Establishing a sustainable reputation for Bosch in the Bulgarian Market

Research Report

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Study programme code: CO-ICM-FNL-M-19

Study subject: Professional Proficiency Test

Wordcount: 5810 (excluding title page, Table of Contents, List of References, Appendix, summary)

Key words: *communication strategy, international promotion, cultural characteristics, reputational strategy*

Table of Contents

Summary **5**

Chapter I **6**

Introduction 7

Chapter II **10**

Literature Review 11

Key Concepts 12

Knowledge Gaps 16

Chapter III **17**

Methodology 18

Reworked Research Objectives and Research Questions 18

Knowledge gap I 20

Knowledge gap II 22

Knowledge gap III 24

Technical Research Design 26

Chapter IV **30**

Results 31

Knowledge Gap I 31

Knowledge Gap II 33

Knowledge Gap III 36

Chapter V **40**

Conclusions and Implications for Recommendation 41

List of References **46**

Appendix **49**

Summary

This research report focuses on the issue of establishing a sustainable reputation and the strategy based on the cultural characteristics of Bulgarians and essentially answering the question “How can we establish a sustainable reputation?”. The report has answered the research question *How can we create a sustainable reputation for Bosch within Bulgarian society?*

The most relevant findings from the desk and field research are in three concepts. The first concept focused on the important factors in the target audience: age between 30 and 65, high education level, high sustainability awareness and positive attitude towards corporate social responsibility. The second concept focused on the cultural characteristics of the target audience: lower on the collectivist scale in comparison with the general population of Bulgaria, lower power distance and high uncertainty avoidance. The third concept focused on the current reputation of Bosch in Bulgaria and it strengthened the reason for this project as all results showed strong positive reputation, except for the area of sustainability.

In conclusion, Bosch needs an integrated communication strategy for sustainability reputation that is culturally tailored for Bulgarians. The communication sources and message appeals need to be also modified as the target audience responds best to safety appeal and interactive communication.

Chapter I

Introduction

The corporate world and markets have adopted a global nature that has significantly affected the marketing and communication of companies globally. The integrating of visions and messages based on different cultural and national values is already an issue that global companies are facing (Adler & Gundersen, 2008).

Bosch is a global company that started as a “Workshop for Precision Mechanics and Electrical Engineering” in Germany in 1886 and was founded by Robert Bosch. Right now, it is a global supplier of technology and services with about 395, 000 associates. They are currently known for creating innovative, smart and connected products that make life easier and more exciting for their customers (Bosch, 2020).

Bosch is present in Bulgaria since 1993, has roughly 430 associates and 3 subsidiaries. In relation to performance in the market and economic situation on a local level, the updated sales revenue is 152 million euros as of year 2019 (Bosch, 2019). Based on the shared content on the Bosch Bulgaria site, acknowledgements and awards that the company has received, are mainly in the business, marketing and technology development (Bosch, 2021a). In the beginning of 2021, the company launched a sustainability campaign that is supposed to be communicated on a local level from each of the offices and has raised some concerns in the Bulgarian communication department. Most global companies create campaigns that are created in a way to suite many cultures at the same time but also based on techniques that have been created from an American and Western-European perspective which leaves the rest of the cultures and subcultures unresearched (Adler & Gundersen, 2008).

A key weakness for Bosch Bulgaria is the lack of knowledge and research about communication in an Easter-European environment which results in poor cultural adaptation of global communication and not reaching the desired sustainable reputation within Bulgarian customers. In order to help Bosch Bulgaria, this report aims to answer the following question: *How can we create a sustainable reputation for Bosch within the Bulgarian society?* The primary research problem is to gain knowledge about *the factors going into cultural adaptation for communication in Bulgaria* and will serve as a starting point for the literature and field research of this paper.

The research objective of the project is to create a communication strategy that will adapt an existing campaign for Bulgarian culture and create a sustainable reputation of the company. This will be achieved by finding cultural factors and concrete characteristics amongst Bulgarians that affect the way a message is perceived in the case of sustainability. The research will also focus on the similarities and differences of cultures that can show what exactly needs to be adapted and what does not.

The research question that is guiding this report is: *What are the key factors that influence a company's reputation amongst Bulgarians?* In order to achieve the research objective, the question has been broken down into a three sub questions (SQs):

SQ1: What is the awareness and knowledge level about sustainability in business amongst Bulgarians?

SQ2: Which cultural characteristics are most important when creating a communication campaign?

SQ3: What are successful aspects of a communication campaign that defines and changes current reputation of a company?

In the following sections of this report, these questions will be answered. The literature review will introduce existing sources about selected key concepts and then be followed by the field research which will be conducted strictly within Bulgarian society. The methods that are going to be used, are literature review and quantitative research, conducted through an online survey. The overall data will be then analyzed in order to allow for a concrete conclusion to be made.

Chapter II

Literature review

Introduction

A literature review can help with guiding the research and suggesting new direction by exposing knowledge gaps (Coughlan & Cronin, 2016). In order to advise Bosch on a suitable strategy to establish themselves as a sustainable company, the review will be based on three literature search questions (LSQs) that were based on the research objective and question:

LSQ1: Which demographics are most interested in sustainability?

LSQ2: What are the most suitable communication strategies for Eastern Europe?

LSQ3: What are existing communication strategies to change company's current reputation?

Three key concepts emerged from those literature search questions: *target audience for sustainability communication, culturally tailored communication, and communication strategies for reputation management.*

Key Concepts

Target audience for sustainability communication

Research suggests that there are many barriers to communicating sustainability, those can be differences in attitudes and the lack of a common definition and understanding of sustainability (Djordjevic & Cotton, 2011). This suggestion shows that it is needed to know what specific characteristics need to be taken into consideration when communicating a sustainable message with the aim of changing current reputation. Research was conducted in Bulgaria that showed the understanding of sustainability development amongst Bulgarians. The survey shows that 53% had not heard about it, 42% had heard about it and 5% refused to answer the question (Danchev, 2005). Those results show a promising statistic that shows high awareness amongst the participants. Another research shows that awareness alone can be used for changing reputation but constant exposure to information also affects commitment and loyalty of the customers. (Eccles et al., 2007).

Another demographic factor that has been more consistent in surveys is education. In research it was proven that people with the highest education level, were most interested in sustainability and the environment overall. The same people were also most likely to have a sustainable consumer behavior (Fisher et al., 2012). The elaboration likelihood model is based on the different processing of messages, depending on the person’s involvement in the topic (Cornelissen, 2014). This further supports both factors and their codependence in the sustainability communication.

While further research about the target audience for sustainability communication is needed, the literature review already suggests targeting people with higher education and sustainability awareness.

Culturally tailored communication

While culture is learned, it is also really hard to understand and study one's own cultural background. In a culturally tailored environment, communication is symbolic which means it is shared and agreed upon (Martin et al., 2018). Furthermore, culture defines how and what we communicate. There are five variables presented by Neuliep (2015) which are presented along the scale of high – low. The first presented variable is individualism – collectivism, the first one describing a culture that emphasizes on the individual's goals and the second one describing a culture which focuses on the needs of the group over the individual. The second variable is high – low – context communication in which it is explained that in high - context, successful communication depends on the visual and perceptual environment. In low – context, the transaction depends on verbal code as a main source of information. The third variable is value orientation and it explains the importance of the cultural beliefs that predict outcomes and influence behavior. The next variable is the power distance in which it is described the extent to which the less powerful members of a culture accept that power is distributed unequally. The last variable is uncertainty avoidance, high – low being the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertain situations.

