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EXPLORING THE BEST INTERNAL COMMUNICATION
PRACTICES FOR OPTIMAL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN
CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY: HI FLY CASE STUDY

Internship Report submitted to Universidade Católica
Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in Communication
Studies: Communication, Organization and Leadership

By

Susana Maria Tavares Sobreiro

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

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Under the supervision of Professor João Simão

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Abstract

Sustainability is a key concern of our times. In order to ensure that future generations will be able to live in a healthy planet and robust society, today's world must be able to increase economic growth, while dealing with the most pressing environmental and social issues. When companies decide to be part of the solution, integrating externalities into their corporate strategy, it is indispensable that employees are aligned with this mission. The more employees are engaged in the company's sustainability strategy, the more they support it, whether through changing their own behaviours, communicating this commitment to external stakeholders, or actively contributing to greening corporate processes. Internal communication enters the picture by promoting this engagement, being a strategic tool for companies to use when they decide to pursue corporate sustainability.

This Internship Report conducted a case study-mixed methods in order to analyse a sustainable company, Hi Fly airline, and explore the best internal communication practices to increase employee engagement in corporate sustainability. Results showed that the airline applies a variety of internal communication practices to communicate about corporate sustainability, ranging from electronic channels, such as the intranet and email, to sustainability training and participatory activities, like beach clean-ups. It was possible to understand, however, that employees prefer the email for this communication. Although Hi Fly employees are engaged in the company's sustainability work, a significant portion wants more communication on the subject and do not feel that they have an open channel to share their suggestions and contribute to making the airline more sustainable, highlighting what should be improved at Hi Fly.

This research adds clues to the scarce literature on the topic, taking advantage of Hi Fly's best practices and its employees' suggestions to provide some lessons learned on how to communicate with employees about corporate sustainability. Applying these practices can benefit both the employees and the companies that have sustainability at the heart of their activities.

Keywords: sustainability; corporate sustainability; internal communication; employees; engagement.

Resumo

A sustentabilidade é uma preocupação central nos dias que correm. De modo a assegurar que as gerações futuras terão a possibilidade de viver num planeta saudável e sociedade robusta, o mundo de hoje deve ser capaz de gerar crescimento económico, ao mesmo tempo que lida com problemas ambientais e sociais. Quando as empresas decidem contribuir, integrando aspetos externos na sua estratégia corporativa, é indispensável que os colaboradores estejam alinhados com esta missão. Quanto mais *engaged* os colaboradores estiverem na estratégia de sustentabilidade, mais irão apoiá-la, seja pela mudança dos seus próprios comportamentos, pela comunicação deste compromisso a *stakeholders* externos, ou contribuindo ativamente para tornar os processos corporativos mais sustentáveis. A comunicação interna surge como promotora deste *engagement*, sendo uma ferramenta estratégica que as empresas podem usar quando decidem incorporar a sustentabilidade.

Este Relatório de Estágio implementou um estudo de caso com métodos mistos para analisar uma empresa sustentável, a companhia aérea Hi Fly, e explorar as melhores práticas de comunicação interna para aumentar o *engagement* dos colaboradores na sustentabilidade corporativa. Os resultados mostraram que a companhia aérea utiliza múltiplas práticas de comunicação interna para comunicar acerca desta temática, desde o uso de canais eletrónicos, como a intranet e o email, à implementação de treinos de sustentabilidade e atividades participativas, como limpezas de praia. Foi possível perceber, porém, que os colaboradores preferem o email para esta comunicação. Embora os colaboradores da Hi Fly estejam *engaged* no trabalho de sustentabilidade da empresa, uma porção significativa quer mais comunicação sobre este assunto e não sente ter um canal aberto para partilhar as suas sugestões e contribuir para tornar a companhia aérea mais sustentável, salientando-se assim o que deve ser melhorado na Hi Fly.

Esta investigação adiciona novas pistas à escassa literatura sobre este tópico, partindo das melhores práticas da Hi Fly e das sugestões dos seus colaboradores para providenciar algumas lições aprendidas sobre como comunicar com os colaboradores sobre sustentabilidade corporativa. A aplicação destas práticas pode beneficiar tanto os colaboradores como as empresas que têm a sustentabilidade no centro das suas atividades.

Palavras-chave: sustentabilidade; sustentabilidade corporativa; comunicação interna; colaboradores; *engagement*.

To my grandfather, Joaquim Tavares.

I know you are up there watching out for me.

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As this one-year journey was not traced solely by myself, I would like to write a few words and express my gratitude to all the people who have contributed to this project.

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To my grandmother, for being the most hardworking woman I know and for having settled that example for me. I will always strive to make you proud and to follow your steps, growing stronger each day.

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Lastly, to the one I wished was here to see me finish this Master's Degree, my grandfather. I am enormously grateful for everything you did for me and to make my dreams come true. I dedicate this work to you, and I can only hope that you are proud of your "little one".

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Introduction

From all branches of communication, internal communication has always caught my deepest interest. For me, it is remarkable to understand how much communication can help to increase employees' productivity, make them feel valued and connected to the companies in which they work. Indeed, to be able to advance companies' goals, while contributing to employees' wellbeing and satisfaction, truly reveals the power of this communication. Because of this, I soon realized that internal communication would be in the spotlight of my Master's Degree final work.

Having joined Hi Fly airline for a four-month curricular internship¹ in October 2020, it was a matter of understanding how internal communication could be best tackled taking into consideration the characteristics of this company. Realizing that Hi Fly is a Portuguese private airline that is recognized for its commitment to sustainability, especially after becoming the first airline to exclusively operate single-use plastic-free flights at the beginning of 2020, the topic for this Internship Report was almost immediately defined.

Understanding that it is extremely relevant to investigate how to plan internal communication in order to encourage employees to support corporate sustainability, the present Internship Report is guided by the following research question: "What are the best internal communication practices to engage employees in corporate sustainability?". To bring clarity to this query, a case study focusing on Hi Fly will be conducted.

Whether voluntarily or due to pressures, more and more companies are integrating sustainability into their businesses (Dhanda & Shrotryia, 2020; Eccles et al., 2014; Silvestre et al., 2018). Indeed, the question is no longer on "whether" but on "how" to incorporate sustainability into business practices (Derqui, 2020; Epstein & Buhovac, 2014; Sullivan, 2014). This means that, in addition to economic performance, companies are increasingly becoming more concerned with environmental and social issues (Eccles et al., 2014),

¹ Although the curricular internship only lasted four months, I started a professional one-year internship at Hi Fly in February 2021. This fact must be pointed out because I continued to learn more about the company and its sustainability and internal communication practices every day. Consequently, it would be wrong to assume that all information and knowledge exposed throughout this Internship Report was solely acquired during the first four months at the airline.

following a triple bottom line approach (Elkington, 1997), and contributing to solve or mitigate global problems.

Corporate sustainability can be understood as “meeting the needs of a firm’s direct and indirect stakeholders (...), without compromising its ability to meet the needs of the future stakeholders as well” (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 131). Adopting sustainability can bring several advantages to companies, such as increased competitiveness (Belen & Nuria, 2017), better performance (Eccles et al., 2014) and improved brand reputation (Derqui, 2020). However, for companies to be successful in their sustainability journey, corporate sustainability must be integrated into the company’s overall strategy (Derqui, 2020; Galpin & Whittington, 2012; Oertwig et al., 2017). Moreover, as part of the corporate strategy, corporate sustainability cannot be effectively implemented without workforce engagement (Galpin & Whittington, 2012).

Internal communication can be used as a tool to increase employee engagement in the organization’s sustainability efforts (Kataria et al., 2013; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016), and there is already evidence that communicating corporate sustainability internally is essential for its success (Brunton et al., 2017; Derqui, 2020; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Genç, 2017). Using internal communication to engage employees in corporate sustainability is highly valuable because “when employees are engaged with their company’s sustainability strategy, they proactively identify, communicate and pursue opportunities to execute the strategy” (Lacy et al., 2009, p. 491).

This Internship Report comprises two main parts – Theoretical Framework and Empirical Study –, each divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 will start with a brief contextualization of sustainability, not only explaining the concept, but also pointing out its importance in today’s world. After this, the focus will be on corporate sustainability, presenting its multiple definitions, most popular operationalization (the triple bottom line) and measurement framework (GRI framework). The rest of the chapter will clarify what drives companies towards sustainability, what it truly means for companies to integrate sustainability and what should be considered to successfully incorporate it.

Moving forward into Chapter 2, internal communication will be addressed. An attempt will be made to define this concept, setting boundaries on what this research will assume as

internal communication. The chapter will also present internal communication's importance, showcasing its several advantages for organizations. Channels will be discussed before exploring internal communication from a strategic point of view. This final section of Chapter 2 is very important, as it sheds light on how to properly plan and assess internal communication in order to help achieve corporate goals. Special attention will be given to three aspects: employee preferences and needs (especially in terms of channels and content), workforce composition and organization size.

Chapter 3, which closes Part I of this Internship Report, will bring together the two main concepts detailed in the previous chapters: corporate sustainability and internal communication. Firstly, it will be explained why it is vital to communicate corporate sustainability to both internal and external stakeholders, presenting the most common channels to convey this communication. After that, the emphasis will be on employees, as they are the ones responsible for turning the sustainability strategy into action. Aligned with the research question, a specific variable – employee engagement – will be highlighted. The chapter will finish with a discussion on what is already known regarding how to plan internal communication to engage employees in corporate sustainability, providing valuable material to inform the methodological part of this work.

Opening Part II, Chapter 4 will detail the relevance of the study, research question, research goals and chosen methodological approach. Considering that Hi Fly is the case company of this Internship Report, in addition to the main goal (i.e., To investigate what are the best internal communication practices to increase employee engagement in corporate sustainability), four specific goals are also proposed: (1) To analyse Hi Fly's internal communication practices regarding corporate sustainability, (2) To comprehend Hi Fly employees' needs and preferences regarding internal communication addressing corporate sustainability, (3) To take conclusions on how engaged Hi Fly employees are in corporate sustainability, and (4) To contribute with practical suggestions on how to better engage employees in working with sustainability at Hi Fly.

For this case study, data will be collected through participant observation, document analysis, exploratory interviews and a questionnaire. While the participant observation, document analysis and exploratory interviews mainly aim to collect information regarding the company's sustainability initiatives and related internal communication, the

questionnaire will give access to the employee perspective. In this sense, the questionnaire will provide the primary data, disclosing Hi Fly employees' preferences and needs regarding internal communication about sustainability, as well as their current level of engagement in corporate sustainability efforts.

Chapter 5 will present the case company, Hi Fly, and provide the descriptive memory of the internship. After briefly presenting its history, business and identity, the chapter will attempt to explain Hi Fly's sustainability policy and corporate sustainability initiatives. This will be done by including insights from the Theoretical Framework and qualitative data, assuming an analytical point of view and starting to bring theory and practice together. At this stage, the internship tasks and activities will be described, explaining what was done throughout the four months, and the relevance of those tasks for the present study and my personal development as a communications professional.

In the last chapter, Chapter 6, primary and secondary data will be presented and analysed. Results from the participant observation, document analysis and exploratory interviews will be displayed first, followed by the results of the questionnaire that will be sent to all Hi Fly employees. The Internship Report will finish with the discussion of the results and conclusions, trying to accomplish all the objectives of the study. Limitations and suggestions for further investigation will also be included.

Part I – Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1: Corporate Sustainability

Since the past few years, companies are increasingly being urged to adopt sustainability (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Haugh & Talwar, 2010). One of the main pressures driving this trend is the public perception that firms must be part of the solution to global problems (Meuer et al., 2020), contributing to a better future. Following this line of thought, companies should not only be concerned with economic performance, but also take into consideration the environmental and social issues that impact the world (Elkington, 1997).

1.1 Sustainability: a key concern of our times

Sustainability is a relatively recent concern. According to Belen and Nuria (2017), sustainability is a new paradigm, defining society since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Despite its novelty, “there is an increasing trend towards sustainability at a global scale” (Genç, 2017, p. 514). The adoption of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in 2015, confirms the world’s commitment to sustainable development – with all 193 UN member states agreeing on the proposed Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Figure 1), in a bid to end poverty, fight inequality and protect the environment (United Nations [UN], 2015).

The most widely accepted definition of “sustainable development” was introduced in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), also known as the Brundtland Commission (Blowfield, 2013; Haugh & Talwar, 2010; Joshi & Li, 2016). This Commission submitted a report to the General Assembly of the United Nations – entitled “Our Common Future” – in which sustainable development is described as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 41). Then, according to this definition and report, sustainable development is what ensures the future wellbeing of society as a whole.

Figure 1

Sustainable Development Goals



Note. Source: UN (n.d.)

One important explanation for sustainability to be “the megatrend of our times” (Derqui, 2020, p. 2712) is the rising concern about environmental degradation, which impels governments and other parties to raise awareness of sustainability issues (Kataria et al., 2013). Indeed, deforestation and desertification are much worse today than they were in the past century, and global warming and climate change are no longer a scientific hypothesis but a demonstrated reality (Norton, 2012). With this in mind, “a new sense of responsibility towards future generations is emerging, as insights on the long-term effects of over-exploitation and environmental pollution are increasing” (Oertwig et al., 2017, pp. 175-176). Apart from environmental problems, there are other global issues that are putting sustainability at the centre of attention. To give a few examples, water and food insecurities are rising as the population grows, and conflicts due to migrant flows and humanitarian crises continue to be a problematic reality (Bergman et al., 2017).

Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic, and its immense impact, is not contributing to alleviating the aforementioned and other global problems. Key stakeholders, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), point out that the worldwide health crisis is derailing progress in attaining the SDGs (Thornton, 2020). The same is already stressed by several academics, such as Filho et al. (2020), Fleetwood (2020) and Hörisch (2020). It is undeniable that the global pandemic has caused (or accelerated) the collapse of global financial markets, increased the levels of unemployment, accentuated poverty (Filho et al., 2020), disrupted the food supply while expanding hunger (Fleetwood, 2020), shifted attention away from environmental problems, such as climate change (Hörisch, 2020), among many other issues. Because of this, the current epidemiological situation strengthens the importance of working towards a sustainable future (Filho et al., 2020).

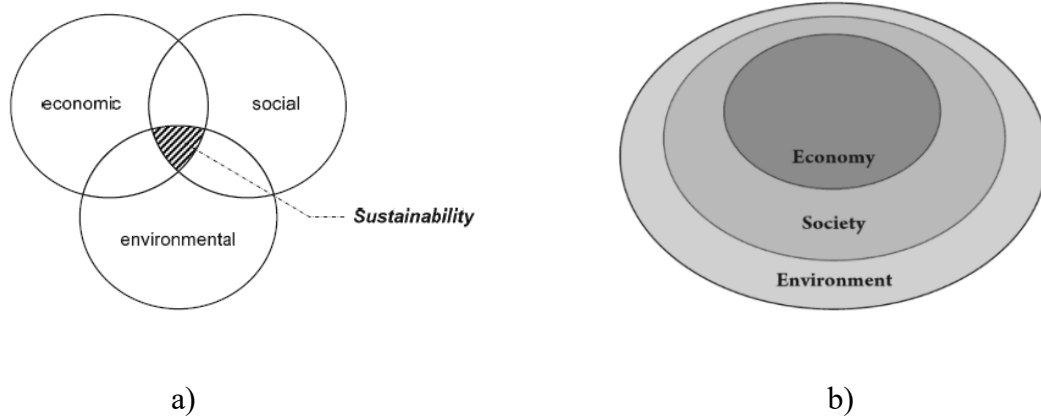
There is a strong consensus that sustainability encompasses three pillars²: economic, social and environmental (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020; Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Bergman et al., 2017; Derqui, 2020; Kopnina & Blewitt, 2018; Purvis et al, 2019; Wagner & Andreas, 2012). In this line of thinking, it is possible to distinguish between three interlinked types of sustainability – where economic sustainability has to do with enhancing future economic prospects, social sustainability refers to supporting people’s wellbeing, and environmental sustainability relates to maintaining nature and its resources (Kopnina & Blewitt, 2018). “Creating balance between these three issues addresses the ‘what we want to achieve’ of sustainability” (McAteer, 2019, p. 29).

The idea of sustainability is usually represented by three intersecting circles that exemplify the pillars of sustainability (Figure 2a). However, some authors prefer to represent the concept of sustainability with three nested concentric circles (Figure 2b). Actually, the second diagram comprises a newer model which presupposes that the environment is the foundation of sustainability (Caradonna, 2014). Kopnina and Blewitt (2018), for instance, support the second model by stressing that “without the healthy planet, no social or economic system can be sustained” (p. 7).

² Few authors support additional pillars of sustainability, such as culture (see Wagner, 2012).

Figure 2

Sustainability Pillars



Note. Sources: a) Hansen (2010, p. 23), b) Caradonna (2014, p. 9)

Since all corporate activities have an impact on both society and the planet, companies can promote or jeopardize sustainable development (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017). As Haugh and Talwar (2010) put it: “By embedding sustainability across business functions, organizations can address some of the negative impacts of globalization and contribute to economic development, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection” (p. 385).

1.2 Defining corporate sustainability

Corporate sustainability, as a multidisciplinary field (Kantabutra, 2019), is increasingly raising academics’ attention, with more and more studies published on the issue, especially since the past few years (Meuer et al., 2020). The growing interest in corporate sustainability is explained not only because of the increasing salience of global problems (Meuer et al., 2020), but also because there is a rising perception that sustainability can bring several advantages to companies (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Belen & Nuria, 2017; Derqui, 2020; Eccles et al., 2014; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016; Wagner, 2019).

