Finnish Multinational Corporations and the Process of Cascading the Sustainability Identity and Targets Across the Company:

How This Impacts Their External Online Communication Internationally?

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Dissertation Title:	Finnish Multinational Corporations and the Process of Cascading the Sustainability Identity and Targets Across the Company: : How This Impacts Their External Online Communication Internationally?
Degree:	M. Sc. in Economics and Business Administration
Subject:	International Business
Supervisor:	Peter Gabrielsson
Graduation Year:	2021 **Pages:** 97

ABSTRACT:

Multinational Corporations (MNCs) are responding to global megatrends by designing sustainability as core of their DNA. Thus, MNCs are basing their corporate identity, values and principles to sustainability agenda. The previous research has recognised the important role, which communication plays in cascading the sustainability identity. However, there is a research gap in studying the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the MNCs, and how this impacts their external online communication internationally. Therefore, this study is providing a framework for the process. The framework is evaluated and modified by utilizing the findings from the empirical data. For the study is selected four Finnish B2B MNCs in primary industries with sustainability at core design of their DNA. The study suggests that case companies have a strong link between sustainability corporate strategy and corporate brand identity. The case companies' sustainability identities are also strongly integrated into their online communication. Additionally, diversity is key characteristic in MNC's business sustainability management, as the case companies have adopted a mix of local and global business sustainability practices. Finally, the study contributes to previous research of MNCs' online communication strategies by confirming that MNCs aim to integrate or even standardize their sustainability online communication internationally, but despite their efforts subsidiaries' sustainability communication may vary.

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Tutkielman nimi:	Suomalaiset monikansalliset yritykset ja heidän vastuullisen identiteettinsä ja vastuullisuustavoitteidensa jalkauttaminen yrityksessä: miten tämä vaikuttaa heidän ulkoiseen verkkoviestintäänsä kansainvälisesti?
Tutkinto:	Kauppatieteiden maisteri
Oppiaine:	Kansainvälinen liiketoiminta
Työn ohjaaja:	Peter Gabrielsson
Valmistumisvuosi:	2021 **Sivumäärä:** 97

TIIVISTELMÄ:

Monikansalliset yritykset vastaavat kansainvälisiin megatrendeihin ottamalla vastuullisuuden tärkeäksi osaksi strategiaansa ja sitä, kuka he ovat yrityksenä. Tällöin yritykset perustavat yrityksen identiteetin, arvot ja toimintaperiaatteet vastuullisuusagendalle. Aiempi tutkimus on tunnistanut viestinnän tärkeän roolin vastuullisen yritysidentiteetin jalkauttamisessa. Nykyisessä tutkimuksessa on kuitenkin aukko tutkimukselle, joka selvittäisi vastuullisen identiteetin ja vastuullisuustavoitteiden jalkauttamista monikansallisissa yrityksissä ja, miten tämä vaikuttaa heidän ulkoiseen verkkoviestintäänsä kansainvälisesti. Sen vuoksi tämä tutkimus tarjoaa viitekehyksen kyseiselle prosessille. Viitekehystä arvioidaan ja muokataan empiirisen tutkimuksen perusteella. Tutkimukseen on valittu neljä suomalaista monikansallista teollisuusyritystä, joille vastuullisuus on tärkeä osa heidän strategiaansa. Tutkimuksessa löydetään, että vastuullisella yritysstrategialla ja yrityksen brändi-identiteetillä on voimakas yhteys. Vastuullinen identiteetti on myös vahvasti integroitu tutkittujen yritysten verkkoviestintään. Lisäksi tutkittujen yritysten vastuullisuuden johtaminen kansainvälisesti vaihtelee ja yritykset ovat omaksuneet sekä paikallisia että globaaleja strategioita. Lopuksi tutkimus tukee aiempien vastuullisuusverkkoviestinnän tutkimuksia vahvistamalla, että monikansalliset yritykset pyrkivät yhtenäistämään ja jopa standardoimaan vastuullisuusverkkoviestintänsä kansainvälisesti, mutta tästä huolimatta tytäryhtiöiden vastuullisuusviestinnässä on eroavaisuuksia.

AVAINSANAT: vastuullisuus; kestävä kehitys; yrityksen brändi-identiteetti; verkkoviestintä; monikansalliset yritykset

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1 Introduction

Various stakeholder groups are growingly aware of companies' sustainability actions and green rankings. The sustainability information affects investors, suppliers and consumers purchasing decisions. The pressure for sustainability has made international companies increasingly sensitive towards sustainability agenda and sustainability has become a source of competitive advantage. (Reilly & Hynan 2014, Porter & Kramer 2006.) As international companies recognize sustainability to be "good business", the more are designing sustainability as core of their DNA. International companies that have sustainability in the core of their corporate brands are basing their corporate identity, values and principles to sustainability agenda (Fatma and Rinding 2014, Villagra & Lopez 2013). However, there are not many studies, that would have studied the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the multinational corporations (MNCs).

The communication is important part of the process of cascading the sustainability identity. According to Urde (2013: 744), "when the corporate brand identity is communicated and interpreted, it will create an equivalent or more developed sign in the minds of customers and non-customer stakeholders". Previous studies have shown that sustainability has important role in the corporate communication due the marketing, business and societal reasons (Signitzer & Prexl 2008), and most large global corporations share their sustainability actions and achievements through different communication channels or at least report some sustainability performance data annually (Reilly & Hynan 2014, Reilly 2009). However, there are no studies that would have studied the impact sustainability identity has for external communication. Therefore, there is a research gap for study, that would research the process of cascading sustainability identity across the multinational corporation and how this impacts their corporate communications internationally.

1.1   Justification for the Study

The focus of brand management has typically been in product branding rather than in corporate branding (Urde 2013). However, the importance of corporate brands is rising due to their strength as a strategy (Balmer & Gary 2003), as a resource (Knox & Bickerton 2003, Grant 1996 & 1991), as a competitive tool (Kapferer 2012), as a contributor to brand performance (Gromark & Melin 2011, Harris & de Chernatony 2001), as a source of equity (Burmann et al 2009), and as a manner to integrate communication (Stuart & Kerr 1999, Ind 1997, van Riel 1995) - making corporate brands as an interesting area of study. Additionally, for business to business (B2B) companies, corporate brand may be more interesting source of competitive advantage than for business to consumers (B2C) companies.

As sustainability has become source of competitive advantage, more international companies have sustainability in the core of their corporate brands basing their corporate identity, values and principles to sustainability agenda (Fatma and Rinding 2014, Villagra & Lopez 2013). Powell (2011) has discussed in his paper the strategic role, which corporate identity may have for company's ethical alignment. Corporate identity plays strategic and operational roles by articulating the core values, establishing the corporate culture, and formulating corporate expression. Corporate expression includes visual identity, brand promise, brand personality, and how these will be communicated to different stakeholders. (Abratt & Kleyn 2012.) Corporate identity is the basis to build a coherent and differentiated corporate brand (Urde 2003). International companies with sustainability at core, base their uniqueness and differentiation on the features of their sustainability (Simões & Sebastiani 2017).

Simões and Sebastiani (2017: 446) have written: "A sustainable identity is at the core of what the organization is and does, and corporate identity plays a key role in upholding the organization's cultural orientation towards sustainability". According to Simões and Sebastiani (2017), the relationship between corporate sustainability and corporate identity should be symbiotic, where sustainability and identity are integrated to attain a

synergetic balance within the company. By aligning the sustainability and identity, the company can have a stronger sustainability position in the market, thus contributing to the development of a more solid reputation (Simões & Sebastiani 2017: 447, Abratt and Kleyn 2012),). Also, Berrone, Surroca and Tribó's (2007) findings indicate that strong ethical identity can have both intrinsic and strategic value.

Business sustainability represents an important opportunity for MNCs and may lead to superior performance (Kumar & Christodoulopoulou 2014, Gupta & Kumar 2013). To achieve business returns from engaging in sustainability, international companies must communicate their initiatives to their stakeholders. Otherwise, the stakeholder will not be aware of the effort's corporations are doing for sustainability. (Schmeltz 2011, Du, Bhattacharya & Sen 2010.) Corporate identity is crucial in the operationalization and communication of sustainability strategies (Simões & Sebastiani 2017, Urde 2003).

There is no agreed definition for MNCs (Aggarwal et al 2011). According to Aggarwal et al (2011) MNCs are traditionally thought to be successful large corporations that are international in their operations, vision and strategies. However, in today's modern business environment, where companies increasingly operate across national borders, the definition has broadened and the range of firms that qualify as MNCs has extended (Aggarwal et al 2011). Therefore, in this paper to MNCs are referred as corporations that operate across national borders by organizing, coordinating and controlling resources globally and are international in their operations, vision and strategies (Aggarwal et al 2011).

Internet is one of the key media for communication. It offers easy, quick, and low-cost way to distribute much information to the variety of stakeholders (Biloslavo & Trnavcevic 2009, Chaudhri & Wang 2007). This may be especially beneficial for global companies with many different multinational stakeholders. Additionally, it allows two-way communication between stakeholders and company (Capriotti 2011, Biloslavo & Trnavcevic 2009). There are studies analysing the corporate websites as a tool for

communication with stakeholders in relation to company's social responsibility (Douglas, Doris & Johnson 2004, Cooper 2003, Snider, Hill & Martin 2003, Maignan & Ralston 2002, Esrock and Leichty 2000 & 1998, Williams & Pei 1999) and sustainability (Bilaslavo & Trnavcevic 2009, Patten and Crampton 2004). There are also few studies about the role of social media in the sustainability online communication (Reilly & Hynan 2014). However, more research is needed to better understand, how the corporate brand identity plays a part in the operationalization and communication of sustainability strategies, especially for MNCs that operate globally in different countries and cultures. That's why this study is interested to identify, the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the MNC and how this impacts their external online communication internationally.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This paper is interested on Finnish B2B MNCs in primary industry with sustainability as a part of their corporate strategy, corporate brand identity, and target setting. It aims to study the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the company and how this impacts their external online communication. Thus, the focus of this study is from inside out, and how the MNCs' self-image and description of themselves affect their external online communication to their various stakeholders. Therefore, the research question is:

> *If the sustainability is a part of Finnish B2B MNCs corporate strategy, corporate brand identity and target setting, what is the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the company and how this impacts their external online communication internationally?*

Additionally, research objectives are defined to answer the research question:

1. To study, the link between sustainability corporate strategy and the corporate brand identity in primary industry MNCs, and how

sustainability identity impacts the external online communication internationally.

2. To study, what kind of international corporate level sustainability targets and KPIs MNCs have and what is the process of cascading them across the MNC.

3. To study, how openly and strongly MNCs communicate their sustainability targets externally, and if the communication is consistent internationally.

1.3   Structure of the Study

The thesis will be distributed to five chapters. The first chapter will be the introduction and it will include the research gap, the research aim, the questions and objectives as well as the research structure. The second chapter will be the theoretical part and it will have four subsections: business sustainability, corporate brand identity, sustainability online communication, and theoretical framework. The third chapter will be the research methodology. The fourth chapter will be the findings and the final chapter will be the conclusions.

1.4   Definitions of the Main Concepts

Multinational Corporations (MNCs) are traditionally firms that operate across national borders by organizing, coordinating and controlling resources globally and are international in their operations, vision and strategies (Aggarwal et al 2011).

Sustainability has been defined by World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as: "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs".

Triple bottom line is a concept developed by John Elkington (1998), which simultaneously considers and balances economic, environmental and social issues from a micro-economic point of view.

Corporate brand identity answers the following questions: "who are we, where do we come from, what we stand for, what is our raison d'être, and what is our wanted position?" Urde (2013).

Sustainability communication has been defined by Signitzer and Prexl (2008) as: "an evolving concept that refers to corporate communications about sustainability issues"

2   Theoretical Part

2.1   Sustainability

The most widely adopted definition of sustainability is from World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) which has defined sustainability as: "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs". The definition includes two key concepts: 1) the concept of needs, and 2) the idea of limitations. It is commonly believed that there are some fundamental and basic needs that need to be filled for people to be productive, well-balanced and satisfied (Taya & Diener 2011, ILO 1977, Maslow 1943), and it is scientifically proven, that resources in the Earth are not infinite (Watts 2018, IPCC 2014, Chong 2006). Therefore, the resources cannot be exploited indefinitely at the expense of the future generations.

Some researchers have criticised the sustainability definition due to the fact that it provides little detail on what should be actually sustained, to what extent the sustenance should take place and what should be the timeframe (Svensson et al 2016, Parris & Kates 2003). It is acknowledged, that the sustainability definition is fairly abstract and does not provide any concrete suggestions for sustainable development. However, as Portney (2015: 2) says the sustainability definition only gives "point of departure for a broad understanding of this fairly abstract concept".

Sustainability is often confused with environmental protection. Sustainability targets include addressing climate change, protecting natural resources like water and soil, avoiding disposing hazardous and toxic materials in nature, and reducing carbon emissions (Portney 2015: 27-28). However, sustainability also addresses social and economic challenges such as inequality, poverty, prosperity, peace and justice (United Nations n.d. a). Portney (2015: 5) writes that the main difference, what separates sustainability and environmental protection, is that environmental protection focuses on

preventing specific environmental threats, whereas sustainability is more proactive and holistic focusing on dynamic processes over the long term.

2.1.1 Sustainability Development Goals

The United National Global Compact is a voluntary initiative for businesses to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and report on their implementation. According to United Nations (n.d. a), Global Compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative. It is "a call to companies to align strategies and operations with universal principles of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and take actions that advance societal goals". Global compact is principle-based framework for businesses to align their strategies and operations with ten principles of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. More than 9,500 companies are participating to Global Compact. (United Nations Global Compact n.d. a, b, c & d.)

In relation to Global Compact, United Nations have set up 17 global sustainable developments goals (SDGs) for 2030. The sustainable development agenda with these goals is to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by ending all forms of poverty, fighting inequalities and tackling climate change. The 17 SDGs are: 1) no poverty, 2) zero hunger, 3) good health and wellbeing, 4) quality education, 5) gender equality, 6) clean water and sanitation, 7) affordable and clean energy, 8) decent work and economic growth, 9) industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10) reduced inequalities, 11) sustainable cities and communities, 12) responsible consumption and production, 13) climate action, 14) life below water, 15) life on land, 16) peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17) partnerships. For every goal UN has defined more specific measurable targets with indicators – in total there are 169 targets and 232 approved indicators for the 17 goals. The Sustainable Development Goals are built up on the success of Millennium Development Goals – all the eight goals were achieved by 2015. (United Nations n.d. a & b.)

2.1.2   Business Sustainability

Many years of focus, solely on profit is over. Not long time ago, a broad consensus was that companies' only responsibilities were towards their shareholders. For instance, Friedman argued in the 1970, that the sole responsibility of business is to increase firm's profits and make money to its shareholders. Friedman was challenged by Elkington in the 1998, who stated that companies have also responsibilities towards people and planet in addition to making profits to their shareholders. Accordingly, today's businesses face different challenges and opposing goals, which they need to reconcile (Murthy 2012). Stakeholder expect businesses to be financially successful, achieve their strategic objectives and engage in sustainability (Svensson et al 2018). Consequently, conflicting relationships between economic, social and environmental elements characterise today's business environment (de Lange 2017).