Adler (2008) also explains the hierarchy of needs that starts from psychological, to safety, to social, to esteem, and ends with actualization but also states that needs on the top can be activated once all the bottom ones have been achieved. However, further analysis

shows that the model does not work for all cultures as the ones with high uncertainty avoidance tend to be more motivated by security.

Research has been conducted by Davidkov (2004) in order to find the cultural characteristics of Bulgarians. On the scale for power distance, the result was on the high end. On the scale for uncertainty avoidance, Bulgarians portrayed tendency towards the high end again. On the individualistic – Collectivistic scale, the results were collectivistic and further research explained it with the high percentage of poor people and good connections with extended family members.

While further research should be done for the Bulgarian population based on the listed characteristics, it is clear that there are many factors that can help culturally tailor the communication once you know your target culture.

Communication strategies for reputation management

A company's reputation is an intangible asset that depends on everything that it does as a whole entity. The signals and communication that are given to the marketplace are an especially important part of establishing a positive reputation (Davies & Miles, 1998).

Cornelissen (2014) states that it is best to manage a company's reputation through achieving 'alignment' between its internal identity and external image. That can be achieved through the Vision, Culture, Image (VCI) model, created by Hatch and Schultz (1997). The model suggests that an alignment between the three elements will help with transparency or finding any gaps between the current and desired reputation of the company. The vision

aspect stands for the management's aspirations for the organization, culture aspect stands for the values shared by all employees of the organization, and the image aspect stands for the impression that outside stakeholders have of the organization. Any misalignment between the elements is a reason for adjustment as all three interfaces are extremely important in order to be transparent and have a good reputation.

Eberle et al. (2013) state that credible communication about CSR positively influences corporate reputation and word-of-mouth behavior. A few concepts were suggested through a conceptual model that shows whether interactive communication affects message credibility. The findings showed that interactive corporate social responsibility (CSR) messages are perceived as more effective. The research further proposed a few ways to analyze the result, the first one being that interactive messages help stakeholders identify with the company. The next suggested analysis is that message credibility also helps stakeholders identify with the brand because of the way people judge advertisement based on its credibility. The final one is that identifying with the company, increases corporate reputation.

Overall, the literature has provided a model that helps identify ways of changing from current reputation to a desired one. The rest of the research provided, showed that credible CSR communication positively impacts the way people perceive a company. It is clear that the findings suggest creating a clear view of the current and desired reputation, while using interactive and credible communication to achieve that goal.

Knowledge Gaps

The following knowledge gaps were identified after the literature review:

- What are the attitudes and sustainability awareness in Bulgarians that respond positively to CSR communication? Are Bulgarians with higher education level responding better to sustainability communication?
- Do the Bulgarian cultural characteristics fit into the target audience for sustainability communication?
- How do Bulgarians perceive Bosch right now? Is Bosch associated with sustainability? Do Bulgarians respond well to interactive sustainability communication?

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

This section allows the reader to critically analyze and evaluate the findings (Kallet, 2004). This chapter explains conceptual and technical research design, it also gives additional information on data collection and operationalization. The section is concluded with sampling and validity of the findings presented.

Conceptual Research Design

Research Objective and Revised Research Questions

The knowledge gaps that came from the literature review, have been used as a foundation for the field research. The initial research objectives and sub questions (SQ) have been rewritten to answer the knowledge gaps and provide any missing information.

The rewritten research objective is to create a communication strategy aimed at Bulgarians with a high sustainability awareness, positive sustainability attitude, and a higher education level, by discovering their motivation to identify with a company, by analyzing their reaction to different types of communication and communication strategies, and by analyzing their reaction to different companies' CSR messages.

SQ1: Which consumer segments are most receptive to sustainability communication?

SQ2: Do the culturally tailored communication tactics fit the target audience?

SQ3: What is the current reputation of Bosch?

The following tables (Table 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) show the operationalization process. The concepts of each sub question were made measurable by breaking them down into various indicators that were made measurable through ordinal, nominal, and scale variables. The first sub question *"What are the motivating factors that influence Bulgarians to perceive a brand as sustainable?"* was broken down into the concepts "Demographic factors" and "Perception of a sustainable brand". The other two questions are *"Do the culturally tailored communication tactics fit the target audience?"* and *"What is the current reputation of Bosch?".* The first one was broken into "Communication based on the cultural variables" and "Communication based on the hierarchy of needs", the second one was broken into "Perception of Bulgarian companies' communication" and "Perception of Bulgarian companies".

Knowledge Gap 1: ***Consumer segments and sustainability receptiveness amongst Bulgarians.***

SQ: ***Which consumer segments are most receptive to sustainability communication?***

Table 1.

Operationalization of "Demographic factors"

Indicators	Variable	Question
Age	Variable type: Number Specific variable: Age Measurable entity: Age range: 18-60	*What is your age?*
Gender	Variable type: Gender Specific variable: Gender Measurable entity: Male; Female; Other; Prefer not to say	*What is you gender?*
Education	Variable type: Level Specific variable: Level of education Measurable entity: Primary education; Secondary education; Bachelor's degree; Master's degree; Doctorate	*What is your education level?*

Table 2.

Operationalization of "Perception of a sustainable brand"

Indicators	**Variable**	**Question**
Sustainability interest	Variable type: awareness Specific variable: sustainability awareness Measurable entity: Yes/No/Neutral	*Are you interested in sustainability*
Brand preference	Variable type: preference Specific variable: company preference Measurable entity: Yes/No	*Do you prefer sustainable brands over others?*
Attitude towards corporate sustainability	Variable type: opinion Specific variable: sustainability opinion Measurable entity: Scale from negative to positive	*What is your attitude towards corporate sustainability?*
Trust of sustainable brands	Variable type: opinion Specific variable: trust Measurable entity: Yes/No	*Do you trust sustainable brands more than others?*

Knowledge gap 2: Cultural characteristics and the target audience

SQ: Do the culturally tailored communication tactics fit the target audience?

Table 3.

Operationalization of "Communication based on the cultural variables"

Indicators	**Variable**	**Question**
Collectivism vs. Individualism	Variable type: Preference Specific variable: Message preference Measurable entity: Collectivist message/ Individualistic message	*Which message would you rather see from a corporate company that talks about sustainability?*
Power distance	Variable type: Behaviour Specific variable: Willingness to change Measurable entity: Yes/No	*If an authority figure in your personal or working life tells you to adopt more sustainable behaviour, are you willing to do it?*

Table 4.

Operationalization of "Communication based on the hierarchy of needs"

Indicators	**Variable**	**Question**
Uncertainty avoidance	Variable type: Preference Specific Variable: Image preference Measurable entity: Shocking image/ Logical image that makes you think	*Which style of image would you rather see from a big company that communicates about sustainability?*
	Variable type: Preference	

Safety vs. Luxury (testing the hierarchu of needs)	Specific variable: Product preference Measurable entity: Safe and sustainable/Luxurious and sustainable	*When you receive an ad for a sustainable product, what do you prefer?*

Knowledge gap 3: Current reputation of Bosch

SQ: ***What is the current reputation of Bosch?***

Table 5.

Operationalization of "Perception of Bulgarian companies' communication"

Indicators	**Variables**	**Question**
Interactive communication vs. Passive communication	Variable type: Preference Specific variable: Communication preference Measurable entity: Interactive communication/ Passive communication	*Which communication do you prefer from CocaCola?*
Conservative vs. Liberal communication	Variable type: Preference Specific variable: Preference of communication type Measurable entity: Bosch sustainability article/ Bosch sustainability video	*Which communication do you prefer from Bosch?*

Table 6.