Most definitions of corporate sustainability derive from the Brundtland Commission’s 30-year-old description of sustainable development, as several authors highlight (Blowfield,

2013; Haugh & Talwar, 2010; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014). One of the most quoted definitions is found in Dyllick and Hockerts (2002), who describe corporate sustainability as “meeting the needs of a firm’s direct and indirect stakeholders (such as shareholders, employees, clients, pressure groups, communities etc), without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well” (p. 131). Another example is given by Brockett and Rezaee (2012), for whom corporate sustainability is “conducting business to create value for present shareholders while protecting the rights of future shareholders and stakeholders” (p. 4). This type of definition transports the generic vision proposed by the Brundtland Commission into the context of business (Blowfield, 2013), also maintaining its long-term perspective.

Other authors prefer to define corporate sustainability by stressing that it represents the relationship between companies and the whole society. Using this approach, Belen and Nuria (2017) broadly describe corporate sustainability as “how companies contribute to a better future” (p. 309). In the same line of thought, but providing a much more specific definition, Epstein and Buhovac (2014) posit that corporate sustainability happens when “a company is contributing to sustainable development of society, which includes economic growth, environmental protection and social progress” (p. 2). This last definition is aligned with the notion of “triple bottom line” (Elkington, 1997).

As the literature highlights, one of the most prevalent operationalizations of corporate sustainability consists in a three-dimensional construct for which Elkington (1997) coined the term “triple bottom line” (TBL). For Elkington (1997):

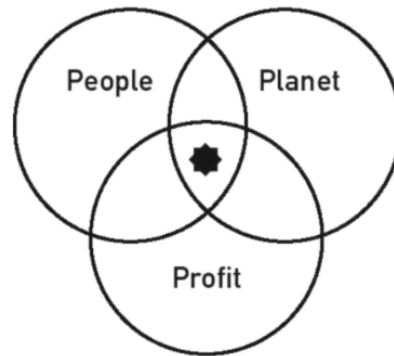
Future market success will often depend on an individual company’s (or entire value chain’s) ability to simultaneously satisfy not just the traditional bottom line of profitability but also two emergent bottom lines; one focusing on environmental quality, the other on social justice. (p. XI)

Having the latter into account, when it comes to sustainability at the organizational level, a firm’s performance should take three domains into consideration: economic prosperity, environmental quality and social justice (Elkington, 1997). Accordingly, the TBL draws strong parallels with the three pillars of sustainability, “encouraging firms to consider longer-term perspectives in their decision making” (Purvis et al., 2019, p. 689). People, planet and profit – 3Ps (Figure 3) – is another way to express the idea of triple bottom line (Montiel &

Delgado-Ceballos, 2014; Purvis et al., 2019), showcasing how companies must aim to make profit while considering the health of our planet and the wellbeing of billions of people.

Figure 3

Triple Bottom Line/3Ps



Note. Source: McAteer (2019)

With this said, “an important task for management is (...) to identify the economic, environmental and social issues that are important to the company” (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017, p. 85). Clearly, the economic dimension is critical for companies, which simply cannot persist if expenses exceed incomes (Townsend, 2008, as cited in Haugh & Talwar, 2010, p. 385). “The challenge with regards to economic sustainability lies in making environmental and social management as economical as possible” (Oertwig et al., 2017, p. 180), taking advantage of sustainability-related activities to create value and enhance financial performance (Allen, 2016). Some economic aspects of corporate sustainability have to do with innovation and technology, processes and sustainability reporting (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010).

The environmental dimension refers to corporate environmental management efforts to safeguard the planet (Allen, 2016) or, at least, to minimize the negative environmental impact as much as possible (Oertwig et al., 2017). Among the environmental issues that are considered in corporate sustainability are: resource use (materials and energy), impact on biodiversity, use of environmentally friendly technologies and emissions into

air/water/ground and waste (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010). One topic that has gained extreme relevance in recent years is plastic usage (Derqui, 2020).

Lastly, the social aspect deals with the humanitarian domain of business (Townsend, 2008, as cited in Haugh & Talwar, 2010, p. 385). It addresses issues like community relations, basic needs, employment, support for education, human rights, poverty, health and safety and charitable contributions (Allen, 2016; Landorf, 2011, as cited in Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018, p. 710). This dimension also encompasses corporate behaviour regarding employees: “social sustainability is concerned with the organisation’s impact on employees as the inner stakeholders” (Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018, p. 710). Therefore, this dimension aggregates themes such as employee participation (involving employees in decisions related with the organization), employee cooperation (enabling teamwork and a sharing environment with colleagues), equal opportunities (with fair employment practices), employee development (providing training programs and mentoring) and health and safety of employees in the workplace (Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018).

Considering that few authors criticize the exposed TBL approach (Isil & Hernke, 2017), and recognizing that the TBL dimensions – economic, environmental and social – perfectly align with how the case study company describes its conduct³, this approach will be the one pursued in this research. However, it is worth mentioning that some scholars have developed alternative, usually extended, models. Budsaratragoon and Jitmaneeroj (2019) suggest incorporating corporate governance⁴ into the TBL, following an approach which is often called “quadruple bottom line” (QBL). Brockett and Rezaee (2012) present a framework of business sustainability that encompasses five dimensions: economic, governance, social, ethical and environmental. Tseng et al. (2020) also suggest that the traditional triple bottom line does not consider enough aspects, proposing that technology, engineering and operations should too be contemplated when it comes to corporate sustainability.

³ “We are committed to operating with a purpose and successfully, driving sustainable and responsible long-term growth and profitability, whilst minimising the inherent negative impact and risks, enhancing the benefits of our business, and responding to environmental and social challenges” (Hi Fly, 2020a, p. 1).

⁴ “Corporate governance involves a set of relationships between a company’s management, its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders” (OECD, 2004, as cited in Steger, 2015, p. 1) and can be described as “the system by which companies are directed and controlled” (Cadbury, 1992, as cited in Steger, 2015, p. 1).

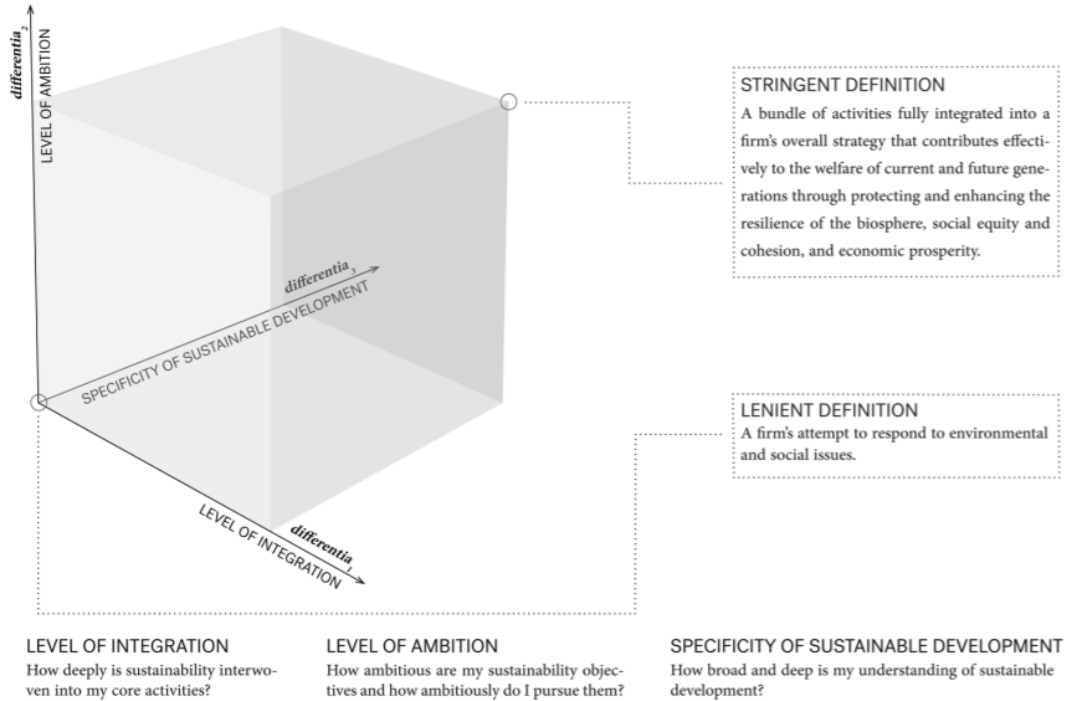
The above discussion makes it clear that, although there are some trends, there is no common definition for corporate sustainability. This fact has been pointed out by multiple authors (Bergman et al., 2017; Derqui, 2020; Dhanda & Shrotryia, 2020; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014). Montiel and Delgado-Ceballos (2014) analysed research on corporate sustainability – published in both academic and practitioner journals, from 1995 to 2013 – and found out that the definitions differently highlight one, two or three dimensions of sustainability. Having reached this conclusion, the authors make a proposal that will be embraced in the present study. Montiel and Delgado-Ceballos (2014) suggest using “corporate sustainability” when the three dimensions of sustainability are being assessed (which is the case in this Internship Report), and an alternative term when referring to one specific dimension (for instance “corporate environmental sustainability” when the environmental aspect is the one under study).

Another example of research that underlines the absence of a common definition of corporate sustainability is found in a recent study by Meuer et al. (2020). These authors conducted a systematic literature review and identified 33 definitions of corporate sustainability. According to them, the definitions differ in terms of level of ambition (the requirements for companies to be considered sustainable), level of integration (the required extent to which sustainability must be integrated in the company’s activities) and the specificity of sustainable development (i.e., which dimensions are considered) (Figure 4).

Bergman et al. (2017) also developed a typology of corporate sustainability in which they could identify three conceptual types and nine subtypes of the term (Figure 5), further emphasizing the lack of a common definition. One main conceptual issue pointed out by these authors is the difference (or lack thereof) between the ideas of corporate sustainability and corporate responsibility/corporate social responsibility. Even though there are multiple academics who pose that corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility are different terms (e.g., Bergman et al., 2017; Dhanda & Shrotryia, 2020; Meuer et al., 2020), many also use them interchangeably (e.g., Brunton et al., 2017; Sullivan, 2014; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016).

Figure 4

Conceptual Differences of Corporate Sustainability



Note. Source: Meuer et al. (2020, p. 330)

Figure 5

Typology of Corporate Sustainability

- 1— Corporate sustainability in relation to corporate responsibility (CS&CR)
 - 1a Corporate sustainability is similar to corporate responsibility ($cs \approx cr$)
 - 1b Corporate sustainability is different from corporate responsibility ($cs \neq cr$)
 - 1c Corporate responsibility leads to corporate sustainability ($cr \rightarrow cs$)
- 2— Mono-focal corporate sustainability (CSI)
 - 2a Corporate sustainability as moral leadership ($cs/moral$)
 - 2b Corporate sustainability as a strategy ($cs/strategic$)
- 3— Inclusive approaches to corporate sustainability (CS n)
 - 3a Corporate sustainability as a holistic concept (cs^∞)
 - 3b Corporate sustainability as part of the triple bottom line ($csTBL$)
 - 3c Corporate sustainability as a financial incentive ($cs\$$)
 - 3d Corporate sustainability as an indexing exercise ($cs/index$)

Note. Source: Bergman et al. (2017, p. 753)

In general, nowadays, authors tend to support that both “corporate sustainability” (CS) and “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) cover three dimensions – social, economic and environmental⁵ (Ashrafi et al., 2020; Montiel, 2008). As Ashrafi et al. (2020) enlighten: “The fundamental idea embedded in the contemporary CSR and CS notions is that businesses, in addition to focusing on profits, have an obligation to foster social and environmental stewardship” (p. 9). This convergence explains why so many authors use the constructs interchangeably. “Corporate citizenship” is another term that is gaining relevance in academic literature about the relationship between companies and society, being especially mixed with the “corporate social responsibility” construct (Matten & Crane, 2005). For the present study I chose to adopt “corporate sustainability” because the company I am studying also uses this term (which is noticeable when analysing its sustainability policy and communications – e.g., press releases).

The exposed lack of clarity regarding the definition of corporate sustainability also expands into the practical field, with managers interpreting the term differently (Derqui, 2020; Meuer et al., 2020). This is problematic for managers because “it results in uncertainty when deciding how their firms can effectively incorporate sustainable practices into their activities” (Meuer et al., 2020, p. 320). By analysing how 72 CEOs from companies operating in Portugal define corporate sustainability, Rego et al. (2017) conclude that most executives associate “corporate sustainability” with the organization’s capacity of continuity and long-term orientation (84,7%). However, CEOs do not agree on the sustainability dimensions: only a few of the participants (12,5%) mentioned the three TBL dimensions, for instance. Additionally, the interviewees also demonstrated different views on which stakeholders the definition implies. Shareholders, employees and natural environment/planet were the most common stated groups. Notwithstanding, customers, society/community, future generations, competitors, suppliers and state/government were also indicated by a few.

⁵ When the concepts appeared, however, corporate social responsibility was mainly associated with social issues, while corporate sustainability was linked to environmental ones (Bansal & Song, 2017; Montiel, 2008). “This distinction blurs over time, as responsibility studies acknowledge that social issues include stewardship of the natural environment, and sustainability studies recognized that society was an important element in environmental systems” (Bansal & Song, 2017, p. 107).

Moreover, the inconsistency between definitions is also reflected when it comes to measuring corporate sustainability, resulting in multiple frameworks to measure sustainability at the organizational level. Not only do academics use different scales proposed by several entities, but also create their own frameworks to measure corporate sustainability (Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014; Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018). One of the most popular frameworks is the one proposed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)⁶, which is aligned with the TBL approach, evaluating the previously addressed three dimensions of corporate sustainability (Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014).

For the economic dimension GRI's framework measures economic performance, market presence, indirect economic impacts, procurement practices, anti-corruption, anti-competitive behaviour and tax. When it comes to the environmental dimension it considers materials, energy, water and effluents, biodiversity, emissions, waste, environmental compliance and supplier environmental assessment. Lastly, for the social dimension it takes into account employment, labour/management relations, occupational health and safety, training and education, diversity and equal opportunities, non-discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, child labour, forced or compulsory labour, security practices, rights of indigenous peoples, human rights, local communities, supplier social assessment, public policy, customer health and safety, marketing and labelling, customer privacy and socioeconomic compliance (GRI, 2020).

As a concluding note of this subchapter, it is relevant to stress that the lack of clarity regarding the concept (and measurement) of corporate sustainability – which is noticeable in both national and international literature dealing with this subject – makes it more difficult to advance on scholarly on this topic, also demanding more caution when comparing results (Meuer et al., 2020).

⁶ GRI is a non-profit organization that intends to help organizations to create standardized sustainability reports, capable of being used by firms of any sector and size (<https://www.globalreporting.org/>).

1.3 The impulse for corporate sustainability

After an extensive analysis of academic literature on corporate sustainability, Bergman et al. (2017) suggest a definition which I believe is very complete – gathering the most relevant aspects of the notion and providing some closure to the last section:

Corporate sustainability refers to a systematic business approach and strategy that takes into consideration the long-term social and environmental impact of all economically motivated behaviors of a firm in the interest of consumers, employees, and owners or shareholders. (p. 10)

It is noticeable that a growing number of companies is putting sustainability on their agenda (Dhanda & Shrotryia, 2020; Eccles et al., 2014; Ioannou & Serafeim, 2019; Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018). Ceres's report "Turning Point: Corporate Progress on the Ceres Roadmap for Sustainability" analysed more than 600 large companies from the United States and concluded that: (1) almost two thirds had committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, (2) more than a half had established formal policies to manage water resources, (3) and nearly half had put into place policies to protect their workers' rights⁷ (Ceres, 2018). These numbers expose the rising tendency to recognize sustainability as a critical component within the corporate landscape.

Indeed, as awareness regarding environmental and social issues rises, companies are expected to be part of the solution to global problems (Meuer et al., 2020; Sullivan, 2014). Consequently, companies are increasingly being urged to adopt sustainability (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Haugh & Talwar, 2010). As Joshi and Li (2016) explain: "Firms, especially the large multinational corporations, are being challenged to behave in an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible manner while maintaining and improving shareholder value" (p. 1).

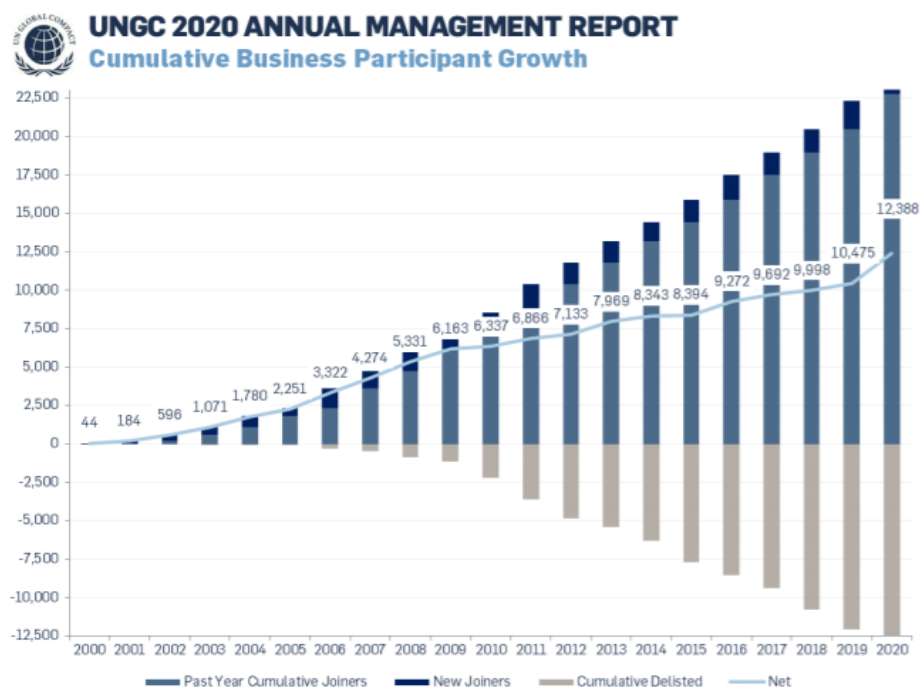
There are many external and internal pressures for companies to adopt sustainability, ranging from legal requirements to stakeholders' expectations (Bergman et al., 2017; Derqui, 2020; Haugh & Talwar, 2010; Joshi & Li, 2016). Several regulations, legislations and codes of practice are forcing and/or urging firms to incorporate sustainability (Haugh & Talwar,

⁷ The same report discloses that only 31% of the companies had policies to protect employees' human rights in 2014 (Ceres, 2018).

