

HZ University of Applied Sciences

International Business

SCHWARZ



RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

Stakeholder Communications

Lisa Jung
00076883

Graduation Intern at Scholz & Friends GmbH
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Graduation supervisor: Mr. Johan M. Weggemans
In-company supervisor: Mrs. Sandra Bumbar-Malchow

Executive Summary

The scope of this research justification outlines plastic reduction and circularity efforts by the Schwarz Gruppe and focuses on aligning these practices to stakeholders. In fact, the research explores strategic possibilities to enhance communication among political stakeholders, media representatives, association & organizations and the overall interested public. By representing efforts and engagement of plastic reduction within the entire organization to those stakeholders, the Schwarz Gruppe has the opportunity to be a leader and expert, gain trust and maintain a seat at the table in all discussions on the topic of plastics and to expand opportunities to directly influence legislative decisions on plastics and circularity. Additionally, it builds and strengthens relationships to NGOs with common denominator on circularity. Moreover, it increases positive coverage and awareness for the Schwarz Gruppe in the context of plastics through earned media. Throughout this research justification, four main information gaps were examined:

1. The relevant stakeholder groups of the Schwarz Gruppe through a stakeholder analysis
2. The corporate positioning in terms of communication activities
3. The political environment that reviews trends, current legislations, regulations on plastic and circularity
4. The relevant communication channels pulled from the stakeholder analysis

Throughout the research, these four information gaps were answered with means of literature review and field research. To be exact, information gap 2 consisted of two semi-structured interviews with participants working for the Schwarz Gruppe as well as internal and external desk research. Information gap 1, 3 & 4 were answered by means of literature review. The interviews were based on positioning of the company in an external light, thus, expressing an overall image of the company. Interviews were transcribed and coded.

The overall results of this research show, that the Schwarz Gruppe has a strong position on the market and no doubt can be market leader with the plastic strategy. Their corporate communicative field is yet reserved, even though engagement and many examples showcase their efforts to become circular with their plastic products. Furthermore, the Schwarz Gruppe has a good standpoint in sense of political efforts such as current legislations for circularity and plastic reduction. The Schwarz Gruppe is for EU-wide regulations and expresses their wants of these legislations. This means, the company is positioning itself positively towards national regulations and wants the industry to adapt and move along those efforts. Due to the fact that the company's divisions already maintain separate communication activities on municipal level, the Schwarz Gruppe has therefore the potential to talk in all names of the company on national (maybe even EU-wide) level. The purpose of this research is to create awareness about plastic reduction and the efforts of the Schwarz Gruppe, as well as enhancing relationships with political stakeholders to be part of the discussions and create advantages regarding plastic reduction in the retail industry. In order to communicate these goals effectively, a professional product in form of a stakeholder communication plan is provided that outlines all important criteria, methods, messages, tactics and time frames for the company to implement.

Based on the results, recommendations were made, which can be found in the end of this research justification and they go as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Expand website of the Reset Plastic | 6. Create initiative/competitions |
| 2. Create a magazine | 7. Be part in the association Klimaschutz Unternehmen |
| 3. Enhance social media activities | 8. Support Paris Climate Agreement |
| 4. Increase media placements | 9. Participate in Think Tanks |
| 5. Initiative a study by research institute | |

Table of Contents

Preliminary research.....	1
<i>Company/product analysis.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Problem analysis.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Project aim</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Information gaps.....</i>	<i>2</i>
Research approach	3
<i>Research Unit</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Data Analysis.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Operationalization.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Reliability & Validity</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Limitation</i>	<i>6</i>
Results	6
Conclusion.....	13
Recommendations.....	15
References	17
Appendices.....	23
<i>Appendix A: Stakeholder Analysis</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Appendix B: Political Positioning of Schwarz Gruppe on Disposable & Reusable Plastic Policy</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Appendix C: Political Positioning of Schwarz Gruppe on Circular Economy Law</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Appendix D: Questionnaire on B2B Communication Activities.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Appendix E: Interview Questions Decoded and Organized by Theme Interviewee 1.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Appendix F: Interview Questions Decoded and Organized by Theme Interviewee 2.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Appendix G: Assessment form graduation IB 20-21 - self-assessment.....</i>	<i>40</i>

Preliminary research

Company/product analysis

Schwarz Group is a family-owned multinational retail group that operates grocery shops under the names Lidl and Kaufland. In addition to the grocery stores, the group also owns GreenCycle (PreZero is the sales brand), an environmental services provider active in dual system waste management, disposal, recycling and recovery, with operations in five countries in the EU. Moreover, the Group has its own production facility that is active in 14 locations around Germany, that manufactures beverages, chocolate, dried fruit, bakery products and ice cream, which are supplied to over 25 countries. Eight of these locations are responsible for producing food and beverages for Kaufland and Lidl, while plastics plants are operated at three locations. Additionally, Kaufland operated five meat processing plants which produce meat and sausage products for its stores. The Schwarz Gruppe is as of now active in over 30 countries – and in 29 of these countries, Kaufland and Lidl together operate around 12,500 stores (*Unsere Geschichte, n.D*). The Schwarz Gruppe has a 16,5% share on the overall food retail market and therefore third strongest in Germany (Deter, 2021). Between the years 2019 and 2020, the Group made 113.3 billion Euro in revenue (Der Spiegel, 2020).

Both the Lidl Stiftung & Co. KG and Kaufland Stiftung & Co. KG act as process and system providers to support the national companies in their business activities. Both legal structures of each national unit are met under operative and regulatory requirements. Both retail divisions are based legally on a variety of independent companies that include regional distribution centers, distribution companies, logistics companies, and meat processing plants for Kaufland (*Unsere Geschichte, n.D*). The company employs over 458,000 people and is present in over 33 countries. The main target of the Schwarz Group will always stay to be B2C – end consumers.

As part of the group mission, one of the main milestones the company has set for itself is to be active in 5 main business areas, namely reducing (REduce) with a resource-saving design (REdesign), collecting and sorting through the system of recycling (RECycle), as well as removing and facilitating the environment (REmove) and, last but not least, fostering innovation and education (REsearch). The plan is set for Lidl & Kaufland to reduce worldwide 20 percent of plastic usage and increase recyclability to 100 percent for private label plastic packaging by 2025. The groups vision comprises of commitments such as by signing a Global Commitment of the Ellen McArthur Foundation, a clear goal has been set: all plastics that's been used needs to be recycled and put into a recyclable loop to not further burden the environment. The main goal would then succeed in a new plastic economy, in which plastic never becomes waste.

Problem analysis

The business problem that the Group is facing is that they need B2B communication activities to enhance awareness. The problem became apparent as the first campaign focused on B2C communications activities, however, later on realized that there is a business problem with two dimensions. First of all, B2C requires a very simple narrative so that the narrative is understood by the broad target group. The whole world shops at discounters, so you have a very diverse target group. Finding the lowest common (understandable and interesting) denominator is difficult. Therefore, the story "We do circular economy in 5 fields of action and with different companies of our group" would have to be strongly condensed to be understandable. Second of all, B2C also needs to be very well orchestrated. Otherwise, the communication cannot have its effect. This means that communication would have to take place in equal measure in the store at Lidl, at Kaufland, in recycling at PreZero & GreenCycle and in - house production, so that a holistic story could be told. That is practically too complex. Communicators at the headquarters of the Group have to deal with this problem. Back in 2019, the problem got identified. Internal discussions were held and decided that a new campaign had to be developed. However, moving along, B2B can solve these problems. Scholz & Friends can

communicate with the originator Schwarz Gruppe as this name is known in B2B circles, they can tell complex stories as they are understood in B2B circles, and they can tell a holistic story of the circular economy of Schwarz Gruppe in 5 fields with individual examples of each company. Therefore, the task will be to identify the stakeholders and create a stakeholder communication plan that addresses and informs the relevant stakeholders about their efforts while creating awareness in these B2B circles. In addition, prior research on the Schwarz Group and relevant stakeholders will be the basis for the professional product that will be created in the form of a communications plan. The professional product is created with means of marketing & sales management tools. This plan will outline objectives, messages, stakeholders, tactics, and a plan for the roll-out phase of the communication.

Project aim

Using the SMART method, the strategic goal is specific as it provides the company with advice in the form of a stakeholder communication plan that outlines all the key criteria, methods, messages, tactics, and timeframes for the company to use for effective stakeholder communication and engagement. The project goal is associated with a learning outcome that will increase knowledge in international business awareness and communication. This professional product will be based on research conducted through a combination of field and desk research. The strategic aim is measurable by using established KPI's such as website traffic, media relations, stakeholder satisfaction and most importantly policy activation. The strategic goal is achievable by using the research, the tools available in the agency and the resources of the Schwarz Group. The strategic goal is realistic because both the agency team and the company have the resources to implement the strategy using professional experience, tools, and networks. Furthermore, the strategic aim is time-bound and should be discussed and implemented within the next year. The specific research objective is to fill gaps between Schwarz Group's interests and the policy side, and then identify further opportunities to create awareness of plastic reduction and communicate Schwarz Group's efforts, as well as improve relationships with policy stakeholders to be part of the discussions and create benefits regarding plastic reduction in retail. In addition, the research objective is measurable in terms of field and desk research results that lead to further insights into the positioning of the company and the policy landscape. In addition, it is achievable with the help of prior knowledge of research skills acquired during the study, the ability to use the Internet for further clarification, and the help of HZ and in-house coaches. In addition, the research objective is completed by June 6 and is therefore time-bound.