Operationalization of "Perception of Bulgarian companies"

Indicators	Variables	Questions
Perception of trustworthy companies	Variable type: Opinion Specific variable: trustworthiness opinion Measurable entity: CocaCola/Bosch/Kaufland/Happy Bar&Grill	*Which company do you think is the most trustworthy?*
	Variable type: Opinion	

Perception of sustainable companies	Specific variable: Sustainability opinion Measurable entity: CocaCola/Bosch/Kaufland/Happy Bar&Grill	*Which company do you think is the most sustainable?*
Perception of quality companies	Variable type: Opinion Specific variable: Quality opinion Measurable entity: CocaCola/Bosch/Kaufland/Happy Bar&Grill	*Which company do you think provides the most quality products?*

Technical Research Design

Research Strategy

This section shows how the field research was supposed to be conducted. For this report, two research methods were chosen – structured interviews and an online survey. As this research took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person interviews and looking for people outside was not an option. This resulted in ruling out any face-to-face interaction and forcing the methods to be changed. Because of looking for interview participants online, the interview had to be changed into an online open question survey as the participants were not comfortable with being recorded in any way.

The open question survey will allow for an analysis of qualitative data that can provide insights and unexpected needed information. The online survey has the advantage of reaching a larger number of people and provide more opinions about the important questions or answer any doubts.

Research Method

- The online survey was conducted in order to suggest answers to the knowledge gaps. The survey also aimed to provide quantitative data for comparison, e.g., correlation testing. The survey questions were derived from the knowledge gaps and the concepts they were broken into. It also showed communication strategies and examples for different cultural, reputational and motivational characteristics in order to apply and test them exclusively amongst Bulgarians. It consisted of 16 questions that included

multiple choice, yes/no and scale answers. Some of the questions included picture and video stimuli. *See appendix for survey questions and results.*

- The open question survey was conducted in order to receive qualitative data to further strengthen the data from the survey and provide additional insights from people who are in the target audience. The survey participants are all between the age of 25 to 50, with higher education level and high sustainability awareness. The open question survey consisted of 8 questions, including 3 demographic ones and one visual stimuli. The data was analyzed and coded in ATLAS.ti. *See appendix for all answers and list of codes.*

Sampling

A combination of convenience and importance sampling method was used. Convenience sampling is when the participants are willing to participate and are easily available (Taherdoost, 2016). The participants were chosen from the researcher's personal network in order to receive more data.

Importance sampling is a non-probability sampling method which selects participants based on certain predetermined variables that make them relevant for the topic in question (Srinivasan, 2002). For this field research, both methods had different entry requirements for the participants. For the online survey, participants had to be between the age of 18 and 65, Bulgarian, and at least some knowledge about sustainability. For the open question survey, participants had to be between the age of 25 and 50, Bulgarian, with higher educational level, and high sustainability and CSR awareness. They were chosen because of the literature

review and the open question report's requirements were chosen because of the survey's results.

The sampling size was 85 for the online survey and 5 for the open question survey.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability. Reliability is a tool that that ensures that a particular test would provide similar results if conducted in different circumstances (Roberts & Priest, 2006). One obstacle to reliability is that the research was conducted by a Bulgarian that is trying to fully understand their own culture. As stated by Martin et al. (2018) it is hard for a person to understand their own culture and look at it from a neutral perspective. While there is literature and research that supports some of the findings that come out from the online survey and open question survey, the analyzation of the results cannot be considered fully unbiased.

Validity. Validity is a tool that shows whether the research is measuring what it is intending to measure in the first place (Roberts & Priest, 2006). The barriers to validity in this research were a result of time, budget, and contact constraints due to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the issues is the refusal of people to be part of an interview and be recorded which resulted in organizing and open question survey. The other issue is the small number of people that participated in it (5) as people who fit the requirements and were willing to participate, were hard to find.

Open-ended questions allow the researchers to take a holistic look at the problem they are looking into (Allen, 2017).

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

Both the results from the open question survey and the online survey were divided into subtopics and then discussed per knowledge gap (KG). The quantitative data from the online survey was tested in correlation and t-tests by being assigned numerical value. The tests focused on the comparison of demographics suggested by the desk research and the answers to the questions of the other two knowledge gap concepts. The qualitative data from the open question survey was coded in ATLAS.ti which helped to efficiently analyze and compare it.

Knowledge gaps

KG1: Consumer segments and sustainability receptiveness amongst Bulgarians.

Demographic factors. 69.4% of the respondents have a high sustainability awareness. In the analysis of *Age and Education level* in correlation with *Sustainability awareness* (Table 3), a significant correlation (r = .22) was found with age and a weak one (r = .16) with education level. Respondents with high sustainability awareness tend to be older and with a higher education level.

Table 7.

Correlation table for Age, Sustainability awareness & Education level

Variables	1	2	3
1. Age	-		
2. Education level	.52	-	
3. Sustainability awareness	.22	.16	-

Younger respondents (age 18-29) were compared to the older respondents (age 30-65). The older survey participants reported higher sustainability awareness (*M*= 2,93) than the younger participants (*M*= 2,55, *p*= ,001). The p-value in this research implies statistical significance.

Perception of a sustainable brand. This section will examine how Bulgarians perceive a sustainable brand in this field research. In the open question survey, participants were asked *'What should a company do in order for you to perceive it as truly sustainable?'* and 3/5 answers focused on the ecological part of sustainability by saying they need a company to have minimum effect on it's surrounding through products and services offered (Table 4).

Table 8.

Statistics of 'sustainable company perception' in structured interviews

	Codes		
Responses	More actions than words	Transparency	Minimum environmental impact
Total	2/5	2/5	3/5
Relative share	40%	40%	60%

One respondent explained that they have higher standards and want a company to perform as best as they can in every aspect that the company can affect its surroundings and stakeholders. This is what they said:

> Reduce their environmental impact, provide fair wages and jobs, support green and social initiatives, transparently communicate about their activities, encourage degrowth. (Personal communication, June, 2021).

This answer solidified the result from the online survey as 28/85 respondents answered, *'somewhat positive'* and 40/85 answered *'positive'* when asked *'What is their attitude towards corporate social responsibility'*. When this question was asked, it was followed by a definition of the concept that captured all aspects same as the answer that is quoted above.

KG2: Cultural characteristics and the target audience

Communication based on cultural variables. In this section the cultural characteristics that are supposed to affect the communication targeted towards Bulgarians is tested. The respondents between the age of 18 and 29 were compared to the ones between 30 and 65 (Table 5). The older participants are also presenting high individualism (M = 2) and uncertainty avoidance characteristics (M = 1), while the younger ones were more collectivistic (M = 1,69, p = ,015) and with lower uncertainty avoidance (M = 1,07, p = ,024). Those results show that people above the age of 29 fit closer to the cultural characteristics that were suggested in the desk research.

Table 9.

Mean difference table between age groups & cultural characteristics

	Age group	
Variables	18-29	30-65
Uncertainty avoidance	1,07	1
Collectivism vs individualism	1,69	2

This result was further solidified when in the analysis of Age, Collectivism and Power distance (Table 6), there were two correlations between Age and Individualism (r = .24) and between Age and Power distance (r = .13). Those correlations show that the older the people are, the more likely they are to be individualistic and with smaller power distance characteristics.

Table 10.