2010). Since 2014, for instance, the European Union (EU) made it mandatory for large firms to reveal nonfinancial statements in their annual reports, disclosing information on how they operate to manage social and environmental challenges (Directive 2014/95/EU, 2014). In Portugal this law is applicable since 2017⁸. The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC)⁹ is another example of an institutional force that is leading companies towards sustainability (Haugh & Talwar, 2010), encouraging them to align business operations and strategies with universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption, and to take actions that advance the SDGs (UNGC, 2016). Only in 2020, 2290 new businesses joined the initiative (UNGC, 2020), bringing the total number of business participants to 12388 (Figure 6).

Figure 6

UNGC Participants



Note. Source: UNGC (2020, p. 12)

⁸ Decreto-lei n.º 89/2017, 2017.

⁹ The United Nations Global Compact is the largest sustainability initiative in the world, gathering organizations from 160 countries (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>).

Apart from legislation and institutional guidelines, employees, customers, suppliers and investors are increasingly forcing companies to adopt sustainability (Haugh & Talwar, 2010; Silvestre et al., 2018). As Joshi and Li (2016) point out: “Stakeholders will increasingly seek information on the environmental and social impacts of business operations” (p. 7). Therefore, companies are not only impelled to adopt sustainability due to authorities’ demands, but also due to internal and external stakeholders’ expectations.

Although multinational corporations have the resources and power to potentially make a meaningful contribution to sustainable development (WBCSD, 2000, as cited in Haugh & Talwar, 2010, p. 384), it is important to note that sustainability is just as important for smaller firms (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). Because of this, even though international companies are more urged to act responsibly (Haught & Talwar, 2010), the pressure to adopt a more sustainable business model is also applicable to regional and national businesses (Bergman et al., 2017). In the end, all “businesses must demonstrate efforts to incorporate externality effects in decision making as a prerequisite for obtaining legitimacy and license to operate” (Joshi & Li, 2016, p. 7).

At this point it becomes especially relevant to distinguish between a sustainable business and a greenwashing company. As previously pointed out, when companies decide to incorporate goals that have to do with the three pillars of sustainability it is called corporate sustainability (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010; Silvestre et al, 2018). Therefore, a business is considered to be sustainable if the value creation for each of the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – is positive or, at least, if the economic gains do not damage the other two dimensions (McAteer, 2019). Greenwashing, on the other hand, happens when a business promotes something as sustainable (whether it is the business as a whole, a product, or initiative), but continues to operate in ways that harm the environment and society (Kopnina & Blewitt, 2018). In another words, greenwashing companies merely want to “convince the public that they are conscientious” (Kopnina & Blewitt, 2018, p. 11), but do not truly embed sustainability.

Companies that practice greenwashing usually do it in order to enhance their image among customers and providers, creating a false sense that they are concerned with global issues only to gain economic advantages (Barros, 2020). This happens because, as it was exposed, companies are being encouraged to enrol in sustainable practices, and there are more and

more consumers who chose products/services because their brand/company is sustainable; notwithstanding, as switching practices and operations in order to become more sustainable requires an important investment, many companies are not willing to truly embed sustainability, finding greenwashing as the (non-moral) door to acquire advantages (Barros, 2020). This practice is driving a legitimacy problem, with consumers not knowing what and who to trust anymore (Szabo & Webster, 2021). With this said, the purpose of the next subchapter is to explain how companies genuinely walk towards sustainability and what noble advantages they can take from it.

1.4 Integrating sustainability into business

Sustainability is gaining a lot of popularity among managers, who already recognize its remarkable importance in the corporate landscape (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020; Derqui, 2020). Indeed, the tendency is for companies to turn from mere compliance to attaining a sustainability edge (Dhanda & Shrotryia, 2020), which is related to a new paradigm shift: “sustainability is not an altruistic option for managers anymore, it is now considered a source of revenue” (Derqui, 2020, p. 2712).

Some scholars have explored how companies move towards sustainability. Benn et al. (2006), for example, propose a sustainability stage model to describe how companies progressively integrate sustainability and, thus, advance towards corporate sustainability (Table 1). For the authors, as firms progress across the six stages, the more they consider environmental and social issues in their decision making and operations. Following a similar line of thought, Baumgartner and Ebner (2010) highlight that there are four levels of sustainability maturity. Level 1 (“poor”) only considers mandatory rules and laws, being a rudimentary level of sustainability; level 2 (“sufficient”) already marks an elementary integration of sustainability but is still mainly focussed on compliance with laws; level 3 (“satisfying”) stands for an integration of sustainability that is often above the industry average; and finally, level 4 (“sophisticated”) “implicates an outstanding effort towards sustainability” (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010, p. 81).

Table 1*Phases towards Corporate Sustainability*

Phase	Human Sustainability	Ecological Sustainability
Stage One Rejection	Employees and subcontractors exploited. Community concerns are rejected outright.	The environment is regarded as a free good to be exploited.
Stage Two Non-responsiveness	Financial and technological factors exclude broader social concerns.	Ecological factors are excluded from decision-making.
Stage Three Compliance	The emphasis is on compliance with legal requirements in industrial relations and safety.	Ecological issues unlikely to attract strong litigation or strong community action are ignored.
Stage Four Efficiency	Technical and supervisory training augmented with interpersonal skills training. Community projects and HR value-adding strategies are pursued only when a cost benefit to the company is obvious.	Environmental issues are ignored if they are not seen as generating avoidable costs or increasing inefficiencies. Sales of byproducts are encouraged.
Stage Five Strategic Pro-activity	Intellectual and social capital is used to develop strategic advantage through innovation in products/ services.	Proactive environmental strategies such as product and process redesign are seen as a source of competitive advantage.
Stage Six The Sustaining Corporation	Key goals both inside and outside the firm are the pursuit of equity and human welfare and potential.	The firm works with society towards ecological renewal and positive sustainability policies.

Note. Source: Benn et al. (2006, p. 157)

According to Derqui (2020), companies that incorporate sustainability tend to pay attention to issues such as the environmental footprint, human rights, quality of life, poverty, health, wellbeing, fair trade, consumer rights and community development. Similarly, Kataria et al. (2013) sustain that the corporate initiatives that are related to sustainability have to do with “material processing and manufacturing system, environmental impacts (...), energy consumption (...) and waste management systems, employees health and safety, fair trade practices, programs for community development and customer safety” (pp. 46-47). Also agreeing with the former authors, and after conducting a non-exhaustive literature review on the topic, Hansen (2010) concludes that the main issues covered by corporate sustainability are: accountability and responsibility towards stakeholders, human rights and ethics, responsibility for employees, environmental protection, responsibility in the supply chain, responsibility for customers and products, responsibility for the community (Table 2).

Table 2

Corporate Sustainability Issues

Feature / study	COM, 2001	Hansen & Schrader, 2005	Loew & Braun, 2006	Kaufmann et al., 2008	SustainAbility & UNEP, 2001	SIGMA, 2003	Epstein & Roy, 2003	GRI, 2006	UNGC, 2008
<i>Meta-concept</i>	CSR	CSR	CSR	CSR	CS	CS	CS	-	-
Accountability towards stakeholders	•		•		•	•	•	•	
- Transparency	•				•	•	•	•	
- Engagement with stakeholders / dialogues					•	•		•	
- External stakeholder communication	•		•		•			•	
Human rights & ethics	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
- Human rights	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
- Fight against corruption	(•)	•	•			•		•	•
- Business ethics					•		•		
Responsibility for employees	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
- Employment & responsible restructuring	•		•					•	
- Compensation (reasonability)	•		•			•	•	•	
- Employee health & safety	•		•	•		•		•	•
- Training & Development	•		•	•		•	•	•	
- Diversity & Equal Opportunity (Gender, Age, Disability)	•		•			•	•	•	•
- Work life balance (inkl. family or other leave times, day care, ..)	•				•		•	•	
Corporate environmental protection	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
- Eco-efficiency	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
- Energy management & climate protection	○		•	•				•	
- Closed-loop production / Recycling			•	•		•	•	•	•
- Bio diversity			•			•		•	
Responsibility in the supply chain	•	•	•	•	(•)	•	•	•	•
- Environmental protection in the supply chain	•	•	•	•	(•)	•	•	•	
- Working conditions in the supply chain	•	•	•	•	(•)	•	•	•	•
Responsibility for customers & products	•		•		•	•	○	•	
- Product safety	•					(•)	•	•	
- Integrated product policy/life-cycle assessments	•		•		•	•		•	
- Introduction of (social-environmental) superior products			○		•	•		•	
Responsibilities for the community	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	○
- Development of local communities	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	○
- Corporate giving / sponsoring	•	•	•		•			•	
- Corporate volunteering		•	•		•			•	
Responsibilities for other stakeholders		•	•	(•)	•	•	•	•	
- Financial return for shareholders (or business case rethorik)				(•)	(•)	•	•	•	
- Development of industry standards / legal framework			•	•	•			•	

- strong (major feature)
- modest
- low (mentioned somewhere)
- (•) Indirectly or implicitly included

Note. Source: Hansen (2010, p. 26)

Additionally, it is relevant to highlight that depending on the industry some sustainability issues may have more importance than others. As Ioannou and Serafeim (2019) explain:

(...) while climate change is a universal issue, carbon emissions are a key issue for electric utility companies and relatively less so for financial companies. Similarly, data privacy is a key issue for technology companies and less so for firms in the agriculture industry, where issues of water scarcity and efficiency are more critical instead. (p. 12)

Many are the authors who believe that integrating sustainability brings advantages to companies (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Belen & Nuria, 2017; Derqui, 2020; Eccles et al., 2014; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016; Wagner, 2019). In fact, this conviction is mirrored in several definitions of sustainable organizations. Eccles et al. (2014), for example, describe sustainable organizations as “a category of modern corporations that compete by integrating social and environmental issues into their strategy and processes” (p. 2836), emphasizing a competitive advantage brought by sustainability. Indeed, increased competitiveness is, according to the literature, one of the advantages of incorporating sustainability into business (Belen & Nuria, 2017; Brockett & Rezaee, 2012; Oertwig et al., 2017).

Aligned with the latter, a potential benefit resulting from corporate sustainability is better organizational performance (Eccles et al., 2014). By looking at 180 companies, over a period of 18 years, Eccles et al. (2014) concluded that the companies that had adopted sustainability policies by 1993 considerably outperformed their counterparts by 2009 – both in terms of stock market (having higher stock returns) and accounting performance (with better return-on-equity¹⁰ and return-on-assets¹¹).

Moreover, there is the belief that corporate sustainability also leads to more innovative organizations¹² (Derqui, 2020; Eccles et al., 2014; Haugh & Talwar, 2010; Oertwig et al.,

¹⁰ “Return on equity (ROE) measures how well a company generates profits for its owners. It is defined as the business’ net income relative to the value of its shareholders’ equity” (Henricks, 2020, para. 1).

¹¹ “Return on assets (ROA) is an indicator of how profitable a company is relative to its total assets. ROA gives a manager, investor, or analyst an idea as to how efficient a company’s management is at using its assets to generate earnings” (Hargrave, 2021, para.1).

¹² At the organizational level, innovation can be defined as “development and use of new ideas or behaviours, where a new idea could pertain to a new product, service, production process, organizational structure or administrative system” (Damanpour, 2010, p. 997). In addition, it is “a means to adapt to the environment, or to preempt a change in the environment, in order to increase or sustain (...) effectiveness and competitiveness” (Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan, 2001, p. 47).

2017). There are high chances that sustainable organizations “engage in more product and process innovations to remain competitive given the additional environmental and social constraints” (Eccles et al., 2014, p. 2848). This helps companies to continuously reinvent themselves, their products and services (Haugh & Talwar, 2010).

Another benefit brought by corporate sustainability is enhanced brand reputation¹³ (Belen & Nuria, 2017; Derqui, 2020). “Improved brand reputation was mentioned as the most relevant source of increased revenues resulting from the investments done up to date in sustainability” (Derqui, 2020, p. 2716). Indeed, engaging in sustainability can be good public relations, providing credibility to corporate actions and enhancing trust among suppliers and customers (Kopnina & Blewitt, 2018).

Adding to and reinforcing the already mentioned advantages, the literature also points out that corporate sustainability helps with risk reduction (Belen & Nuria, 2017; Oertwig et al., 2017), attracting better human capital (Derqui, 2020; Eccles et al., 2014; Sullivan, 2014), improving bottom line and earn superior returns (Derqui, 2020; Epstein & Buhovac, 2014; Oertwig et al., 2017).

Having this said, it is not surprising that more and more companies are integrating sustainability voluntarily (Eccles et al., 2014). Indeed, the pressures that were mentioned in the last subchapter do not comprise the only driver of corporate sustainability. Many firms are integrating sustainability concerns alongside more traditional imperatives because they expect benefits from it¹⁴ (Baumgartner & Rauter, 2017; Eccles et al., 2014; Oertwig et al., 2017; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). This is understandable when noticing that only a few authors mention that corporate sustainability can lead to disadvantages¹⁵.

¹³ Reputation, as defined by Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) is “the collective representation of multiple constituencies’ images of a company, built up over time and based on a company’s identity programs, its performance and how constituencies have perceived its behavior” (p. 369).

¹⁴ Schaltegger and Horish (2015) differentiate two perspectives for companies to adopt sustainability:

- Profit-seeking view: companies integrate sustainability because it has a positive impact on their economic success;
- Legitimacy-seeking view: firms adopt sustainability due to societal pressure in order to safeguard their legitimacy and license to operate (a view that was explored in subchapter 1.3).

(Schaltegger & Horish, 2015, as cited in Pintão et al., 2018, p. 106).

¹⁵ Haugh and Talwar (2010), for example, affirm that “internalizing sustainability within an organization is a double-edged sword, providing both opportunities and risk” (p. 387).

Yet, it seems to be consensual that the advantages will only be delivered if corporate sustainability is integrated into the company's overall strategy (Derqui, 2020; Galpin & Whittington, 2012; Oertwig et al., 2017; Sullivan, 2014). Strategy is what guarantees the survival of the company, contributing to its long-term economic success (Oertwig et al., 2017). According to Figge et al. (2002), there are three options for implementing sustainability into the corporate strategy: adapting the corporate strategy (including sustainability objectives), defining a new specific sustainability strategy as part of the overall company's strategy, or redefining the corporate strategy by creating a holistic sustainability strategy (as cited in Oertwig et al., 2017, p. 178). Some literature on the topic highlights that companies still forget to integrate sustainability into the core strategy (Galpin & Whittington, 2012), which may hinder corporate sustainability success.

“After the successful implementation of sustainability aspects in the strategizing phase, proactive management is needed in order to achieve the sustainability objectives” (Oertwig et al., 2017, p. 178). Companies have two possibilities concerning implementation of sustainable management solutions: they can work independently or in partnership with other organizations (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). Partnerships between for-profit and non-profit organizations, like nongovernmental organizations, are one emerging trend in the corporate sustainability context (Pompper, 2015). Since NGOs have commitments to sustainable development (Perez-Aleman & Sandilands, 2008, as cited in Haugh & Talwar, 2010, p. 387), partnerships with these organizations help companies to align their actions with sustainability concerns (Dhanda & Shrotryia, 2020).

Lastly, one should note that there are several factors that support corporate sustainability strategy implementation. By conducting an in-depth analysis of a company from the automotive sector, Engert and Baumgartner (2016) propose six critical factors for successful corporate sustainability strategy implementation: organizational structure, organizational culture, leadership, management control, employee motivation and qualifications and communication (internal and external). Outlining similar factors, Oertwig et al., (2017) state that the facilitators of corporate sustainability are: management control and endorsement, stakeholder engagement, organizational learning and knowledge, transparency and communication, management attitude and behaviour, organizational culture, complexity and investment. Because employees are an essential key for the overall success of every

company (Constantin & Baias, 2015), the present study will concentrate on employee-related factors and internal communication.

Chapter 2: Internal Communication

Internal communication has been largely studied in the past recent years, which might be explained due to its perceived importance for organizational success (Bharadwaj, 2014; Martinez & Hurtado, 2018; Robson & Tourish, 2005; Ruck & Welch, 2002). One can say that internal communication exists since ancient times (Welch, 2018). Truly, “internal communication enabled ancient civilizations to organize the human efforts required to construct pyramids, build great walls, and administer vast empires” (Welch, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, only the managed and formal internal communication can be considered as a recent phenomenon (Welch, 2018), being the focus of the following chapter.

2.1 What is internal communication?

Internal communication has been defined in several ways. Kalla (2005) describe it very broadly as “the formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of an organization” (as cited in Bharadwaj, 2014, p. 183). A stricter definition is provided by Strauss and Hoffmann (2000), who view internal communication as “the planned use of communication actions to systematically influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of current employees” (as cited in Yeomans, 2006, p. 334), already assuming that there is an objective for this communication. Welch and Jackson (2007) go even further on the level of preciseness, proposing an internal communication matrix composed of four internal communication dimensions: internal line management communication, internal team peer communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication.

