our values

Authenticity	Accountability	Audacity	Affordability
Nurture	Safety	Value	Pragmatism
Diversity	Commitment	Reliability	Comfort
Humility	Family	Accountability	Positive
Creativity	Integrity	Education	Quality
Fun	Fair	Simplicity	Innovation
Collaborative	Cleanliness	Relevance	Community
Dynamic	Aspiration	Beautiful	Savvy
Intelligent	Luxurious	Bold	Exclusive
Inspiration	Diligence	Considerate	Happy
Healthy	Pure	Tenacious	Spiritual
Soulful	Perfection	Optimistic	Realistic
Cool	Independence	Equality	Objective
Eco-conscious	Customer Delight	Alternative	Vintage
Customer Satisfaction	Compassion	Confident	Ethical
Exclusivity	Fashion	Fitness	Natural
Resourceful	Security	Sexy	Thoughtful
Timely	Trustworthy	Wisdom	With
Passion	Boldness	Inclusive	Unique

Pick 3 or suggest new ones!

Stakeholders



Nature as stakeholder

Nature is part of every value chain on the planet

- How does nature affect us?
- How do we affect nature?
- Do we include nature in our stakeholders?





Sustainability @ Company Z

Discussion

Why do we perform sustainable actions?

What efforts have been made so far?

Our certifications – anything we haven't discussed so far?

Sustainability as a business strategy

Discussion

How is sustainability part of our business operations?

How can we further incorporate it?

Appendix 2 10(11)



Vision for sustainability work

Discussion

What do we ultimately want to achieve?



Sustainability @ Company Z

Discussion

Do our sustainable actions interest our customers and stakeholders – and why?



Sustainability @ Company Z

Discussion

What benefits do our sustainable actions offer our customers and stakeholders?

Appendix 2 11(11)



Sustainability @ Company Z

Discussion

Who could we partner with to advance our sustainability message?