Information gaps

This project focuses on stakeholder management by targeting stakeholder information and building dialogues and communication channels to engage and influence them. Down below, Information gaps show the currently missing information needed to tackle the answer to the main research question, which goes as follows: *What strategic approach can the Schwarz Gruppe use to improve communication among relevant stakeholders to create awareness of its plastic reduction, recycling and circular economy efforts within its organization?* Each information gap has a question that will be answered later. The information gaps are separated into four blocks, namely:

1. Stakeholder Analysis

The first information gap relates to the need to analyze company's structure, filter out most relevant stakeholders and identify their position and interest to those of the Schwarz Gruppe. A relevant stakeholder can be classified by the level of importance to the company, to the extent and how they can be influenced at all, how they can be reached & what media they are using, as well as how precisely the relationship can be established or maintained. For communicating the plastic strategy successfully, the Schwarz Gruppe must actively cultivate and manage relationships with the relevant stakeholder group. This means: The Schwarz Gruppe must align the interests, expectations and goals of the stakeholder group with the goals of their company. At the same time, the stakeholder group has their own unique needs and interests, and the communication strategy must be addressed precisely to

those. They must be communicated on their own terms and given personal attention. This creates an information gap that addresses the importance of research to identify interests and demands as well as channels of communication of the targeted group. This informational gap can then further help structure the communication strategy more precisely. The following question related to the first information gap: Who is the most relevant stakeholder(s) for Schwarz Gruppe?

2. Corporate Positioning

The second information gap is to understand the Schwarz Gruppe's playground in terms of its activities, commitment, vision and future actions, and to examine the company's external positioning in relation to communication activities. For successful stakeholder management, it is necessary to involve each individual in the processes and future plans, as well as to identify the communicative actions currently being carried out. This gap explores previous actions, viewpoints, and engagements related to political endeavors such as associations and organizations. The following question addressed the second information gap: How is the Schwarz Gruppe positioned in terms of communicative activities?

3. Political Environment

The third information gap focuses on the political environment and its landscape. This gap identifies current legislations and regulations in regard to circular economy and plastic reduction efforts to minimize climate change. The gap identifies interest and efforts of the political perspective, with which later on the Schwarz Gruppe can target its messages to. Furthermore, this gap identifies general perception and trend in the current year and showcases how the general interested public would react. The following question related to the third information gap: How does the current political environment look like in regard to plastic legislations?

4. Communication Channels

The fourth and last information gap focuses on the research to find communicative channels of the chosen relevant stakeholders. This gap is connected to gap 1. With an insight of relevant stakeholders, precise channels can be chosen that will later on be used to communicate within the campaign. The following question related to the fourth information gap: What are the communicational channels of the relevant stakeholder(s)?

Research approach

The first information gap is answered by a selection of research methods. Initially, internal desk research is used as a method to collect company insights and to identify relevant stakeholder groups. Internal sources comprise of CSR reports, press releases, a country-stakeholder analysis report and a media relations list. As a second step, external research is used with sources comprised of several CSR reports, company documents, newspaper and review articles and research studies based on plastic and packaging. This method created a basic overview of currently involved and essential stakeholder groups for the research topic. The information was collected and gathered in an excel spreadsheet to organize, describe and filter certain criteria, qualities and level of relevance. Furthermore, field research in form of two semi-structured interviews were held to gain further and in-depth information regarding the company's standpoint of current practices and positioning. With field research, the main objectives of the company were identified. Those two interviews revealed and validated the most relevant stakeholder groups and affirmed the previous made assumptions and analyzations made during desk research. Both interviews can be defined as "non-standard" due to the coordination of open questions that left room for further dialogue and follow-up questions. In this way, a broad and deep understanding of the respondents' perspective could be gained.

The second information gap is conducted by external desk research mainly to define und cluster requirements from the political landscape on the topic of climate regulations and circular economy in

Germany. Identifying pending or planned legislations that promote the implementation of circular economies and efforts to reduce plastic waste in post-consumer and post-industry relations is crucial for this research to map the plans and interests of the political landscape to the plans of the Schwarz Gruppe. To get an overview of the political landscape in terms of efforts and expectations, the study is divided into several parts. Several perspectives are analyzed and studied with statistical data, governmental published data, peer-reviewed articles and books.

The third information gap is conducted by external desk research. Parts of the first information gap are used to back up findings as the third information gap lives off internal and external information found during the stakeholder analysis. With this set of data, new one could be formed to express further insights as to how these stakeholders use channels of communication and in what ways it will be possible to target those. Sets of data, through external and internal desk research were taken from internal published company reports and external published scholar articles.

Research Unit

This research is made for the communications team of the Schwarz Gruppe and is considered as a research unit.

Data Collection

Information gaps are answered using field research in the form of two interviews, internal desk research, and external desk research. Data collection was done through a combination of both methods using sources such as internally published company reports, government published data, interviews and externally published articles. Field research took the head of corporate communications of the Schwarz Gruppe and head of communications at Schwarz Produktion into account. The first interviewee was selected on the recommendation of Scholz & Friends - she is the head of the communications department of the Schwarz Gruppe and the main project manager for the REset Plastic strategy. The second interviewee is the Head of Communications at Schwarz Produktion and was selected on the basis that he is considered to be most involved in political communications activities and has knowledge of the Schwarz Gruppe's commitment to community outreach. Two interviews were sufficient for this research as it deals with a company's perspective towards external influences such as political or economic changes. The interviewees both have an important role in external communication about changes and efforts and therefore provided sufficient data. To promise reliability of finding from interviews, internal desk research was used for backings. As corporate communications are rather a set of activities the company does as a whole and not separately, such as individual employee influence, the method no longer relies of quantity, but quality in what is mentioned by the head of department in this regard. The interview participants were approached by e-mail and asked to be part of an interview. All data was audio recorded.

Data Analysis

Two data sets collected from interviews are analyzed, transcribed and decoded from audio-recordings. The document was structured in two ways, first the question was placed under the category of "focus" and the written responses that were written and copied sentence by sentence into the category of "wording". The interviews were transcribed in an "intelligent" format by transcribing every word but making an interpretation to exclude pauses, status, and filler words and possibly cleaning up grammar (Burnage, 2021). Then, the interviews are coded through a process of reading through the data, applying codes to excerpts, grouping codes by themes, and finally making interpretations. Coding the interviews enabled the researcher to identify synergies between answers of the interviewee and if those answers correspond to the theories that have been analyzed by help of the previously done internal and external literature research. In addition, internal and external research is conducted using

search engines, clustered by relevance, interpreted using logic and analytical thinking to identify patterns, and finally evaluated.

Operationalization

Preliminary literature review is used to give definitions for concepts. Literature on internal company activities as well as political activities are important to answer the main research question. To ensure successful communication between stakeholders, the concept of mutual interest is chosen because it contains the definition of the interests of both sides. One is the political commitment and the other is the political requirements. Furthermore, concepts such as value & attitude are chosen as communication needs to be defined in a certain tone. These two concepts are transformed into measurable indicators such as communication channels and involvement. These indicators later helped to define more clearly the outcome of the research question. All definitions below refer to the Schwarz Group's plastic reduction efforts and current circular economy incentives, policy landscape, or stakeholder engagement.

Concept	Dimension	Subdimension	Indicator	Question
Mutual Interest	Corporate Positioning	Corporate Communication	Media relations	Who are and how do you interact with media representatives?
			Political efforts	Where are you engaged?
			Stakeholder Management	Who are your relevant stakeholders?
			Level of communication	On what level does communication take or will take place?
	Political Environment	Public sector	Perspective as individual	What is the public perception of current political scene?
			Perspective towards corporation	What are the expectations of corporations in the current political scene?
			Current legislations on plastic policies	What are the current legislations on national level?
Value & Attitude	Stakeholder definition	Stakeholder role	What they do	What is your main role?
		Stakeholder goal	What they are interested in	What are your interests?
		Communication channel	How to reach them	What media do you use?
				How do you interact with the private sector?

Reliability & Validity

Semi-structured interviews are chosen for one part of the research on basis of identifying internal company information. Desk research gives an overview, yet interviews specified information gathered and was therefore used. Two interviews are conducted as data collected gave sufficient information to work with. Further interviews would have been repetition of would provide no further new insight. Interviews are conducted for the first part of the research. Those two interviews give insights specific enough to understand how the company is positioning itself to its stakeholders and what it takes for them to encounter and make certain decisions regarding reducing plastic and encouraging a circular economy within their organization. From a reliability point of view, the research method in the form of a semi-structured interview gave the participants the opportunity to provide all relevant insights into the company's activities, approach, tone, and opinion about practices in the political, economic and environmental sphere. Both interviews had the same set of questions and the same space to expand on statements and knowledge. From a validity point of view, both interviews are conducted via an audio format. Giving both participants the same set of setting. Additionally, both interviews had the same set of questions that were able to be reviewed beforehand. Moreover, the entire research was backed up by literature review. In addition, to ensure reliability in the research, objective sources are used, mostly searches are conducted on Google Scholar and specific keywords are used. Validity of desk research is defined by amount and origin of sources used.