MNCs do not operate in void. Their actions have a severe influence on the world economy as well as to communities and environment in which they operate (Guest 2010, Porter & Kramer 2006, Ramus 2002). Thus, MNCs have a significant role in the sustainable development due to their global influence. "Their potential in being not only part of problem, but also perhaps part of the solution, is increasingly recognized" (Kolk & van Tulder 2010: 119). On the other hand, different stakeholder groups have an effect to the companies' survival and prosperity. The relationship with MNCs and their stakeholders can be described as bidirectional. (Porter & Kramer 2006.) Due to this bidirectional relationship, business sustainability can create long-term value and affect the life-expectancy of the company (Rowley, Saha & Ang 2012: 32-33).

Business sustainability refers to "a company's efforts to go beyond focusing only on profitability, also to manage its environmental, social, and broader economic impact on the marketplace and society as a whole" (Svensson et al. 2016: 153). Sustainability is operationalised through triple bottom line. Triple bottom line is a concept developed by John Elkington (1998) and it addresses sustainability outcomes on the dimensions of economic, environmental and social measures. The idea is that the company's profit

should not be driven at expense of people or the planet. (Elkington 1998.) However, it is good to point out, that truly sustainable business does not exist. A sustainable business would have a neutral or positive triple bottom line making it impossible to achieve. Therefore, sustainable business should be seen as the ultimate goal and instead highlight the sustainability commitment and actions to reach the goal. (Conaway and Laash 2012: 10.)

There are many different motives, why companies want to become more sustainable. There might be tactical reasons, marketing reasons, strategic reasons, and altruistic or moral reasons. First, tactical reasons are avoiding fines or heavy taxes due to legislation or regulations, avoiding bad publicity, or responding to competitors. Second, marketing reasons are the positive influence on corporate image or exploitation of new markets. Third, strategic reasons are the internal and external opportunities that business sustainability can create by reducing operation costs, reducing risk and increasing the goodwill among stakeholders. Finally, company can have altruistic or moral reasons for wanting to be sustainable – company can have a sense of responsibility for community and environment in which it operates. (Saha & Darnton 2005.) Whatever are the reasons, business sustainability should be seen as a source of competitive advantage that is a win-win situation for all the company, environment and society. However, to achieve business returns from engaging in sustainability, companies must communicate their initiatives to their stakeholders. Otherwise, the stakeholder will not be aware of the efforts corporations are doing for sustainability. (Schmeltz 2011, Du, Bhattacharya & Sen 2010.)

2.1.3 Business Sustainability Framework

Svensson et al. (2016) have proposed a business sustainability framework based on triple bottom line approach. The framework was created by conducting a series of case studies to determine possible dimensions and items and then tested by executing three factor analysis with cross-industry sample in Norway. (Svensson et al 2016.) The empirical findings were later validated by Ferro et al (2019) in their validation study based on cross-

industry sample in Spain. Their study succeeded to satisfactorily validate the dimensions and items of a triple bottom line dominant logic for business sustainability. Ferro et al (2019) also expanded the framework with additional dimensions and items that had not been successfully tested in the previous studies. (Ferrero et al 2019.) A framework of a triple bottom line dominant logic for business sustainability is presented in the figure 1 with all the dimensions presented by Svensson and his team (2016) and Ferrero and this team (2019).
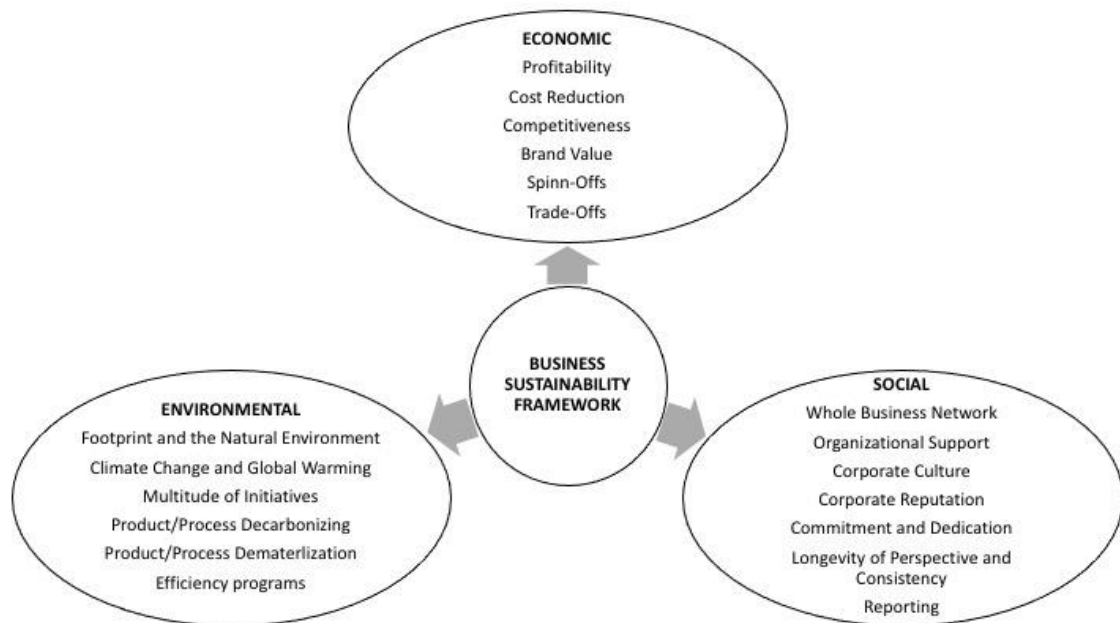
Figure 1. Business Sustainability Framework (Adapted from: Ferro et al 2019, Svensson et al 2016).

Ferro et al (2019) have argued, that the framework for a triple bottom line dominant logic for business sustainability provides substantiation for universal applicability as it has been empirically tested successfully across context and through time. However, the triple bottom line approach has been criticised from being delivered from or commonly based upon a western perspective on the market and society on the literature (Santos, Svensson & Padin 2014). For instance, in the case study of South African retail chain Woolworths, the researchers found that the company was using a "fivefold bottom line" approach. The five pillars were labelled as economic growth, transformation, social

development, environment and biodiversity, and climate change. The five pillars could be reorganized accordingly to triple bottom line, but the researchers thought the fivefold bottom line approach by the Woolworths was valuable due to the somewhat unique past and present characteristics of the South African market and society. Santos, Svensson and Padin (2014) believe that the findings from the case study indicate that triple bottom line approach may need to be adapted to the country and cultural context in focus. (Santos, Svensson & Padin 2014.)

2.1.4 Multinational Corporations' Sustainability Strategies

Multinationals may take credit for taking the sustainability agenda forward, since they are often challenged to implement sustainability practices in countries where human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption policies are less developed than in their home countries (Crane et al 2013). However, there are also studies that report about the differences in sustainability practices between home country and host country operations (Tan & Wang 2011, Zhao et al 2014). According to Tan and Wang (2011), the strategies of MNCs seem to depend on how deeply the MNC is committed to sustainability principles and ethical expectations of the host country.

Hah and Freeman (2014) suggest, that MNCs tend to adopt different business sustainability strategies to build external or internal legitimacy in their host countries. To gain external legitimacy, they would adopt local business sustainability strategies that meet local host societies' need, whereas to gain internal legitimacy, they would adopt global business sustainability strategy that is accordance with the sustainability policies of the home country. Yang and Rivers (2009) support this by stating that the state which subsidiaries rely on parent company for resources and internal legitimacy influence on what extent they adopt local business sustainability practices. Additionally, some research findings suggest, that different types of MNCs place differently importance on global business sustainability. Multidomestic and transnational MNCs favour country-

specific business sustainability while global MNCs prefer global business sustainability strategy. (Husted & Allen 2006.)

Jamali (2010) has studied MNCs and their Lebanese subsidiaries and found that home country stakeholders' expectations seem to influence the business sustainability strategies in the host countries. Crilly (2011) also claims that corporate parent is a crucial stakeholder but admits that even different subsidiaries of the same MNC can have different stakeholder orientations and therefore different business sustainability strategies. Therefore, the diversity is a key characteristic in MNCs' business sustainability management to respond both internal and external pressures (Szanto 2018).

2.2 Corporate Brand Identity

Corporate identity is subjective and describes what the organization thinks about itself (Ind 1997). It is affected by different factors such as the management and employees, organizational achievements, the position of the company, the internal and external behaviour, and the internal and external communication (Bilaslova & Trnavcevic 2009). Corporate identity is connected to the matter company presents itself publicly both internally and externally (Alessandri 2001). Therefore, organizational identity affects stakeholders' image of the company (Bilaslova & Trnavcevic 2009).

Corporate brand identity is the description of the attributes of corporate identity (Balmer 2010). According to Urde and Greyer (2013: 97), a corporate brand identity answers the following questions: "who are we, where do we come from, what we stand for, what is our raison d'être, and what is our wanted position?" A well-defined corporate brand identity is crucial in the building and management of corporate brand (Kapferer 2012, Urde 2003 & 1994). According to Urde (2013) strategic management of brand identity is a key activity.

The biggest difference between product brand and corporate brand is that corporate brand indicates that there is an organization behind the brand (Urde 2013, Schultz et al 2005, Balmer 1995, Alvesson & Berg 1992). That distinction is visible in the language, as the corporate will normally talk about itself as "we" and the public will talk about the corporation as "they", whereas a product brand is called "it" by everyone (Urde 2013). In corporate branding the corporate name represents and symbolises the entire organization (Urde 2013, Knox & Bickerton 2003). According to Urde (2013) the fundamental elements of corporate brand are the mission, vision, the core values, corporate culture and competences. The intent is to offer customers broader "customer solutions" with the corporate brand in focus (Urde 2013). Therefore, according to Bickerton (2003), corporate branding should focus on building and managing corporate brand identity, defining the corporate brand position, positioning the corporate brand, communicating it consistently, leading the corporate branding deeper into the organization and monitoring the corporate branding strategy.

A brand can be regarded as a "sign" that should acquire and communicate meaning (Mick 1986, Levy 1959). Therefore, the management of brands can be regarded as the management of signs. In the case of corporate branding, the object is the organization, and the sign is the corporate brand identity (Urde 2013). According to Urde (2013: 744), "when that corporate brand identity is communicated and interpreted, it will create an equivalent or more developed sign in the minds of customers and non-customer stakeholders". Thus, the management should define the corporate "sign", align it into single entity, communicate it, and thereby start a decoding process in the minds of stakeholders (de Saussure 2013, Shannon & Weaver 1964). The process happens in social setting, making corporate brand as a social construction (Silverman 2019, Solomon 1983, Blumer 1969).

In principle, there are two different approaches in the defining of a brand: the market-oriented approach and brand oriented approach (Urde 2013, Urde et al 2011, Knox & Bickerton 2003). In the market-oriented approach, the brand image is key, whereas in

the brand-oriented approach the brand identity is key. Both approaches aim to satisfy the needs and want of customer, but brand-oriented approach within the limits of the brand core identity. (Urde 2011.)
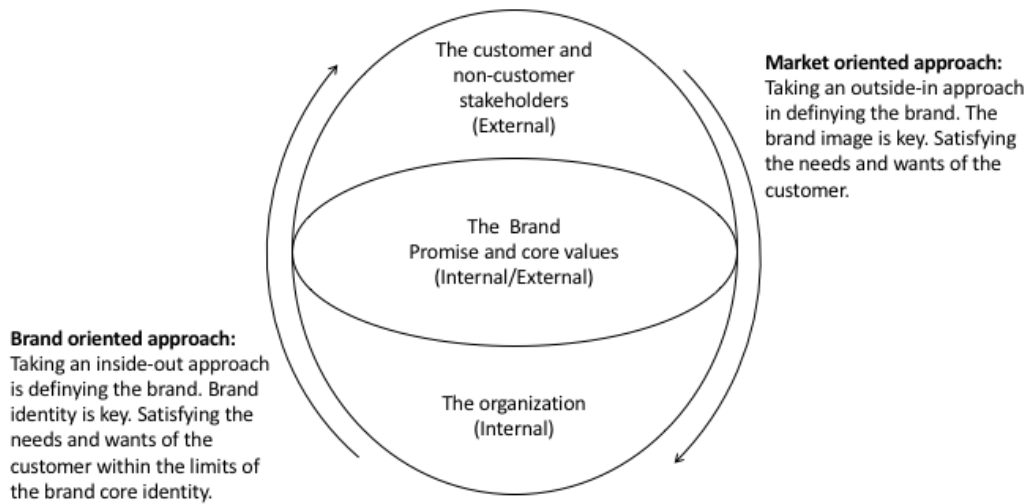
Figure 2. The Market and Brand-Oriented Frameworks (Urde et al 2011).

2.2.1 Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM)

Urde (2013) has developed a framework Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM). The framework can be used to describe, define and align corporate brand identity. Urde (2013: 744) describes it as template for management "in the analysis, definition, coordination and building of corporate brand identity for improved performance". The matrix composes of three components, which all have three elements. The components have been distributed to internal elements, internal/external elements and external elements. All the elements of matrix are interrelated and form a structured entity. In the middle of the matrix is core, that consist of promise and core value. (Urde 2013.) Urde (2013: 751) says, that "in a coherent corporate brand identity, the core reflects all elements, and every element reflects the core".

The internal elements in the bottom row of the matrix can be described as the three characteristics of the organization: its mission and vision, its culture, and its competences. The internal elements are the foundation of corporate brand identity. (Urde 2013.) The corporate mission explains, why the corporation exists and what engages and motivates it, beyond the aim of making money (Collin & Porras 1998). Corporate vision defines corporate's view of where is going and what inspires it to advance (de Chernatony 2010). Together mission and vision are the sources of commitment for corporate brand identity (Senge 2006) and represent the point-of-departure in the defining of corporate brand identity for an organization with a brand-oriented approach (Urde 1999 & 1994). The culture of an organization reflects corporate attitudes, values and beliefs and dictates how the company works and behaves (Schroeder & Saltzer-Morling 2006, Hatch & Schultz 2001). In the CBIM, these two elements (vision and mission, and culture) represent a source of differentiation and potential competitive advantage (Urde 2013, Burman et al 2009, Brexendorf & Kernstock 2007). Adding competences as a third element to internal components in CBIM confers extra strategic relevance relating to the creation and maintenance of sustainable competitive advantage (Urde 2013). Competences are what the organization is especially good at, what special know-how it has, and what makes it better than the competitors (Urde 2013).