According to the last mentioned authors, internal line management communication happens between line managers/supervisors and employees, aiming to set out controls and routines; internal team peer communication occurs between team colleagues, with a team task discussion as an example of this communication; internal project peer communication has to do with communication between project group colleagues and might occur to solve project issues; and internal corporate communication happens between the strategic managers/top management and all employees and deals with communicating corporate issues such as goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements (Table 3). Taking this

typology into account, this research will mainly focus on internal corporate communication, which involves “formal, managed communication mediated by communication professionals” (Welch, 2018, p. 1) and aims “to promote commitment to the organization, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment, and understanding of its evolving aims” (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 186).

Table 3

Internal Communication Dimensions

Dimension	Level	Direction	Participants	Content
1. Internal line management communication	Line managers/supervisors	Predominantly two-way	Line managers-employees	Employees' roles Personal impact, e.g. appraisal discussions, team briefings
2. Internal team peer communication	Team colleagues	Two-way	Employee-employee	Team information, e.g. team task discussions
3. Internal project peer communication	Project group colleagues	Two-way	Employee-employee	Project information, e.g. project issues
4. Internal corporate communication	Strategic managers/top management	Predominantly one-way	Strategic managers-all employees	Organisational/corporate issues, e.g. goals, objectives, new developments, activities and achievements

Note. Source: Welch & Jackson (2007, p. 185)

It is important to note that some scholars prefer to use the term “employee communication” when talking about communication that is specifically addressed to employees. Raposo (2017) supports this terminology, defining employee communication as the communication function that is focused on building and managing stable and long-lasting relationships between the organization and one of its primary stakeholders, the employees. Other commonly used synonym expressions are employee relations, internal relations, internal public relations, internal marketing and staff communication (Welch, 2018).

Although definitions and terminology vary from author to author, this Internship Report will use the term “internal communication” and will assume two basic characteristics in order to bound the concept. Firstly, for this study, internal communication is a “strategically minded

management process”, requiring a careful plan and thinking ahead (Dewhurst & FitzPatrick, 2019, p. 3). This means that informal communication taking place inside organizations will not be considered in this research. Secondly, this study assumes that internal communication comprises both one-way and two-way communication: “we’re in the ‘listening’ and ‘talking’ business more than the ‘telling’ game” (Dewhurst & FitzPatrick, 2019, p. 4).

Typically, organizations still favour top-down communication (Bharadwaj, 2014; Constantin & Baias, 2015; Smith & Mounter, 2008). This type of communication is important because “there will always be a need for senior management to give guidance on the direction in which it wants the organization and its constituent teams to head” (Smith & Mounter, 2008, p. 94). In other words, it is through internal communication that employees become connected to the business strategy (O’Murchú, 2015; Yates, 2006) and aware of the values¹⁶, mission¹⁷, vision¹⁸ and objectives of the organization (Martinez & Hurtado, 2018). As summed up by O’Murchú (2015):

The real purpose of effective internal communication is to align people in the organisation in order to deliver the organisation’s strategy. Creating this ‘line of sight’ helps people to understand their role, how they should perform it and how it contributes to the organisation as a whole. (p. 96)

However, for a successful management of internal communication, it is not enough to make messages reach people: “employees are not sets of pots to which you pour out your ideas without giving them a chance to have a say on issues that matter to their job and life” (Markos & Sridevi, 2015, p. 93). Thus, “the strategic purpose of internal communication can perhaps best be summarised as one that is concerned with building two-way, involving relationships

¹⁶ The values can be defined as the “the organisation’s essential and enduring tenets – a small set of timeless guiding principles that require no external justification; they have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organisation” (Collins & Porras, 1998, as cited in Urde, 2003, p. 1018).

¹⁷ A mission is “a general expression of the overriding purpose of the organization, which, ideally, is in line with the values and expectations of major stakeholders and concerned with the scope and boundaries of the organization” (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 24).

¹⁸ The vision can be simply defined as the “desired future state of the organization” (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 24). “It is an aspirational view of the general direction in which the organization wants to go, as formulated by senior management, and requires the energies and commitment of members of the organization” (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 24).

with internal publics, with the goal of improving organisational effectiveness” (Yeomans, 2006, p. 337).

As a matter of fact, building on other authors’ work, Welch (2018) proposes that, so far, there are seven eras of internal communication, associated with different key objectives: entertainment (pre-1939), information (1940s), persuasion (1950s), mutual understanding (1980s), change support (1990s), employee engagement¹⁹ (2000s), and trust (2010s). According to Welch (2018), although “the objectives embodied in these eras are interrelated and ongoing” (p. 3), they also demonstrate a shifting focus over time. Certainly, there seems to be a shift from what we can call a technical function to a strategic one (Raposo, 2017), and from a command-and-control approach to one that includes employees (Yaxley & Ruck, 2015). Welch (2018) also forecasts an eighth era of internal communication, proposing two alternatives: cooperative interaction era and constructive era. My preference lies in the second option, which assumes that the employee voice²⁰ movement will triumph, with top management listening more effectively to employees’ ideas and opinions (Welch, 2018).

Indeed, many are the authors who support the importance of nurturing internal communication practices that consider employee voice and allow employees to participate (Argenti, 1998; Brandão, 2018; Constantin & Baias, 2015; Kang & Sung, 2017; Martinez & Hurtado, 2018; Men, 2014; Walden et al., 2017). Managers should encourage two-way communication (Markos & Sridevi, 2015; Smith & Mounter, 2008) and organizations should recognize internal communication as a tool to integrate employees’ suggestions and ideas into organizational management (Brandão, 2018). In fact, “part of the problem at many companies is that senior management fail to involve other employees in the decision-making process” (Argenti, 1998, p. 199). Showing respect for employees’ inputs and sharing power with them is important for a multiplicity of reasons: it fosters a sense of belonging to the company (Markos & Sridevi, 2010), increases trust on managers (Constantin & Baias, 2015), makes employees feel valued – letting them know that their efforts are essential to achieve organizational goals (Bharadwaj, 2014; Yates, 2006) –, and stimulates employee

¹⁹ “Employee engagement” will be discussed in Chapter 3 (subchapter 3.2).

²⁰ There are two types of employee voice: collective and individual. The first “involves trade unions or employee representatives channeling workforce views and bargaining with management” and the second “relates to direct contributions by staff” (Welch, 2018, p. 12).

engagement (Constantin & Baias, 2015). In this sense, organizations should foster a participative environment and lessen hierarchy when it comes to their internal relationships (Brandão, 2018).

To close this section, it is worth highlighting that there is an extensive discussion on where the internal communication function should be positioned inside an organization. In fact, internal communicators can work in a multiplicity of departments, such as Human Resources, Public Relations, Corporate Communication, Marketing and even Informational Technology department (Welch, 2018). However, according to the literature, the most disputed ones are Human Resources and Public Relations or Corporate Communications departments (Argenti, 1998; Neill, 2015). To solve this debate, some authors propose that the internal communication tasks for each of these departments are not the same (Argenti, 1998; Neill, 2015). When it comes to Public Relations professionals, Theaker (2008) highlights that these should focus their internal communication efforts on everything that generates the feeling of belonging to the organization, including sharing the vision, mission, values, culture and organizational activities (as cited in Raposo, 2017, p. 93). On the contrary, Human Resources should deal with more specialized information, such as communicating benefits and payroll procedures (Argenti, 1998).

2.2 The importance of internal communication

Internal communication used to be a minor area of importance, often overlooked by practitioners (FitzPatrick, 2012). However, nowadays, it is consensual that internal communication is a key factor for organizational success (Bharadwaj, 2014; Martinez & Hurtado, 2018; Quirke, 2008; Robson & Tourish, 2005; Ruck & Welch, 2012), with employees being recognized for their fundamental role (Raposo, 2017). As a result, organizations are increasingly devoting time and resources to this communication (Smith & Mounter, 2008; Verghese, 2017), and a growing body of literature on how to practice it effectively has emerged (FitzPatrick, 2012).

It is unquestionable that companies that excel in internal communication have better organizational performance²¹ (Chmielecki, 2015; FitzPatrick, 2012; Verčič & Vokić, 2017; Yates, 2006). The main explanation for this is the fact that informed employees are more productive and more willing to contribute to organizational goals' achievement (Argenti, 1998; Martinez & Hurtado, 2018). Contrarily, employees who are not informed also exhibit a poorer performance (Martinez & Hurtado, 2018). According to Quirke (2008), "84 percent of employees who understand what makes their business successful want to help create that success, whereas only 46 percent of those who don't understand share that feeling" (p. 11). Therefore, "organizations that communicate well and have staff focused on the same results tend to perform well" (FitzPatrick, 2012, p. 275). Indeed, there is evidence that companies that are effective in terms of internal communication have higher market premium and higher shareholder returns (Yates, 2006).

Another benefit brought by internal communication has to do with organizational change²². Kotter's (1996) change model perfectly demonstrates how internal communication plays an essential role during change – as the means to create a sense of urgency, justify the need for the change, create a shared vision, report signs of progress, and communicate the results of the change. Evidently, internal communication "plays a pivotal role in the successful implantation of change in organizations as a tool for declaring and elucidating the change" (Bharadwaj, 2014). As employee support is essential in all change processes (FitzPatrick, 2012; Smith & Mounter, 2008), internal communication becomes a key facilitator by ensuring that employees understand the change and are prepared for it (FitzPatrick, 2012; Yates, 2006). Moreover, the more the employees are involved in the planning and development of the change, the more they will support it (Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017), further strengthening the need to "keep everyone up to date with unfolding events and involved in the eventual outcome" (Yeomans, 2006, p. 342).

²¹ Organizational performance is related to two main dimensions: efficiency and effectiveness (Davis & Pett, 2002). While efficiency has to do with "the amount of output obtained from a given input" (Davis & Pett, 2002, p. 87), effectiveness deals with "the resource-getting ability of an organization" (Davis & Pett, 2002, p. 87).

²² Zorn et al. (1999) define organizational change as "any alteration or modification of organizational structures or processes" (as cited in Lewis, 2011, p. 25). It can be proactive or reactive: "proactive change initiatives emerge from discussions within organizations, while reactive change efforts respond to outside occurrences" (Welch, 2018, p. 13).

Furthermore, “organisations normally aim for a level of stability in their workforce and try to avoid unplanned resignations” (FitzPatrick, 2012, p. 277). Internal communication helps to retain people (FitzPatrick, 2012; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017) and lowers employee turnover (Yates, 2006), which is beneficial for organizations because hiring new employees is expensive, time consuming, and does not benefit the workforce (Yates, 2006).

The previous advantage has to do with another one: employee engagement. It is highly consensual that internal communication helps to create an engaged workforce (Kang & Sung, 2017; Mishra et al., 2014; Verčič & Vokić, 2017; Welch, 2011; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Yates, 2006), especially if there is two-way communication (Constantin & Baias, 2015; Kang & Sung, 2017; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Mishra et al., 2014; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). Fostering employee engagement is important because, as it will be discussed, engaged employees are a valuable asset for any company that aims to reach high-performance levels.

A less obvious aspect is the fact that internal communication also affects external reputation (FitzPatrick, 2012). Employees are perceived as a credible source of information about their organizations (FitzPatrick, 2012; Raposo, 2017), and can either champion for or against it (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014). Having this said, internal communication should be strategically used to make sure that employees “understand the corporate policy and positions on key issues” (FitzPatrick, 2012, p. 280), as well as to develop positive relationships between the employees and the organizations in which they work (Kang & Sung, 2017).

Other relevant advantages fostered by internal communication within organizations are better knowledge management (Martinez & Hurtado, 2018), enhanced trust between employees and managers (Mishra et al., 2014) and increased levels of innovation (Argenti, 2007, as cited in Bharadwaj, 2014, p. 184). Given the fact that internal communication brings so many advantages to organizations, diving deep into how to manage it effectively can be truly helpful within the corporate landscape. Especially in today’s globalized economy, companies must continuously find ways to achieve competitiveness, profitability and growth (Chmielecki, 2015).

2.3 Internal communication channels

There are multiple channels that can be used for internal communication. In general terms, internal communication can assume face-to-face, print and electronic media formats (Welch, 2018). Face-to-face internal communication can either be one-to-one or ‘en masse’ (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Mass face-to-face communication encompasses meetings and events, for example (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Print media channels comprise newsletters and magazines, for instance, and may be used to support face-to-face communication activities or to reach employees who could not be achieved through face-to-face communication (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Electronic channels range from videos displayed on corporate screens and videoconferencing, to the intranet, email, internal social media and other (Neill, 2015; Smith & Mounter, 2008). A comprehensive list of internal communication methods is provided below (Table 4).

Table 4

Internal Communication Channels

Animations	E-zines	Posters
Audio recordings	Focus groups	Presentations
Award schemes	Guides	Recognition events
Blogs	Handbooks	Reports
Briefing packs	Information booklets	Roadshows
Brochures	Internal social media platforms	Seminars
Bulletin boards	Internal TV systems	Senior management drop-in sessions
CEO addresses to all staff	Intranet pages	Senior management site visits
Comments pages	Letters and memos (all staff)	Speeches
Corporate websites	Magazines	Staff conferences
Desk-drop promotional items	Managed meals	Suggestion schemes
Digital signage screens	Manuals	Surveys
Displays	Meet-the-management events	Team briefings (with core brief)
Electronic newsletters	Networking events	Telephone hotlines
E-mail (all staff)	Newsletters	Themed events
Employee letters	Newspapers	Videocasts
Employee research	Online consultation forums	Videos
Employee surveys	Online polls	Webinars
Enterprise social networks	Open meetings	Wikis
Exhibitions	Podcasts	Workshops

Note. Source: Welch (2018, p. 10)

Social media channels are one emerging trend at the organizational context. “The advent of the Web 2.0 era fundamentally changed the landscape of communication and the internal communication of companies” (Men, 2014, p. 270), with more and more organizations using social media for internal communication (Neill, 2015; Sievert & Scholz, 2017). Indeed, now that social media play a huge role in our daily lives, considerations about their use in companies are emerging (Neill, 2015; Nguyen & Gregar, 2018), and authors already stress their usefulness for companies. Internal social media help to dissolve geographical barriers (Men et al., 2020) while blurring corporate hierarchy (Men, 2014; Sievert & Scholz, 2017). Consequently, these channels expand participation and enable employees to share their opinions, knowledge and ideas (Men, 2014). Moreover, they allow managers to answer faster, contributing to establish an effective dialogue within organizations (Nguyen & Gregar, 2018).

Channels can be categorized as personal or impersonal: face-to-face communication channels are understood as personal, while print and electronic communication channels are generally perceived as impersonal (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Moreover, they can also be distinguished in terms of their level of richness. The more a medium allows non-verbal cues, the richer it is (Quirke, 2008). Therefore, face-to-face communication is the richest medium (Men, 2014), including cues such as the tone of voice, body-language and facial expressions (Mishra et al., 2014). According to Quirke (2008), “the less the chance of misunderstanding or misinterpretation, the leaner the media you can use” (p. 159). The same position is supported by Men (2014) who says that rich media are the best channel for communicating complex information, facilitating feedback and listening, while enabling multiple cues and personal focus.

Choosing a channel must also take into account the purpose of the message: “if people are to feel involved or consulted in a decision, sending a memo (...) won’t have the desired impact” (FitzPatrick, 2012, p. 291). With this in mind, Yeomans and FitzPatrick (2017) suggest using a diverse range of channels in order to achieve five main purposes: push messages, pull information, aid understanding, generate debate and build community. When the objective is to push out a message to all staff in a quick way, using email and magazines can be effective (FitzPatrick, 2012; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). If the goal is to provide information for employees to “pull” when they want or need it, the intranet can assume a

central role (FitzPatrick, 2012). Furthermore, when trying to aid employee understanding, face-to-face channels are a good option, such as team meetings and training (Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). On the other hand, internal social media and online forums are a good option in order to generate debate and incite employees to ask questions (Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). Lastly, events, using Instagram and internal social media channels can be a suitable option if the intention is to build a sense of community (Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017).

Looking at employees' preferences regarding internal communication channels, there is a wide consensus that face-to-face communication is the most desired format among employees (Bharadwaj, 2014; Men, 2014; Mishra et al., 2014; Smith & Mounter, 2008). "Employees tend to feel more satisfied with the organization when their managers use more face-to-face channels to communicate with them" (Men, 2014, p. 278). This is probably because face-to-face communication is the best channel for two-way communication (Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017), allowing for checking and immediate feedback (Men, 2014; Smith & Mounter, 2008), and giving employees the feeling that the management is willing to listen to them and cares about their opinions (Men, 2014).

Despite the latter, "executives recognize that many communication vehicles are available to them to send messages to employees, and they do not always see face-to-face communication as the fastest, easiest, or most effective method" (Mishra et al., 2014, p. 197). Therefore, it is also important to look at preferences regarding other channels. Woodal (2006) mentions that print communication is losing preference to electronic forms of communication (as cited in Welch, 2012, p. 248). Supporting this contention, Men (2014) found out that employees prefer to receive a variety of information (e.g., new decisions, events, changes) through email, stressing that print channels, such as newsletters, reports and brochures, are becoming less preferred. One exception to this rule is pointed out by Mishra et al. (2014), who emphasize that employees want a paper to take home when the information has to do with employee benefits.