Correlation table for age, collectivism/individualism & power distance

Variables	1	2	3
1. Age	-		
2. Collectivism/Individualism	.24	-	
3.Power distance	.13	-.09	-

Three tables (Tables 7,8,9) were created to present the way all survey participants answered to the questions that were asked in order to characterize the cultural characteristic preference in communication. On the question about collectivism and individualism, majority answered with individualistic communication preference (74,1%).

Table 11.

Statistics of "Collectivistic vs. Individualistic communication preference"

	Answer scale	
Responses	Individualistic communication	Collectivistic communication
Total	63/85	22/85
Share	74,1%	25,9%

On the question about power distance in sustainability communication, majority of respondents (97,6%) presented the answer that presents high power distance characteristic.

Table 12.

Statistics of "Power distance in sustainability communication"

	Answer scale	
Responses	High power distance	Low power distance
Total	83/85	2/85
Share	97,6%	2,4%

To the question testing the uncertainty avoidance of the participants, majority of the respondents (84,7%) chose the high uncertainty avoidance communication.

Table 13.
Statistics of "Uncertainty avoidance in sustainability communication"

	Answer scale	
Responses	High uncertainty avoidance	Low uncertainty avoidance
Total	72/85	13/85
Share	84,7%	15,3%

Communication based on the Hierarchy of needs. In the desk research it was suggested that the hierarchy of needs might not work for cultures with high uncertainty avoidance. As it states in Table 9, Bulgarians do have high uncertainty avoidance characteristic and further analysis was needed in the field research (Table 10). In the online survey participants answered a question where they had to choose between uncertainty avoidance appeal and on based on the hierarchy of needs. Majority of participants (94,1%) chose the first appeal and therefore show that the hierarchy of needs is not the best appeal practice Bulgarian characteristics.

Table 14.

Statistics of "Hierarchy of needs appeal"

	Answer scale	
Responses	Uncertainty appeal	Needs appeal
Total	80/85	5/85
Share	94,1%	5,9%

KG3: Current reputation of Bosch

Perception of Bulgarian companies' communication. In the online survey a few visual stimuli were presented to the participants so they can choose what they prefer and provide a clear view of their preference. In the desk research it was suggested that for sustainable communication, it is better to opt for interactive communication rather than informative. In the question that compares them in the case of CocaCola (Table 11), majority of participants (60%) chose the interactive option.

Table 15.

Statistics of "Interactive vs informative communication"

	Answer scale	
Response	Interactive communication	Informative communication
Total	51/85	34/85
Share	60%	40%

In the survey, participants were also asked to choose between a Bosch sustainability ad and news on the site (Table 12). The majority of the participants chose the video ad over the news.

Table 16.

Statistics of "Video ad vs. news"

	Answer scale	
Response	Video ad	News on site
Total	65/85	20/85
Share	76,5%	23,5%

Further analysis of both data statistics showed a weak correlation (r = -.11) between concepts and showed that people who prefer the interactive communication also prefer the video ad over the news article on the site.

In the structured interview survey, participants had to choose between sustainability communication between CocaCola and Bosch. 3 out of 5 participants said that they prefer Bosch’s communication. The main reason was that those participants preferred simpler-

looking communication (60%) and it was also mentioned that it looks more professional (20%).

Table 17.

Statistics of 'Bosch communication preference' in structured interviews

	Codes	
Responses	Simple communication	Professional communication
Total	3/5	1/5
Relative share	60%	20%

Perception of Bulgarian companies' reputation. Participants were asked to say which companies they perceive as most sustainable, trustworthy and the one they relate with quality. In the case of sustainability, the majority of participants chose Bosch (50,6%) and CocaCola (28,2%). For quality, majority answered Bosch (81,2%) and CocaCola (9,4%). Majority thought that Bosch (68,2%) and Kaufland (14,1%) are most trustworthy.

In the open question survey, participants were asked what their impression of Bosch was after they watched their most recent #LikeABosch video ad in Bulgaria. Most of the participants enjoyed it and were left with a good impression (60%) whole other were neutral (20%) or with a negative impression (20%).

Table 18.

Statistics of 'Bosch ad impression and reputation'

	Codes		
Responses	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Total	1/5	1/5	3/5
Relative share	20%	20%	60%

The participants with positive impressions said that the ad made them feel like Bosch had good marketing and subtle communication of sustainability. The participant with a neutral opinion stated that they felt confused by the concept but likes the message. The person with a negative opinion stated that it felt like an unsuccessful attempt at being ‘hip’ (Personal communication, June, 2021).

Chapter V

Conclusion and implications

Introduction

In order to answer the central and sub question and draw conclusions, data from all the research methods was combined. After potential improvements and limitations of the research were discussed, implications for the recommendations were defined.

Conclusions

Which consumer segments are most receptive to sustainability communication?

The people that are most receptive to sustainability communication have high sustainability awareness, above the age of 30 and with higher education level. Gender does not play a role as neither the desk research or the field research suggests a significant difference in men and women regarding sustainability communication. When it comes to age, Bosch could do further research for the upper limit to their target audience as that factor is also closely connected to the education level and no findings were significant enough to determine a closed interval of age target.

The perception of a sustainable brand amongst Bulgarians mainly focuses on the ecological aspect, therefore, ecological awareness tends to be higher than sustainability awareness and can be targeted as a communication tactic. The overall sustainability and corporate social responsibility concept amongst Bulgarians is well received but not as well as the ecological one.

Do the culturally tailored communication tactics fit the target audience?

If the target audience fits the characteristics of being with higher education, above 30 years old and with high sustainability awareness then it would be contradicting with the information that was found in the desk research. People above the age of 30 tend be more individualistic unlike younger people. The target audience would also have lower power distance characteristic. However, they perform the same way as younger people in uncertainty avoidance. People with higher education level also have higher sustainability awareness.

The hierarchy of needs cannot be used due to high uncertainty avoidance. Bulgarians showed that they prefer the safety appeal over esteem and self-actualization. More appropriate communication for them would be logical, with safety appeal, targeted towards ‘you’ and not ‘us’, and communicated through different channels in addition to the site.

What is the current reputation of Bosch?

The latest video ad ‘Живей устойчиво (Live sustainable) #LikeABosch’ was well received by participants in both surveys but it needs to be noted that some found it confusing or simply disliked it. On the other hand, the impression it left was that the company is sustainable and with good marketing. The video definitely has improved the participants’ impression of Bosch. However, the sustainable reputation for Bosch could be questioned, they easily won the majority participants’ choice in trustworthiness and quality, but their lowest score was in sustainability and barely got above 50% of the votes.

The overall image of Bosch is extremely positive but still lacks consumers’ trust in sustainability.

Overall conclusions

After the sub-questions have been answered, the findings were applied in order to answer the central research question of this report.

What are the key factors that influence a company's reputation amongst Bulgarians?

There are many factors that influence a company's reputation, especially in a culture that has not been researched as much. Some of those factors are demographic and others are sustainability awareness and attitude, lifestyle, individual consumer motivation, the way a company communicates, culture and the aspects of a successful reputation strategy.

There are some predictors of a company's reputation, like successful communication, quality of products and services, work environment and word of mouth in related subcultures. Consumers are prone to form an opinion about a company if they already have existing knowledge and high awareness on the topic. This also depends on their personal beliefs and attitude towards the specific concept. In order to persuade consumers to form a positive opinion about a company, especially in the case of sustainability, the communication should be interactive and not just informative, through more approachable channels, with logical approach and safety appeal.