The three elements in the middle row of the matrix are both internal and external. The brand core is in the heart of corporate brand identity and consists of brand promise and supporting core values. The core values are the guiding lights of corporate identity (Urde 2003). It is important that the corporate identity is based on solid and consistent values as those guide company actions and will consequently be perceived by the stakeholders (Villagra & Lopez 2013). Urde says (2013: 752), that brand core is "an entity of core values supporting and leading up to a promise". In the CBIM the brand core is in the centre; it is ideally coherent with the other components and vice versa. According to Urde (2013: 752), "it is communicated externally and has a guiding role internally". Personality describes the corporate brand's individual character, whereas expression defines the

verbal and visual manifestations of the brand. Personality and expression connect the internal and external elements of the corporate brand identity (Urder 2013). Keller and Richey (2006) note, that a corporate brand personality is more dependent on the personality of employees representing the corporation.

The external elements in the top row compromises value proposition, relationships and position. These three external elements influence image and reputation of the company. According to Urde (2013), they need to be coherent with the brand core and other elements in the framework. He continues (2013: 753), "for corporate brands, typically serving multiple customer groups and stakeholders, they furthermore need to be carefully integrated and adapted to the needs and expectations of target audiences".

The value proposition element refers to the appealing arguments that corporation directs to customers and non-customer stakeholders (Frow & Payne 2011, Rintamäki et al 2007). An effective value proposition should lead to favourable relationship between corporation and stakeholder and ultimately to positive purchase decision (Aaker 2010 & 2004). "Relationships and how they are built over time, reflect and define the corporate brand identity", Urde says (2013. 753). Corporate brands have typically multiple stakeholders and thus multiple relationships, and one relationship might potentially influence relations with others. Therefore, these multiple relationships need to be integrated. (Farquhar 2005, Fournier 1998.)

The position elements specify how management wants the corporate brand to be positioned in the market and in the minds of key customers and other stakeholders (Keller 2012). It is closely linked to the corporate brand identity and the choice of intended position is a mean to differentiate the brand identity (Kapferer 2012). According to Urde (2013), it is important to align the organization's reason of being and its direction with the intended position.
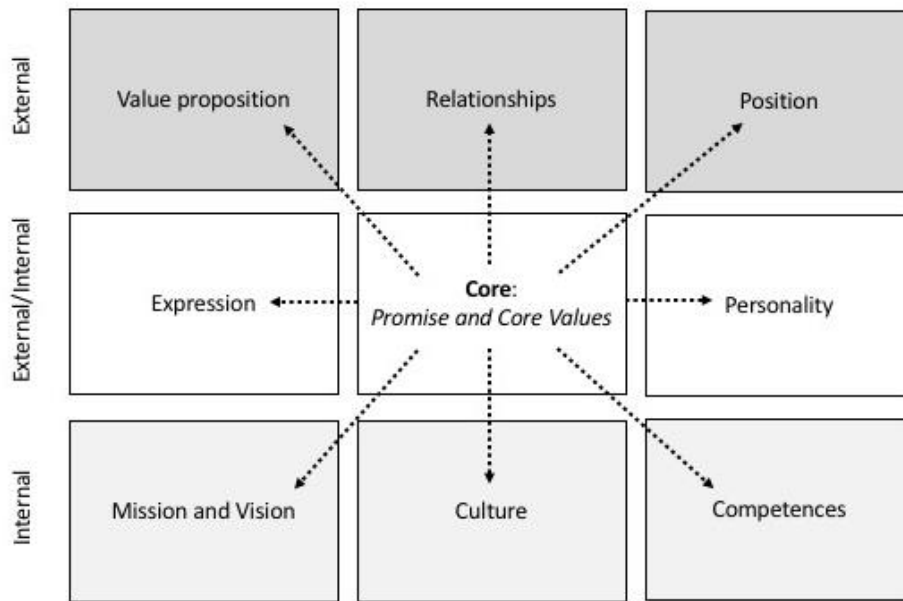
Figure 3. The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde 2013).

The brand core is at the heart of the framework, which makes the CBIM consistent with the most other frameworks. However, Urde's (2013) framework places strong emphasis on the internal components of corporate brand identity, and therefore clearly differs from frameworks developed for product brands, and also from existing corporate brand identity frameworks. The other key difference is the definition of brand core as "a set of core values leading up to and supporting a promise" (Urde 2013: 758), which is especially applicable for corporate brands. CBIM combines different elements surrounding the brand core and the key correspondences between them. Thereby providing an overview of the essential relationships to be analysed and defining the raison d'être. Furthermore, the CBIM defines the roles and functions of different types of value as part of corporate brand identity. Finally, the framework integrates the market-oriented and brand-oriented approaches. (Urde 2013.)

2.3 Sustainability Communication

Sustainability communication is critical part of sustainable management process. Signitzer and Prexl (2008) have defined sustainability communication as: "an evolving concept that refers to corporate communications about sustainability issues". It is used to complement other communication programs such as marketing communication, advertisement, and sales promotion. Companies communicate sustainability initiatives and achievements to stakeholder groups due to marketing, business and societal motives. (Signitzer and Prexl 2008.) They use variety of media and approaches (Reilly & Hynan 2014, Reilly 2009).

Van de Ven (2008) has identified three potential approaches for sustainability communication. First approach is the reputation management, which focuses "on the basic requirements of conducting a responsible business to obtain and maintain a license to operate from society" (Van de Ven 2008: 345). The second approach is building a virtuous corporate brand, which means making an "explicit promise to the stakeholders and the general public that the corporation excels with respect to their corporate social responsibility endeavours" (Van de Ven 2008: 345). Third approach is differentiation, which aims at differentiating company "on the basis of an environmental or social quality" (Van de Ven 2008: 348).

Sustainability communication is important for assessing MNC's sustainability legitimacy as sustainability practices are not easily visible (Christmann 2004). Sustainability legitimacy has been shown to be important for stakeholders, and therefore gaining legitimacy through sustainability communication can have real benefits for MNCs (Christmann 2004). For instance, communicating sustainability concerns seem to reduce company's unsystematic risk (Bansal & Chelland 2004) and protect profitability (Ilinitch et al 1998). Furthermore, the liability of foreignness means that subsidiaries of MNCs are often expected to exceed local legitimacy requirements (Zaheer & Mosakowski 1997).

Even majority of stakeholders' regard business sustainability important, their awareness, if companies actually engage in sustainability, is typically low (Schmeltz 2011, Bhattacharya et al. 2008, Du et al. 2007, Sen et al. 2006). According to Schemltz (2011), for instance consumers want more sustainability communication, but they are not willing to actively seek the information. However, continuous and explicit sustainability communication is rewarded with increased credibility. (Schmeltz 2011.)

2.3.1 Stakeholders and Sustainability Communication

Good communication with stakeholder groups is the essence of sustainability communication. (Fatma & Rinding 2014, Conaway & Laash 2012: 1.) With good corporate sustainability communication, MNCs can create value and improve their performance. According to Conaway and Laash (2012: 4), credible sustainability communication can create goodwill among stakeholders. For instance, Berrone, Surroca and Tribó (2007) have found, that companies' ethical behaviour has informational worth by enhancing shareholder value and increasing shareholder satisfaction. MNCs also face institutional pressures from stakeholders, such as governments and customers, to present sustainability communication in order to gain legitimacy (Christmann 2004, Christmann & Taylor 2001). The situation is especially complex for MNCs, as stakeholder standards and expectations vary across countries. Most stakeholders that have high sustainability expectations of MNCs are from developed countries such as Europe, Canada and the U.S. (Hunter & Bansal 2007.)

Freeman (1984: 46) has defined stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization objectives". Clarkson (1995: 106) has refined the definition by stating, that stakeholders are "persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present or future". Stakeholders can be divided into two groups: primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. (Clarkson 1995.) Stakeholders are presented in the figure 4.
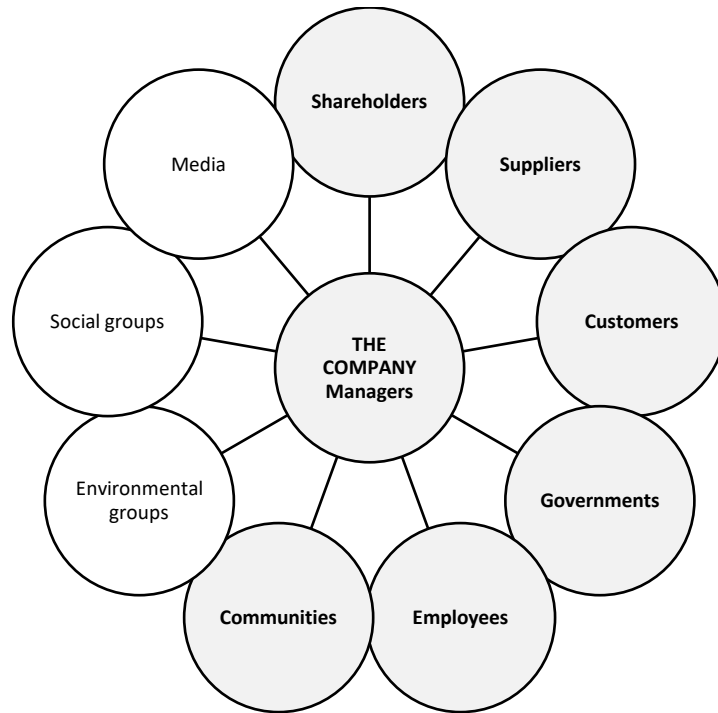
Figure 4. MNCs' Stakeholders (Adapted from Clarkson 1995).

There is a high level of interdependency between a company and its primary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders have a direct interest in the company and their actions have a direct impact on company's survival and prosperity. Due to their power on company, primary stakeholders have an ability to directly influence on the decision making in the company. Primary stakeholders consist of shareholders, managers, employees, suppliers and customers as well as governments and communities. (Clarkson 1995.)

Secondary stakeholders have an indirect interest in the company and their actions have only an indirect impact on company. Secondary stakeholders are not essential for company's survival, but they have a capacity to mobilize public opinion favour for or against for the company and therefore can cause serious damage. Secondary stakeholder groups include for instance the media and a wide range of social and environmental groups. (Clarkson 1995.)

It has been noted that stakeholders react positively to reliable sustainability communication. Positive sustainability associations may increase the customers' willingness to buy a product or service, whereas negative sustainability associations can reduce the consumption or even create aggressive boycotts. Therefore, successful sustainability communication can have positive influence on the company's revenues. (Conaway and Laasch 2012: 3-4.)

Investors are very sensitive to future revenues as those ultimately translate into dividends. Additionally, investors value eco-efficiency as it reduces operating costs. Moreover, they recognize that investments into sustainable innovation products can open new markets or increase purchasing price in existing markets. Furthermore, well-managed economic, environmental and social factors reduce company and investment risk. (Conaway and Laasch 2012: 3-4.) Therefore, sustainability communication has shown to reduce stock market risk for MNCs (Bansal & Roth 2000) while low sustainability legitimacy poses a risk to corporate profitability (Payne & Raiborn 2001, Ilinitch et al 1998, Russo & Fouts 1997) and stock prices (Bansal and Chelland 2004). Risk and profit margin are factors which influence shareholders' goodwill toward the company (Conaway and Laasch 2012: 3-4).

Also, the internal stakeholder groups such as employees react positively to company's sustainability actions. Sustainable companies have more content employees as work satisfaction increases due to physically improved work conditions and the pride to work for a "good company". Additionally, sustainable companies better attract employees as employees view the responsible companies more attractive workplaces than irresponsible companies. Employees can even refuse to work in companies which they view irresponsible. (Conaway and Laasch 2012: 3-4.)

Finally, credible sustainability communication helps companies to avoid potential scandals. Media and NGOs have become adept at holding companies responsible of their actions and are ready expose companies for any false behaviour (Porter & Kramere 2006).

Sustainability crisis can interfere with normal business, tarnish the reputation, negatively affect the brand image, and lower trust with stakeholders (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 53). Therefore, sustainability communication can be important tool for reputation and crisis management. For MNCs sustainability communication has been shown to reduce scrutiny from non-profit organizations and governments (Delmas 2001).

There are different stakeholder communication practices. The stakeholder communication modes can be divided into three categories, which differ in intense and focus. First category is the stakeholder information strategy, where the company communicates favourable sustainability performance in a one-way communication to create goodwill among stakeholders. Second category is the stakeholder response strategy, where company reacts to stakeholders' concerns, requests, or tendencies. This strategy works well in appeasing critical stakeholders. Third category is the stakeholder involvement, where company's stakeholders are engaged to two-way communication. The goal of the two-way communication is to "translate stakeholder input to concrete actions and co-creation solutions". (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 42-43.)

2.3.2 Sustainability Communication Process

The communication process and their respective goals in sustainable business can be seen from figure 5. As the figure shows, sharing the sustainability achievements is just one of the three functions of corporate sustainability communication. In the first phase, corporate sustainability communication helps to define what sustainable business, a sustainable process, and specific stakeholder responsibilities should be like in an ideal situation. The drafting a plan should start with consulting the internal and external stakeholders. In the second phase, company should convince the key decision makers and educate stakeholders about the company's sustainability commitments. In the third phase, company can share its sustainability activities and performance with its stakeholder groups. (Conaway and Laash 2012: 13-14.)
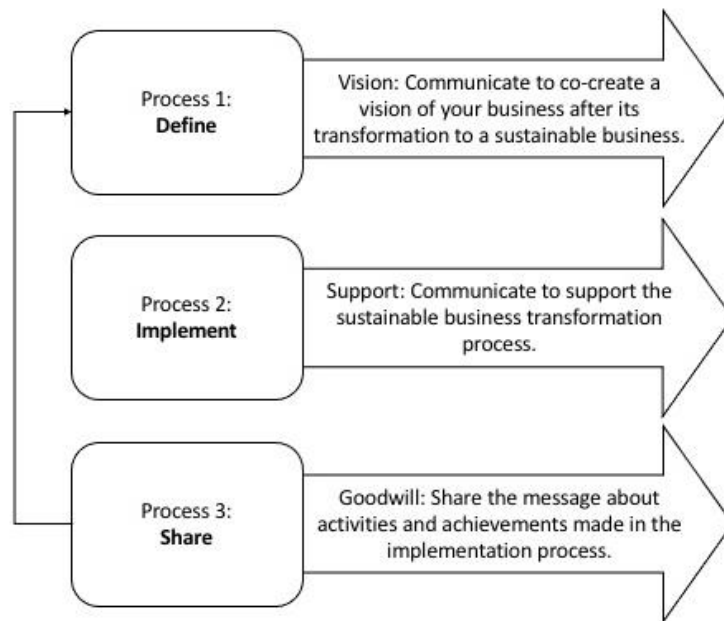
Figure 5. Sustainability Communication Process (Conaway and Laasch 2012: 13).

Some companies mistakenly start the process in reverse order from these three processes. Instead of first defining sustainable business and then implementing and communicating the results, the company focus on communicating isolated sustainability activities to actively raise the company reputation. This type of behaviour easily leads to sustainability communication trap as stakeholders usually detect such superficial communication and expose the company. The sustainability communication scandals may have serious negative consequences. (Conoway & Laasch 2012: 14.)