Limitation

The research has limitation in regard to field research. With more time, further parts of the company could have been researched such as Public Affairs office for instance. Furthermore, as part of the campaign, however, two more stakeholders should be included, namely, media representatives in the fields food retail, industry, economy, politics and environment and the interested public, which can also be seen as consumers and prospective consumers. Furthermore, the research is limited since the political landscape has many sides that can be targeted, yet the research focuses to the general efforts done at state and EU-level and general public perception of those.

Results

The research findings resulted in, on the one hand, the corporate positioning of the Schwarz Gruppe with regard to its circular economy approach to reducing plastics, on the other hand, with a political analysis and its current requirements, interests and planned legislations with regard to circular economy developments in Germany and, finally, with an analysis of the right channels and methods of communication from the Schwarz Gruppe towards the political landscape. Operationalizing these findings led to questions that are answered by means of semi-structured interviews and desk research. Hence, the results of the findings show interests of the company, interests from political landscape, as well as stakeholders' communicative field of interest.

Stakeholder analysis

A stakeholder(s) is a person or group of persons who are affected directly or indirectly by an organization, project. According to Oxford University, a stakeholder analysis is "an approach, tool, or set of tools for generating knowledge about stakeholders" to gain a thorough understanding of their behaviors, intentions, interests, and interactions. During the implementation process of a project, an analysis is used to assess the direct and indirect influence and resources that stakeholders bring to the table (watermark, 2020). The stakeholder analysis provides a tool to help the Schwarz Gruppe identify and understand their market and the players in it about plastic issues. The national companies - Landesgesellschaften in German - can actively deal with their stakeholders and their political, legal, and social framework conditions and thus develop their basis for successful communication of REset Plastic step by step. For a complex topic such as the handling of plastic, it is of the utmost relevance to consider

country-specific factors and the specific interests of the local target groups. With the analysis undertaken, it became apparent which stakeholder has which involvement and to which extend these can be targeted. As part of the analysis of the first semi-structured interview with the head of corporate communications department, political level is the most wanted target of all. This means, the revealed analyzation showed that several drivers are included in this category.

Positioning of Schwarz Gruppe

Reset Plastic Strategy

The Schwarz Group has specifically positioned itself in the market to express overall sustainable practices and efforts to minimize plastic flows within its processes and to promote a circular economy with all parts of the business. This strategic approach is called competitive positioning. The Schwarz Gruppe is positioning itself on the market in a way, in which it stands out from all other competitors in the food retail industry. Being the only player in Germany that owns dual systems in all 16 states of Germany and therefore winning over a great deal of comparative advantage.

Corporate Communications

For once, the Schwarz Gruppe sells itself not by showcasing how great they are in every aspect, but rather "the attitude towards certain milestones that have been reached or projects that have been successfully completed" (Interviewee 1). The corporate mentality forms from "doing good but talking little about it" (Interviewee 1). Further sources mention that "in a competitive retail marketplace, the Schwarz Gruppe may be ahead of its peers in the pursuit of new areas of cost advantage and consumer preference", with which the company sells its unique selling point (Wiltshire, L.).

Media relations

In the area of media relations, the Schwarz Group is active in sending out press releases and cooperating with press organs. As part of the REset plastics strategy, the company works primarily with magazines that have a focus on food retailing - Lebensmittel zeitung, the economy - Handelsblatt, packaging-related topics - 360 Grad Packaging, recycling-related topics - Recycling Magazin, and local newspapers - Heilbronner Stimme. In addition, the company has invited television stations to film documentaries about its production facilities in the past. Overall, there is sufficient media coverage of its practices and efforts. However, the company is not primarily focused on media relations and "the press as a target group is important for us, but not the main driver of the issue" due to their "reserved" way of communicating their positioning of "commitment" (Interviewee 1). At the same time, related efforts and new practices are reported with portals throughout the scene of food retailing, economy, agriculture and environmental issues (Interviewee 2). Overall, press relations can be found in the individual subsidiaries, acting on their feet and cooperating with media on their own efforts, however, working „with close coordination of the headquarters“ (Interviewee 1). In the end, communications take place towards end-consumers mostly at subsidiary level and communication towards stakeholders involved with politics, economy and relevant stakeholders at corporate group level.

Political efforts

Political work takes place in the offices in Berlin and Brussels on behalf of the Schwarz Group. Targeted positioning in the political field was undertaken with "open talks about pilot projects", such as the "introduction of the Eco-Score at Lidl Germany" (interviewee 1). Furthermore, political engagement was described with "open dialogues with politicians" and as "more open than towards the public" (interviewee 1). The approach looks like a "mixture of direct meetings, (...) a lot of association work...as well as participation in an environmental committee" where circular economy and plastic reduction topics are discussed. There were also meetings with Minister Schulze at the Round Table 2019, where they also tried to push topics together (interviewee 1). In fact, the Schwarz Group "as a member of various external initiatives such as the Supply Chain Initiative, Fairtrade, UTZ, RSPO or Rainforest

Alliance" has also "joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) in fiscal year 2020" and in relation to the REset plastic strategy is "part of the AllenMcArthur Foundation" (interviewee 2). The company also strives for commitment and transparency, which was demonstrated during a visit of the TV station WDR to the production facility. Overall, the Schwarz Group is involved in many NGOs and is part of associations.

Stakeholder management

An important part of managing and ensuring successful communication of a company's efforts and best practices is maintaining good relationships with stakeholders to understand their wants and needs and to be able to share the company's interests with them to achieve lasting relationships and progress. It became clear that due to its size, the Schwarz Group has a lot of influence on the market and therefore influence on important drivers in the system. In addition to important stakeholders such as politicians and end consumers, suppliers also play a major role and "we also have the opportunity to involve them (...) our efforts, especially in terms of sustainable engagement, are also followed by commitments" (interviewee 1). In addition, the Group pays much attention to the efforts made in relation to packaging and new incoming products. The first priority is "the quality of the product", then solutions for environmentally friendly or recyclable packaging are discussed. Through engagement in communication with stakeholders, the company implements efforts. In addition, during the process of changing the packaging of products sold at Kaufland and Lidl, parts of the engagement are closely discussed with the "purchasing department at the table with suppliers, looking at and evaluating how the packaging needs to be designed, quality testing and marketing reasons" (Interviewee 2).

Level of communication

Until now, each subsidiary communicated individually with its target groups at the local level. This means that Lidl and Kaufland, PreZero and Schwarz production facility have their own marketing and PR departments that take care of communication with important drivers. For instance, PreZero was conflicted with "obtaining authorization to operate as a dual system in all federal states", which set priorities to "to set messages on a municipal level" (interviewee 2). There are two dominant levels of communication that the company focuses on and needs to increase in scope, which are the municipal and federal levels. On the one hand, the subsidiaries communicate at the municipal level to address consumers, suppliers or B2B partners regionally and meet their needs. It is very important for the company to engage in the political arena and "make demands" to get results when it comes to changing climate policy and moving the private sector towards sustainable practices across the industry (Interviewee 1). Schwarz Group shows interest and wants to be a player in the circular economy and confirms this by saying, "We are a private company, and we are very interested in creating as much uniformity as possible - across federal and state borders (...) we want to work with more system and standardization" (Interviewee 1). In summary, both the municipal and federal levels are approached by the corporation and the practices for communicating to the public are prevalent there.

Political environment in Germany

Public sector (perspective on individual)

At present, it is more than clear that the German political landscape is confronted with huge generational differences. According to the 2021 German Voter Behaviour Study, the key Green Party - Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and the Free Democratic Party - Freie Demokratische Partei have the best chance of winning the votes of the youngest voters. This also means that the current largest party, the Christian Democratic Party - Christliche Demokratische Partei, is popular with the older generation. In the middle field, the Socialist Party of Germany - Soziale Partei Deutschland is trying to protect its gambling field (Eichhorn, J. S, 2020). In this context, a clear trend is emerging in the political landscape that will determine the future of the country. Especially four months before the upcoming federal elections, the individual parties naturally try to win over as many voters as possible. Especially now it is predominantly important for the parties to engage in the most current requirements of voters. A

conducted study by the European Policy Institute reviews the focus on German voters regarding climate policy. The study goes on and says, only 9% of the 16-74-year-olds believe that the government should be less concerned with climate change. The study goes on by saying that about half respondents believe that, the German government should maintain the same focus, while a third are even convinced it should do more to protect the climate despite the pandemic (Eichhorn, J. S, 2020). This gives an overall understanding that the trend towards a climate friendly political landscape is asked for and expected. Given all the research in this area, it is clear that building on a "positive attitude towards climate action could convince even more people of the urgency of the issue, creating the possibility for effective political action across party lines" (Eichhorn, J. S, 2020). In addition, the study highlights the importance of voters expecting political parties in Germany to demonstrate how they will implement climate neutral measures, rather than just actively addressing them (Eichhorn, J. S, 2020).