2.4 Planning internal communication: a strategic approach

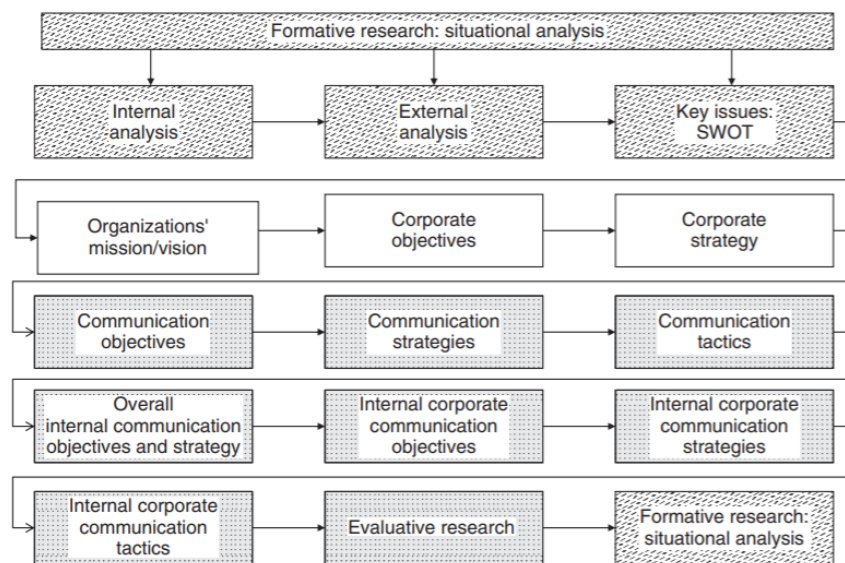
For FitzPatrick (2012), when planning internal communication, there are three main questions to take into consideration: “what do we want them to know?”, “what do we want them to think or feel?” and “what do we want them to do?” (p. 288). What companies want their employees to know, feel and do will, of course, differ from one company to another (Dewhurst & FitzPatrick, 2019). Notwithstanding, delivering outcomes in terms of knowledge, feelings and behaviours can be perceived as the three main objectives for this communication (Dewhurst & FitzPatrick, 2019).

A list of more concrete goals for internal communication is proposed by Argenti (1998), who points out seven objectives: (1) “to improve morale and foster goodwill between employees and management”, (2) “to inform employees about internal changes such as reorganization or staff promotions”, (3) “to explain compensation and benefit plans such as a new health-care plan or an employee assistance program”, (4) “to increase employee understanding of the company and its products, organization, ethics, culture, and external environment”, (5) “to change employee behavior toward becoming more productive, quality oriented, and entrepreneurial”, (6) “to increase employee understanding of major health/social issues or trends affecting them”, (7) “to encourage employee participation in community activities” (p. 201).

Many are the authors who believe that the internal communication objectives must be directly related with the organization’s overall strategic plan (Quirke, 2008; Raposo, 2017; Welch, 2018). Organizations face different challenges, such as new management, crisis, new identity, etc. Consequently, depending on the organization’s context, internal communication may help to attain desired outcomes, such as fostering trust relationships, promoting participation, getting feedback, among others (Raposo, 2017). Indeed, in order to strategically manage internal communication, communication professionals need to understand the organization’s overall corporate strategy, “aligning communication planning with the organization’s objectives” (Welch, 2018, p. 4). By doing this, internal communication not only solves communication problems, but also advances corporate goals and delivers real business outcomes (O’Murchú, 2015).

When approaching internal communication in a strategic manner, this communication implies careful research, planning, implementation and evaluation (Raposo, 2017). Welch (2018) provides a useful guide map for strategic internal communication planning (Figure 7). Complementing this model, and according to Ruck (2015), there are four main attributes of a strategic approach to internal communication: (1) research-based (it implies knowledge about the organization, its culture, strategy and employees), (2) communication theory-based (it involves knowledge about the right communication approach to the specific situation), (3) employee-centred (it should put employee communication needs first) and (4) results-based (it must encompass clear and measurable objectives²³).

Figure 7
Internal Communication Planning Process



Note. Source: Welch (2018, p. 4)

Several authors mention that most internal problems are related to ineffective internal communication. As Chmielecki (2015) highlight: “poor internal communications ends up affecting other areas of the organization and can result in bad feelings and weak relationships

²³ O’Murchú (2015) mentions that internal communication objectives should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.

among the employees” (p. 28). For Verghese (2017), the biggest barriers that are jeopardizing the effectiveness of internal communication encompass: “inability to demonstrate value of the function, low budgets, limited line of sight, poor alignment of employees, lack of commitment from senior leaders, competing priorities and lack of time” (p. 111). Pointing out similar factors, Chmielecki (2015) states that the main factors influencing the effectiveness of internal communication are: information sharing, insufficient amount of information, not valuing internal communication, time, hierarchy, lack of feedback and too much information.

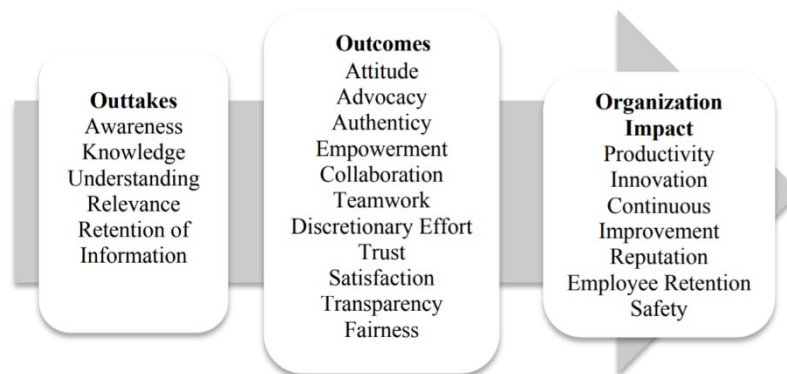
To assess the effectiveness of internal communication, FitzPatrick (2012) suggests that it is critical to look at the following factors: user perceptions (“do you feel well communicated with?”, “do you like the intranet?”, “are you reading the newsletter?”), learning (“what did the audience take away from the communications?”, “how well they understand certain messages”), behaviours (“are people doing things differently?”, “have they stopped doing things?”) and results (“is our business performing better as a result of good IC?”) (p. 302).

Adding to the latter, O’Neil et al. (2018) conducted a Delphi study in order to recommend standards for measuring internal communication, presenting a complete list of 22 parameters that should be taken into account when assessing internal communication initiatives (Figure 8). The goal was to tackle the absence of a standardized approach to measuring this communication, which makes it difficult for practitioners and organizational leaders to compare results (O’Neil et al., 2018). In their study, the researchers also justify why they did not include engagement as an outcome standard of internal communication. As they say: “the researchers decided not to include engagement as a standard, because it is a function of several other standards, including knowledge, understanding, discretionary effort, trust, and satisfaction” (O’Neil et al., 2018, p. 8).

Still regarding internal communication’s assessment, Smith and Mounter (2008) point out that internal communication can be measured by both quantitative and qualitative measures, for instance by conducting surveys, audits and focus groups. This evaluation is fundamental in order to demonstrate the value of internal communication and justify investment on it (Yeomans, 2006) – two hurdles that affect internal communication’s effectiveness, as stressed above.

Figure 8

Standards for Measuring Internal Communication



Note. Source: O’Neil et al. (2018, p. 8)

2.4.1 Key factors to take into consideration when planning internal communication

In order to successfully plan internal communication, there are several key factors to take into consideration. Employees’ preferences and needs, the workforce composition, and the size of the organization configure some important aspects that affect how internal communication should be managed (Constantin & Baias, 2015; FitzPatrick, 2012; Neill, 2015; Welch, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007).

2.4.1.1 Employee preferences and needs

As pointed out by several authors, in order to make internal communication effective it is important to assess employees’ needs and preferences regarding this communication (Mishra et al., 2014; Smith & Mounter, 2008; Welch, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007). Yeomans (2006) suggests that employees have the following overall internal communication needs: general information about the organization, specific information that help to do the individual job, clarity about personal roles, clear organizational vision, information on workplace practices, opportunities to be involved and consulted, feedback on performance, access to training and development, and access to communication channels (p. 342).

Welch and Jackson (2007) highlight that research on internal communication needs and preferences is essential regarding two central aspects: channels and content. This means that only the appropriate messages should reach employees and through the right channels (Welch, 2012). “If employees feel such communication is conducted inappropriately, the communication process could inadvertently damage internal relationships” (Welch, 2012, p. 246). Despite this fact, most communication professionals continue to operate in the dark, not having enough information regarding employee communication needs (O’Murchú, 2015).

Preferences for channels were already addressed in a previous subchapter²⁴ – with face-to-face communication being favoured over other channels, and print communication increasingly losing preference to electronic channels. Understanding which channels are preferred by employees is crucial, as they “will be more likely to respond and engage when they receive information in a form and channel that they prefer” (Mishra et al., 2014, p. 197).

When it comes to the content of internal communication, Ruck and Welch (2012) underline that there is little evidence on what messages employees need: “much of the current research and assessment of internal communication includes the use and preferences of channels” (p. 300). However, some studies already shed some light on this matter. Truss et al. (2006) posit that employees lack messages that make them feel valued and inform them about the company goals (as cited in Ruck & Welch, 2012, p. 295). Moreover, according to Center and Jackson (1995), the subjects that employees want to hear more about are: organizational plans for the future, job advancement opportunities and job-related how-to information (as cited in Smith & Mounter, 2008, p. 131).

Having this said, communication professionals “charged with providing content for employee communication publications and other channels must balance the demands of management with the needs of employees” (Welch, 2018, p. 6). Therefore, it is important to continuously research employee needs, assuring that internal communication is relevant for the employees and meets their information demands (Welch, 2018).

²⁴ See subchapter 2.3.

2.4.1.2. Workforce composition

Effective internal communication also requires a deep understanding of the audience, in this case, the workforce (FitzPatrick, 2012; Smith & Mounter, 2008; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). As FitzPatrick (2012) highlights:

As with any branch of communication, planning in IC begins with an understanding of the public or audience with whom the organisation wishes to connect. Without a clear picture of the character, composition, motivation and attitudes of the people being addressed, it is unlikely that any useful understanding will emerge from the conversation. (p. 281)

One must remember that the workforce rarely is homogeneous (Smith & Mounter, 2008; Yeomans, 2006), being composed by employees with different characteristics, such as age, gender, culture, mindsets, etc. Because of this, it is important to segment the workforce into groups that share similar characteristics (Cantrell & Smith, 2010, as cited in Suh & Lee, 2016, p. 451). Yeomans (2006) suggests segmenting employees according to demographics, psychographics, staff groups, contract with the organization and geographical location. The underlying assumption is that “attempts to communicate with everyone in exactly the same way can only be partially successful” (FitzPatrick, 2012, p. 281) and, so, segmentation makes it easier to effectively address each employee (Suh & Lee, 2016).

Indeed, even the above-mentioned general preferences and needs regarding internal communication can vary among different employee groups. When it comes to internal communication content, for instance, needs may differ according to the specific employment relationship experienced by the employees (Welch, 2018). As Welch (2018) puts it: “a new entrant to an organization will generally have different information needs than a long-serving employee” (p. 6).

Furthermore, although employees from different generations work together, their expectations and necessities regarding internal communication may be different (Neill, 2015; Walden et al., 2017; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). “One of the biggest forces impacting internal communication is the generational shifts” (Neill, 2015, p. 14). With a growing number of Millennials²⁵ inside companies, some internal communication practices may be rejected. According to Neill (2015), “Millennials are resisting traditional communication tactics such as long mass emails instead preferring short messages on the device of their choosing” (p. 14). Moreover, Millennials expect to be well informed regardless of their position inside the company (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, as cited in Walden et al., 2017, p. 78) and demand more dialogue than other generations (Neill, 2015).

2.4.1.3 Organization size

Finally, the size of the organization must also be considered for an effective management of internal communication (Constantin & Baias, 2015). Despite being fundamental in both small and large organizations (Smith & Mounter, 2008; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017), the size of the company affects which internal communications practices work best and which do not. “If it is difficult to talk to 800 people at once, it is relatively simple to gather 30 people in a room” (Constantin & Baias, 2015, p. 977).

Of course, the tendency is to move away from face-to-face communication as organizations grow (Smith & Mounter, 2008). It would not be sensible to believe that internal communication could be mainly conducted through face-to-face except in small organizations (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Because of this, for Constantin and Baias (2015), one-way communication can be effective in large organizations.

²⁵ According to the Pew Research Center, Millennials are the ones who were born between 1981 and 1996 – ages 25 to 40 in 2021 (Bialik & Fry, 2019). This generation is characterized by being confident, self-expressive and open to change (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Comparing to previous generations (Generation X, Baby Boomer and Silent Generation), Millennials are better educated and tend to delay marriage and forming their own households, living with their parents for longer stretches (Bialik & Fry, 2019). Another aspect that differentiates Millennials is their use and relationship with digital technology, the internet and social media (Taylor & Keeter, 2010). Generation Z is the youngest of all generations (less than 25 years old in 2021) and shares many similarities with Millennials, having an even deeper relationship with the digital world (Parker & Igielnik, 2020).

The latter, however, does not imply that large organizations should underestimate two-way communication, nor that they do not have solutions to establish a dialogue with their employees. One option is to use internal social media. As Men (2014) highlights:

Organizational social media channels with two-way, interactive/dialogical, communal, and relational features also promote employee participation and engagement, facilitate conversation between employees and the organization, and encourage employees to articulate their opinions. These characteristics again reflect the organization's symmetrical communication. (p. 270)

Knowing how to manage all the discussed aspects is a very important task in order to deliver effective internal communication and maximize its advantages. The goal of this study is to better understand how this can be accomplished when communicating corporate sustainability specifically. The next chapter will expose what is already known regarding the relationship between corporate sustainability and internal communication.

Chapter 3: Corporate Sustainability and Internal Communication

There is already evidence that communicating corporate sustainability internally is essential for its success (Brunton et al., 2017; Derqui, 2020; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Genç, 2017). Internal communication can help to raise employees' awareness regarding corporate sustainability efforts, as well as their motivation to participate in those (Koch et al., 2019). Moreover, this communication can also be used as a tool to increase employee engagement in the organization's sustainability practices (Kataria et al., 2013; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016), which is highly valuable because engaged employees not only identify with, but also communicate and work to execute the sustainability strategy (Lacy et al., 2009; United Nations Environment Program [UNEP], 2011).

3.1 Communicating corporate sustainability

Communication is at the core of successful sustainability strategies (Derqui, 2020; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Genç, 2017). "As organizations recognize the need to engage in (...) sustainability initiatives, it is integral to success to communicate that they are doing so" (Brunton et al., 2017, p. 31). Indeed, lack of communication is frequently the reason why companies do not get full credit for their sustainability efforts (Dawkins, 2007, as cited in Derqui, 2020, p. 2714). First, without proper internal communication the company will not be able to implement the necessary changes to make the organization more sustainable (Baldassare & Campo, 2016; Derqui, 2020; Genç, 2017). Second, some positive effects resulting from the adoption of sustainability strategies are only attained if there is sufficient advertising (Wagner, 2010, as cited in Pintão et al., 2018, p. 108). To give a concrete example, if a company does not communicate its sustainability efforts externally, it may lose sales of environmentally conscious consumers (Baldassare & Campo, 2016), not being able to "take advantage of current increasing demand for sustainable products and services" (Derqui, 2020, p. 2714). Third, communication helps to involve stakeholders in sustainability, providing them with an opportunity to give feedback that can help the company improve its performance (Pintão et al., 2018).

Despite the above, some companies seem to be afraid to communicate sustainability because they fear being accused of greenwashing (Allen, 2016; Baldassare & Campo, 2016). In order to avoid this risk, companies should communicate their sustainability efforts clearly and, preferably, backing up their claims with tangible evidence (Alevizou et al., 2019). As an example, companies should never present themselves as perfect or the best in their industry; “instead, they should specifically communicate how they are better than their competitors” (Szabo & Webster, 2021). Therefore, authenticity and sincerity when communicating corporate sustainability efforts is essential (Pompper, 2015). On this matter, Allen (2016) states the following:

Credible communication provides detailed information on topics that stakeholders would expect to be discussed, supplemented with illustrative examples. Non-credible communication is more opaque and general; omits important facts, topics, and discussions; or presents more favorable information than would be expected. (p. 70)

In this sense, when not used in misleading ways, communication is in fact a means to provide transparency to a larger set of stakeholders (Hansen, 2010), informing them about what the organization is really doing and why (Allen, 2016; Font & Cochrane, 2005). As Siano et al. (2016) explain:

The purpose of sustainability communication is to adequately convey the sustainable organization’s commitment, avoiding the gap between what the company promises and its effective ability to achieve and report the expected results. (p. 3)

Moreover, since sustainability issues are not always easy to understand, communication assumes another critical role: it helps to deliver the information across stakeholders (Genç, 2017). Technical information, for example, is not usually understood by stakeholders, which may lead to messages not being processed (Allen, 2016). Therefore, it is important that communication professionals are able to thoughtfully craft sustainability-related messages with the audience on their mind, making them accessible (Allen, 2016).

One of the main instruments used by companies to disclose sustainability-related information, to both internal and external stakeholders, are sustainability reports²⁶ (Hansen, 2010). Sustainability reports are usually published on an annual or biannual basis (Hansen, 2010) and are used to “document the environmental, social and economic engagements that enterprises are making in dealing with internal and external resources” (Oertwig et al., 2017,

²⁶ Some organizations blend sustainability reporting with their annual report (Pompper, 2015).

p. 192). Therefore, “publishing reports on a company’s CSR/Sustainability activities is essential to gaining credibility among stakeholders and for demonstrating compliance with Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and other standards” (Pompper, 2015, p. 66). With this said, the two main purposes of sustainability reporting are to assess the state of the firm regarding the three main dimensions of corporate sustainability and to communicate the organization’s sustainability efforts and progress to its stakeholders (Lozano, 2012, as cited in Pintão et al., 2018, p. 106).