Therefore, it is good to highlight the credibility of corporate sustainability communication. To create stakeholder goodwill, companies must first achieve positive environmental, economic and social performance, and second communicate effectively their sustainability progress made to their stakeholders. Communicating sustainability activities without real progress is called greenwashing and may have serious consequences for the company. (Conaway and Laash 2012: 4-5.)

Thus, company's sustainability performance and sustainability communication should be balanced, and communication should match the company's sustainable performance (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 21, Berrone, Surroca and Tribó 2007). Imbalance occurs, when business does not actively engage in sustainability activities creating only little social or environmental value but creates the impression of positive sustainability performance through marketing and communication – this is called greenwashing. Imbalance also occurs, when business is sustainable and creates social and environmental value but does not communicate their activities and achievements to their stakeholders. In this situation, the company is not rewarder from their actions as the stakeholders are unaware of their initiatives towards sustainability. According to Conoway and Laasch, the balance only exists when companies are "walking the talk" and "talking the walk". (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 21.) The balance and imbalance are described in the figure 6.
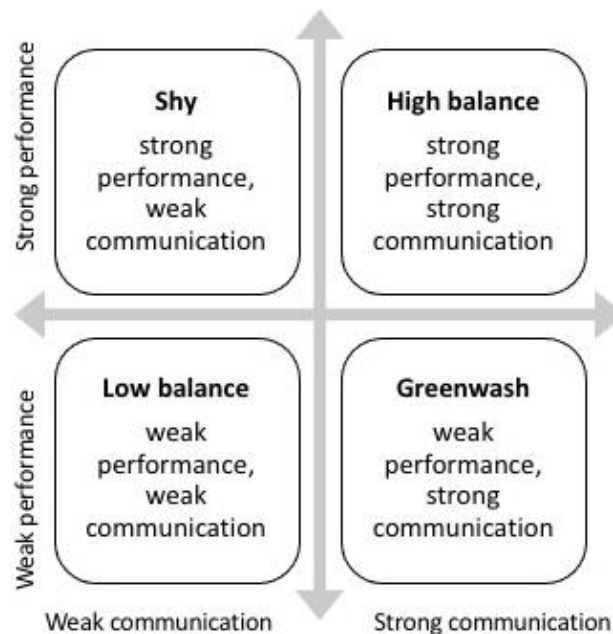
Figure 6. Sustainability Communication (Conoway & Laasch 2012: 23).

Companies can use external endorsements, such as certificates and ecolabels to boost the confidence in customers that the sustainability actions are accurate (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 29). Conaway and Laasch have listed four benefits of certificates and

ecolabels. First, external endorsements can help the companies to maintain and increase their market share in business areas with green purchasing guidelines. Second, external endorsements can increase the chances for companies to win large institutional contracts as the certificates give a direct indication of sustainability performance and therefore help the purchasing agents in their decision. Third, external endorsements can raise the visibility of companies' sustainability initiatives and strengthen their competitive advantage. Finally, the external endorsements can enhance the value of brand. (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 30.)

2.3.3 Sustainability Online Communication

Internet is one of the most effective communication channels for MNCs (Shin & Huh 2009). It offers easy, low-cost, mass-targeted communication (Biloslavo & Trnavcevic 2009) as well as flexibility and detailed up-to-date information (Wanderley et al 2008). One of the benefits of the online communication is the possibility to provide information targeted to different stakeholder groups and obtain feedback from them by creating an interactive two-way communication between company and its stakeholders (Capriotti, 2011, Biloslavo & Trnavcevic 2009). Internet is also powerful communication channel for sustainability communication (Biloslavo & Trnavčevič 2009, Wanderley et al 2008, Capriotti & Moreno 2007, Chaudhri & Wang 2007, Adams & Frost 2006). Furthermore, it provides MNCs unlimited reach to their global audience across borders (Shin & Huh 2009).

Corporate websites are good to distributing much information, quickly, easily and in controlled manner (Chaudhri & Wang 2007). Whereas social media channels are better in creating symmetrical communication and dialogue with stakeholders (Fieseler, Fleck & Meckel 2010). Social media can be used for various reasons such as educating stakeholders about sustainability efforts undertaken and responding stakeholders' questions (Reilly & Hynan 2014).

2.3.4 Sustainability Message Formulation

The integration of communication throughout the company is the key to success. Conaway and Laasch (2012: 36) write that companies should avoid unnecessary duplication and possible conflict of information in their communication. The companies should strive to clear and coherent messages, that are in congruence with company reality and core business. (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 36.) The fit between sustainability cause and business affect the credibility of sustainability message (Schmeltz 2011). To decrease scepticism and increase credibility companies should choose sustainability initiatives that match their core activities and communicate this in subtle manner (Schmeltz 2011).

It is important that the messages reflect company's sustainability performance to establish credibility (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 46). Explicit, transparent, clear and detailed claims are more persuasive than vague and ambiguous ones (Schmeltz 2011, Davis 1994, Kangun et al 1991). Also, the message should not be too complex (Schmeltz 2011). According to Schmeltz (2011), customers prefer factual based communication rather than impressionistic communication style and underlines, that companies should be explicit, factual and precise in their sustainability communication. Furthermore, Davis (1994) have found that customers view it as less manipulative when the sustainability claim is presented as a second attribute after a more central one.

It seems that customers regard business sustainability as an integrated, natural part of doing business, and also find it credible, when companies are engaging in sustainability for other reasons that doing greater good. Suggesting that companies should not be afraid of communicating their sustainability initiatives as the overall evaluation of such activities is positive even the company would engage in sustainability for self-centred reasons. (Schmeltz 2011.)

The goal is that the integrated communication will reach all the important stakeholder groups of the firm (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 36), which also applies to sustainability

communication. To achieve integrated sustainability communication, company should ensure that the message is same in all their communication channels following the company's overall strategy. Additionally, all stakeholders must receive a consistent message. (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 46.)

Study from Hartman, Rubin and Dhanda (2007) suggest, that the sustainability communication might differ between United States and European Union MNCs. According to their study (2007: 373), U.S. companies tend to communicate and justify business sustainability using more financial arguments whereas European companies incorporated both financial and sustainability elements in justifying their business sustainability activities. Their study also suggested that European companies are more equally engaged in reporting sustainability while U.S. companies were less systematic overall. Both European and U.S. companies seek positive image with regard sustainability communication. (Hartman e al 2007.) However, study from Maignan and Ralston (2002) conflicts with Hartman et al (2007) findings. Maignan and Ralston (2002) found that U.S. companies applied more value-driven sustainability communication while European companies had performance-driven motivations. Other studies suggest that the country of origin is important determiner in sustainability communication, even within Europe (Branco et al 2014), which could explain the different results. Wanderley et al (2008) found that also industry sector influences the communication.

2.3.5   MNC's Sustainability Online Communication

MNCs tend to communicate their concern for sustainability to gain legitimacy (Deegan & Rankin 1996). Especially MNCs that operate in heavily polluting industries are more likely to communicate their environmental responsibility (Zyglidopoulos 2002, Russo & Fouts 1997). Deegan and Rankin (1996) have found that companies, who did not repot sustainability issues and practices did not gain sustainability legitimacy and were more likely to accused of poor sustainability performance. The credibility of MNC's sustainability communication is an important determinant of sustainability legitimacy

(Hunter & Bansal 2007). Credible communication should be both transparent and comprehensive (Livesey & Kearins 2002).

According to Christmann (2004), MNCs also encourage their subsidiaries to communicate their concern for sustainability to increase the company's legitimacy with stakeholders in their various host countries. Integrated communication shows that the entire MNC including its subsidiaries is concerned on sustainability and can help reduce negative stereotypes and biases against the MNC (Christmann 2004, Bansal & Roth 2000). Christmann (2004) have found evidence that institutional pressures from stakeholders, who can grant legitimacy for MNCs, such as governments, industry members and customers, would lead MNCs to standardize their sustainability communication in terms of content, message and appearance across subsidiaries. Credible sustainability communication helps to increase the company's legitimacy and reduce the liability of foreignness (Hunter & Bansal 2007).

However, other studies show that subsidiaries' sustainability communication varies considerably. Hunter and Bansal (2007) found that the level of credibility of sustainability communication varies considerably across countries, among subsidiaries of different MNCs and among subsidiaries of the same multinational. Findings from Szanto (2018) support this. Szanto (2018) found that Hungarian subsidiaries communicate about sustainability issues less intensely than their parent companies on their global websites.

There are a number of reasons, why the sustainability communication may vary among an MNC's subsidiaries. First, subsidiaries of an MNC face institutional duality (Kostova & Roth 2002). The parent company's institutional expectations dominate, but it is possible that the subsidiary only symbolically adopts the practices if there are differences between the parent's and host country's expectations (Kostova & Roth 2002). Therefore, the subsidiary is trying to comply with the parent's expectations but does not know how to do so credibly (Hunter & Bansal 2007). Additionally, the subsidiary must be regarded as legitimate in its host country and have to adopt local practices that can differ from

those followed by the parent (Zaheer 1995, Birkinshaw & Morrison1995). Furthermore, the parent company may not provide enough resources for the subsidiary to invest in sustainability communication (Hunter & Bansal 2007). For instance, Szanto (2018) notify that the Hungarian subsidiaries in his study are small entities within the entire MNCs, so they might not have the resources or motivation to implement the sustainability actions that exists at the global level. Szanto also reminds that global websites often summarize the activities of the entire MNC while subsidiaries focus on local activities. Additionally, the local stakeholders probably are not interested in some global topics that MNC communicate in their global website. (Szanto 2018.)

The variability in the sustainability communication of MNCs' subsidiaries bring the sustainability commitment of the parent company into question. Low credibility of some subsidiaries may compromise the sustainability legitimacy of the whole MNC. (Hunter & Bansal 2007). Therefore, sustainability communication studies suggest, that MNCs should aim to standardize their sustainability communication (Hunter & Bansal 2007, Christmann 2004, Bansal & Roth 2000). However, according to international marketing studies MNCs often use both adaptation and standardisation simultaneously (Vrontis & Papasolomou 2005, Vrontis 2003, van Raij 1997, Main 1989, Boddewyn et al 1986, Sorenson & Wiechmann 1975). Vrontis, Thrassou and Lamprianou (2009) write, that "standardization and adaptation is not an all-or nothing proposition, but a matter of degree". They believe, that MNCs should thus incorporate elements of both approached based on an understanding of the dynamics of the served markets. (Vrontis et al 2009.)

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is assuming, that MNCs with sustainability at core will have corporate brand identity that reflects sustainable values, due to the existing research that has linked the sustainability dimensions to corporate identity (Simões & Sebastiani 2017, Fatma and Rinding 2014). Simões and Sebastiani (2017: 446) have written: "A sustainable identity

is at the core of what the organization is and does, and corporate identity plays a key role in upholding the organization's cultural orientation towards sustainability". According to Simões & Sebastiani (2017), the relationship between corporate sustainability and corporate identity should be symbiotic, where sustainability and identity are integrated to attain a synergetic balance within the company. By aligning the sustainability and identity, the company can have a stronger sustainability position in the market, thus contributing to the development of a more solid reputation (Simões & Sebastiani 2017: 447). In the case of MNCs with sustainability at core, the core values should express pursuit towards environmentally, socially and economically responsible behaviour (Biloslavo & Trnavčevič 2009). As the identity is the basis from where the corporate brand is built, companies with sustainability at core will base their uniqueness and differentiation on the features of their sustainability (Simões & Sebastiani 2017, Urde 2003).

According to Stuart and Kerr (1999: 177), "corporate identity should be the backbone of any communication strategy". Additionally, different writers have underlined the importance of various forms of communication in corporate identity management (Stuart & Kerr 1999, Ind 1997, van Riel 1995). Furthermore, integration of corporate brand identity and communication is highlighted by Ind (1997: 72), "communication strategy is about integration: the development of a coherent plan based upon the reality of the corporate identity". Therefore, the corporate brand identity should be an important part of the MNCs' communication strategy. Therefore, this study is interested, if the corporate brand identity is integrated into the corporate communications.

Therefore, the aim of created theoretical framework is to explain the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the MNCs and how this impact their external online communication internationally based on the previous research. The theoretical framework presents a continuous process. In the top of framework, is the sustainability corporate strategy, which has a link to international corporate level sustainable development goals (SDGs) and corporate brand identity. The SDGs and

corporate brand identity are side by side, and the SDGs have an impact to the corporate brand identity. Sustainable development goals also have a direct impact to the group level targets and KPIs, which influence then to business segment targets and KPIs and to local and sub-unit level targets and KPIs.

In the framework, the corporate brand identity, the targets and KPIs, and the actual implementation impact the external sustainability online communication. The framework uses Conaway and Laash (2012: 1-21) theory, that strong sustainability communication process should have three phases in the following order: first define, second implement and third share. The sustainability online communication is divided to three levels: group level, business segment level and local level sustainability online communication. This study assumes that the group level targets, KPIs and implementation have an impact to group level communication, while business segment level targets, KPIs and implementation have an influence on business segment level communication, and local level targets, KPIs and implementation impact the local level communication.

The framework is based on Urde's research (2013) of the corporate brand identity, which integrates the market-oriented and brand-oriented approaches. Therefore, both the organization and stakeholders affect the corporate brand identity. Thus, in the framework, the external sustainability online communication creates stakeholder reaction, which has then an impact to the strategy and corporate brand identity. The theoretical framework is presented in the figure 7.
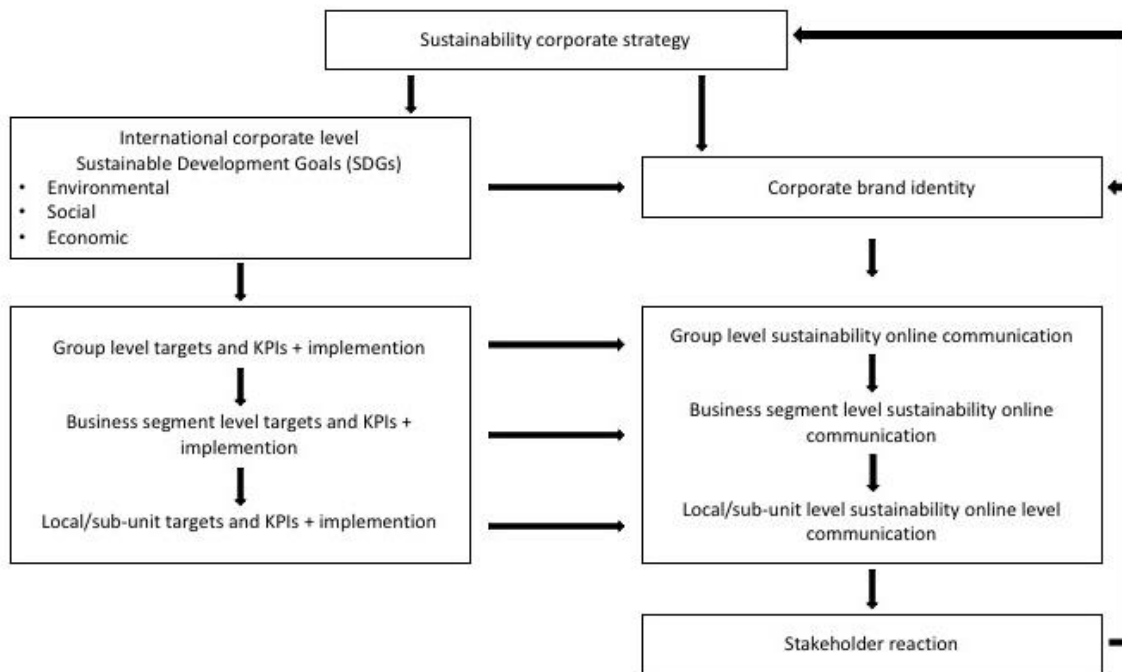
Figure 7. Theoretical Framework.