Public Sector (perspective towards companies)

A perspective that focuses on how the government can react to the climate crisis, an apparent picture of diversity in opinions arises. After conducting a survey on government climate protection measures, the study shows that regarding individual and corporate behavior, there is disagreement about the way of handlings. Thus, while significantly more of the respondents preferred rewards for climate-friendly behavior (27 percent) on individual level, taxes on climate-damaging behavior (19 percent) and bans (19 percent) were favored for implementation on corporate level. As one of the most popular variations, respondents clearly favor their interests in a mix of different instrumental measures (Eichhorn, J. S, 2020).

Current legislations on plastic policies in Germany

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research, short BMBF, published a report on current laws and regulations on plastics collection and recycling. The report outlines three relevant laws and regulations for this research, namely, the "Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz" (KrWG) - Waste Framework Directive, the "Verpackungsgesetz" (VerpackG) - Packaging law and the "Gewerbeabfallverordnung (GewAbfV) - Commercial Waste Ordinance (Mederake. L, 2020). The aim of the amended Waste Framework Directive is to increase the promotion of the circular economy by avoiding and, above all, recycling waste (BMU, 2017). This law entered into force on the 29th of October 2020 and has since pushed the agenda to improve waste prevention and increase recycling (Bundeskabinet, 2020). Moreover, the law represents the implementation of a European directive. Furthermore, back in the year 1991, the German federal government introduced the packaging regulation (VerpackG) that had the aim to entrust packaging manufacturers and distributors of packaging with the collection and recovery of packaging waste (Mederake. L, 2020). Thereupon, dual systems – systems that collect packaging waste close to the household and that ensure a sophisticated recycling system of those – were introduced. Since then, the law has been amended to prevent "abuse and circumvention of individual regulations," and as of January 1, 2019, the law encompasses a significant increase in the applicable quotas (Mederake. L, 2020). Therefore, the new regulation states, that until the year 2022, licensed and collected plastics packaging must meet a 63 percent rate (BMU). Besides the recycling quotas, differentiated license fees for dual systems were prescribed. The aim was to strongly orientate the systems on ecological criteria such as recycling and sorting properties, the use of recyclates and renewable raw material in production, and thus create an incentive for recycling-friendly and resource-conserving packaging (Mederake. L, 2020). However, the regulation also hides other perspectives that slow down the process of recycling packaging. For example, the environmental associations are dissatisfied with the law because it leads to a conflict between municipalities and the private sector, which cannot agree on the introduction of recycling waste garbage cans. In addition, the environmental associations criticize the competitive business of the dual systems, as it has been shown that it is cheaper instead of more expensive to put packaging into circulation (Bmbf). This is a callout to create incentives. Lastly, the report outlines the last regulation that went into action in April 2017 – the Commercial Waste Ordinance – GewAbfV. This regulation aims to collect commercial waste separately

according to material flows in order to separate and recycle them in a high-quality manner. For this case, the commercial industry must be able to organize a technical sorting system – dual systems - of its plastic waste to ensure high-quality plastic material recovery (BmbF).

Further political requirements for safekeeping the environment of plastics in regard to the above-mentioned laws and regulations are as follows: for one, a program that aims to keep recycling, recover and waste prevention as much as possible. This incentive is called the Abfallvermeidungsprogramm (AVP), which was introduced in the year 2013 (BmbF). Another governmental published review explains that the efforts made for the AVP, is in fact, hard to follow as the “measures to control production and consumption patterns, either quantitatively or qualitatively, are extremely complex and difficult to evaluate in the context of global economic relations”, which however, still encourage political discussions around environmental policy in all grades (Die Abfallrahmenrichtlinie, 2009). The review goes on and explain with a proper compliance of quantitative and qualitative prevention can bring resource and climate protection, as well as minimize environmental risks. Moreover, the state created a plastic bag ban since July 2016 in Germany, ensuring an agreement between ministry of environment and trade association for retailers to commit to no further retailing business of those bags (BmbF). Additionally, labels were introduced in 2015 to reduce micro plastic in detergents and cleaning agents (Deutscher Bundestag 2016). Lastly, the BMU – Bundesministerium für Umwelt introduced a 5-step plan to ensure less plastics and more recycling. This plan was published in 2015 with the name “Nein zur Wegwerfgesellschaft”- meaning, “no to a throw-away society” (Bundesministerium, 2020). The aim of this plan was to activate the potentials of a circular economy and reduce the amounts of single or short-use plastics. There are 5 concrete steps:

1. Avoid unnecessary products and packaging
2. Make packaging and other products more environmentally friendly
3. Strengthen recycling, use more recyclates
4. Avoid plastics in biowaste
5. International commitment against marine litter and for a sustainable use of plastics

This plan is oriented towards informational communication, making sure to create dialogues between manufacturers, retailers, consumers and recyclers (Bundesumweltministerin Schulze, 2020).

Communication channels

Identification

Taken from the stakeholder analysis, three main stakeholder groups are considered.

1. Political stakeholders involved in environmental practices in Germany
2. Media representatives in fields politics, economy, industry, environment
3. Interested public

(Potential) stakeholder in relation to plastic or REset Plastic	Role of the stakeholder in relation to plastic or REset Plastic	Goal / interest of the stakeholder in relation to plastic or REset Plastic	Example channel for interaction
State / Politics / Legislators / Authorities	Provide the (political and legal) framework for the production, use and disposal of plastic products & packaging and monitor compliance (e.g. ban on certain plastic products and packaging, participation in	Protecting the environment and society from plastic risks (e.g. Dual System Germany, misleading advertising, closed-loop life cycle for plastics, mandatory packaging information)	Lobbying Participation in associations, committees and networks Confidential talks Round table

	recycling system, recycling quotas, waste export restrictions)	Exploiting plastic opportunities for the economy and society (e.g. material substitutes) Reconciling the interests of different (national) plastic stakeholders Meeting/achieving EU targets Solving the (national and global) plastic problem Achieving (inter-)national goals (e.g. SDGs)	Policy-business talks initiating/supporting petitions partnership/cooperation with allies in business community
Public / Society / Media	Media inform about plastic (e.g. waste sorting, harmful effects on health) > "Tonality" of reporting Public / society must deal with plastic and the advantages as well as disadvantages	Minimise negative impacts of plastic on society (e.g. uncollected and recycled waste) Maximise positive impacts of plastic on society (e.g. shelf life extension of food) Media: Inform society about plastic and reach many people	Information sessions, events, plenary discussions Interview/contribution Entrepreneurial reporting Participation in associations, committees and networks Issue screening Press release Newsletter
Interested public / Customer	End consumers of plastic products or products in plastic packaging Make purchasing decisions for or against a product (packaging is a deciding factor)	Protected product (e.g. protection from light, water vapour, contamination, damage, animal pests, micro-organisms and loss of aromas) Safe product or packaging (e.g. no	Infosheets Information sessions, events, plenary discussions Surveys Customer meetings Customer magazines

	<p>Influence the success or non-success of a product and influence the range of goods on offer</p>	<p>release of harmful substances)</p> <p>Long shelf life of the product (e.g. vacuum packaging)</p> <p>Product information on packaging (e.g. ingredients)</p> <p>Easy handling of the packaging (e.g. resealability)</p> <p>Environmental compatibility of the product or packaging (e.g. recycled product materials)</p> <p>Resource-saving packaging (e.g. no plastic packaging)</p>	<p>Acknowledgement or complaints (e.g. directly in branch or through social media)</p> <p>Corporate reporting (e.g. annual and sustainability reports)</p> <p>Advertising</p>
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Conclusion

The Schwarz Gruppe and its efforts to become a leader in food retailing by recycling plastics from post-industrial waste and promoting circular systems within its organization have proven to be solution oriented. In order to improve communication activities between the company and its stakeholder groups, the company's corporate positioning was analyzed, current policy practices and efforts on climate policy, plastic reduction and circular economy were broken down, stakeholder groups were analyzed and their potential communication channels categorized with the aim to identify and understand patterns in which an effective communication in terms of criteria, methods, messages and tactics can be carried out.

Overall, the results show that the positioning of the Schwarz Gruppe is active in terms of their communication activities, but still has potential to engage more frequently and with the right target group. For example, company language regarding their engagement in their plastics strategy is still very mild and reserved. Media outreach was done by sending out press releases on best practices and milestones, as well as organized tours of production sites to show transparency and progress. Especially since each subsidiary communicates on its own, there is an opportunity that the Group should take to communicate the plastics strategy in all names and more frequently. The Group is also involved in many associations and NGOs, local organizations and initiatives such as the Global Sustainable Development Goals and the McArthur Foundation. They all still have the potential to make these efforts more topical, especially since their investments contribute to all aspects of innovation for plastic reduction, recycling and sustainable packaging design. Moreover, because the group has a large share of the market, its influence on stakeholders is enormous. They engage, involve and inform as part of organizational changes or plans by educating, informing and working closely with stakeholders. In addition, communication occurs at both levels, local and national. At the local level through the subsidiaries and at the national level through their public affairs offices in Berlin and Brussels.