It is worth noticing that much sustainability reporting is now taking place online (Pompper, 2015). “Many organizations are augmenting their written reports with electronic website-based versions or moving their reporting completely online” (Allen, 2016, p. 82). Indeed, corporate websites are being used to communicate commitment to corporate sustainability, with sustainable organizations usually having a “sustainability” section on their website (Siano et al., 2016). For Siano et al. (2016), websites are a useful tool to generate dialogue about sustainability with stakeholders and “should include tools that favor ‘inclusive’ processes, namely, structured forms of collaboration and methods for personalized engagement” (p. 4). Despite this fact, few corporate websites promote two-way communication mechanisms on their websites (Capriotti and Moreno, 2007, as cited in Pompper, 2015, p. 70).

Social media channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube) are also being used by many companies to communicate about sustainability to both internal and external stakeholders, being a great tool to share the companies’ sustainability achievements (Reilly & Hynan, 2014) and promote sustainability initiatives (Pompper, 2015). “Corporations stand to gain many returns when (...) social media are used to promote CSR/Sustainability goals and highly visual community service performed by employees wearing color coordinated, company-logoed T-shirts and caps” (Pompper, 2015, p. 91). Some social media best practices are to post regularly (Reilly & Hynan, 2014), answer promptly to consumers and investors (Gottsman, 2013, as cited in Reilly & Hynan, 2014, p. 757) and ensure that the message is consistent across all accounts (Alevizou et al., 2019). One advantage of social media is that employees can share posts (or their own photos) of what the company is doing in terms of sustainability, which provides extra publicity to the corporate sustainability efforts (Pompper, 2015) and credibility to the company’s sustainability practices.

Belen and Nuria (2017) affirm that communicating a focus on corporate sustainability leads to significant advantages for the company. The results of their study show that communication strategies based on sustainability increment corporate competitiveness, strengthen the relationship with stakeholders, improve the corporate reputation (with both internal and external stakeholders) and contribute to corporate differentiation. Probably because of this, “communicating a focus on (...) sustainability has become integral to the organizational agenda” (Brunton et al., 2017).

3.1.1 The importance of communicating sustainability efforts internally

Research on corporate sustainability-related communication has mainly focused on external communication: how companies’ sustainability efforts are communicated to external stakeholders (Brunton et al., 2017; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Kataria et al, 2013; Wagner, 2019). Moreover, employees tend to be neglected in many corporate sustainability studies (Brunton et al., 2017; Kataria et al., 2013; Pintão et al., 2018; Pompper, 2015). Therefore, there is little research on how employees respond to communication on this subject (Allen, 2016). Recognizing that employees are vital for achieving corporate sustainability’s success, the present study will address this research gap.

Employees are the foundation of all organizations and the essential key with which firms can turn their strategies into reality (Constantin & Baias, 2015). Some authors go even further on the employees’ importance for a company, stating that they are “the only competitive advantage that differentiates it from other companies” (Martinez & Hurtado, 2018, p. 5). Knowing this, it is not surprising that the employees’ role for achieving corporate sustainability is now gaining more attention in the academic literature (Süßbauer & Schäfer, 2019).

It is widely agreed that leading a company towards sustainability requires collective efforts (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020; Kataria et al., 2013; Lacy, et al., 2009; Sullivan, 2014; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016; UNEP, 2011). “Strategy implementation is about getting the strategy as formulated accomplished through employee initiatives” (Nathan, 2010, as cited in Engert & Baumgartner, 2016, p. 823). Hence, when companies decide to contribute to

sustainable development and integrate sustainability into their core strategy, it is essential that employees are onboard (Sullivan, 2014). “Even the best ideas for supporting sustainability will fall flat unless a company’s workforce can put them into action” (Lacy et al., 2009, p. 492).

Lacy et al. (2009) found out that companies which have more success regarding sustainability efforts have one thing in common: “a deep reliance on their employees – at all levels – to carry out their sustainability strategies” (p. 488). Sustainability is not a sole top management’s responsibility (Kataria et al., 2013) and successful managers know the importance of inspiring employees to take action (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020). Companies that fail to use their employees for corporate sustainability are missing out one of the most valuable resources to the company’s development and implementation of sustainability strategies (Font & Cochrane, 2005; Sullivan, 2014). As stated in a report by the UNEP (2011):

Employee support is a key driver of sustainability within the business. Employees are responsible for an organisation’s processes and operations and are, therefore, crucial players in greening such processes and in transforming corporate culture to integrate sustainability. (p. 3)

One should note that it is wrong to assume that employees are aware of corporate sustainability policies: “many employees may be unaware of sustainability issues beyond their immediate work responsibilities” (Haugh & Talwar, 2010, p. 384). This idea is supported by Kataria et al. (2013) who suggest that sometimes employees do not contribute to corporate sustainability because they do not have enough information or, even worse, are completely unaware of sustainability initiatives. This presents a problem because, as it has been suggested so far, the lack of awareness among employees represents a hurdle for managers when the company decides to integrate sustainability (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). However, this barrier can be overcome by establishing sustainability communication practices inside the company (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). As Font and Cochrane (2005) underline:

An internal communications strategy (...) is the most effective way to guarantee that permanent change is achieved and that all staff participate fully in the implementation of the company’s sustainability goals and objectives. (...) A good communications strategy will encourage diversity and an open exchange of ideas, promote a sense of unity and common purpose throughout the company. (p. 20)

Indeed, internal communication can influence both resistance to change and employee engagement in sustainability (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016), making it essential not only to start transformation towards sustainability, but also to sustain this strategy over time.

Since “sustainability cuts across business functions from production, manufacturing, supply chains and distribution, marketing and selling to finance and management control” (Haugh & Talwar, 2010, p. 3), communication of corporate sustainability should be companywide (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). Accordingly, managers should encourage and support their employees, be aware of their capacities and raise their understanding regarding sustainability (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020). Moreover, employees should be informed about the company’s sustainability goals and be regarded as partners in achieving those objectives – being consistently asked for ideas and feedback (Sullivan, 2014). Finally, solutions should be found in order to enable employees to show their abilities and take responsibility (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020).

Taking everything into account, it is not surprising that several authors have pointed out concrete employee-related factors for successful development and/or implementation of corporate sustainability. Some of these factors are: employee involvement in the company’s sustainability program (Koch et al., 2019), employees’ sustainability awareness (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020; Derqui, 2020), employees’ sustainability understanding (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020), employees’ motivation (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016), employees’ commitment to corporate sustainability (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016) and employees’ engagement in sustainability (Galpin & Whittington, 2012; Kataria et al., 2013; Lacy et al., 2009; Sullivan, 2014). This study will look specifically at the last-mentioned factor, addressing how internal communication can best assist in delivering it.

3.2 Employee engagement and corporate sustainability

Employee engagement is receiving both scholars’ and practitioners’ attention (Saks & Gruman, 2014). The explanation for this interest is the fact that employee engagement is related with many positive organizational outcomes (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Mishra et al., 2014). As highlighted by Bedarkar and Pandita (2014),

employee engagement is “a vital element in determining the extent of organizational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness” (p. 107). Notwithstanding, only 15% of employees are engaged worldwide (Harter & Rubenstein, 2020).

Broadly speaking, “engagement is something that the employee has to offer and cannot be ‘required’ as part of the employment contract” (Bridger, 2015, p. 4). Kahn (1990) was the first author to provide a definition of employee engagement²⁷, describing it as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (p. 694). Therefore, for this author, people put physical, cognitive and emotional efforts when they are engaged at work. On the contrary, if employees are disengaged at work, they will be physically uninvolved, cognitively unvigilant and emotionally disconnected while doing their tasks. Still according to this author, there are three fundamental psychological conditions which influence the levels of engagement: meaningfulness²⁸, safety²⁹ and availability³⁰.

Although the first definition continues to be one of the most influential nowadays, being quoted in many studies (e.g., Anitha, 2014; Mishra et al., 2014), other relevant descriptions have emerged. For Maslach and Leiter (2008) employee engagement is “an energetic state of involvement with personally fulfilling activities that enhance one’s sense of professional efficacy” (as cited in Saks & Gruman, 2014, p. 158). Similarly, Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) describe employee engagement³¹ as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption” (as cited in Welch, 2011, p. 333). A more recent definition, proposed by Bridger (2015), simply describes employee engagement as “the extent to which people are personally involved in the success of the business” (p. 7).

²⁷ The author used the term “personal engagement”.

²⁸ Meaningfulness has to do with “a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one’s self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy” (Kahn, 1990, pp. 703-104). This happens when employees feel useful and valuable (Kahn, 1990).

²⁹ Safety deals with “feeling able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career” (Kahn, 1990, p. 708).

³⁰ Availability means that employees have a “sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment” (Kahn, 1990, p. 714).

³¹ The authors used the term “work engagement”.

Despite their nuances, all definitions make it clear that employee engagement is a highly valuable feature in any organization.

It is undeniable that engaged employees exhibit desirable characteristics for successful organizations. “An engaged employee is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organisation, feels passionately about its goals and is committed to live by its values” (Anitha, 2014, p. 310). As a result, engaged employees are more productive (Allen, 2016; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Bridger, 2015), they fight for their companies’ goals while motivating their colleagues to do the same (Anitha, 2014), and exceed work expectations, performing their tasks with excellence and going beyond the employment contractual agreement for the success of their employer (Allen, 2016; Anitha, 2014; Markos & Stridevi, 2010). The same does not apply to disengaged employees. According to Gallup (2002), “not engaged employees” only do what they are told to do, not caring about the organizational goals, while “actively disengaged employees” not only perform poorly, but also demotivate the overall workforce, being extremely dangerous workers for companies (as cited in Anitha, 2014, p. 310). Consequently, knowing how to foster employee engagement significantly contributes to high-performance organizations (Mishra et al., 2014).

When it comes to corporate sustainability specifically, engaging employees is key (Font & Cochrane, 2005; Galpin & Whittington, 2012; Glavas, 2012; Kataria et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2014), resulting in identification, eagerness to communicate about the company’s sustainability strategy and readiness to contribute to it (Lacy et al., 2009). Therefore, employee engagement is essential to turn the sustainability strategy into measurable results (Galpin & Whittington, 2012) and “use sustainability as a competitive advantage” (Kataria et al., 2013, p. 50).

Another aspect to take into consideration is that “although top management establishes the sustainability-related vision for their organization, (...) personnel are tasked with disseminating the message” (Allen, 2016, p. 98). Evidently, it is important to recognize that employees are the main interface through which external stakeholders are exposed to an organization, which means that they are an important source of information regarding corporate sustainability (Allen, 2016; Kataria et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2014). When employees

are engaged, they also display higher levels of positive communication behaviours³² (Kang & Sung, 2017), such as advocating for the company and recommending it to others (Gallup, 2003, as cited in Kang & Sung, 2017, p. 87). Consequently, employees can endorse the sustainability initiatives of the company and help enhance corporate reputation by effectively communicating with external stakeholders (Kataria et al., 2013). As Sullivan (2014) explains:

Employees can be this army of authentic brand ambassadors, talking as sustainability champions, acting like they really care, voicing commitment to the company's sustainability mission. They can tell it as it is. What they themselves are doing to help the company reach its sustainability goals. And they can talk when they like, in daily social interactions, not when told to by the PR department. They'll talk because they want to. (p. 40)

The above justifies why more organizations are trying to engage employees in their sustainability-related initiatives (Allen, 2016). Font and Cochrane (2005) propose that employee engagement in sustainability efforts starts with education and awareness-raising of both sustainability issues and the company's sustainability policy and activities. Moran (2019) also suggests that in order to engage employees on sustainability it is necessary to craft initiatives that raise awareness, educate and provide opportunities for action and ownership. Aligned with the ideas of the previous authors, Polman and Bhattacharya (2016) propose eight concrete ways to engage employees in the company's sustainability journey:

(1) Define the company's long-term purpose: it is important to stress and share with the employees what are the long-term interests of the company when it comes to the planet and society. Having a clear long-term purpose creates meaning in and at work, something that employees are valuing more and more.

(2) Spell out the economic case for sustainability: in order to gain employees support, companies should make it clear that operating in more sustainable ways is both "doing good" and "doing well", also bringing economic advantages.

³² Internal communication can help improve external reputation of an organization when it creates internal ambassadors: employees who speak up for their organization (FitzPatrick, 2012). This asset becomes especially relevant when taking into consideration the current availability of platforms where people can freely express their opinions – in our social media age PR can no longer control the communications space (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014).

(3) Create sustainability knowledge and competence: as previously stated, successful corporate sustainability requires efforts from the entire workforce. Accordingly, it is fundamental to educate employees through sustainability training, as well as to provide them with systems and processes that facilitate sustainability integration into business decisions. Only this way will employees have the specialized knowledge and expertise that is required in many sustainability initiatives.

(4) Make every employee a sustainability champion: when it comes to creating a sustainable organization it is critical to have the leadership on board, with senior executives personally involved. However, sustainability champions must exist at all levels of the organization, with sustainability ambassadors who contribute to delivering the sustainability agenda throughout the entire organization.

(5) Cocreate sustainable practices with employees: in order to feel engaged in sustainability, employees should have the opportunity to put their ideas forward and see them implemented. When this happens, employees understand that they have a role to play, also starting to contribute with more and better suggestions.

(6) Encourage healthy competition among employees: according to the authors, one way to foster the 'I should do it' spirit inside companies is through creating healthy competition among employees. For sustainability purposes, this could be achieved through throwing a competition where groups of employees have to come up with a project to help generating a more sustainable company. This peer pressure stimulates creativity and innovation that can benefit the sustainability journey of the company, while also involving employees in the process, making them feel more engaged.

(7) Make sustainability visible inside and outside the company: it is important to always remember employees that sustainability is meaningful to the company. To do this, the companies should develop sustainability indicators and share progress on them. Apart from metrics, putting visual signs around the office, for example, also encourages employees to adopt more sustainable behaviours.

(8) Showcase higher purpose by creating transformational change: companies should be able to show how their sustainability efforts are bringing real change to the world, which may

imply sharing good practices with competitors. By doing this, employees see that the efforts are not only about the company, instead they aim to deliver changes with higher impact. Pride and identification among employees follow.

According to Savitz (2013) companies can develop two types of engaged employees in corporate sustainability: bystanders and participating employees. The first group relates to employees that are not directly involved in sustainability practices but are well informed and satisfied regarding the company's sustainability efforts; the second group concerns employees who are actively involved in the company's sustainability efforts (Savitz, 2013). Since internal communication can be used to inform employees about the company's sustainability practices, this communication's potential to create bystander employees is evident. "Through effective use of internal communication channels and sustainability training provided to all employees, the company creates bystander employees" (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016, p. 11). Moreover, as awareness is the first step to create participating employees (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016), internal communication also becomes essential to create this second group of workers: "the bystanders are expected to turn into participants at work through voluntary activities and also act as aware employees at home" (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016, p. 12).

3.3 Planning internal communication to engage employees in corporate sustainability

Although there is little research that brings together "corporate sustainability", "internal communication" and "employee engagement", previous studies already provide some insights on how to manage internal communication about corporate sustainability efforts.

Evidently, "effective internal communication can aid appropriate messages about sustainability implementation strategies to reach employees in a useful and acceptable manner" (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016, p. 5). Ulus and Hatipoglu (2016) state that messages on sustainability should be clear and rich in their content. These authors also pose that persistence is effective for communication of sustainability. Moreover, according to Kataria et al. (2013), one topic that should be covered when communicating sustainability to employees is the cost-benefits to the organization. This can be a persuasive subject for

engaging employees in working with sustainability “because people tend to prioritise financial concerns over environmental or social benefits” (Kataria et al, 2013, p. 49).

Companies can make use of several channels to communicate information about sustainability to their employees. Font and Cochrane (2005) provide a comprehensive and extent list: words from the CEO, meetings (team meetings, informal meetings, all-employee events), email, publications (brochures, leaflets, flyers, corporate report, newsletter or magazine), intranet, images (videos, stickers, posters, logos, computer images), games (treasure hunt, quiz) and training. The authors also offer some guidance on the goals of each of these methods, the group of employees they can reach and the organization size where they are more effective. To provide a concrete example, they say that all-employee events can be used in all types of organizations and are known to be useful to communicate strong messages and objectives, as well as to gather all employees around the company’s sustainability strategy.

According to Engert and Baumgartner’s (2016) study, the main internal communication channels for sustainability are meetings, the intranet and company’s newspapers. Kataria et al.’s (2013) research also mentions that employees receive sustainability policy information through the intranet and face-to-face meetings, but their results also add the email and the company’s website as common channels. Some authors propose that social media tools can be used to promote employees’ interest in sustainability (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). These platforms can be especially useful to increase awareness of younger employees who have grown up with the Web 2.0 (Fieseler et al., 2010, as cited in Haugh & Talwar, 2010, p. 389).

When it comes to employees’ preferences and needs regarding corporate sustainability-related communication, Kataria et al. (2013) state that employees prefer meetings instead of emails and want “very lucid, short, and pragmatic messages about what they can do for the environment and society” (p. 49). Moreover, according to Balčiūnaitienė and Petkevičiūtė (2020) employees from both private and public organizations put sustainability training as number one for raising their understanding on the issue.

Sustainability training for employees aims to create sustainability ambassadors (Derqui, 2020; Sullivan, 2014). It is through training that employees become the embodiment of sustainability values, get prepared to communicate the company’s sustainability efforts, and

engaged in helping the company deliver (Sullivan, 2014). Despite this fact, not enough companies recognize the importance of training (Ceres, 2018). According to Ceres's report conducted in 2018, only 38% of the analysed companies provided some training to employees on sustainability topics; and only 3% of those firms provided companywide sustainability training (Ceres, 2018).

Participatory activities, such as corporate volunteering, are also highly recommended in the literature when it comes to communicating sustainability to employees (Koch et al., 2019). Through a qualitative study in a large international firm, Koch et al. (2019) found out that participatory sustainability activities help to raise employees' awareness of social and environmental topics. According to this study, employees who participate in sustainability-related activities are also more knowledgeable regarding sustainability issues than the ones who have never been involved.