3   Methodology

The purpose of this thesis will be both exploratory and explanatory. An exploratory study aims to find out "what is happening" and to understand the problem. While an explanatory study aims to establish causal relationships between the variables. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009: 139-140.) This study will research how Finnish B2B MNCs in primary industries with sustainability at core design of their DNA integrate their sustainability identity to their online communication. It will also aim to establish causal relationships between sustainability business strategy, corporate brand identity and online communication.

This study will use abductive approach, which is a combination of deductive and inductive approaches and "refers to the process of moving from the everyday descriptions and meaning given by people, to categories and concepts that create the basis of an understanding" (Eriksson et al. 2008: 21, 2). The abductive approach is chosen due to the fact that the theoretical framework for sustainable corporate brand identity management and sustainability online communication is formulated in the theoretical part and then the theoretical framework will be modified by utilizing the findings of the empirical data.

This study will be qualitative research. Saunders et al. (2009: 480-482) have written that is in nature non-numeric and based on meanings expressed through words. The data will be conducted using case study strategy and it will be collected using cross sectional design. The goal of this thesis is to have small sample of cases to bring in-depth understanding of a complex phenomenon. In the data collection, will be used semi-structured thematic interviews as those are suitable for gaining rich understanding of the phenomenon and the related context. Additionally, secondary sources such as corporate websites and social media channels will be studied.

For this study will be selected Finnish B2B MNCs in primary industries with sustainability at core design of their DNA. Meaning, that the corporations are operating in primary

industry, such as mining or forestry, that is concerned with obtaining or providing raw materials for conversion into commodities. Additionally, the corporations must operate across national borders, have facilities in more than one country, are international in their operations, vision and strategies. Furthermore, the corporations must base their uniqueness and differentiation on the features of their sustainability. For the selection process will be used corporate websites. This study is assuming that in the case of MNCs with sustainability at core design of their DNA, the company's vision and mission, purpose, and core values mentioned in their corporate websites would express pursuit towards sustainability agenda.

First, eight Finnish B2B MNCs in primary industries are identified. The eight corporations operate in oil, mining, chemistry or forest industry. Additionally, they operate across national borders and have facilities in more than one country. However, one of the eight potential corporations is operating only in the Nordic countries, and is thus excluded from the study. Second, the corporate websites of the potential case companies are analysed. According, to the corporate websites the seven potential case companies have sustainability as a part of doing business and at the heart of their strategy. For instance, their strategy, vision and mission, purpose, and core values express pursuit towards sustainability agenda. After, the seven potential case companies are identified, 14 potential interviewees, who are responsible of business sustainability or sustainability communication, are identified from social media channel LinkedIn and contacted by email. In the final data, are 6 interviewees from 4 Finnish B2B MNCs in primary industry with sustainability at core design of their DNA.

4 Findings

All the case companies are Finnish MNCs, that operate globally, have facilities in more than one country, are international in their operations, vision and strategies, and can be described as B2B companies. They operate in traditional primary industries, mining, chemical and forest, changed by technological development and societal attitudes. Additionally, all the companies have sustainability as a part of doing business and at the heart of their strategy and base their uniqueness and differentiation on the features of their sustainability. The information of case companies is summarized in the table 1.

The first two case companies A and B are traditional Finnish forest industry companies, that have repositioned themselves. The company A aims to lead "forest-based bioindustry into a sustainable, innovation-driven and exciting future beyond fossils", while the company B has positioned themselves as "the renewable materials company". The third case company C is from a chemical industry, which goal is to serve their customers by "improving product quality, resource efficiency and sustainability". The fourth and final case company D is industrial machinery company serving the mining, constructions and recycling industries. They describe themselves as "a frontrunner in sustainable technologies" that help their customers to "improve efficiency, increase productivity and reduce environmental and economic risks". The company B is the biggest with 26,000 employees and company C is the smallest with 5,000 employees.

For this thesis has been interviewed 6 persons – 1-2 employees per company. The interviewed employees are responsible of business sustainability, sustainability communication, marketing and brand, logistics, sourcing and operations. They are all in managerial positions. The interviewed persons were able to answer questions regarding the company's corporate brand identity, business sustainability, and sustainability online communication. All the interviewed persons were working in the parent country, Finland. In addition to the interviews, secondary sources such as corporate websites and social media channels are used.

Table 1. Case Companies.

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Industry	Pulp, paper, forest	Pulp, paper, forest	Chemicals	Industrial machinery for the mining, constructions and recycling
Revenue EUR million (2019)	10,238	10,055	2,658.8	3,635
Employees	18,700	26,000	5,000	15,800
Geographical presence	46 countries: Finland, Germany, Other Europe, China, North America, Uruguay, Other Asia, Rest of the World	30 countries: Finland, China, Sweden, Poland, Germany, Russia, Other Europe, Brazil and Uruguay, Other countries	24 countries: Europe, Middle East and Africa, Asia Pacific, Americas	52 countries: Europe, North America, South and Central America, Asia Pacific, Africa and Middle East
Online communication channels analysed	Corporate websites, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube	Corporate websites, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest	Corporate websites, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram	Corporate websites, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube
The persons interviewed	Person A: Manager, Responsibility Communication & Brand (from group) Person B: Senior Manager, Brand & Marketing (from business segment)	Person C: Senior Vice President, Sustainability	Person D: Director, Sustainability Person E: Director, Logistics Sourcing and Operations	Person F: Director Sustainable Development

4.1 Corporate Strategy: Vision and Mission

"Sustainability is a good business", say the interviewees from the case companies. The global megatrends such as urbanization, changing lifestyles with growth in e-commerce

and higher use of packaging and board, more efficient use of scarce natural resources, focus on biobased and recyclable materials, alternatives for fossil-based materials, tightening environmental regulation, and climate change mitigation have made sustainability as a key driver for the long-term growth for global companies. Based on the interviews and case companies' corporate websites and social media channels, the case companies see sustainability as source of competitive advantage, growth and revenue and thus have integrated sustainability into their strategy and purpose. For instance, the interviewee C from company B says, "Our investors are interested in knowing, how we have understood the global megatrends". Henderson and Van den Steen (2015: 327) have defined corporate purpose as "a concrete goal or objective for the firm that reaches beyond profit maximization". The endeavour of case companies is to create solutions to accelerate sustainability.

Company A's strategy is beyond fossils and they strive to create value by seizing the potential of bioeconomy. According to interviewee A, beyond fossils is "the backbone our strategy and leads everything we do". Their strategic corner stones are performance, growth, innovation and responsibility. Key drivers for their growth are answering to global megatrends and offering sustainable solutions to replace fossils. Thus, they are focusing on high value fibre, specialty packaging materials and molecular bioproducts.

Company B's strategy is to meet the demand for sustainable products based on renewable materials and create value in packaging, biomaterials, wooden construction, and paper. Global megatrends are key drivers for their growth, such as the demand for sustainable packaging in e-commerce, the demand for renewable, plastic free products, and the demand for biobased materials. The company has chosen to focus their growth on packaging, building solutions and biomaterials innovations. The interviewee C says, "Sustainability is our business; we will not do business, which is not sustainable".

Company C's strategy is to achieve revenue growth by providing customers sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries. They list as their three corner stones:

profitability, growth and sustainability. Key drivers for their growth are water treatment and biobased and recyclable materials. Interviewee E from company C says, that this type of growth can only be achieved by increasing global presence. Furthermore, company C have in their strategy that significant amount of the revenue will be based on biobased products in the future. Interviewees D and E from the company C says, that they will do the shift towards higher sustainability by gradually transforming their product portfolio to more biobased, reduce the use of fossil-fuel based carbon as raw material and increase the share of recycled material in their products.

Company D's strategy focus on growth and improving sustainability. The company aims to become a top-tier supplier of products, technologies and services in the aggregates and minerals industries and a top financial performer and has defined their purpose as: "enabling sustainable modern life." The corner stones of their strategy are integration and financial performance, customer centricity, sustainability and performance culture. According to interviewee F from company D, "We offer a licence to operate for our customers, who operate in heavily polluting industries, with technology that help our customers to operate better, more efficiently, more environmentally friendly, and more safely".

The companies' strategy, purpose, vision and mission have been summarised in the table 2. It is evident that the sustainability is an integral part of case companies' strategy and source of competitive advantage and growth. Therefore, this study is interested in analysing, if the sustainability is also part of organizational DNA, and if the case companies are "true believers", who are motivated first and foremost by who they are and are interested in how they can positively and proactively have an impact (Fawcett et al 2015). Thus, this study is interested in the case companies' corporate brand identity.

Table 2. Case Companies' Sustainability Corporate Strategy.

Company	Strategy	Purpose	Vision	Values
A	Future beyond fossils	Create value by seizing the limitless potential of bioeconomy	Lead the forest-based bioindustry into a sustainable, innovation-driven, and exciting future beyond fossils	Trust and be trusted; Achieve together; Renew with Courage
B	Support customers to meet consumers' demand for sustainable products based on renewable materials	Do good for people and the planet. Replace non-renewable materials with renewable products.	Replace non-renewable materials with renewable products	Lead; Do What's Right
C	Serve customers around the world and improve their product quality, resource efficiency and sustainability	Use chemistry to improve everyday	To become the leading provider of sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries	Doing things, the right way
D	Aim to become a top-tier supplier of products, technologies and services in the aggregates and minerals industries and top financial performer	Enable sustainable modern life and aim to create solutions to accelerate sustainability	To be customers' number one choice for sustainable use of Earth's natural resources	High ambition; Customer in centre, Getting it done – together; Open and honest

4.2 Corporate Brand Identity

To analyse the corporate brand identities of the case companies this paper will use Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM). Urde (2013) has developed indicative questions for the application of the CBIM framework. These questions were asked from the interviewees to get a view of the case companies' corporate brand identities, and to study if the sustainability is part of their organizational DNA.

As discussed in the theoretical part, the matrix composes of three components, which all have three elements. The components have been distributed to external elements, internal/external elements and internal elements. All the elements of matrix are interrelated and should form a structured entity. In the middle of the matrix is core, that consist of promise and core value. (Urde 2013.) According to (2013: 751), "in a coherent corporate brand identity, the core reflects all elements, and every element reflects the core".

4.2.1 External Elements

According to Urde (2013), the external elements influence image and reputation of the company. The external elements are value proposition, relationships and position. The external elements of the case companies' corporate brand identity are summarized in the table 3 based on the interviews and case companies' corporate websites.

First, the value proposition refers to the appealing arguments that corporation directs to customers and non-customer stakeholders (Frow & Payne 2011, Rintamäki et al 2007). Sustainability is an important value proposition for all the case companies. Case companies A and B focus on meeting customer demands for sustainable alternatives to fossil-based materials and bio-based innovations. For instance, interviewee A from company A says, "We offer sustainable raw material, which can replace fossil-based raw materials", and interviewee C from company B says, "We are here for two reasons; first we want to be a partner in sustainability and second we want to get rid of plastic". According to interviewee D, company C provides their customers "expertise, application know-how and chemicals, that improve customers' sustainability, product quality, process and resource efficiency", and according to interviewee F, company D provides their customers "technology, that improve customers' efficiency, safety and sustainability, and therefore licence to operate". Therefore, all the case companies highlight sustainability in their value propositions for their customers.

Second, an effective value proposition should lead to favourable relationship between company and its stakeholders (Aaker 2010 & 2004). For instance, all interviewees discuss about being a partner in sustainability for their customers. Interviewee B from company A's labelling business says, that they want to be "partner of choice in sustainable labelling", and interviewee F from company D says, "We want our customer to think, that we can help them to reduce their environmental impact". Furthermore, all the case companies describe themselves as reliable long-term partners. For instance, interviewee F from company D says, that they are "reliable long-term partner", and interviewee C from company B says, that they want to be "a partner in climate change". According to Urde (2013. 753), "relationships and how they are built over time, reflect and define the corporate brand identity". The interviewees also discuss about transparency. Especially interviewee C states that they want to be radically transparent to all of their stakeholders and says that trust comes from transparency. According to him, is important to tell what went well and especially what went wrong, and what they are trying to do fix it. He continues, that they have got a lot of credibility from being transparent and honest both from their customers and other stakeholders. All case companies report their safety and environmental incidents in their annual reports.

Finally, the position elements specify how management wants the corporate brand to be positioned in the market and in the minds of key customers and other stakeholders (Keller 2012). According to the interviewees and their corporate websites, all the case companies want to be a leading provider of sustainable solutions. Company A wants to be a leading provider of sustainable solutions to replace fossils, while company B's goal is to be a leading global provider of renewable solutions in packaging, biomaterials, wooden construction and paper. Additionally, company C wishes to grow by becoming a leading provider of sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries, and company D aims to be a leading company in process technology, equipment and services serving the minerals, metals and aggregates industries, as well as to be a leader in sustainable technology.

Table 3. Case Companies' External Elements of Corporate Brand Identity.

Company	A	B	C	D
External elements				
Value propositions	Meet demands for sustainable alternatives to fossil-based materials Bio-based innovations Reliable partner and risk-free supplier Help customers to meet their sustainability targets Safe investment	Meet demands for eco-friendly and circular solutions Meet demands for plastic free and eco-friendly circular packaging Meet demands for alternatives to fossil-based materials Biomaterials innovation Innovation & sustainability Partner in Sustainability	Provide expertise, application know-how and chemicals, that improve customers' sustainability, product quality, process and resource efficiency Innovation, digitalization & sustainability Partner in sustainability	Provide customers licence to operate Provide technology, that improve customers' efficiency, safety and sustainability
Relationships	Reliable & responsible long-term partner	Transparent, reliable partner	Reliable partner	Reliable long-term partner
Position	A leading provider of sustainable solutions to replace fossils	A leading global provider of renewable solutions in packaging, biomaterials, wooden construction and paper	A leading provider of sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries	A leading company in process technology, equipment and services serving the minerals, metals and aggregates industries A leader in sustainable technology

4.2.2 External/Internal Elements

External/internal elements are core, personality and expression. The external/internal elements of case companies' corporate brand identity are summarized in the table 4 based on the interviews and case companies' corporate websites. The brand core is in the heart of corporate brand identity and consists of brand promise and supporting core values, which lead up to a promise (Urde 2013). For instance, company A promises to help their partners to go beyond fossils with sustainable innovation, while one of their core values is "achieve together". "Cooperation is our core value", interviewee A from company A says. Additionally, company B promises to help customers to be eco-friendlier and transition towards a bioeconomy, while their core values are lead and do what's right. Interviewee C from company B believes, that their employees have "a moral compass", that helps them to navigate and act according to their corporate values.