Discussion

Limitations of the research

Several limitations need to be considered when interpreting the findings and the data. Due to low budget, time constraints and the pandemic situation, the reliability and validity have been compromised. The research goal of presenting the target audience for sustainability communication of Bosch has not been fully achieved due to not being as selective as needed for the field research and the lack of willing participants for an interview. The pandemic has also restricted the research from any in-person contact like an interview or a focus group. The small variety of participants in regard to age and education should also be considered as majority of people were between the ages of 18 and 29 and have achieved secondary education level.

Suggestions for improvement

The research outcome could be improved in a few ways: First, a sample size larger than 5 structured interviews and 85 survey participants could lead to stronger data analysis and a more representative result. There could also be more variety in the sample in regard to age, education and gender in order to compare more subgroups and behaviors. Second, the interviews could be face-to-face and translated after instead of conducting them in English as that can limit the expression of opinion for the participants. Third, a focus group could provide more insights and a different environment which will spark a discussion on the different topics. Lastly, a follow up analysis on the performance of the sustainability add could give insights that can help with future communication on the sustainability topic.

Implications for recommendations

For the Advice Report, the finding suggest that people of the demographics mentioned above will be most receptive to sustainability communication from Bosch once they are approached with a proper sustainability reputation communication strategy. Bosch should focus on consumers between the age of 30 and 65 when choosing messaging channels and appeals. A well-integrated communication strategy that is culturally tailored towards Bulgarians and with a safety appeal, will be well received by the individuals in the target audience. As the consumers have shown a preference towards logical and interactive communication, further tailoring of the message will be needed.

A widely standardized, cost-effective communication strategy for the target market in Bulgaria is advisable as it shares characteristics with target markets in neighboring countries and can be used for them or future communication targeted at Bulgarians.

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Structured interview Questions

Demographic:

What is your age?

What is your education level?

Sustainability perception:

What should a company do in order for you to perceive it as truly sustainable?

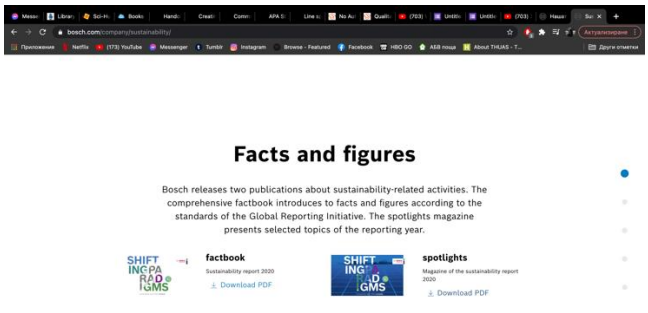
Bosch perception:

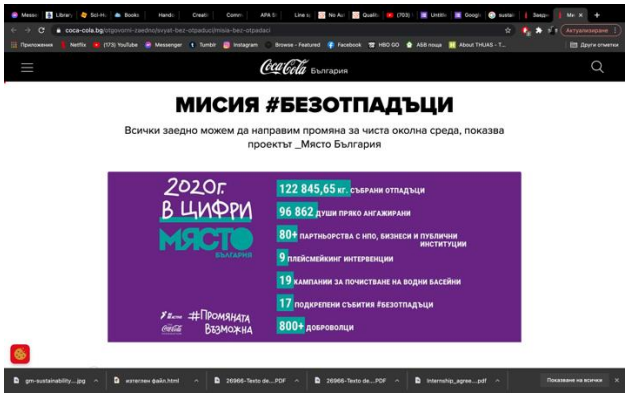
How does that video make you feel about the company? (Bulgarian version was used;

English version is identical except for sound

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3XfoiIffbM&ab_channel=boschhomeappliances)

Which sustainability communication do you prefer?





Why did you make that choice in the previous question?

Answers on structured interview:

Svetoslav

Age: 26

Education: Bachelor's degree

What should a company do in order for you to perceive it as truly sustainable?: Have a fall back budget and keep its debt to an acceptable minimum. Utilizing and throwing any material that they can to as large degree as possible.

How does that video make you feel about the company?: Disgusted, it is a blatant unsuccessful attempt at being hip.

Which sustainability communication do you prefer?: Bosch

Why did you make that choice in the previous question? It is clean.

Yana:

Age: 31

Education: Bachelor’s degree

What should a company do in order for you to perceive it as truly sustainable?: They should have transparent communication and do more than just submitting a sustainability report.

How does that video make you feel about the company?: Good marketing

Which sustainability communication do you prefer?: CocaCola

Why did you make that choice in the previous question?: The design catches the eye.

Ksenia:

Age: 20

Education: Bachelor’s degree

What should a company do in order for you to perceive it as truly sustainable?: Reduce their environmental impact, provide fair wages and jobs, support green and social initiatives, transparently communicate about their activities, encourage degrowth

How does that video make you feel about the company?: A little confused. I like the message but not sure about the way how it’s transmitted.

Which sustainability communication do you prefer?: CocaCola

Why did you make that choice in the previous question?: Visuals and graphics can transmit the message clearer for general public than simple facts and figures. However if it requires more serious communication to a knowledgeable audience, e.g. full CO2 report, the second option is also acceptable.

Francine:

Age: 22

Education: Bachelor’s degree

What should a company do in order for you to perceive it as truly sustainable?: If you’re truly sustainable it’ll come across regardless. Don’t use a bunch of labels

How does that video make you feel about the company?: Good, sustainability is demonstrated but rather subtle.

Which sustainability communication do you prefer?: Bosch

Why did you make that choice in the previous question?: It looks more professional and less in your face. The image of Coca Cola is already negative when it come to sustainability, therefor it feel like greenwashing. Boschs image is better

Alexa:

Age: 22

Education: Bachelor’s degree

What should a company do in order for you to perceive it as truly sustainable?: They should be cruelty free and should reuse materials such as plastic.

How does that video make you feel about the company?: Makes me wanna buy something from them.

Which sustainability communication do you prefer?: Bosch

Why did you make that choice in the previous question?

The Bosch one is very clear, easy to read and easy to understand.

ATLAS.ti codes:

Name	**Groundedness**
Bosch communication preference	3
CocaCola communication preference	2
good working environment	1
Minimum environmental impact	3

More actions than words	2
needs more than report	1
Negative opinion bosch ad	1
neutral Bosch ad opinion	1
Positive opinion Bosch ad	3
Professional communication preference	1
simple communication preference	3
transparency	2
visual communication preference	2

Project proposal:

1. Background and context of the organization

Bosch is a global company that offers technology and services. They are mainly in the market of home appliances, heating and security systems, work tools, software development, car technology and e-bike technology. The current headquarters are in Germany, but offices can be found on every continent.

Bosch creates campaigns on a global level and then local offices can either just share the information from the global site or tailor it to their partners and customers. This allows the local offices to create their own persona for the target audience of the said campaign and then pick and choose the information, sources and strategies of the overall communication. That way not all messages reach the average consumer that is close to a local office, but the company seems to rely on their global reputation and their loyal customers.

2. Problem analysis

When it comes to the environment, as of the recent events surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, Bosch has had a successful year with no major losses compared to its competitors. The global health situation has also left many companies silent as they continue to work. Bosch has gained a lot of attention by being one of the few companies to release a campaign in the beginning of 2021while most of the world is spending their time at home and most likely being online.

#LikeABosch is a global campaign that Bosch created with the main focus being sustainability and the urgency of reaction. The overall campaign is embodied in a main video that shows the younger generation seeking action regarding climate change and then results into a rap battle about who is more sustainable. The video and the campaign mix advertising and sustainability in a way that does not feel too much or too corporate while still sharing the accomplishment of CO^2 neutrality.