The same authors could perceive that employees who enrol in participatory activities also tend to spend time reflecting on individual attitudes and behaviours. These employees will more likely consider strategies to help to build a more sustainable company and try to encourage colleagues to take part in sustainability efforts. This shows that the more employees are involved in participatory activities, the more they seem to be invested emotionally and cognitively (Koch et al., 2019) – which, as previously seen, is a symptom of engaged employees. In the end, and to use a term that has already been presented, these activities help to foster participating employees, the ones who are involved in corporate sustainability processes (Savitz, 2013).

Aligned with what has been exposed so far, Glavas (2012) also mentions that training programs, newsletters, conferences, volunteering initiatives and meetings can engage employees because these are able to raise awareness of organization's sustainability efforts and build pride and loyalty. However, this author highlights that strategies to engage employees in sustainability can differ according to the age, gender, personality and culture of the employee. As Glavas (2012) says:

What motivates one employee might disengage another. Some might be motivated by messages of world peace while others consider it 'tree-hugging' and nothing to do with business. (...) We are only just beginning to understand how to engage employees in sustainability. It is definitely not a 'one size fits all' approach primarily because each employee is a unique individual with his or her own needs, values and purpose. (p. 25)

There are other authors who also recommend tailoring the sustainability messages according to specific groups of employees. Kataria et al. (2013), for instance, suggest that the messages should be tailored according to employees' roles and, thus, relevant for the specific job that the employees assume. Similarly, Font and Cochrane (2005) propose segmenting the audience in three groups: top management, middle-management and all employees. With this Internship Report, further clues on how to best communicate corporate sustainability to engage employees on this matter will try to be added.

Part II – Empirical Study

Chapter 4: Methodology

Having reviewed and displayed the literature on the main concepts that this study tackles, the empirical study is now presented in the subsequent chapters, starting with the presentation of the chosen methodological approach. A case study-mixed methods design (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018) was preferred because it appeared to be the most comprehensive methodology to analyse the company under study – Hi Fly airline –, providing a solid amount of data to answer the research question and address the objectives that guided this Internship Report.

4.1 Relevance of the study and research question

As exposed in the Theoretical Framework, employees play a big part when it comes to corporate sustainability efforts (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Koch et al., 2019; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). Therefore, it is of vital importance to understand how to get employees onboard regarding the company's sustainability strategy and initiatives. As previously stressed, the more employees are engaged in corporate sustainability, the more they cooperate (Lacy et al., 2009), and one way to achieve that result is through internal communication (Kataria et al., 2013; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016).

Although there is already evidence that internal communication is key for achieving corporate sustainability's success (Brunton et al., 2017; Derqui, 2020; Engert & Baumgartner, 2016; Genç, 2017), there is still room to contribute to this subject by focusing on the specific internal communication practices that best contribute to win employees' engagement on this matter. As pointed out before, there is little research involving corporate sustainability, internal communication and employee engagement – the three central variables of the present study. Moreover, most studies on communication and corporate sustainability focus on communication that is directed towards external publics (Brunton et al., 2017; Kataria et al., 2013; Wagner, 2019), reinforcing the relevance of further investigating this topic by looking at employees in particular.

Hence, the research question that guided this study was:

What are the best internal communication practices to engage employees in corporate sustainability?

When companies have sustainability at the heart of their activities, internal communication can be an ally to get employees interested and eager to contribute to reaching corporate sustainability goals. However, the range of internal communication practices that can foster employee engagement in the company's sustainability strategy is potentially endless. Thus, this Internship Report tried to assess the best internal communication practices for the specific purpose of engaging employees in corporate sustainability, adding up to the few conclusions already known³³.

4.2 Objectives of the study

After revealing the research question, which can be interpreted as the most important step in a study (Yin, 2018), it is now essential to state the research goals that were associated with this inquiry. Thus, aligned with the research question, the general goal for this Internship Report was:

- To investigate the best internal communication practices to increase employee engagement in corporate sustainability.

This could be done by analysing Hi Fly, the company where I did a four-month curricular internship and where I have been working to the date. This airline has long been committed to sustainability, being a pioneer in some of its initiatives, such as the single-use plastic-free flights³⁴. Due to this, Hi Fly was an adequate company to conduct this study because much of its internal communication deals with corporate sustainability.

³³ Presented in subchapter 3.3.

³⁴ The company's sustainability initiatives will be detailed in Chapter 5.

In order to attain the general goal, and considering Hi Fly as the case company, the following specific goals were also proposed:

- To analyse Hi Fly's internal communication practices regarding corporate sustainability.

As the study is focused on internal communication, it was critical to understand which internal communication practices are put in place at Hi Fly when it comes to corporate sustainability. Among other aspects, this involved investigating which channels are used to convey corporate sustainability-related communication and which type of content is communicated. Moreover, this goal implied a deep knowledge and understating of Hi Fly's sustainability policy and several corporate sustainability initiatives.

- To comprehend Hi Fly employees' needs and preferences regarding internal communication addressing corporate sustainability.

As highlighted in Part I, in order to effectively plan internal communication, it is necessary to assess employees' preferences and needs regarding this communication, especially in terms of channels and content. Therefore, this second specific goal was critical to the overall study. Moreover, it was also important to understand if there were substantial differences among employees, for instance considering their generation.

- To take conclusions on how engaged Hi Fly employees are in corporate sustainability.

The third specific goal aimed to assess if and to what extent Hi Fly employees are engaged in corporate sustainability. This allowed me to comprehend if Hi Fly is already being successful when it comes to engaging its employees in the company's sustainability journey and tackle the aspects that could be improved.

- To contribute with practical suggestions on how to better engage employees in working with sustainability at Hi Fly.

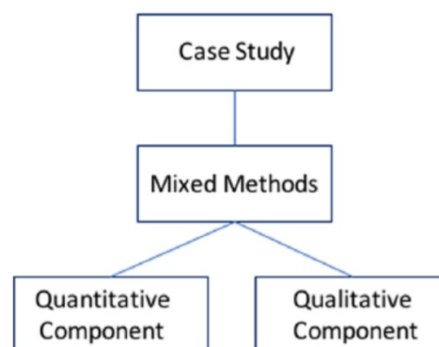
Lastly, another aim of this Internship Report was to provide useful suggestions that could make a difference at Hi Fly. Since to date I am still working at the company, it was always my intent to make the conclusions of this project meaningful for the airline. Recognizing that there is always room for improvement, the aim was to take advantage of employees' perceptions and suggestions in order to be able to make recommendations on how Hi Fly can better engage its employees in corporate sustainability through internal communication, benefiting both the company and its employees.

4.3 Research design

The methodology chosen for this research was a single-case study that integrated a mixed-methods approach (Figure 9). According to Guetterman and Fetters (2018), “investigators are increasingly combining case studies and mixed methods, which, if conducted systematically and thoughtfully, can yield a more complete understanding” (p. 901).

Figure 9

Case Study-Mixed Methods Design




Note. Source: Guetterman & Fetters (2018, p. 901)

“Case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13) – in my case, a company. According to Yin (2018), analysing a single case is appropriate when one has a critical, unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal case. Considering Hi Fly’s background regarding corporate sustainability and implementation of internal actions that aim to, at least, raise employee awareness of sustainability, this company enabled to confirm, challenge and/or extend the theory – some attributes of a critical case (Yin, 2018).

As for the mixed-methods approach, the sequential exploratory strategy was followed (Creswell, 2009), collecting qualitative data first and quantitative data second. The reasoning for gathering both data is that it “provides an expanded understanding of research problems” (Creswell, 2009, p. 203). In my case, while the qualitative data were mainly collected to better understand Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives and to explore how the company communicates its corporate sustainability efforts internally, the quantitative data were indispensable to achieve the employee-related research goals. Moreover, as the quantitative component of the research was done after the qualitative component, the results of the participant observation, document analysis and exploratory interviews (Phase 1) were useful to inform the questionnaire (Phase 2). Table 5 provides the rationale for the chosen research design, linking the data collection methods to the main research goals that they aimed to accomplish.

Table 5

The Empirical Study: Phases and Research Goals

<p>Case study</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>Qualitative component</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant observation • Document analysis • Exploratory interviews 	<p>To investigate the best internal communication practices to increase employee engagement in corporate sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To analyse Hi Fly’s internal communication practices regarding corporate sustainability.
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>Quantitative component</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire 	<p>To investigate the best internal communication practices to increase employee engagement in corporate sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To comprehend Hi Fly employees’ internal communication needs and preferences regarding corporate sustainability; • To take conclusions on how engaged Hi Fly employees are in corporate sustainability; • To contribute with practical suggestions on how to better engage employees in working with sustainability at Hi Fly.

4.3.1 Exploratory data

Participant observation

Since the present study is an Internship Report³⁵, I had the opportunity to be onsite at the company in which this research is based. “Participant-observation is a special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer” (Yin, 2018, p. 167). Working at Hi Fly airline, I was involved in crafting messages and activities related to sustainability, which proved to be highly relevant in order to better bound this study and its objectives.

Moreover, I had the chance to acquire information that, otherwise, would be inaccessible to me. “Participant-observation provides certain unusual opportunities for collecting case study data” (Yin, 2018, p. 168). This advantage is clearly perceived when considering that I was able to see the messages being displayed on the intranet, internal TV screens and screen savers of the office’s computers. Moreover, I could observe if employees participate in sustainability-related activities and adopt sustainable behaviours. Adding to this, the culture and values of the company could only be experienced because I was (and still am) part of the company.

Document Analysis

In parallel with the participant observation, document analysis was also carried out. According to Quivy and Campenhout (2005), the researcher may collect several types of documents – from handwritten, to print or even audio-visual documents –, in order to find useful information for the study. Typically, the use of documentation helps to augment and corroborate evidence that was collected through other sources, providing more details (Yin, 2018).

For this Internship Report, firstly, I analysed documents that allowed me to comprehend Hi Fly’s work in terms of sustainability. In this sense, Hi Fly’s Sustainability Policy, internal presentations, the website, Hi Fly’s YouTube account videos and press releases were analysed. Then, in order to take some preliminary conclusions on how Hi Fly communicates

³⁵ The tasks and activities developed during the internship will be covered in Chapter 5.

about corporate sustainability to its employees, I also analysed the intranet and corporate news that addressed internal actions, such as sustainability training workshops and beach clean-ups. Some of these were found in Mirpuri Foundation's³⁶ website.

Both the participant observation and the document analysis provided valuable insights to develop the organization characterization³⁷, interview guide (Appendix A) and questionnaire (Appendix B).

Exploratory interviews

Having collected data via participant observation and document analysis, two exploratory interviews were conducted, with Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer and Mirpuri Foundation's Head of Public Relations. These helped to explore aspects that I would not be able to understand by myself through the literature review and other qualitative methods, which is an attribute of exploratory interviews (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 2005).

The two participants were purposefully selected due to their prominent role in communicating corporate sustainability at Hi Fly, constituting what Quivy and Campenhoudt (2005) call privileged testimonies. Sílvia Mirpuri, Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, directs the company's communications, public affairs and philanthropic activities, being responsible for managing and monitoring both internal and external communication at Hi Fly. Ana Agostinho, as the Head of Public Relations of Hi Fly's main sustainability partner, the Mirpuri Foundation, is also particularly involved in Hi Fly's internal communication addressing corporate sustainability, especially through the implementation of internal actions that aim to engage employees in corporate sustainability efforts.

The main goal of the interviews was to gather as much information as possible regarding Hi Fly's past and current corporate sustainability initiatives and the way in which these were, and still are, communicated to the airline's employees. In addition, the interviews also aimed

³⁶ Mirpuri Foundation is a non-profit organization established by Paulo Mirpuri, Hi Fly's President. More information on the linkages between the Foundation and Hi Fly will be provided in the following chapters.

³⁷ Presented in Chapter 5.

to gain access to the managers' opinions about which internal communication practices they believe are the most effective to engage employees in the company's sustainability work. Finally, it was also my intention to understand if the interviewees believe that the workforce is engaged in the company's sustainability work or not. Although these insights would not be enough to answer the employee-related goals, mentioned above, they were seen as a valuable addition in order to be able to triangulate results.

Therefore, the interview guide (Appendix A) was divided into three sections: (1) Hi Fly's sustainability, (2) Internal communication about corporate sustainability, and (3) Employee engagement in corporate sustainability. The questions and sub-questions were based on the literature presented above, as well as on the results of the participant observation and document analysis. Moreover, the interview guide was minimally adjusted to each of the participants, taking into consideration their position and organization.

The first interview, with Mirpuri Foundation's Head of Public Relations, was carried out via Microsoft Teams on July 13, 2021. The second, with Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, was conducted in-person, at Hi Fly's headquarters, in Lisbon, on July 19, 2021. The first interview was conducted in English and lasted approximately 70 minutes, while the second was completed in Portuguese and took around 50 minutes. Both interviews were recorded, with the participants' authorization, and transcribed for analysis (Appendices C and D).

Adding to the data that had already been collected through the other methods, the information disclosed by the interviews helped with the organization characterization – the focus of the next chapter – and with the final adjustments of the questionnaire.

4.3.2 Primary data

Questionnaire

Phase 2 of this research involved an online self-administered questionnaire that was sent via email to all Hi Fly employees. In June 2020, according to Hi Fly's Human Resources Department, the airline counted with 639 employees, distributed as follows:

- Hi Fly Building: 267;
- Cabin Crew: 211;
- Pilots: 161.

As all employees were invited to participate, a random sample was assembled, which is the most suitable for making generalizations to a population (Creswell, 2009). The questionnaire was available from July 26, 2021, to August 31, 2021, and the number of collected responses was 204, of which 4 were not considered valid for this study³⁸. Considering the population size (639), however, the sample should have fallen somewhere between 234 and 242 employees to guarantee its validity, as shown on the following page (Table 6). The holiday season was possibly one limitation, resulting in a lower response rate despite the 3 follow-up emails and additional Microsoft Teams messages that were sent to incentivize participation. Moreover, due to internal policies, it was not possible to use the intranet to disseminate the questionnaire, which could have helped to increase the number of responses.

In spite of the latter, applying the formula below (Levine et al., 2021), the margin of error is still low – 5,7% – for a 95% confidence level. This fact, in combination with data triangulation, which was possible due to the qualitative component of the study, ensures that conclusions can be taken.

$$e = z \sqrt{\frac{\pi(1 - \pi)}{n}} \sqrt{\frac{N - n}{N - 1}}$$

$$e = 1,96 \times \sqrt{\frac{0,5 \times (1 - 0,5)}{200}} \times \sqrt{\frac{639 - 200}{639 - 1}} \approx 0,057 \approx 5,7\%$$

Note. E – sampling error; z – critical value from the standardized normal distribution (1,96 for 95% confidence level); π – population proportion (0,5 is used when no prior knowledge about the population proportion is known); N – population size (639); n – sample size (200)

³⁸ These responses were not considered because one was duplicated and three were incongruent (revealing participants' lack of attention while filling out the questionnaire).

Table 6*Population VS. Sample Size*

N	n	N	n	N	n	N	n	N	n
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2 800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3 000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3 500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4 000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1 000	278	4 500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1 100	285	5 000	357
40	36	160	113	360	191	1 200	291	6 000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1 300	297	7 000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1 400	302	8 000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1 500	306	9 000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1 600	310	10 000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1 700	313	15 000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1 800	317	20 000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1 900	320	30 000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2 000	322	40 000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2 200	327	50 000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2 400	331	75 000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2 600	335	100 000	384

Note. N – population size; n – sample size. Source: Huot (1992, as cited in Huot, 2006, p. 28)

The questionnaire was divided into four sections: (1) Demographic information, (2) Awareness of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives, (3) Engagement in Hi Fly’s sustainability, and (4) Hi Fly’s internal communication about corporate sustainability. The goal of this data collection method was to collect feedback from employees, assessing their level of awareness regarding the company’s sustainability efforts (questions 5-8), their level of engagement in corporate sustainability initiatives (questions 5-21), and their preferences and needs regarding internal communication dealing with this subject (questions 22-35). Some of the questions also enabled to understand if employees were content and satisfied with Hi Fly’s current internal communication on the topic, as well as to comprehend what they would like to see changed (questions 16, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 35).

The questionnaire was developed in Google Forms and the items were based on the literature review and on the findings from the qualitative component of the study. Awareness of corporate sustainability initiatives had to be given special attention because, throughout the literature, it emerged as a critical antecedent for engagement (Font & Cochrane, 2005; Moran, 2019; Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). Because of this, it would not make sense for employees who were not aware of the company’s sustainability initiatives to complete the

whole questionnaire. Moreover, other variables that the literature had suggested to be linked with engagement in corporate sustainability were also incorporated into the questionnaire: sustainability knowledge (Font & Cochrane, 2005; Moran, 2019; Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016), pride (Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016), identification (Lacy et al, 2009), positive communication behaviours (Galpin & Whittington, 2012; Sullivan, 2014), feeling of personal involvement (Bridger, 2015), commitment (Sullivan, 2014) and participation in company's sustainability efforts (Savitz, 2013). When it comes to exploring employees' preferences and needs regarding internal communication on this topic, the focus was on channels and content (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

To better evaluate and make conclusions concerning what was mentioned, the questionnaire was composed of closed-ended questions (multiple selection and Likert-scale questions) and few open-ended questions, inviting additional comments when considered appropriate and indispensable for a deeper understanding.

Data analysis was conducted with the aid of Google Forms' generated graphics and Excel. Excel was used to cross results and understand whether some demographic aspects (e.g., generation) influenced employees' preferences and needs regarding internal communication dealing with corporate sustainability. In addition, responses to open-ended questions required content analysis so that they could be aggregated into themes (coded) to facilitate interpretation.