Furthermore, company C promises to provide customers sustainable chemical solutions and protect the world's resources through better chemistry, while their core value is do things the right way. According to interviewee D from company C, the core values can be seen every day. As an example, he tells, that "23 % of our products are made from waste or recycled raw materials and we kicked this year a big project about bio-based products". Another example he gives is, that "We have made an effort to really understand, what is our impact both negative and positive", and continues "We have 68 production sites and in the site level we have done impacts and aspects mapping". Finally, company D promises to their customers to help them improve efficiency, increase productivity and reduce environmental and economic risks, while one of their core values is customer in centre. According to interviewee F from company D, "We give our customers a licence to operate". Therefore, all the case companies have core values that support them in achieving their brand promise.

According to Urde (2013) personality and expression connect the internal and external elements of the corporate brand identity. Personality should describe the corporate brand's individual character (Urde 2013). The interviewees describe their companies as

safe, reliable, transparent, honest, responsible, innovators and long-term partners. Many of the interviewees say that their strength is that they are reliable partners for their customers, but they would like to be seen more as innovators and brave. For instance, interviewee D from company C says, "We want to be seen as innovators, experts, safe and responsible". Additionally, interviewee A from company A say, that "We are regarded safe and traditional, when we would like to be regarded as surprising and innovative" and interviewee C from company B says, that they would want to be regarded as "fun, inspiring and entrepreneurial". Furthermore, interviewee F from company D says, that they want to be "reliable and honest long-term partner, who can be trusted".

Expression defines the verbal and visual manifestations of the brand (Urde 2013). The expression of case companies resembles each other's. The case companies A, B and C all have modern, Nordic and minimalist visual design in their websites. The case company D also has modern design in their website, but more industrial. The case companies A, B and C use earthy colours in their websites. Also, the case company D's website is mostly black and white, but they use additionally bright highlight colours. The case companies A and B use a lot of pictures of forest, nature and people, while case company C uses a lot of pictures of people in everyday and case company D uses industry pictures. For instance, the interviewee B from case company A, describes their visual identity as "green, earthy colours and imagery of forests". All the case companies discuss a lot of sustainability in their websites and social media. Companies A, B, and C have also tried to make their business and role in the society more tangible and concrete by illustrating their role in everyday life. Additionally, case companies' sustainability vision is the core message in their corporate websites and social media channels.

Table 4. Case Companies' Internal/External Elements of Corporate Brand Identity.

Company	A	B	C	D
Internal/external elements				
Core: promise and values	Promise: Help partners to go beyond fossils with sustainable innovation. Values: Trust and be trusted; Achieve together; Renew with courage; Partner of choice	Promise: Help customers to be eco-friendlier and more competitive in a world with a growing demand for sustainable solutions, and to help them transition towards a bioeconomy. Value: Lead; Do what's right	Promise: Provide customers sustainable chemical solutions and protect the world's resources through better chemistry. Values: Doing things the right way	Promise: Help customers improve efficiency, increase productivity and reduce environmental and economic risks. Values: High ambition; Customer in centre, Getting it done – together; Open and honest
Expression	Green, black, white Forest, nature, end products Nordic and minimalist design Sustainability vision	Yellow, green, grey, white Nature, people, everyday, end products Nordic and minimalist design Sustainability vision	Black, white, grey, beige People, everyday Nordic and minimalist design Sustainability vision	Black, white, bright colours Industries Industrial design Sustainability vision
Personality	Safe and reliable	Transparent, honest and reliable ABC: agile, brave & curious	Innovators, experts, safe and responsible	Reliable and honest Long-term partner

4.2.3 Internal Elements

The internal elements are mission and vision, culture, and competences. The internal elements of the case companies' corporate brand identity are summarised in the table

5 based on the interviews and case companies' corporate websites. The corporate mission should explain what engages and motivates company beyond the aim of making money (Collins & Porras 1994). All the case companies have mission statements with a sustainability focus. Interviewee A from company A says, that "It is a fact, that sustainability is good business and thus integrated to our entire business". Company A's mission is to build a sustainable future beyond fossils, while case company B wish to replace non-renewable materials with renewable products. Case company C aspire to ensure safe clean water for people and nature, and company D aim to create solutions to accelerate sustainability in the industries they operate in.

The corporate vision describes what inspires the company to evolve (de Chernatony 2010). Company A wants to lead the forest-based bioindustry into a sustainable, innovation-driven, and exciting future beyond fossils, while company B's vision is to be the renewable materials company. Company C aim to become the leading provider of sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries, and company D wish to be customers' number one choice for sustainable use of Earth's natural resources. Therefore, all the case companies have sustainability vision.

According to Senge (2006), together mission and vision are the sources of commitment for corporate brand identity. For instance, interviewee D from company C says, that "Everyone in our company has shared understanding that our greatest mission is to provide safe clean water to society". The interviews and case companies' corporate websites show commitment to sustainability. Companies see sustainability as a competitive advantage and source of sustainable long-term growth. The companies discuss in their websites and annual reports about the global megatrends and are responding to these trends by integrating sustainability into their strategy and into their corporate brand identity. For instance, the company B write in their annual report: "Out of the global megatrends impacting societies, markets and businesses, climate change is our greatest challenge".

The culture of organization should reflect the corporate attitudes, values and beliefs (Schorder & Saltzer-Morling 2006, Hatch & Schultz 2001). The interviewees say that corporate values are important and have an effect on corporate culture. The interviewee B from company A says, that as a manager the interviewee tries to make sure, that their subordinates are aware of the corporate values. The core values, that the interviewees mention, are cooperation, work safety and work-place wellbeing. Interviewee C from company B believes, that values "do direct the daily activities". Furthermore, interviewee D from company C thinks, that internal communication is important:

"You communicate those values, and you create a culture in the company. You can see it every day in the company, that we are creating this cooperation and innovation can come from anywhere. And people are responding to the growing sustainability trend and looking for innovations".

Finally, competences are what the company is especially good at or what makes the company better than the competitors (Urde 2013). Competences are relevant for the creation and maintenance of sustainable competitive advantage (Urde 2013). The case companies list sustainability, reliability, partnership and innovation as their competences. Interviewee F from company D says, that their strengths are sustainability and "being strong global company". Furthermore, interviewee D from company C believes their strength is, that:

"The customers get certain piece of mind. They know they are getting reliability and company that is working responsibly. And deliver on time and quality. Additionally, global understanding about safety practices."

Table 5. Case Companies' Internal Elements of Corporate Brand Identity.

Company	A	B	C	D
Internal				
Mission & Vision	Mission: Build a sustainable future beyond fossils Vision: Lead the forest-based bioindustry into a sustainable, innovation-driven, and exciting future beyond fossils	Mission: Replace non-renewable materials with renewable products Vision: Renewable materials company	Mission: Ensure safe clean water for people and nature Vision: Become the leading provider of sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries	Mission: Create solutions to accelerate sustainability in the industries we operate in Vision: Be customers' number one choice for sustainable use of Earth's natural resources
Culture	Cooperation	Early intervention approach Work-place wellbeing	Work safety	Risk observation Work-place wellbeing
Competences	Sustainability Long-term relationships with customers	Innovation Responsibility Transparency Partnership	Reliability, responsibility, delivery on time, quality, safety R&D capability	Sustainability Partnership Globality Premium products

4.2.4 Summary of Findings of Corporate Brand Identity

Urde (2013: 751) says in his study, that "in a coherent corporate brand identity, the core reflects all elements, and every element reflects the core". This seems to apply for case companies. For instance, the interviewee A from company A says, that beyond fossils is their company's strategic statement, mission, vision and brand promise. Additionally, beyond fossils is in the core of company A's corporate brand identity and reflects all elements, and every element reflects the core. For instance, the interviewees A and B mention beyond fossils when discussed about their value proposition, position, promise,

and mission and vision. Furthermore, sustainability is important part of the rest of their corporate brand identity elements.

According to interviews sustainability seems to be integral part of case companies corporate brand identity, and therefore part of their organizational DNA. Thus, companies seem to be "true believers", who are motivated and interested in how they can positively and proactively have an impact. However, the interviewees highlight the strategic and financial reasons for integrating sustainability into their business and organization in addition to the moral and altruistic reasons. The interviewees regard sustainability as good business, which can sustain the growth of the company. This should increase the case companies' credibility, as previous findings suggest, that customers regard business sustainability as an integrated, natural part of doing business, and also find it credible, when companies are engaging in sustainability for other reasons that just doing greater good (Schmeltz 2011).

To better understand, the process of cascading the sustainability strategy and identity across the company, this study also analyses the case companies' target setting across the MNCs and their subsidiaries. For instance, Hah and Freeman's (2014) study suggest, that MNCs tend to adopt different business sustainability strategies to build external or internal legitimacy in their host countries. Therefore, how the targets are cascaded in the MNCs can tell something about their business sustainability strategy.

4.3   Sustainable Development Goals

All the four case companies are committed to the UN Global Compact's ten principles to align their strategy and operations with universal principles of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption, and take action to that advances the societal goals. Case companies have also adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The companies have done mapping of the SDGs and considered their impact and potential to the SDGs and chosen priority SDGs – the most strategic SDGs to their businesses. The

priority SDGs contribute to key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets. The interviewee D from company C explains the process of mapping the SDGs:

"We have done mapping about UN sustainable development goals. We followed a methodology developed by World Counsellor for Sustainable Development together with chemicals companies. They were looking what are the typical impact chemical companies have and therefore relevant for chemical company when looking sustainable development goals. To do that we mapped our company's impact and potential to the SDGs. We took our strategy and what types of product we have and our geography. That's how we found the most important SDGs."

For instance, the company C has clean water and sanitation, responsible consumption and production, and climate actions as their priority SDGs. These SDGs are affiliated with their strategy to become the leading provider of sustainable chemical solutions for water-intensive industries. Company C justify their chose of first SDG, clean water and sanitation, by stating that company C develops technologies and solutions that enable their customers to recycle and reuse water resources. Their second SDG, responsible consumption and production, they explain with their business, chemistry, which is at the heart of enabling circular economy and thus, they can help their customers to achieve circularity. Their third SDG, climate action, the company argues with their target to reduce Scope 1 (direct activities e.g., manufacturing) and Scope 2 (upstream activities e.g., supply of raw materials) greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 (compared to 2018). Additionally, for Scope 3 (downstream activities, logistics), the company C is implementing the Global Logistics Emissions Council's (GLEC) Framework. All the case companies SDGs are listed in the table 6.

Table 6. Priority SDGs of the Case Companies.

Company	Priority Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
A	6. Clean water and sanitation 7. Affordable and clean energy 8. Decent work and economic growth 12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action 15. Life on land
B	12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action 15. Life on land
C	6. Clean water and sanitation 12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action
D	3. Good health and well-being 4. Quality education 6. Clean water and sanitation 7. Affordable and clean energy 8. Decent work and economic growth 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 13. Climate action 17. Partnerships for the goals

4.4 Targets and Key Performance Indicators

The case companies have different sustainability focus areas, that can be divided into economic, social and environmental. For each focus areas, the case companies have defined targets and key performance indicators (KPIs). The case companies have both long-term and short-term targets and KPIs. The focus areas are typically part of the companies' strategies and only changed, when the strategies are updated or changed. The targets and KPIs connected to the long-term focus areas may change over the time. The case companies' targets and KPIs contribute positively to SDGs.

The case companies have aggregated and reported targets and KPIs both group level and business segment level. The interviews report cascading strategic management of targets and KPIs top-down. The Interviewee C from company B says that targets and KPIs are defined in the group level but have been cascaded to business segment level. Also, Interviewee A from Company A says, that targets and KPIs have been cascaded to

business segments, but the business segments also have their very own targets and KPIs related to their operations and responsibilities. The interviewees think it is important that the targets and KPIs are cascaded to business segment level. For instance, interviewee D from Company B says: "We are only as good as our business units' performance is. The targets must be cascaded, as otherwise they are disconnected and inefficient." The interviewees also point out, that in top of the shared group targets, they typically have also local and functional targets to support the operative parts of the business. The interviewee E from company C tells that it is very typical for example local manufacturing sites to have additional sustainability targets defined by the local authorities. Additionally, interviewee E explains that logistics has created additional lower-level targets to support company's strategy related climate targets.

For instance, company C has defined five themes (people, water, circularity, climate, and safety) where they can make the biggest difference, and which contribute to their profitability. Additionally, they have defined targets for each theme in global group-level. First, their target for safety is to reduce their total recordable injuries (TRI). Second, their target for people is to reach top 10% cross industry norm Diversity & Inclusion by 2025. Third, for water their target is to continuously improve freshwater use intensity. Fourth, for circularity their targets are to reduce waste intensity by -15% by 2030 and create revenue from biobased products more than 500 million euros by 2030. Finally, their target for climate is to reduce -30% Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030. The case company C also has global group-level KPIs such as achieve TRI 1.9 by the end of 2020, which is also bonus target for all the employees. The sustainability business strategy from case company C has been illustrated in the figure 8.
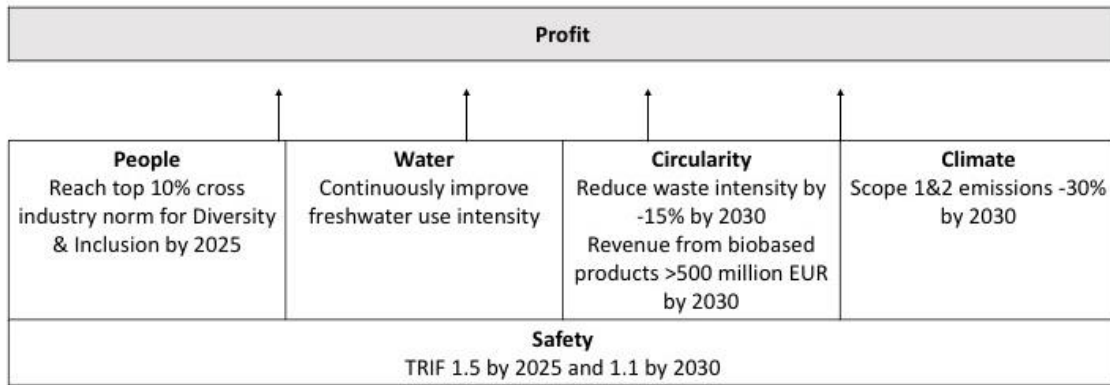
Figure 8. Sustainability Business Strategy from Case Company C.