The research has shown that a general understanding of the trend toward climate-friendly policies is in demand and expected in German society. Moreover, a positive attitude toward climate protection could convince even more people of the urgency of the issue and thus create the possibility for effective political action across party lines. With this in mind, the federal government and its ministries have launched legislation to promote plastic reduction in industry and encourage the private sector to implement circular economies. For example, there is the Act to Promote the Circular Economy in Industry, the Packaging Act for the collection and recycling of packaging waste, and the Commercial Waste Ordinance for the separate collection of commercial waste according to material streams in order to separate and recycle it in a high-quality manner. For all these laws, the Group can show examples of implementation and already has potential to communicate this frequently. The overall assumption in the political landscape is that efforts are being made at national and EU level, but that these laws still have gaps for the private sector and are generally difficult to implement. Experts say they need clear instructions and realistic targets to implement such measures. With all that said, there is a 5-step government plan that is highly relevant to the private sector and a good starting point for the group to look at.

The main result of the research was the identification of the right stakeholder groups to address in the communication strategy. The results were produced after conducting interviews, internal and external secondary research. Communication takes place at all levels and towards all stakeholder groups. For example, consumers are addressed at the local level and in the subsidiaries, stakeholders such as suppliers are informed internally within the organization, and political stakeholders are in contact with the public affairs offices in Berlin and Brussels. The analysis shows further stakeholders and their interests and engagement in the cause. The overall result of the analysis shows that political stakeholders, especially German EU politicians, can be the target to start communicating towards. Their channel of communication are classic lobbying activities, participation in associations, committees and networks, conduct confidential talks, organize round tables, policy-business talks, initiating and supporting petitions and build partnerships/cooperation with allies in the business community. To engage more towards the media, channels such as Information sessions, events, plenary discussions,

Interviews and contribution can be organized, distribution of entrepreneurial reporting, issue screening, press releases and newsletters. In order to fulfill the third level of stakeholder, being the interested public or consumers, communicative activities such as info sheets, Information sessions, events, plenary discussions, surveys, customer meetings, customer magazines, acknowledgement or complaints (e.g. directly in branch or through social media), corporate reporting (e.g. annual and sustainability reports) and most importantly advertising will reach those.

Overall, the research produced sufficient and clear results. Although this research is limited in terms of field research with two interviews, the main research objective was met. Due to organizational and time interferences, no further interviews could be scheduled. Therefore, the scope and utility of this study can and should be significantly expanded in future research. All in all, the Schwarz Gruppe should engage with the business community to gain allies, as well as actively participate in conversations between policymakers and the business community to gain a place in discussions, and actively engage in associations and other initiatives such as events to communicate their efforts. The common denominator between the two sides describes an interest in creating appropriate and actionable legislation at the national and EU level to promote plastic reduction and the circular economy. Example: If the company expands with its plastic reduction innovation, it will create new jobs. Both the private and public sectors would benefit from enabling legislation to guide these efforts, as well as funding.

Recommendations

Based on this research, the project aim is formulated with means of recommendations for the Schwarz Gruppe to use and build into their communication strategy to promote and showcase their efforts of the REset Plastic strategy.

The overall idea is to create a stakeholder concept. This stakeholder engagement concept focuses on the communication activities towards political stakeholders to build media coverage and build brand image for consumers/interested public to recognize you.

Presence on channels of Schwarz Gruppe:

1. **Expand website of www.reset-plastic.com** (For stakeholders, the homepage serves as a platform for in-depth information on the various fields of action in the circular economy)
 - a. Change it to a “hub” and add a more “emotional” perspective to the currently existing content, for example, by giving the people behind the plastic strategy a crucial role in communicating the content
 - b. Make it as a central digital access point of information
 - c. Add a newsroom to inform stakeholders about activities of separate divisions, press releases, informational content likes films, videos, graphics
 - d. Add a graphic that shows all reductions/savings of all new added products (to show progress in plastic reduction)
 - e. Create newsletter alerts for media relations
2. **Create a magazine**
 - a. Should take up different formats (interviews, reports, graphics, etc.) and be created serially
 - b. This magazine addresses the topic more broadly and makes it exploratively accessible to stakeholders
 - i. Why is plastic a/not a problem? Who is the Schwarz Group? What is special about the Schwarz Group's approach? What are concrete activities in the fields of action? What are the individual solutions of the divisions?
3. **Enhance social media activities**
 - a. Create accounts for Instagram and twitter
 - b. Introduce and further use #resetplastic
 - c. Content should focus on company-relevant content not only REset plastic
 - d. Content from the hub can be prepared for social media (e.g. milestones, reports from the fields of action or campaign motifs)

Following communication activities:

1. **Media placements**
 - a. Placement in stakeholder and public media outlets on digital formats as well as TV and radio (Spiegel, Süddeutsche, Handelsblatt etc.)

Partnership/cooperation:

1. **Initiate a study done by a research institute**
 - a. Germany (eventually EU-wide with presence of Schwarz Gruppe) is examined and compared with among others with regard to the circular economy
 - b. The focus of study are topics of economy, resource conservation and independence
 - c. The aim is to compare the status of implementation as well as the potentials of implementing the circular economy

- d. Circular economy is underrepresented in climate change plans of Germany, and needs attention brought to politicians, businesses and society
- e. With this study, Schwarz Gruppe can position itself as driver and expert in the field
- f. The study should be accessible for the German government and institutes
- g. The study should receive press relevancy (press conference) by:
 - i. Presentation of study with representatives of the Schwarz Gruppe as the client, representatives of the divisions (especially the recyclables divisions) as experts from the field, and representatives of the research institute to provide insights into the study design
 - ii. Give interviews
 - iii. Be present at events
- h. The study provides content for press relations, stakeholders and own channels (hub, magazine and social media)
- i. Write Politikbrief (policy letters)
 - i. Contains relevant results of study and targets directly politicians

2. Create an initiative/competition

- a. The REsearch department of Reset Plastic seeks for cooperations with start-ups, NGOs & other companies that are leader in circular economies (at best that represent all 5 actions done at Reset plastic – REsearch, REdesign, REuse, REcycle, REMove,
- b. The best innovations or actions towards circular economies win
- c. Partnership with municipal umbrella organizations (kommunale Spitzenverbände) that search for most recycling municipalities in Germany to award them. It is important to have presence of Lidl and Kaufland in these cities

4. Be part in the association Klimaschutz Unternehmen - Climate Protection and Energy Efficiency Group of German Business

- a. Can be by working together with ministries of environment, economy and climate policies and build relationships with environmental politicians

5. Show initiative by supporting Paris Climate Agreement

6. Participate in Think Tanks

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Appendices

Appendix A: Stakeholder Analysis

Annex 1 – Stakeholder Analysis

(Potential) stakeholder in relation to plastic or REset Plastic	Role of the stakeholder in relation to plastic or REset Plastic	Goal / interest of the stakeholder in relation to plastic or REset Plastic	Example channel for interaction
Customers	<p>End consumers of plastic products or products in plastic packaging</p> <p>Make purchasing decisions for or against a product (packaging is a deciding factor)</p> <p>Influence the success or non-success of a product and influence the range of goods on offer</p>	<p>Protected product (e.g. protection from light, water vapour, contamination, damage, animal pests, micro-organisms and loss of aromas)</p> <p>Safe product or packaging (e.g. no release of harmful substances)</p> <p>Long shelf life of the product (e.g. vacuum packaging)</p> <p>Product information on packaging (e.g. ingredients)</p> <p>Easy handling of the packaging (e.g. resealability)</p> <p>Environmental compatibility of the product or packaging (e.g. recycled product materials)</p> <p>Resource-saving packaging (e.g. no plastic packaging)</p>	<p>Infosheets</p> <p>Information sessions, events, plenary discussions</p> <p>Surveys</p> <p>Customer meetings</p> <p>Customer magazines</p> <p>Acknowledgement or complaints (e.g. directly in branch or through social media)</p> <p>Corporate reporting (e.g. annual and sustainability reports)</p> <p>Advertising</p>
Suppliers (product manufacturer, packaging manufacturer, importer, forwarder, warehouse keeper)	<p>Manufacture, store and deliver plastic products or products in plastic packaging</p> <p>Develop new products and packaging (e.g. alternative or reduced material use) together with retailers.</p>	<p>Protected product (e.g. protection against mechanical stresses such as vibrations and shocks)</p> <p>Transportable product (e.g. stable packaging, stackability, easy handling)</p> <p>Low (legal) product and packaging requirements (e.g. packaging ordinance, recycling quota)</p>	<p>Supplier/Stakeholder Dialogue</p> <p>Round Table</p> <p>Workshop</p> <p>Supplier assessment</p> <p>Standardized survey (feedback questionnaire) or interviews</p>

	recycling quotas, waste export restrictions)	<p>Reconciling the interests of different (national) plastic stakeholders</p> <p>Meeting/achieving EU targets</p> <p>Solving the (national and global) plastic problem</p> <p>Achieving (inter-)national goals (e.g. SDGs)</p>	
Employees / Works Council / Trade Unions	<p>Main contact person for customers in branches (also regarding plastic products or products in plastic packaging)</p> <p>Advise on, promote and sell plastic products and products in plastic packaging</p> <p>Deal with plastic products and products in plastic packaging on a daily basis</p> <p>Are the external representative or figurehead (e.g. employer branding).</p>	<p>Pay and working hours: Avoid or adequately compensate for the (additional) costs of offering, selling and, if necessary, taking back plastic products or products in plastic packaging.</p> <p>Working conditions: Safe product(s) or packaging (e.g. no release of harmful substances)</p> <p>Economically successful and respected employer (e.g. position as responsible company through REset Plastic)</p>	<p>Works council meetings</p> <p>Staff meetings</p> <p>Staff meetings of the management</p> <p>Information sessions, events, plenary discussions</p> <p>Workshop / training / further education</p> <p>Intranet messages and staff magazines</p> <p>Notices and information posters</p>
Manager / Branch Manager	<p>Implement the strategic guidelines on plastic in the individual branches</p> <p>Within their scope of action, set their own accents with regard to the handling of plastic products or products in plastic packaging in order to stand out from the competition</p>	<p>Minimise the amount of plastic waste in the branch (e.g. replace plastic with alternative materials)</p> <p>Positioning as a resource-conserving branch (e.g. lighthouse projects on the topic of plastic, transparency offensive) in order to stand out from other branches and competitors</p>	<p>Management feedback meetings</p> <p>Internal project meetings</p>