When it comes to Bulgaria, there has been barely any mention of the #LikeABosch campaign and there has only been a link to the global site through the responsibility page on the Bulgarian site. When communicating any sustainable actions or products, the local offices are not linking their work with the global campaign that would further strengthen their reputation and claims regarding the topic.

Bosch is mainly in the Bulgarian market of home appliances, heating and security systems, work tools, software development, car technology and e-bike technology. Most of those businesses are thought to be the main cause of global warming and the overall harm that Earth has endured. The actual problem is the reputation of the company in Bulgaria where all manufacturing and technology service companies are perceived as bad for the environment. Furthermore, the company's headquarters and offices are all positioned in the capital (Sofia) where people are constantly attacking the government and companies for damaging the city and polluting the air. Right now, the majority of citizens is asking for sustainable choices and products but do not know where to find them as it is a new topic in Bulgaria and there are no platforms that share such information. This results in a codependence of communication between companies and consumers.

There are many stakeholders affected by this problem and the main ones are from the communication management on a global level as a report is needed from any company after the launch of a campaign in every country. Those reports are further analyzed in order to collect data regarding their local and global reputation. The next main stakeholders would be

the managers of the different offices on a local level as none of them want to lose revenue because of a sustainability issue that does not actually exist regarding their manufacturing. Secondary stakeholders would be the communication department on a local level as they have an established style that fits the company but differs based on learnt cultural differences. As a client they would be the most dependent on the research and advisory report that would need to fit all the established guidelines on a local and global level while still providing a creative solution. They also depend on the local reputation that the company has as it reflects the communication that people have received and how they have received it. One of the most important stakeholders are the consumers as they are currently looking for relevant information about sustainable actions from the company.

The problem requires an urgent solution as a communication campaign does not last long and requires a thorough plan created for its target audience. In global companies the reputation and associations significantly affect the y-y revenue statistics. As a company that has accomplished something that has taken a lot of effort in order to lower their harm on the planet, it is highly important to share the information while it is still new and important. The overall issue that needs to be solved is the necessity of establishing a sustainable reputation in the Bulgarian market with an integrated communication campaign.

3. The assignment

Based on the situation analysis and the problem analysis, the advice question of this project is "How can we create sustainable reputation for Bosch in Bulgaria?"
The end result of the project will have to be a concrete communication strategy that will show the steps that will be needed in order to reach an audience with Bulgarian characteristics and create a campaign that does not stray from the original messages that Bosch created but still manages to change the current situation of the company on a local level.
Both the research report and the advice report would be highly beneficial as the Bulgarian audience is not as researched when it comes to cultural characteristics and that would solve a lot of issues for the local office regarding the #LikeABosch campaign and future communication that comes from a global office. A concrete strategy would give a step-by-step plan that would give the local office the ability to take advantage of the global campaign and provide revenue and improved reputation within the local stakeholders.

4. Research approach

The research would provide insights about existing diverse global campaigns with cultural adaptations and the cultural characteristics that need to be taken into consideration regarding communication campaigns. The existing campaigns could show more than just experience but also what communication tactics fit a specific characteristic. Furthermore, it should be researched what is the currents state of Bosch's reputation in Bulgarian and whether they are seen as a sustainable choice on the market.

The research objective of the project is to create a communication strategy that will adapt an existing campaign for Bulgarian culture and create a sustainable reputation of the company:

I. Finding culturally tailored campaigns from global brands
II. Understanding the different tactics for different cultures
III. Finding the culturally tailored tactics and their fitting characteristics in the existing campaign
IV. Finding the cultural characteristics of Bulgaria
V. Analyzing sustainable behavior in Bulgaria

VI. Analyzing sustainable awareness in Bulgaria
VII. Analyzing the main obstacles in accomplishing sustainable awareness in Bulgaria

Research questions:

- Central question:

How can we create a campaign for a specific culture?

Sub-questions:
What are previous culturally tailored campaigns?
What cultural characteristics are most important when creating a communication campaign?
Which cultural models are used in advertising/communication campaigns?

- Central question:

What are Bulgaria's cultural characteristics that need to be taken into consideration?

Sub-questions:
What are Bulgaria's cultural characteristics?
What is Bulgaria's sustainability awareness?
Which characteristics matter regarding an advertising campaign?
What is Bulgaria's sustainability in business awareness?

- Central question:

How can we improve the reputation of a company?

Sub-questions:
What communication models are used for defining current reputation?
What communication models are used for changing current reputation?
Is reputation affected by cultural characteristics?

Based on the research questions there could be a few concepts that can be initially explored and analyzed. The first concept is "The ways of culturally tailoring a global campaign". As Bosch in Bulgaria has to adapt a big campaign that has already been altered for a global audience, it is crucial to see which models and templates are needed to further alter it while keeping the message. The main sources in connection with this concept are Global Scan: The Globalization of Advertising Agencies, Concepts, and Campaigns (Leslie, 2016); The Impact of Moral Emotions on Cause-Related Marketing Campaigns (Kim & Johnson, 2013).
The second concept is "Bulgaria's cultural differences and their importance". The basic understanding of a different culture is crucial for any campaign's target audience. As Eastern Europe can be neglected, it is good to find out about general cultural differences and also the specific research that has been done about Bulgaria. Good sources and models for this concept are Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 2001); Cultural intelligence (Soon Ang et al., 2008); Marketing Implications of Communist Ideological Legacy in Culture in the Context of Central and Eastern Europe: A Comparison of Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine (Marinov et al., 2002); Personal uses and perceived social and economic effects of advertising in Bulgaria and Romania (Marinova et al., 2007).
The third concept is "Defining and changing current reputation". As the main goal is to change the reputation of Bosch in Bulgaria, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of changing a reputation and how exactly it can be accomplished. The main sources regarding this concept are: Statistical models to measure corporate reputation (Cherchiello, 2011) and

The impact of cause-related marketing campaigns on the reputation of corporations and NGOs (Bianchi et al., 2020).

5. **Planning**

The project will begin with extensive desk research that covers all concepts and allows for a list of knowledge gaps to be created. Once this part is done, quantitative research will be conducted with survey answers that would be then exported to Excel in order to find tendencies and concrete data. If there are still unanswered knowledge gaps that require more in-depth answers, interviews will be conducted with a new questionnaire that provides more data or clarification.

Based on the research report and all the data analysis, the advice report will include a persona(s), guidelines for communication with Bulgarians and most of all an answer to the advice question.