Another example of cascading the targets and KPIs is from company A, that has targets and KPIs from group level to business segment level and ultimately to local production units. For instance, the labelling business have their own sustainability targets and KPIs, which support the international group level targets and KPIs. The important SDG for labelling business segment is circular of economy, which they are pursuing with life cycle assessment, eco-design and bio-based components, waste management, recyclability and recycled content. Additionally, they have a sustainability program for their label material factory sites to improve sustainability performance. To reach their sustainability targets, their factory teams have created site-specific roadmaps to reach targets and track progress on a scorecard. The scorecard has approximately 40 performance indicators for the labelling business operations related to waste generation, energy consumption, safety performance, supplier sustainability performance, development opportunities for employees, community engagement and measures of diversity.

4.5   Sustainability Online Communication

To analyse the case companies' sustainability online communication strategies, the case companies' corporate websites and social media channels and accounts are listed and categorized to group level, business segment level and local level in the table 7. The case companies use different international online communication approaches. The case

companies D and C seem to manage the communication from group level and do not have own websites or social media accounts for their business segments or local subsidiaries, excluding one exception. Whereas, the case companies A and B have also international group level, business segment level and local level websites and social media accounts.

The case company D have international group level website with two language versions, Finnish and English. They do not have own websites for different business segments. Additionally, they only have internal group level social media accounts. The main language used in the social media channels is English, but content can also be found in other languages.

Also, the case company C has only international group level website, with seven language versions, and do not have own websites for different business segments. The difference is that the company C has some level of localization in their language versions, as not all business segments are included in all language versions. Similarly, to case company D, the company C only have international group level social media accounts with both English and Finnish as the used languages, if excluded one local Facebook and LinkedIn page in English.

The case company A has the most different websites and social media accounts, and their business segments and local subsidiaries seem to have the most independency in their online communication. They have six language versions of international group level website, but only Finnish and English language versions include all the business segments. Additionally, all the business segments have also their own websites, which have variable number of language versions. Under business segments are also web pages for local production units. Furthermore, they have two local sites of which one has one language version and the other has three language versions. The case company A also have numerous social media accounts. The have international group level social media accounts, business segment level social media accounts and local social media

accounts. The international group level social media channels use both Finnish and English in their content, while some of the business segment level social media accounts use only English or language of the target group. For instance, the labelling business segment uses English in their social media accounts, but the forest business segment uses Finnish. Local social media accounts intrinsically use language of the target group. The interviewee A from company A comments, that they do have "a great number of social media accounts". According to the interviewee, "The teams are independent and want visibility, but it might not be the best solution". Interviewee says, that in the future, they will try to strengthen the message by reducing the amount of social media accounts and concentrating the communication to global social media accounts.

The case company B has four language versions of the international group level website and seven local websites. Additionally, they have one business segment level website, which have variable number of language versions. The case company B also have social media accounts in all levels. The language used in international group level social media accounts is mostly English with few exceptions. The business segment level social media accounts use English and local social media accounts the language of target group.

Table 7. Mapping of Case Companies External Online Communication Channels.

Company	A	B	C	D
International group level				
Websites	6 language versions. Only Finnish and English language versions include all the business segments.	4 language versions.	7 language versions. Only English language version includes all the business segments.	2 language versions.
Social media channels	LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest	LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter	LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter	LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter
Business segment level				
Websites	All the business segments have their own websites (in total 22) with varying number of language versions.	1 business segment level website with 8 language versions.	-	-
Social media accounts by channels	LinkedIn (9), Facebook (2), Instagram (3), YouTube (5), Twitter (2)	LinkedIn (4), Facebook (3), YouTube (1), Twitter (2)		-
Local level				
Websites	2 local websites (1 only in Spanish and 1 with 3 language versions).	9 local websites	-	-
Social media accounts by channels	LinkedIn (1), Facebook (5), Instagram (3), YouTube (4), Twitter (3),	LinkedIn (2), Facebook (16), Instagram (4), YouTube (1), Twitter (1)	LinkedIn (1 in English), Facebook (1 in English)	

Therefore, it seems that the case companies differ in the level of freedom and independency they give to their business segments and local subsidiaries in online communication. The case companies C and D seem to manage online communication in the group level, while the case companies A and B give some level of freedom and

independency to their business segments and local subsidiaries. Especially, the company A's business segments seem to be very independent in their online communication, as they all have their own websites and social media accounts. The case company B has also given some level of freedom to their business segments as some businesses have their own social media accounts. However, when analysed the number of websites and social media accounts, the case company B do not seem to give as much freedom to their business segments as the company A. Case companies A and B have also given some level of freedom to their local subsidiaries to have own websites and social media accounts. Company B has nine local websites and numerous local social media accounts. For instance, they have 16 local Facebook pages. Also, company A has two local websites and several local social media accounts.

The high independency that the case companies A and B give to their business segments and local subsidiaries might affect to the congruence of their sustainability online communication. According to researchers, integrated communication shows that the entire MNC including its subsidiaries is concerned on sustainability and can help reduce negative stereotypes and biases against the MNC (Christmann 2004, Bansal & Roth 2000), whereas variability in the communication may bring the sustainability commitment of the parent company into question (Hunter & Bansal 2007). Previous studies have shown that subsidiaries' sustainability communication can vary considerably from the global corporate level communication (Szanto 2018, Hunter & Bansal 2007). Therefore, high level of independency might be risk for strong and congruence sustainability online communication.

However, global corporate level sustainability online communication often summarizes the activities of the entire MNC while business segment level communication focus on their own activities and subsidiaries focus on their own local activities. Hence, business segment level and local level sustainability online communication can better serve stakeholders, when communication is better targeted to them. Additionally, if the MNCs are able encourage their subsidiaries to communicate their concern for sustainability, it

can increase their legitimacy with stakeholders in their various host countries (Christmann 2004).

Sustainability communication studies suggest, that MNCs should aim to standardize their sustainability communication internationally to achieve congruency. However, according to international marketing studies MNCs often use both adaptation and standardisation simultaneously (Vrontis & Papasolomou 2005, Vrontis 2003, van Raij 1997, Main 1989, Boddewyn et al 1986, Sorenson & Wiechmann 1975). Therefore, this study is interested in what level the case companies standardize their international sustainability online communication.

4.5.1 The Level of Standardization in International Sustainability Online Communication

All the case companies report having sustainability as the core of their corporate brand identities. That is why, this study is interested in analysing, how integrated their corporate brand identities are into their international online communication and how strong is their international sustainability online communication. The findings have been summarized in the table 8. In the table have been listed, what corporate brand identity elements are communicated, and what business sustainability elements can be found from companies' online communication. Additionally, the findings have been categorized to international group level, business segment level and local level to have an idea in what level the case companies standardize their international sustainability online communication.

All the external elements of the corporate brand identity seem to be visible in the corporate level online communication. Case companies' value propositions, position, promise and core values, expression, personality, and mission and vision can be identified from their global corporate websites, annual reports and social media channels. Additionally, the case companies discuss about their strategy, purpose,

megatrends, SDGs, targets and KPIs, sustainability performance, certifications, sustainability indices, recognitions, sustainability innovations, sustainability investments, social responsibility, and sponsorships and donations in their global online communication. Therefore, it can be argued that the case companies' sustainable corporate brand identities are highly visible in corporate level online communication and the case companies have strong sustainability communication at least in global corporate level.

The corporate brand elements are also visible for the case company A in their business segment level online communication. All the same corporate brand identity elements that can found from group level online communication, can also found from their business segment level online communication. Additionally, the interview with person B from company A's labelling business give support, that the business segments share the corporate brand identity. In the contrary, all the corporate brand identity elements could not be found from business segment level online communication for case company B. However, the company B has only one business segment level website, which does not have a lot of content.

Even the company B business segment level website does not have a lot of content, sustainability is still the corner stone of their message. Sustainability is also the main theme in case company B's business segment level social media channels, where the sustainability communication is very strong and informative. Company A's business segment's sustainability communication is also strong. Even the company A gives a high-level of independency to their business segments in their online communication, the business segments communicates almost as strongly about sustainability issues as the group. Interviewee B from company A's labelling business says, "90 % of our communication is about sustainability".

The corporate brand identity elements are also visible for case companies A and B in their local sites. The case company A has two local websites and some of their business

segment level websites are only in the target language as they operate only in one market and can therefore be regarded as local websites. Additionally, they have webpages for their production units under business segments. From those local sites could be found same corporate brand identity elements than from the global site. The case company B has local sites under their global site, and those sites' content is similar to the global site. Therefore, many of the corporate brand identity elements could be found from the local sites as well.

Also, corporate sustainability elements could be found from case companies A and B's local sites. As already mentioned, the content of company B's local sites is similar to the global site and therefore many of the corporate sustainability elements could be identified from the local sites as well. The sustainability communication was also strong in company A's local sites. For instance, the case company A has a webpage for their Finnish production unit under Pulp business segment's website and in that webpage is communicated the company A's strategy, purpose, and vision. Additionally, the webpage communicates their sustainability targets, environmental parameters, environmental permits, certifications, social responsibility, and sponsoring and donations. Furthermore, the webpage, as all the pulp and mill production units of the company A, is part of Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and reports accordingly.

However, the sustainability communication is not as strong in the case companies' local social media channels as in global and businesses' channels, even many sustainability themed posts can also be found from the local social media channels. When the content of local social media accounts is analysed, it seems that majority of their posts focus on presenting their employees or job opportunities they offer. Furthermore, social media channels for local production units are often used for status updates to locals. For instance, interviewee A from company A says, "Even some production units have their own social media accounts, which they use for local communication such as informing locals about the bad odours coming from the factory". Therefore, the local social media channels might not have the motivation to communicate about the global sustainability

actions and only focus on local activities causing that their posts focus less on sustainability than the global channels.

To summarize, it seems that the corporate brand identities are integrated into the case companies' international online communication, as many of the corporate brand identity elements could be identified from case companies' group-level websites and social media channels. Additionally, the sustainability online communication is strong for all the case companies in the international group level both in their websites and social media channels. Moreover, despite the given independency for businesses and local subsidiaries, the level of integration of sustainability online communication seem to be strong for the case companies A and B. Some variability exists, but corporate brand identity elements and corporate sustainability elements could be identified from both business segment online communication and local online communication.

Thus, in the spectrum of standardization versus adaptations, the case companies D and C have the highest-level standardization and case companies A and B have highest level of adaptation in their international online communication. It seems that the case companies A and B use modified strategy in their international online communication, whereas company D and C have standardized their international online communication.

Table 8. Case Companies' International Sustainability Online Communication.

Company	A	B	C	D
International group level				
Corporate brand identity elements	Value propositions, Position, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality, Mission and vision	Value propositions, Position, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality, Mission and vision	Value propositions, Position, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality, Mission and vision	Value propositions, Position, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality, Mission and vision
Corporate sustainability elements	Strategy, Purpose, Megatrends, SDGs, Targets & KPIs, Sustainability performance, Certifications, Sustainability indices, Collaboration with foundations, Recognitions Innovations, Investments Social responsibility, Sponsorships and donations	Strategy, Purpose, Megatrends, SDGs, Targets & KPIs, Sustainability performance, Certifications, Sustainability indices, Recognitions, Innovations, Investments, Social responsibility, Sponsorships and donations	Strategy, Purpose, Megatrends SDGs, Targets & KPIs Sustainability performance, Certifications, Indices, Recognitions, Innovations	Strategy, Purpose, Megatrends SDGs, Targets & KPIs Sustainability performance, Certifications, Indices, Recognitions, Innovations
Main channels used	Corporate, website Annual Report, Social media	Corporate website, Annual Report, Social media	Corporate website, Annual Report, Social media	Corporate website, Social media

Business segment level				
Corporate brand identity elements	Value propositions, Position, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality, Mission and vision	Value propositions, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality, Position	-	-
Corporate sustainability elements	Strategy, Purpose SDGs, Targets & KPIs, Sustainability performance, Sustainability indices, Certificates, Collaboration with foundations, Recognitions, Innovations, Social Responsibility, Sponsorships and donations	Strategy, Purpose, SDGs Innovations, Targets, Sustainability performance, Eco-labels, Certifications, Recognitions, Social responsibility, Donations	-	-
Main channels used	Business segment level websites, Reports, Social media	Social media, Business segment level websites	-	-

Local level				
Corporate brand identity elements	Value propositions, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality, Mission and vision	Value propositions, Promise and core values, Expression, Personality Mission and vision	-	-
Corporate Sustainability elements	Strategy, Purpose, Targets & KPIs, Sustainability performance, Certificates, Environmental permits, Social responsibility, Sponsorships and donations	Strategy, Purpose, Targets Innovations, Sponsorships and donations	-	-
Main channels used	Local sites under business segment level websites, Reports Social media	Local websites, Social media	Social media	-

4.5.2 Summary of MNC's Sustainability Online Communication

The findings of this study suggest that the MNC's sustainability online communication can be distributed to three levels, which are international group level, business segment level and local level. The three levels of sustainability online communication are presented in the figure 9. The case companies C and D seem to manage the communication from group level and do not have own websites or social media channels for their business segments or local subsidiaries, if excluded two exceptions. Whereas, the case companies A and B have also international group level, business segment level and local level websites and social media channels. However, even the case companies C and D manage the communication from group level and do not have as clearly as the case companies A and B sustainability online communication in all three levels, they also

have content in their social media channels in other languages than in English. Therefore, this study assumes, that they do, in some level, localise or at least translate their sustainability online communication to better target the local audiences.
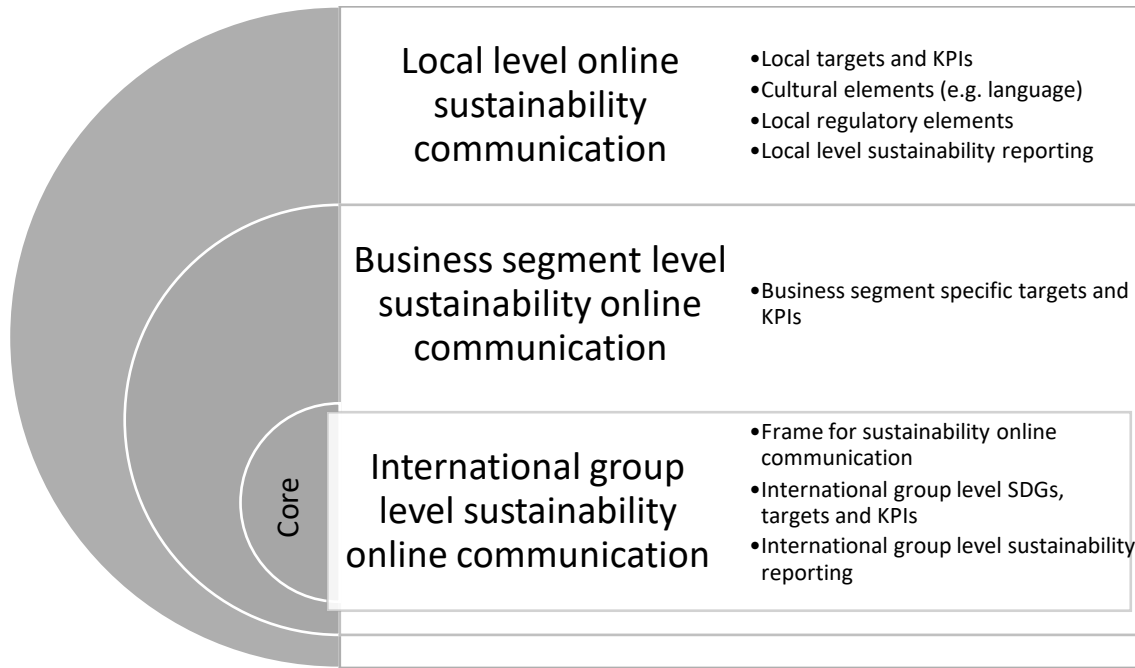

Figure 9. MNCs' Three Levels of Sustainability Online Communication.