		Use plastic to minimise costs and maximise profit (in individual branches)	
Competitor / Competition	<p>For the most part, they also have a plastic strategy and try to convince customers of their merits</p> <p>Look to competitors for guidance on how to deal with plastic or serve as a role model ("good practices")</p>	<p>Stand out from the competition in a positive way when dealing with plastics</p> <p>Convince customers of their own resource-saving or plastic-minimising behaviour</p> <p>Learn how to deal with plastic from competitors (e.g. good practices) and develop ideas further</p>	<p>Competition analysis/observation</p> <p>Exchange with industry experts</p>
Environmental organisations (NGOs and NPOs)	Advocate for the protection of the customer, society and the environment from plastic risks	<p>(Emotional) education of the public about plastic risks</p> <p>Writing petitions on the plastic issue</p> <p>Calling for boycotts of certain plastic products or products in plastic packaging or from certain retailers</p> <p>Collecting and disposing of plastic waste from the environment</p> <p>Promoting a (global) circular economy</p> <p>Fundraising to finance plastic projects</p>	<p>Stakeholder dialogue</p> <p>Cooperation in associations, committees and networks</p> <p>Cooperation with consumer and environmental organisations</p> <p>Information sessions, events, plenary discussions</p> <p>Workshops</p> <p>Press releases</p> <p>Corporate reporting (e.g. sustainability report)</p>
Industry initiatives and associations	<p>Represent the political and economic interests of plastics and related companies</p> <p>Represents plastics companies and related businesses to the public and builds reputation/industry image</p>	<p>Economic freedom and few requirements / regulators</p> <p>Steer regulations in the sense of plastic companies and related businesses</p> <p>Promote circular economy, resource efficiency, innovation and the general availability of plastics</p>	Membership and involvement in initiatives and associations

		<p>Economical, cost-minimising packaging (e.g. redesign of packaging)</p> <p>Efficient packaging take-back systems (e.g. Duales System Deutschland, deposit on reusable packaging)</p> <p>Knowledge transfer from upstream and downstream stages of the value chain (e.g. cooperation with retailers in the development of new packaging)</p> <p>Promotional and sales-promoting packaging (e.g. through colourful design and special shape)</p>	<p>Supplier discussion (face-to-face)</p> <p>Training, further education</p> <p>Participation in associations, committees, and networks</p>
Public / Society / Media	<p>Media inform about plastic (e.g. waste sorting, harmful effects on health) > "Tonality" of reporting</p> <p>Public / society must deal with plastic and the advantages as well as disadvantages</p>	<p>Minimise negative impacts of plastic on society (e.g. uncollected and recycled waste)</p> <p>Maximise positive impacts of plastic on society (e.g. shelf life extension of food)</p> <p>Media: Inform society about plastic and reach many people</p>	<p>Information sessions, events, plenary discussions</p> <p>Interview/contribution</p> <p>Entrepreneurial reporting</p> <p>Participation in associations, committees and networks</p> <p>Issue screening</p> <p>Press release</p> <p>Newsletter</p>
State / Politics / Legislators / Authorities	<p>Provide the (political and legal) framework for the production, use and disposal of plastic products & packaging and monitor compliance (e.g. ban on certain plastic products and packaging, participation in recycling system,</p>	<p>Protecting the environment and society from plastic risks (e.g. Dual System Germany, misleading advertising, closed-loop life cycle for plastics, mandatory packaging information)</p> <p>Exploiting plastic opportunities for the economy and society (e.g. material substitutes)</p>	<p>Lobbying</p> <p>Participation in associations, committees and networks</p> <p>Confidential talks</p> <p>Round table</p> <p>Policy-business talks</p>

		<p>Raise awareness of the positive properties of plastic and its positive contributions to sustainable development</p> <p>Further development of industry-uniform (technical) standards and regulations</p>	
Science	Research and development on plastics	<p>Development and research of innovative plastic technologies (e.g. recycling processes) and behaviours</p> <p>Dissemination of scientific plastic results to or influence on political, economic and social actors (teaching)</p> <p>Contribution to the global plastics problem through the setting of scientific goals and the application of scientific methods</p> <p>Interdisciplinary approaches to solutions</p> <p>Funding of research and development</p>	<p>University and research cooperation</p> <p>Cooperation in associations, committees and networks</p> <p>Technical presentations</p>

SCHWARZ



Positionspapier Einweg-Mehrweg

Hintergrundinformation

- Vor dem Hintergrund des vermehrten Aufkommens von Plastikabfällen und -rückständen in der Umwelt, insbesondere in den Meeren, gibt es zahlreiche Initiativen von Umweltverbänden und aus der Politik, die in diesem Zusammenhang auch ein kritisches Augenmerk auf Einweg-Plastikflaschen richten. Ein Bündnis von Umweltorganisationen hat beispielsweise Anfang Februar 2020 15 Forderungen an die Bundesregierung übergeben, in denen generell eine Ausweitung von Mehrwegsystemen verlangt wird. Explizit wird die Bundesregierung aufgefordert, das seit 2019 im Verpackungsgesetz vorgesehene Ziel einer Mehrwegquote bei Getränkeverpackungen von 70 % gesetzlich verpflichtend zu machen. In einem 2018 veröffentlichten „5-Punkte Plan für weniger Plastik und mehr Recycling“ fordert auch das Bundesumweltministerium eine Stärkung von Mehrwegsystemen.
- Das Bundesland Hessen hat, unterstützt durch das Bundesland Baden-Württemberg, am 14.02.2020 einen Entschließungsantrag in das Plenum des Bundesrates eingebracht. Dieser fordert, die Befandung von PET-Einwegflaschen und Getränkedosen auszuweiten und unabhängig vom Inhalt der Verpackung geltend zu machen. Der Antrag wurde in den Umwelt- und Wirtschaftsausschuss zur weiteren Bearbeitung verwiesen.
- Als Schwarz Gruppe haben wir in Deutschland ein einzigartiges Recyclingsystem aufgebaut, mit dem bei Lidl und Kaufland zurückgegebene PET-Flaschen für Mineralwasser und Erfrischungsgetränke wieder zu neuen PET-Flaschen weiterverarbeitet werden. Mit unseren Kreislaufflaschen sehen wir uns auf ökologischer Augenhöhe mit den immer stärker individualisierten Mehrwegflaschen. Deshalb treten wir dafür ein, dass Einweg- und Mehrwegsysteme in Deutschland weiter nebeneinander existieren können und rein nach ökobilanziellen Kriterien bewertet werden. Darüber hinaus sind wir davon überzeugt, dass das Einwegpfandsystem mit einer Rücklaufquote von über 98 % durch eine Ausweitung auf bisher unbefandete PET-Flaschen und Dosen weiter gestärkt werden kann. PET aus Pfandrücknahmesystemen ist ein wichtiger, lebensmitteltauglicher Kunststoff und könnte so noch stärker als bisher in Kreisläufen genutzt werden.

Was wir tun

- Wir schließen Kreisläufe. Die Schwarz Gruppe ist das erste Unternehmen, das sämtliche Schritte des „bottle-to-bottle“ Recycling unter einem Dach vereint. In den Pfandautomaten von Lidl und Kaufland werden täglich mehrere Millionen Flaschen zurückgenommen. Diese werden in drei unternehmenseigenen Recycling- und Kunststoffwerken zu Rezyklat verarbeitet, das vollumfänglich zur Herstellung neuer Flaschen eingesetzt wird.
- Unter dem Dach der Schwarz Produktion ist in den letzten Jahren ein Produktionsnetzwerk von fünf Getränkewerken in Deutschland entstanden, in denen unsere Getränke-Eigenmarken

SCHWARZ

Positionspapier Novelle Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetz



Hintergrundinformation

- Am 12.02.2020 hat das Bundeskabinett den Gesetzentwurf zur Novelle des Kreislaufwirtschaftsgesetzes (KrWG) des Bundesumweltministeriums auf den Weg gebracht. Die Novelle verfolgt primär das Ziel, Vorgaben aus der EU-Abfallrahmenrichtlinie und der EU-Einwegplastikrichtlinie in deutsches Recht umzusetzen. Aus Sicht der Schwarz Gruppe sind insbesondere die Vorgaben zur Obhutspflicht, zur erweiterten Herstellerverantwortung und zu Verordnungsermächtigungen für mögliche Produktverbote kritisch zu betrachten. Positiv hervorzuheben ist, dass das Gesetz die Rahmenbedingungen für ein Recyclinglabel schafft und die Vorgaben für die öffentliche Beschaffung zum Einkauf von Gütern mit Rezyklatanteil stärkt.