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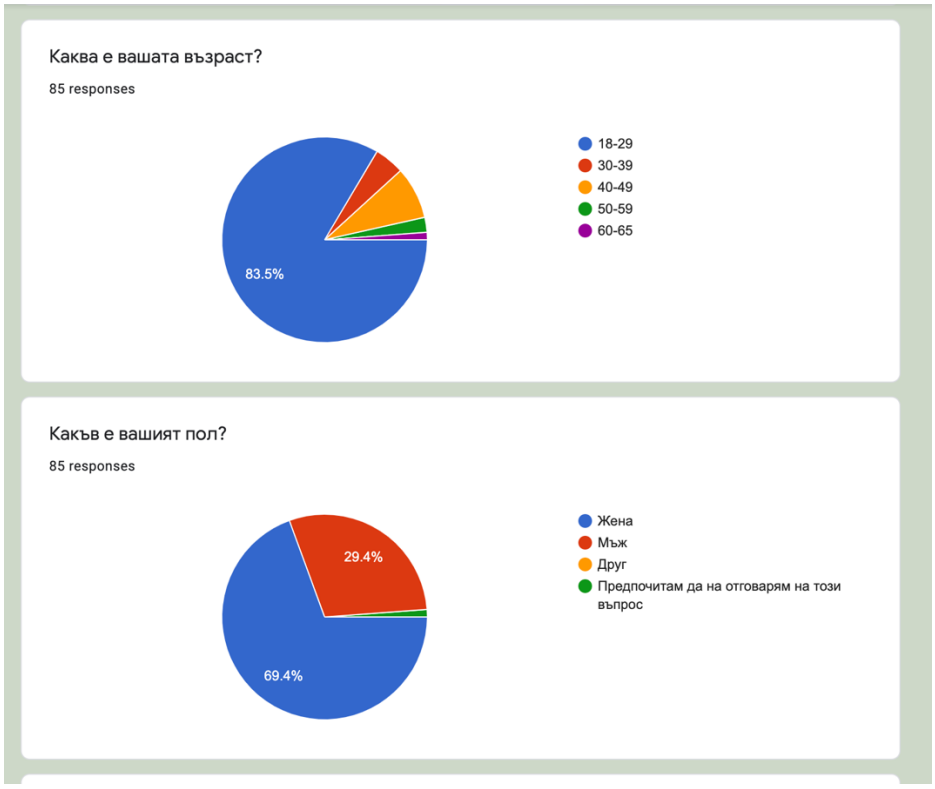
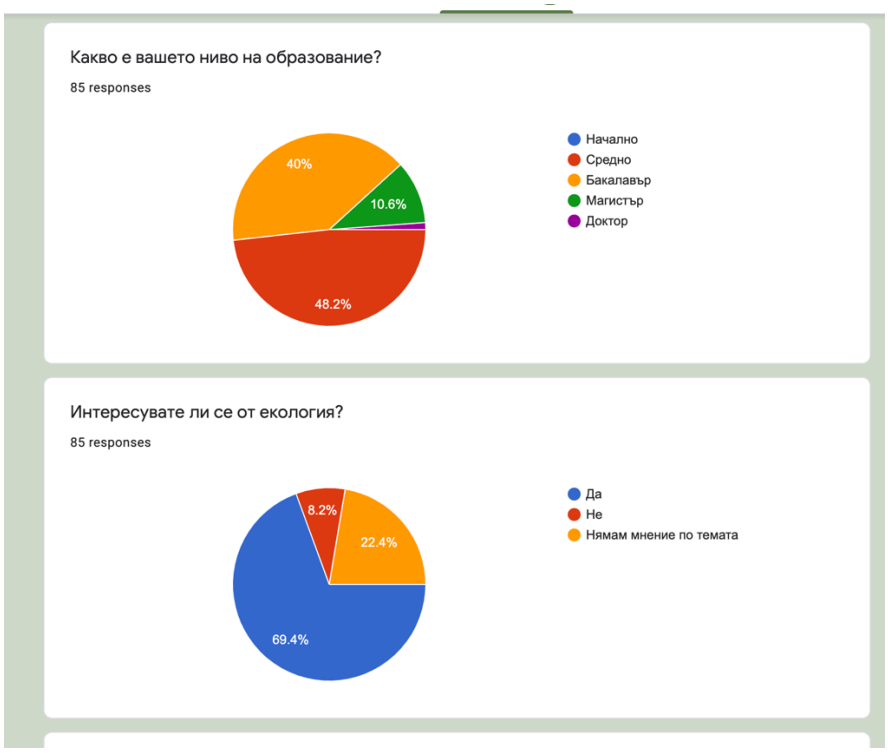
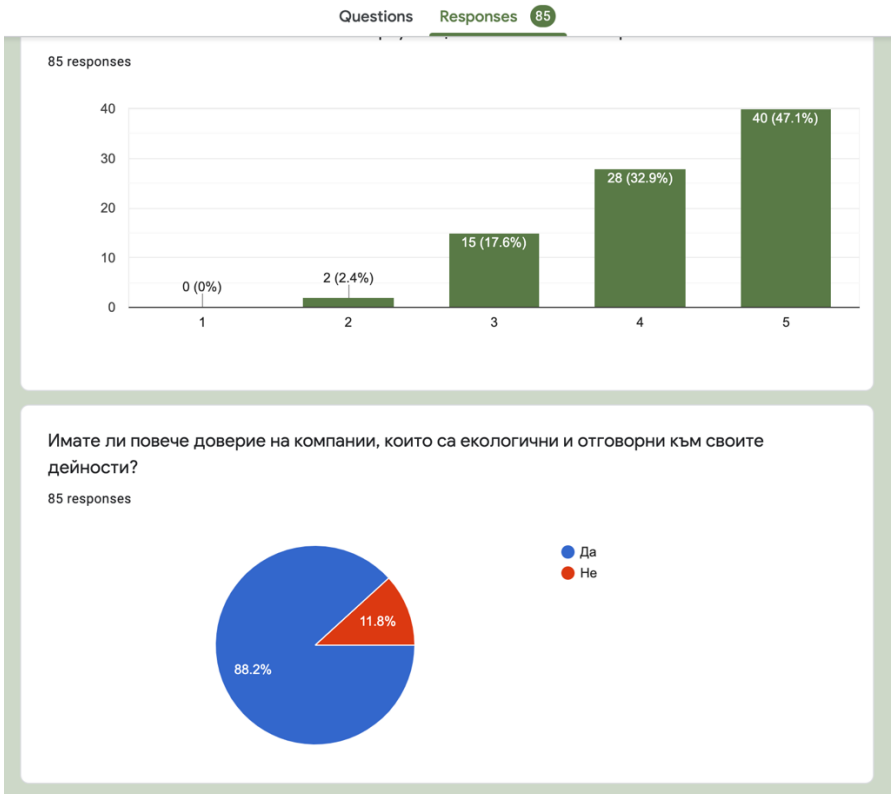
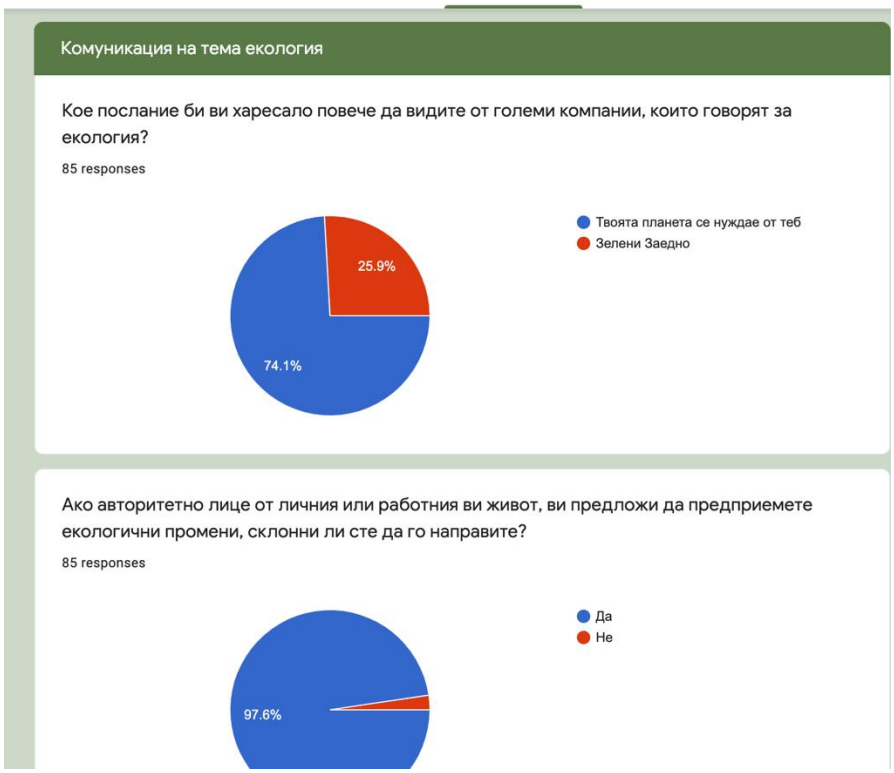
Survey questions and results (Identical translation in operationalization tables)