The case companies' corporate brand identities are strongly integrated into their online communication. Almost all of corporate brand identity elements could be identified from the case companies' online communication, and many of them could be identified from all three levels of online communication. This supports the Urde's theory that communication is important part of cascading the corporate brand identity. Urde (2013: 744) says, that "when that corporate brand identity is communicated and interpreted, it will create an equivalent or more developed sign in the minds of customers and non-customer stakeholders". The communication of corporate brand identity is important, as corporate brand is a social construction and the process of decoding the corporate brand in the minds of stakeholders happens is social setting (Shannon & Weaver 1964, Blumer 1969, Solomon 1983, de Saussure 2013, Silverman 2019).

All the case companies' sustainability business strategies and sustainability targets are strongly communicated in their online communication channels in all three levels. Therefore, it seems that also the case companies A and B have some level of integration and standardization in their sustainability online communication, even their business segments and local subsidiaries have more independency in their online communication than companies C and D have. Conaway and Laasch (2012: 46) say, that to achieve integrated sustainability communication, the message should be the same in all of the company's communication channels following the company's overall strategy. Additionally, all stakeholders must receive a consistent message (Conaway & Laasch 2012: 46). This applies to the case companies' online communication, as the sustainability message is consistent in all of their online communication channels in all three levels.

Therefore, in the spectrum of standardization versus adaptations, the case companies D and C have the highest-level standardization and case companies A and B have highest level of adaptation in their international online communication. It seems that the case companies A and B use modified strategy in their international online communication, whereas company D and C have standardized their international online communication.

Furthermore, Livesey and Kearins (2002) state that credible sustainability communication should be both transparent and comprehensive. Also, interviewees regard transparency important. For instance, the interviewee C states that they want to be radically transparent to all of their stakeholders and says that trust comes from transparency. According to interviewee C, it is important to tell what went well and especially what went wrong, and what they are trying to do fix it. All of the case companies report their safety and environmental incidents in their annual reports and are in general very comprehensive in their sustainability communication. Especially, the case companies A, B and C have very comprehensive annual reports, which have been audited by outside auditors.

Additionally, it increases the credibility of case companies' sustainability communication that they seem to follow the sustainability communication process presented by Conaway and Laasch (2013: 12). From the case companies' online communication can be found their vision, targets and KPIs, actions, and follow-ups and results. Therefore, the case companies show that they have first achieved the positive sustainability performance, and second communicated effectively their sustainability progress made to their stakeholders. Finally, the fit between case companies' sustainability cause and business affect positively to the credibility of their sustainability message (Schmeltz 2011). All the case companies have adopted their sustainability message accordingly to their businesses and have chosen sustainability initiatives that match their core activities.

4.6 Summary of the Findings

The process framework based on the findings is illustrated in the figure 10. The finding of this study mostly supports the theoretical framework. All the case companies are committed to UN Global Compact's ten principles to align their strategy and operations with universal principles of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption, and take action to that advances the societal goals. Additionally, the case companies have done mapping of the SDGs and considered their impact and potential to the SDGs and chosen priority SDGs – the most strategic SDGs to their businesses. The priority SDGs contribute targets and KPIs, and how the interviewees describe their organization.

The case companies have targets and KPIs both group level, business segment level and local level. The interviews report cascading strategic management of targets and KPIs top-down. Interviewee A from Company A says that targets and KPIs have been cascaded to business segments, but the business segments also have their very own targets and KPIs related to their operations and responsibilities. The interviewees also point out, that in addition to the shared group targets, they typically have also local and functional targets to support the operative parts of the business. The interviewee E from company C tells that it is very typical for example local manufacturing sites to have additional

sustainability targets defined by the local authorities. Additionally, interviewee E explains that logistics has created additional lower-level targets to support company's strategy related climate targets.

The findings also support the assumption that the case companies' corporate brand identities are strongly integrated into their online communication. Almost all of corporate brand identity elements could be identified from the case companies' online communication. Additionally, the findings suggest that the MNC's sustainability online communication can be distributed to three levels, which are international group level, business segment level and local level. However, only the case companies A and B have online communication channels in all three levels. Therefore, this study assumes, that some MNCs standardize their online communication by managing it only from international group level. Thus, the other two levels of sustainability online communication might not exist in all MNCs. Therefore, in the updated framework is emphasized, that business segment level or local level sustainability online communication might not exist.

Finally, the interviewees support the assumption, that corporate brand is a social construction and the process of decoding the corporate brand in the minds of stakeholders happens is social setting (Silverman 2019, de Saussure 2013, Solomon 1983, Blumer 1969, Shannon & Weaver 1964). Therefore, the stakeholder reaction impacts the way the organization see themselves and define their corporate brand identity.
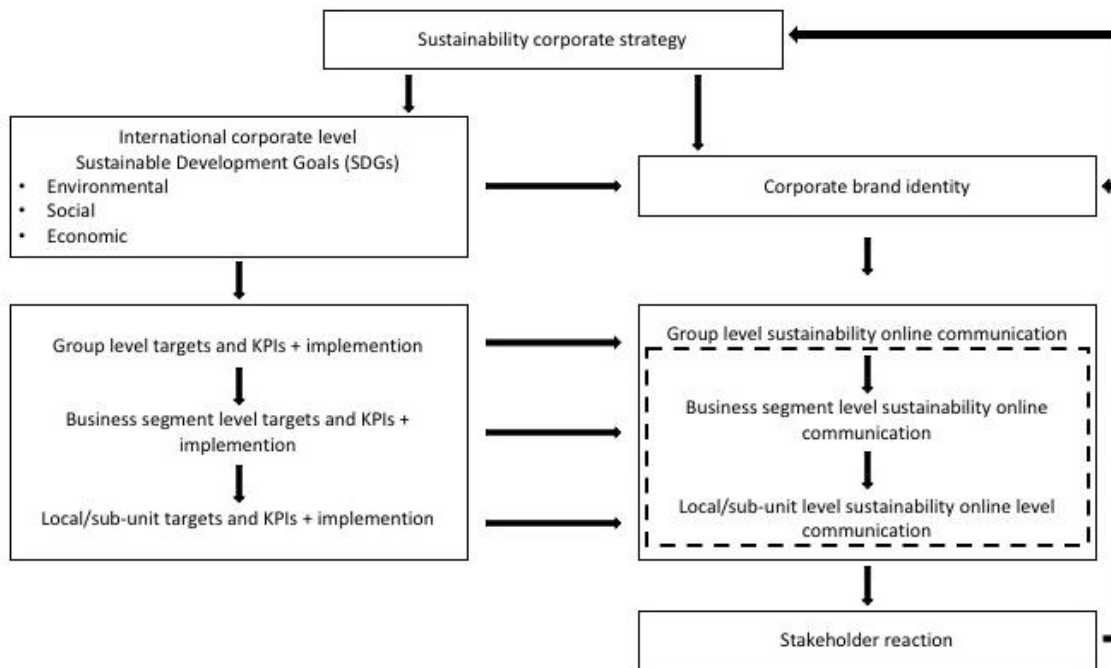
Figure 10. The Process Framework of Cascading the Sustainability Identity Across the MNC.

5   Conclusions

The goal of this study was to research, what is the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the MNC and how this impacts their online communication internationally. To understand the process, a theoretical framework was formulated. The theoretical framework was then analysed and modified by utilizing the findings from the empirical data, that was collected by using semi-structured thematic interviews and by analysing secondary sources, which were corporate websites and social media channels. For the study was selected four Finnish B2B MNCs in primary industries with sustainability at core design of their DNA.

The finding of this study mostly supports the theoretical framework. In all case companies could be identified strong link between sustainability corporate strategy and corporate brand identity. For all case companies' sustainability is integral part of their corporate brand identities. The findings also support the assumption that the case companies' sustainability identities are strongly integrated into their online communication. Almost all of corporate brand identity elements could be identified from the case companies' online communication.

In the framework the MNCs' sustainability online communication was distributed to three levels: international group level, business segment level and local level. The findings mostly supported this. However, not all the case companies have online communication channels in all three levels. Therefore, this study assumes, that some MNCs standardize their online communication by managing it only from international group level. Thus, the business segment and local level of sustainability online communication might not exist in all MNCs.

Additionally, the framework expected the MNCs to choose strategical SDGs for their businesses, which would then contribute to targets and KPIs. It was also assumed that the targets and KPIs would be managed top-down from group level to business segment level and local level. This was validated by the findings as the case companies have done

mapping of SDG and chosen priority SDGs, that then contribute to targets and KPIs. The interviews also report cascading strategic management of targets and KPIs top-down from group level to business segment level and local level. Furthermore, was presumed that the targets and KPIs together with the actual implementation would influence the sustainability online communication. The empirical findings support this. All the case companies communicate their targets and KPIs as well as the action they are taking in their online communication channels.

Finally, the findings support the assumption, that corporate brand is a social construction and the process of decoding the corporate brand in the minds of stakeholders happens is social setting. Therefore, the stakeholder reaction impacts the way the organization see themselves and define their corporate brand identity.

This study makes a contribution to the international business research by illustrating the process of cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the MNCs and how this impact their online communication internationally. It supports the previous research by confirming that sustainability corporate strategy and the corporate brand identity are linked in primary industry Finnish MNCs (Simões & Sebastiani 2017, Fatma and Rinding 2014). It also supports the previous research by confirming that sustainability identity is integrated into their online communication internationally (Stuart and Kerr 1999, Ind 1997, van Riel 1995).

Additionally, it contributes to the international business research about MNCs' sustainability strategies by explaining the process of cascading the international corporate level sustainability targets and KPIs across the corporation. It confirms that the diversity is key characteristic in MNC's business sustainability management, as the case companies have adopted a mix of local and global business sustainability practices (Szanto 2018). Finally, it contributes to the sustainability online communication research of MNCs by confirming that MNCs aim to integrate or even standardize their sustainability online communication internationally (Christmann 2004), but despite their

efforts subsidiaries' sustainability communication may vary (Szanto 2018, Hunter & Bansal 2007).

5.1 Managerial Implications

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a process framework, for management of MNCs, for cascading the sustainability identity and targets across the MNC to strengthen their sustainability position in the global market. Accordingly, four implications for corporate brand management are suggested. First, the process framework offers management a structured overview of cascading the sustainability identity across the MNC. Second, it provides a structured overview of cascading the sustainability targets and KPIs across the MNC. Third, the framework provides a structured overview of integrating the sustainability identity into sustainability online communication to strengthen MNC's sustainability position in the global market. Fourth, it offers a structured overview of different international sustainability online communication strategies, and how the MNC might increase the congruency of their international sustainability online communication.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. To the validity of findings and reliability of this study influence, that only six interviews were conducted, and all the interviewees were in managerial positions and from parent country, Finland. Therefore, interviews with employees from other countries than Finland, especially outside Europe, and from different levels of organizations, could impact the findings. Thus, conducting more interviews with employees from different positions and from different countries would positively contribute to the validity and reliability of this study.

Additionally, for the case companies were chosen only Finnish MNCs. Therefore, the findings cannot be directly applied to all the MNCs, due to the cultural differences. For instance, Hartman, Rubin and Dhanda (2007) suggest, that the sustainability communication might differ between United States and European Union MNCs. Other studies also suggest that the country of origin is important determiner in sustainability communication, even within Europe (Branco et al 2014). Additionally, the home and host countries of MNCs may impact to the chosen business sustainability strategies (Tan & Wang 2011).

Furthermore, all the case companies were B2B companies operating in primary industries. Researchers (Wanderley et al 2008, Zyglidopoulos 2002, Russo & Fouts 1997) have found that industry sector influences the sustainability communication style and strength, so the findings of this study cannot be directly applied to other industries. Thus, more research is needed, and the framework should be tested with cross-country and cross-industry sample to validate the framework.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

The Corporate Brand Identity (The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix – Urde 2013)

1. What are your key offerings and how do you want them to appeal to customers and non-customer stakeholders? (Value propositions)

2. What is our intended position in the market, and in the hearts and minds of key customers and non-customer stakeholders? (Relationships e.g. trust, long-term)

3. What combination of human characteristics or qualities forms your corporate character? (Personality e.g. trustworthy, strong, reliable, responsible)

4. What do you promise, and what are the core values that sum up what your brand stands for? (Core)

5. What is unique or special about the way we communicate and express ourselves making it possible to recognise us at a distance? (Expression)

6. What engages you, beyond the simple aim of making money (mission)? What is your direction and inspiration (vision)? (Mission and Vision)

7. What are your company core values and how they are present in daily activities? (Culture)

8. What are you particularly good at, and what makes you better than the competitor? (Competences)

Corporate Sustainability

1. (If you didn't already mention sustainability related items in your corporate mission and vision) Do you have any corporate sustainability related mission and vision?

2. Do you have any corporate level sustainability KPIs and what are they?

3. How have you cascaded these KPIs across your company?

4. Do you also have functional/segment/sub-unit specific sustainability targets? (e.g. manufacturing, logistics, specific business area, etc.)

5. Have you dedicated sustainability resources? (e.g. Head of Sustainability, Sustainability as a function)

6. What sustainability initiatives/projects your company has? Can you provide some examples?

7. Does your company have any sustainability certifications or merits and if what? (e.g. awards)

8. Any other achievements? (e.g. what you are personally proud of?)

9. What are your company's sustainability goals for next 2-5 years? Do you have any longer-term plans e.g. 10 years?

Corporate Sustainability Online Communication

1. Do you publish your sustainability targets?

2. the sustainability present in your corporate online communications? How?

3. What are the online communication channels you use?

4. What are the key messages?

5. What are the targeted stakeholder groups for your sustainability communication?

6. What are your sustainability communication targets for different stakeholder groups?

7. Do you communicate your sustainability achievements, certificates or awards in your online communication channels?