Was wir tun

- Weniger Plastik – geschlossene Kreisläufe. Das ist unsere Vision. Die Schwarz Gruppe hat 2018 die gruppenweite Plastikstrategie REset Plastic ins Leben gerufen. Ziele dieser Strategie sind bis 2025 20 % weniger Plastik zu verwenden und die Verpackungen unserer Eigenmarken maximal recyclingfähig zu machen. Als Unternehmensgruppe vereinen wir alle für eine Kreislaufwirtschaft relevanten Akteure unter einem Dach: Produktion, Duales System, Handel, Entsorgung und Rezyklatproduktion. Wir sind stolz darauf, dass Kreislaufwirtschaft Teil unserer DNA ist.
- Wir gestalten Verpackungen ökologisch. Im Rahmen unserer Plastikstrategie haben wir uns 2019 dem Global Commitment der Ellen MacArthur Foundation angeschlossen und uns verpflichtet bis 2025 20 % Rezyklate in den Verpackungen unserer Eigenmarken einzusetzen. Auch das Ziel der maximalen Recyclingfähigkeit unserer Eigenmarkenverpackungen trägt dazu bei, dass Verpackungen zu Rezyklaten verarbeitet und wieder in den Kreislauf eingebracht werden können.
- Mit entsprechenden Logos auf Eigenmarkenverpackungen zum Einsatz von Rezyklat, Verpackungseinsparung und Recyclingfähigkeit ermöglichen Lidl und Kaufland Kundinnen und Kunden eine bewusste Wahl von Produkten mit optimierter Verpackung.
- Wir ergreifen Maßnahmen, um Retouren zu verhindern und haben mehrstufige Prozesse für den Umgang mit Retouren und Restanten etabliert. Gemeinsam mit dem Hohenstein Institut arbeiten wir in diesem Sinne an einer Harmonisierung von Kleidergrößen und bieten Kunden unseres Lidl-Onlineshops Größenrechner an, die die Auswahl der richtigen Kleidergröße unterstützen. Für die Retouren, die uns bei Lidl und Kaufland erreichen, haben wir einen Analyse- und Klassifizierungsprozess etabliert, der das Ziel verfolgt, die retournierte Ware wieder verkaufsfähig aufzubereiten. Restanten aus Aktionen werden, wenn möglich, gelagert und zu einem wiederholten Werbetermin erneut angeboten. Alternativ wird Werbeware nach Ablauf der Aktion zu reduzierten Preisen verkauft oder bei Sonderverkäufen angeboten.

Appendix D: Questionnaire on B2B Communication Activities

Questionnaire on B2B Communication of the REset Plastics Strategy

The following survey is about the topic of B2B communication. In the context of my final thesis I dealt with the research question:

What strategic approach can the Schwarz Group use to improve communication among relevant stakeholders to create awareness of its plastic reduction, recycling and circular economy efforts within its organization?

Thank you very much for your participation!

Question 1:

At what levels does the Schwarz Group communicate with stakeholders?

- a. Does communication take place at the municipal and federal levels?
- b. If so, how?

Question 2:

What could be common denominators for political stakeholders?

Question 3:

How do you communicate with political actors?

- a. With which associations, political actors and authorities is SG in contact?
- b. What do you pay most attention to in communication?
- c. What are the measures/methods?
- d. Is lobbying being done?

Question 4:

How is/can the Schwarz Gruppe communicate on a municipal level?

Question 5:

How did the last stakeholder survey go and what are the results on the relevant stakeholders in relation to the plastics strategy?

- a. What were the most represented interests?

Question 6:

What analysis have been undertaken in terms of stakeholder analysis?

Question 7:

Would it be possible to obtain contact details of stakeholders (political actors and media representatives) to conduct further interviews?

Appendix E: Interview Questions Decoded and Organized by Theme Interviewee 1

Interviewpassage	Coding (Concept)
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Potential from the company's point of view to be more strongly built up in terms of communications</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>It's actually more of an entrepreneur's attitude at Schwarz Gruppe. You could also call it a Swabian mentality: we do a lot of good but talk little about it. But that is already our statement that runs through our company. It is currently within a good and reasonable framework, but it is not our goal to communicate everything about every test, every pilot. It's more about our attitude towards certain milestones that have been reached or projects that have been successfully completed. When we roll out topics nationwide, those are communication moments for us. Because then it is more in line with our corporate mentality.</p> <p>The USP of our group is that we can cover every level and thus close the loop. Originally, each subsidiary acted alone, which was changed by REset.</p> <p>The REset logo was established for all divisions, on posters and in campaigns. Overarching as the sender of the Schwarz Group not communicated to the end customer. Communication to the end customer is the responsibility of the divisions, but with very close coordination.</p> <p>In the direction of politics, there is only the image of the Schwarz Group as the sender, and in the direction of the media, both the Schwarz Group and the individual divisions. It is decided whether or not to work together on the issue. Suppliers and customers also per division.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Most relevant stakeholders currently for the Schwarz Group in relation to the REset plastics strategy</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>It's actually the case that, partly as a background, when the plastics strategy was launched, it was very strongly driven by public affairs (SG's headquarters in Berlin). And there was also a very strong approach that you have a USP with what you do there as a group of companies and should therefore also use that and should</p>

	<p>pay more in there to even political jurisdiction, political issues that either come to the forefront or are generally placed positively in the direction of politics.</p> <p>But then that changed a bit, because it became clear who the drivers are, the drivers are Lidl & Kaufland. And what is the most important thing for the two divisions? - Sales & getting customers to buy the products. In other words, it really depends on which phase of the project we are in, and sometimes we focus on politics and sometimes on customers. But those are clearly the most important drivers. And something like suppliers, we are a big company, we have many different suppliers but we also have the possibility to engage them. Our efforts, especially in terms of sustainable commitment, are followed by obligations. That's why suppliers are nobody for whom we have to put in an incredible amount of work - how do we convince them, how do we get them behind our strategy. But of course we also have to make sure how and where information flows. That they know what's important to us, and so on. There was also a detailed guide for suppliers on how to switch to packaging, so suppliers are a target group for us, but not the most relevant one. At the end of the day, they are the ones who implement it, so they are very relevant, but not the ones where we have to invest a lot of work to convince them.</p> <p>And press as a target audience is important for us but not number one driver of the issue. That is also something with which we want to position our commitment, but where we are simply not the most communicative in the company in general. We tend to act with more restraint, and that's why it's a bit more difficult. So our main target groups are politicians and customers. Of course, the depth and complexity of the issue of REset Plastics is something that is of</p>
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	<p>greater interest to the general public, but we nevertheless have the feeling that various studies show that it is an issue that interests the masses, and where everyone in the study tends to say that they would buy packaging with less plastic. In reality, however, this is not the case.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Communication with political actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is paid attention to most - Measures/methods - At what level is communication with political actors most important? 	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>In the direction of politics, we are almost a little more open, there is also sometimes talk of a pilot project or now the Eco-score is being introduced at Lidl Germany, where it has also been said that this is now being piloted, but talks are already being held with politicians. In summary, communication with politicians is almost more open than with the general public.</p> <p>It's a mix of direct meetings that take place, but also a lot of association work. We are in the ABVU (Allgemeiner Bürgerverein Urdenbach E.V.), in the HDE (Handelsverband Deutschland) - there is also an environmental committee where the topics are always discussed, there were some meetings with Minister Schulze at the table in 2019, where there was also a joint attempt to advance topics. The result was the premature halt to the sale of disposable carrier bags. There is a lot of association work going on, but also direct exchange at certain points.</p> <p>As a B2B approach, it makes most sense to communicate at the federal level. For the Schwarz Group, it is very important that they get involved and make demands. It has been shown, in Corona times, we are a private company and we are very much interested in creating as much uniformity as possible - across federal and state borders. And that's why, we tend to act at the federal level. We don't want this patchwork quilt. We want to work with more system and standardization.</p>

	<p>Sometimes it is necessary to communicate and act on a local or municipal level. An example would be: in Tübingen, the question was only Mehrweg in the to-go area, do we also have to implement something in our branches? And how does it become relevant again when we do local and municipal tests, that we then also involve the regional press and thus get in touch with them. That happens, but the focus is definitely at the federal level.</p> <p>Contacting politicians is in the hands of the office in Berlin and Brussels.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Levels of communication (local & state)</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>On the municipal level, relevant for the Schwarz Group is a single business model, that rather concerns the business of PreZero. We have a dual system - disposal and recycling companies. And they were very busy, especially last year, in obtaining authorization to operate as a dual system in all federal states. And that's why it's important to set messages on a municipal level. Otherwise, our main focus is already increasingly on federal policy. We have our headquarters near the capital of Baden-Württemberg, and a colleague from the Public Affairs Office in Berlin has already been to an environmental committee meeting in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. This is all very selective, but it is at the federal level.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Media representatives of the SG</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>We have many press releases, yet there hasn't been a press conference here in a long time. Press background talks have not been held either, due to the Corona situation, as the Schwarz Group stands as the winner. That's why communication has been dialed down. More not to show how great and successful they are.</p> <p>Most/relevant media outlets are: Lebensmittel Zeitung, Handelsblatt, Heilbronner Stimme, 360 Grad Packaging,</p>