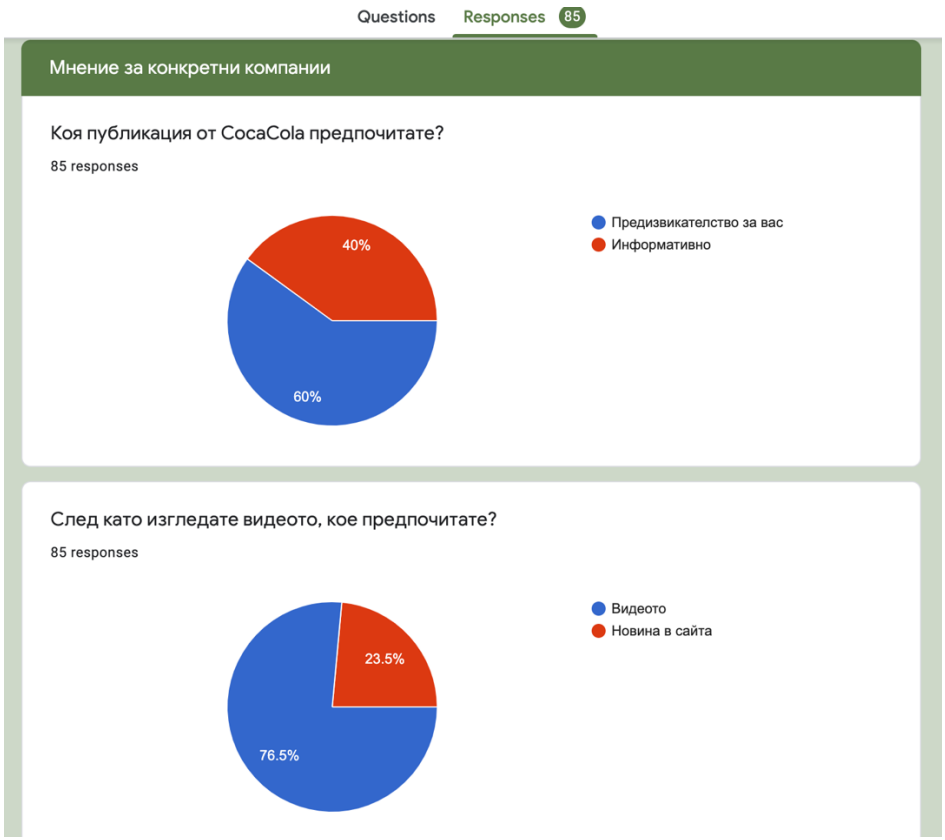

Какво е вашето ниво на образование?
85 responses
40%
10.6%
48.2%
Начално
Средно
Бакалавър
Магистър
Доктор
Интересувате ли се от екология?
85 responses
8.2%
22.4%
69.4%
Да
Не
Нямам мнение по темата

Предпоч"итате ли екологичните компании?
85 responses
18.8%
81.2%
Да
Не
Какво е вашето отношение към корпоративната социална отговорност?
*корпоративната социална отговорност се разбира като популяризиране на практиките на отговорния бизнес, които носят полза на бизнеса и обществото и подпомагат социалното, икономическо и екологично устойчиво развитие чрез максимизиране на положителното влияние на бизнеса върху обществото и минимизиране на негативното.
85 responses
40
30
20
10
15 (17.6%)
28 (32.9%)
40 (47.1%)


Questions
Responses 85
85 responses
40
30
20
10
0
0 (0%)
2 (2.4%)
15 (17.6%)
28 (32.9%)
40 (47.1%)
1
2
3
4
5
Имате ли повече доверие на компании, които са екологични и отговорни към своите дейности?
85 responses
Да
Не
11.8%
88.2%


Комуникация на тема екология
Кое послание би ви харесало повече да видите от големи компании, които говорят за екология?
85 responses
Твоята планета се нуждае от теб
Зелени Заедно
25.9%
74.1%
Ако авторитетно лице от личния или работния ви живот, ви предложи да предприемете екологични промени, склонни ли сте да го направите?
85 responses
Да
Не
97.6%

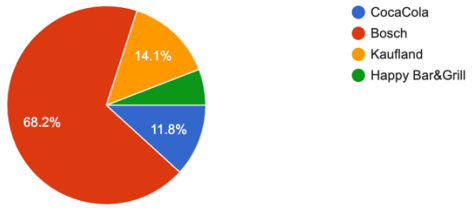
Кой стил на изображения предпочччитате да видите от големи компании, които говорят за екология?
85 responses
15.3%
84.7%
Изображение, което ви кара да се замислите
Шокиращо и запомнящо се изображение
Когато получавате реклама за екологичен продукт, какъв предпочччитате да бъде?
85 responses
94.1%
Безопасен и екологичен
Луксозен и екологичен


Questions
Responses 85
Мнение за конкретни компании
Коя публикация от CocaCola предпочитате?
85 responses
40%
60%
Предизвикателство за вас
Информативно
След като изгледате видеото, кое предпочитате?
85 responses
23.5%
76.5%
Видеото
Новина в сайта

Предстоящите компании са избрани, защото са популярни и е по-вероятно всички да ги знаят. Въпросите не са свързани с техните услуги или продукти, а с вашето мнение за тях като цяло.

На коя компания бихте се доверили най-много?

85 responses

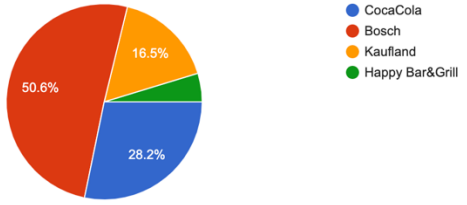


Коя компания мислите, че имай силна корпоративна социална отговорност?

85 responses

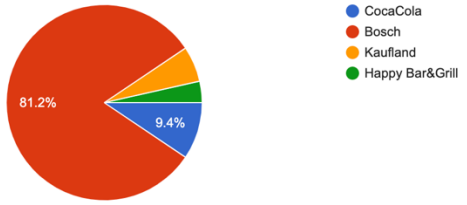
Коя компания мислите, че имай силна корпоративна социална отговорност?

85 responses



Коя компания свързвате с най-високо качество?

85 responses



Excel workbook:

Online survey.xlsx

THE HAGUE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Add this signed form as an appendix in both
your PPT Research Report and Advice Report

Hereby I confirm that the PPT Research Report and the PPT Advice Report have been shared with me, the assignment provider.

Your name : Irena Raycheva-Udreva

Position : Head of communication department

Organisation : Robert Bosch EOOD

Name student : Petra Valkova

Date : 28th of June, 2021

Signature : pki, BOSCH, EMEA, I, R, Irena.Raycheva-Udreva

Digitally signed by pki, BOSCH, EMEA, I, R, Irena.Raycheva-Udreva
Date: 2021.06.28 20:00:34 +03'00'

The Hague University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Management & Organisation
International Communication Management bachelor programme

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