	<p>Recycling Magazin. WDR conducted a tour of the plant.</p> <p>Maybe times good to see who has reported there in recent times and contact them.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Address to politicians and associations</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>Addressing is not in our hands, that is actually the responsibility of the public affairs office in Berlin and Brussels.</p> <p>Schwarz-Produktion, which also produces the Saskia bottle, for example, and is specifically involved with disposable beverage bottles and plastic recycling, is very active.</p>

Appendix F: Interview Questions Decoded and Organized by Theme Interviewee 2

Interview passage	Coding (Concept)
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Potential from the company's point of view to be more strongly built up in terms of communications</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>We do everything together with Lidl, which means we produce bottles and actually recycle them again. We don't have that kind of cycle otherwise. All the other packaging that we use, first of all, is not from us (so we buy in) and they are not recycled by us. That doesn't mean they're not recycled, but they're not part of the Schwarz Group's circular economy. They are designed to be recycled as much as possible - which is also a goal of the REset strategy, circular economy. The packaging we use, including apartments, is 99% fully recyclable. The Schwarz Group's goal is 100% recyclability of our packaging and products. This is already the case with the PET bottle. Chocolate packaging, for example, is already designed to be packaged with only one layer that can be recycled again. But, of course, it goes into the yellow garbage can at the consumer's end, and then only at some point is it switched to PreZero - it's hard to track, of course. It depends on the region. But the current case law/legislation is that this packaging in the yellow bag cannot become food packaging again because it cannot be sorted or collected as well. Unlike PET bottles, which are collected separately and reprocessed and reused.</p> <p>Schwarz production, which also produces the Saskia bottle, for example, and are very active in associations specifically with disposable beverage bottles and plastic recycling.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Most relevant stakeholders currently for the Schwarz Group in relation to the REset plastics strategy</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>Our purchasing department sits around the table with suppliers and discusses, looks at, and evaluates how the packaging needs to be designed for A. product</p>

	<p>quality and marketing reasons, so it has to feel good and look good, etc.</p> <p>Among other things, we work closely with associations, e.g. Schwarz Produktion is a member of various external initiatives such as the Supply Chain Initiative, Fairtrade, UTZ, RSPO or Rainforest Alliance. In addition, the Schwarz Group, which includes Schwarz Produktion, joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) in fiscal 2020. This Foub. As part of the REset Plastic strategy, we are also a member of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Together with Schwarz Produktion and the other business units, the Schwarz Group submitted a declaration of accession to the Science Based Target Initiative in August 2020. In addition, Schwarz Produktion intends to join the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS), an initiative that promotes the sustainable use of water as a natural resource.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Communication with political actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is paid attention to most - Measures/methods - At what level is communication with political actors most important? 	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>Political actors are addressed in Berlin and Brüssels. On some projects, we do PR on pilot projects and communicate these efforts. Mostly done on municipal level. As well as the communication done separately from Lidl, Kaufland, Green Cycle, PreZero and the Produktion.</p>
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Levels of communication (local & state)</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>The Schwarz Group will be operating together with the dual systems in 16 German states from January 1. Even before that, the Schwarz Group had worked together with municipal and local value disposers. Since PreZero communicates strongly in the social networks, and among other things also the respective divisions Lidl and Kaufland we have at present already so some communication at the running on local level.</p>
Focus:	Phrasing:

Media representatives of the SG	As of now, we have several media outlets specifically responding to the plastic issue. Among others, Lebensmittel Zeitung, Handelsjournal, Lebensmittel Praxis, Ech024, Business Insider, Sauerland Kurier, Ruhr24, Handelsblatt, Wirtschaftswoche.
<p>Focus:</p> <p>Address to politicians and associations</p>	<p>Phrasing:</p> <p>This work is done at the offices in Berlin and Brüssel that focus on public affairs activities. These activities are out of our hands and are closely coordinated with the communication department of Schwarz Gruppe</p>



Graduation Internship International Business '20/'21

Self-assessment Research Justification Report and Professional Product(s)

Student name: Lisa Jung

Date of assessment: 31.05.2021

GRADE: 8.5 (scale 1-10)

KNOCK-OUT CRITERIA

PASS X / NO PASS

The criteria:

- The activities during the Graduation Internship have been performed with a large degree of autonomy and complexity in an international business context;
- A Plan of Approach has been submitted throughout the Graduation Internship with a *pass* given by the HZ supervisor;
- The Research Justification Report has a front page, table of contents, page numbering, chapter and paragraph numbering, a proper file name and everything else expected from a professional report;
- The scope, structure and length of the Research Justification Report and Professional Product(s) are in accordance with the agreements;
- The communication style of the Research Justification Report and Professional Product(s) is objective, precise, logical, careful and clear;
- The language of the Research Justification Report and Professional Product(s) is correct, attractive and acceptable;

Motivation for the assessment:

All activities were performed well, with an angle of independent work, challenging in many cases, and with the experience of a complex situation, *such as a customer proposal that is difficult to implement and trying to find solutions as quickly as possible*. A plan of approach was submitted to the HZ supervisor and received a "Pass". The justification includes a title page, table of contents, page numbering, chapter and paragraph numbering, correct file name and everything else expected from a professional report; all required parts such as scope, structure and length have been considered, the communication style is objective, precise, logical and clear, the language used is correct, appealing and acceptable.

See next page.

PART I: DOING IN-COMPANY RESEARCH

Preliminary Research

1. The company and its product/service have been explored using a thorough company analysis;
2. The business problem has been explored using a thorough problem analysis addressing at least the 6W questions;
3. One or more possible solutions for the business problem have been addressed and linked to one or more Professional Product(s) to be delivered corresponding to one of the five Working and Management Tools (Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management, Organisation & People and Business Innovation);
4. The possible solutions result in a SMART project aim;
5. Knowledge that currently lacks to underpin the solution(s) for the business problem has been identified, stating the lack of knowledge in detailed information gaps.

Research Approach

6. An adequate research design is chosen, described and justified, addressing -if applicable- per information gap the research approach, the units of analysis, the process of data collection & analysis, the operationalisation and reliability & validity;
7. The chosen research approach is effective and leads systematically to the knowledge needed to fill the information gaps.

Analysis & Results

8. The research results are effective, efficient and permissible;
9. The data collection and analysis methods are applied correctly;
10. The research is replicable. The data are complete, detailed and reported in a structured manner.

Critical Thinking (I)

11. A clear process of thoughtful evaluation has been used to deliberately formulate a reasonable conclusion.

Conclusion

12. The research has been carried out correctly, with the use of analytical techniques that are accepted in the field of business research;
13. A brief discussion in the conclusion includes a critical reflection on the research process and its limitations;
14. The conclusion is valid, with regard to the evidence used and the rules relating to explanation and generalisation;
15. The conclusion explains how the information gaps are filled, is free of errors in reasoning or irrelevant argumentation and has no juggling with meanings.

Recommendations

16. The recommendations follow logically from the research in relation to the business problem;
17. The recommendations are accepted in the context of the business problem and the practical field;
18. The solutions provided are actual, sustainable and permissible;
19. The solutions provided are achievable given the environment, those responsible for implementation and the available time and budget.

Management of Information

20. Produce management information from various data sources in an international business environment;
21. The statement of sources of the information is in accordance with international standards (APA) and results in a literature list.

Motivation for the assessment:

I / S / G / VG

In reviewing the research justification, all points have been met and mentioned. In my personal opinion, the word count limits the scope to describe certain points and leaves little room for options in the results portion. Nevertheless, I am satisfied with the outcome of this research paper.

See next page.

PART II: PROFESSIONAL PRODUCT(S)

→ Acquisition of working and management tools in one of the five following themes: Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management, Organisation & People or Business Innovation.

22. The Professional Product that is delivered is a) an advice that states what the client can best do to change or improve a situation, b) a design containing of a visual or schematic representation of a product or intervention, c) a concrete physical or digital end product that the end user can apply functionally and/or d) an action in terms of professional behaviour towards stakeholders.
23. The Professional Product is suitable, acceptable and feasible in the business context.

Choose one of the five themes that is being assessed:

- ☒ Marketing & Sales
☐ Finance & Accounting
☐ Operations & Supply Chain Management
☐ Organisation & People
☐ Business Innovation

Motivation for the assessment:

I / S / G / VG

The professional product I have created meets criteria A & D. The communication plan is used to advise the company on communicative activities. The communication plan describes the activities that the company should use to strengthen relationships with its company's stakeholders in order to gain further advantages. These advantages can be described in terms of comparative advantages over competitors, gaining a better political standpoint, achieving a leadership position in the industry, etc. The professional product is suitable because the strategy imposed works just for the size of the company as it is, is consistent with the goals the company wants to achieve, and effectively leverages the power of the company. In terms of adoption, the professional product might encounter a thorough stakeholder response to identify risks. This part could be expanded. In terms of feasibility, the company and its size has the perfect structure to implement the strategy. The resources to hire an agency are also possible and realistic to implement.