4.4 Ethical considerations

As Creswell (2009) alerts, "throughout the project, it is important to engage in ethical practices and to anticipate what ethical issues will likely arise" (p. 73). With that in mind, this research took into consideration some ethical concerns, especially when it comes to the quantitative component of the study, ensuring complete anonymity to all the employees who have completed the questionnaire. This was attained by not asking for some biographical and demographic information, such as the name and contact details. Moreover, departments were not considered in this study, as some participants would be easily identified (e.g., managers of each department).

The interviewees were also informed that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed for the purpose of this study, taking special attention that no confidential or sensitive information was divulged.

Chapter 5: Presentation of the Case Study Company and Descriptive Memory of the Internship

A four-month curricular internship³⁹ carried out at Hi Fly airline allowed me to gain practical experience in the field of corporate communications, teaching me the basics on how to communicate with both internal and external stakeholders. The fact that the company puts sustainability at the centre of its operations and culture meant that this topic was recurrently in the spotlight of the messages being delivered and received, reason why this matter called my attention, ending up partially guiding the choice of the subject for this research. This chapter presents Hi Fly and its corporate sustainability initiatives, also detailing the tasks I performed at the airline during the internship.

5.1. Introducing Hi Fly

5.1.1 About the airline: history, business and identity

Hi Fly is a privately-owned Portuguese wet lease specialist and charter airline operating worldwide. It was created in 2005 and started its operations in 2006. Throughout the past 15 years, the airline has experienced consistent growth, which is proved by the fact that in 2010 it was already the largest private Portuguese airline, and in 2014 it also became the largest wet lease specialist worldwide, surpassing the 15 large aircraft mark.

The airline is part of the Aviation Division of the Mirpuri Investments Group (Figure 10) which also encompasses:

- MESA: aircraft maintenance and engineering company;
- Safeport: aircraft handling company;
- LSKY: inflight and corporate catering company;
- SkyTech: military aviation services and funding solutions provider;
- Hi Fly Academy: pilot training centre.

³⁹ The tasks and activities developed during the internship will be covered in subchapter 5.2.

Figure 10

Mirpuri Investments Group: Aviation Division



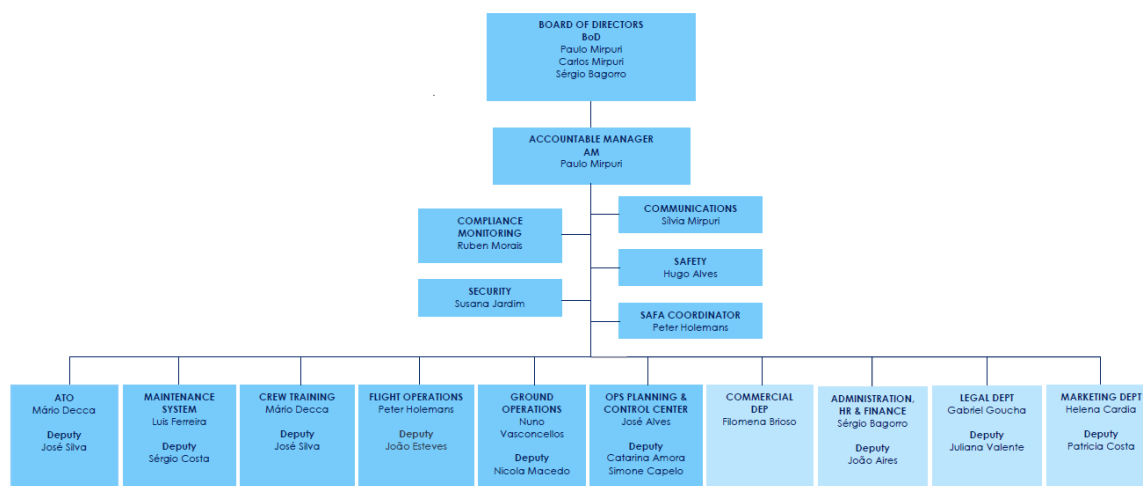
Hi Fly's main business is wet lease, that is, it provides aircraft on ACMI basis (including the crew, maintenance and insurance). Consequently, Hi Fly works on a Business-to-Business model and its principal clients are other airlines, which sometimes need extra capacity to cope with short/medium term or seasonal needs. Governments are also increasingly adhering to wet lease as a reliable, safe and efficient source of transportation for officials and defence personnel, comprising Hi Fly's second main clients. Although wet lease is Hi Fly's core business, the airline also offers charter flights for tour operators, companies and individuals. While in the first modality Hi Fly operates the flight under the customer airline flight numbers, the second implies that the client decides both the route and schedule and Hi Fly operates the aircraft on an all-inclusive basis for a fixed fee.

As the global Covid-19 pandemic significantly decreased passenger flights and augmented cargo transportation needs, since 2020, the airline started to convert some of its aircraft into freighters, removing the seats from the cabin to create extra cargo capacity. This not only allowed Hi Fly to better cope with the crisis, sustaining its business, but also enabled the airline to assist several countries in delivering Covid-19 vaccines and other much needed medical equipment.

Currently, Hi Fly operates an all-Airbus fleet of 20 widebody aircraft (of which 8 are in its cargo version), including the families A320, A330 and A340. It is qualified and authorized to fly to every country and reaches 400 destinations. The airline has more than 600

employees, classifying it as a large company⁴⁰. Hi Fly’s organizational structure can be consulted below, in Figure 11.

Figure 11
Hi Fly’s Organizational Structure



Note. Source: Hi Fly’s internal presentation

Regarding Hi Fly’s DNA, the airline’s mission is to be a leading widebody aircraft wet lease specialist. Moreover, its corporate values are based on safety, agility, trust, efficiency and modernity. The airline is committed to the highest safety standards and is able to deploy the aircraft with very short notice (as little as three hours). It strives to provide trustworthy services to its customers and, in 2015, it achieved 99,7% dispatch reliability across its fleet. It operates modern and efficient aircraft and tries to be at the forefront of digital transformation in all aspects of the business.

Adding to the latter, sustainability is a core concern for the airline, being part of its corporate strategy: “If we want to survive in the long term, we need to find a new balance between progress and sustainability” – Paulo Mirpuri, Hi Fly’s President (Hi Fly, 2019a, p.1). Thus,

⁴⁰ According to Eurostat’s definition of enterprise size (micro firms: 0-9 persons employed; small firms: 10-49 persons employed; medium-sized firms: 50-249 persons employed; large firms: 250+ persons employed). (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Enterprise_size)

the airline positions itself as a sustainable company, with a clear sustainability mission statement defined: “We are committed to operating with a purpose and successfully, driving sustainable and responsible long-term growth and profitability, whilst minimising the inherent negative impact and risks, enhancing the benefits of our business, and responding to environmental and social challenges” (Hi Fly, 2020a, p.1).

5.1.2 Hi Fly’s sustainability journey

Hi Fly’s commitment to sustainability has been present since the airline’s inception, especially when it comes to the economic and environmental dimensions of corporate sustainability. Since the beginning, the goal was to have an efficient and modern airline that would take the planet and its resources into consideration (Sílvia Mirpuri, Hi Fly’s Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Appendix C).

This early concern with the environment is not difficult to understand when considering that aviation is a necessary, but also pollutant industry. When it comes to climate change and global warming, for instance, the aviation sector is responsible for about 2-3% of global carbon emissions from human activities (European Union Aviation Safety Agency [EASA], 2019). Moreover, in 2017, the airline industry is estimated to have produced 5.7 million tonnes of cabin waste, which encompasses cabin cleaning waste and catering waste (International Air Transport Association [IATA], 2019). Therefore, as businesses should incorporate externalities into their decision making in order to attain legitimacy and license to operate (Joshi & Li, 2016), it is not surprising that, even nowadays, most of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives are directed towards the planet.

Notwithstanding, it would not be accurate to say that the airline does not address the social dimension of corporate sustainability. As its sustainability policy (Annex A) make clear, the airline follows a triple bottom line approach (Elkington, 1997), taking into consideration the three dimensions of corporate sustainability. For the airline “what is good for the world is good for business”, “to sustain (...) success we must protect our greatest resource – the planet”, and “success (...) depends on (...) people feeling inspired by their jobs and fulfilled in their careers” (Hi Fly, 2019a, p. 1). Therefore, the aim is to have a profitable business

(economic dimension), while considering the wellbeing of the planet (environmental dimension), the employees and communities (social dimension).

Although the airline has always had sustainability concerns, the turnaround point came in 2017, when Hi Fly launched several sustainability programs in partnership with the Mirpuri Foundation, a non-profit organization that was established by Paulo Mirpuri, Hi Fly's President, in 2016. As it was addressed in the Theoretical Framework, when it comes to the implementation of sustainable management solutions, partnerships with non-profit organizations are becoming a trend (Pompper, 2015). Indeed, most of Hi Fly's sustainability initiatives are carried out in partnership with the Mirpuri Foundation, which has been working alongside the airline "to help ensure that the company becomes (and remains) one of the world's leading proponents of sustainability in aviation" (Hi Fly, 2019a, p. 1).

Moreover, it was only since the airline joined efforts with the Mirpuri Foundation that it started to involve its employees in the company's sustainability mission. As Sílvia Mirpuri, Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, highlighted⁴¹:

In 2017 (...) we realized that (...) we were focusing more on the company than on the people. With the "Turn the Tide on Plastic" campaign [Mirpuri Foundation's campaign supported by Hi Fly] we took the sustainability commitment that we had since Hi Fly's inception (...) further. We started to reach people and engaging the employees a lot. (...) We made reusable bottles to give to everyone (...), we did a lot of team buildings, beach clean-ups, training sessions (...), surf classes. The Mirpuri Foundation as Hi Fly's sustainability partner was responsible for organizing those actions, but they were all for Hi Fly's people. (Appendix C)

Consequently, according to Ana Agostinho, Mirpuri Foundation's Head of PR⁴², the Mirpuri Foundation functions almost as Hi Fly's Sustainability Department, supporting the airline in its sustainability journey (Appendix D). With this said, when taking into consideration the sustainability integration models (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010; Benn et al., 2006) exposed in Part I, Hi Fly has been moving into the highest levels of sustainability integration especially since 2017, incorporating more and more environmental and social issues in its decision making and operations.

⁴¹ Full transcription of the interview to be consulted in Appendix C.

⁴² Full transcription of the interview to be consulted in Appendix D.

Nowadays, the airline's corporate sustainability initiatives are varied and aim to promote sustainable development by addressing some of the 17 SDGs, namely: SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) (Hi Fly, 2020a).

It is important to note that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some plans and projects related to corporate sustainability have been slowed down or postponed. This is a clear example that demonstrates how the global pandemic was responsible for negatively impacting sustainable development (Thornton, 2020). Nevertheless, the airline is conscious that working towards sustainability is a never-ending process and aims to do more: "I think that we have come a long way, but we still have much more to do. (...) It is an evolutionary process that never ends" (Sílvia Mirpuri, Appendix C).

Hi Fly's sustainability-related efforts are internationally recognized, especially the ones that aim to protect the environment. Some international aviation specialized media, such as Simple Flying, mention Hi Fly as one of the greenest airlines in the world⁴³. Moreover, other important industry players recognize the airline for its corporate sustainability work. When Hi Fly took delivery of an Airbus A330neo, in 2019, for instance, Peter Bennet, Airbus's Vice President Sales Southern Europe, said: "Hi Fly must be one of the main customers we have that really focuses on the environment as an objective for the future" (Hi Fly's YouTube video⁴⁴). Moreover, Paulo Mirpuri, Hi Fly's President, and Ana Agostinho, Mirpuri Foundation's Head of PR, are regularly invited to participate in international sustainability conferences and events to share the airline's work on this domain. These examples make it clear that Hi Fly is a solid role model when it comes to sustainable aviation, having developed an outstanding reputation regarding its corporate sustainability efforts around the world.

⁴³ <https://simpleflying.com/worlds-greenest-airlines/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34ADBdEmjRI>

5.1.2.1 Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives

To better understand what has been addressed so far, this section will go through concrete actions that Hi Fly is implementing when it comes to corporate sustainability. As the airline states in its sustainability policy (Hi Fly, 2020a):

To live up to these principles and commitments, we are integrating them into our activities, through specific policies, procedures and practices, and with the implementation of action plans. These are applied across the company, including top management decision making, as well as embodied in the culture, day-to-day behaviour and tasks performed by all workers. (p. 4)

As it will be exposed, the airline has incorporated sustainability in its corporate operations, across the services it provides (in the air and on the ground), and through community and environmental projects (Hi Fly, 2020a), with environmental advocacy also playing a big part. Some of the most important corporate sustainability efforts are presented below in chronological order.

Fleet selection (since 2006)

The first and ongoing corporate sustainability effort has to do with Hi Fly's fleet. Since the beginning, Hi Fly has always tried to choose modern and efficient aircraft that consume less fuel, both for economic and environmental purposes. Having a young and efficient fleet requires constant fleet renewal, reason why the airline periodically takes delivery of new planes to substitute older aircraft that are less environmentally friendly.

One of the most efficient and environmentally friendly airplanes that the company currently owns is an A330neo (Figure 12), which was acquired in 2019 and is capable of reducing fuel consumption up to 25% per seat when compared to previous A330 (Hi Fly, 2019b).

Figure 12

Hi Fly's A330neo



Note. Source: Hi Fly's website

Paperless cockpit (since 2014)

In 2014, the airline started a process that aimed to reduce paper inside the cockpit, substituting paper manuals for apps and, consequently, using less raw materials. In 2018, a new software (Electronic Flight Bag) was fully implemented across the fleet. As it can be read in a piece of news from the website (Hi Fly, 2018):

The Electronic Flight Bag avoids the need for constant manuals replacement that otherwise would have to be physically updated every week, as well as other flight deck documentation that would also require periodic revisions. All updates are now sourced in the server enabling immediate availability of information and upgrades at a distance through the simple push of a button. Specific navigation data can also be prepared prior to the flight and uploaded to the devices optimizing the whole process and eliminating the dependency on paper-based data. (para. 4)

This initiative shows how corporate sustainability can drive innovation (Derqui, 2020; Eccles et al., 2014; Haugh & Talwar, 2010; Oertwig et al., 2017), pushing Hi Fly to change its processes in order to minimize its environmental impact. To note that Hi Fly was the first airline to introduce this type of system in Portugal.

Environmental themes on aircraft livery (since 2017)

2017 marked the introduction of environmental themes on Hi Fly’s aircraft livery, using airplanes as flying billboards to raise awareness of important environmental issues around the world. To date, the airline has used two of its airplanes to support Mirpuri Foundation’s campaigns “Turn the Tide on Plastic” and “Save the Coral Reefs”. While the first campaign tackles plastic pollution and its impact on the ocean’s health, the second calls attention to the fact that 50% of the coral reefs of the world are already extinct.

The message “Turn the Tide on Plastic” was displayed in an Airbus A330 that exhibited a dark blue side and a light blue side, symbolizing a polluted and a clean ocean respectively (Figure 13a). The message “Not too Late for Coral Reefs” travelled around the world in an Airbus A380, the largest airplane of the world. This aircraft was also painted with one side that represented destroyed marine life and another showcasing a pristine ocean (Figure 13b).

Although none of these planes continue to operate for the airline, the “Turn the Tide on Plastic” visited five continents during almost four years of operations and the “Save the Coral Reefs” raised awareness in four continents for almost two years.

Figure 13

“Turn the Tide on Plastic” and “Not too Late for Coral Reefs” Aircraft



Note. Source: Hi Fly’s internal presentation

Environmentally friendly office (since 2017)

Aligned with the display of the message “Turn the Tide on Plastic” on one of its aircraft, in 2017, Hi Fly also started its active journey against single-use plastic, starting at the office. As Ana Agostinho explained, the first step was to “remove the single-use plastic mindset internally, from the structure of the company itself” (Appendix D). Two steps that contributed to attaining this goal were:

- Distribution of reusable water bottles: all employees were provided with reusable bottles and single-use plastic water bottles were banned from the office;
- Installation of water stations: all floors of Hi Fly building were equipped with a water station where employees can refill their water bottles.

Moreover, to tackle waste management in general, the company also installed new recycling stations on all floors of the building, inciting its employees to embrace sustainable behaviours and contributing to a more environmentally friendly workplace.

Sustainability training (since 2017)

Also in 2017, and in an effort to continue changing the mindset internally, Hi Fly also started to implement sustainability training, with the sessions being provided by the Mirpuri Foundation. Although, at first, these were very centred on plastic and its effects on both the planet and human health, nowadays, as Hi Fly has also expanded the range of issues that it considers when it comes to corporate sustainability, more topics have been included, such as wildlife conservation.

Currently, Hi Fly promotes sustainability training sessions for the office’s new entrants and, periodically, for cabin crew. This initiative was also a pioneering one, as Hi Fly was the first airline to launch a series of sustainability training workshops for cabin crew in 2019. Explaining the importance of sustainability training, Ana Agostinho said:

It’s very important. We do it not just to cabin crew, but also to all employees. When you join the company, you automatically gain a sustainability workshop, so you can know exactly what the sustainability policy of the company is, and what to expect in terms of mission and in terms of goals for the environment and for sustainability. It is very, very

important and it is the only way to know exactly what the company is doing. (Appendix D)

Corporate volunteering (since 2017)

Still in 2017, Hi Fly started doing internal actions of corporate volunteering. Beach clean-ups (Figure 14) are one example, being organized in partnership with the Mirpuri Foundation. More recently, a blood donation action was also promoted by the Human Resources Department.

Figure 14

Beach Clean-Up



Note. Source: Mirpuri Foundation's website

Flights without single-use plastic items (since 2018)

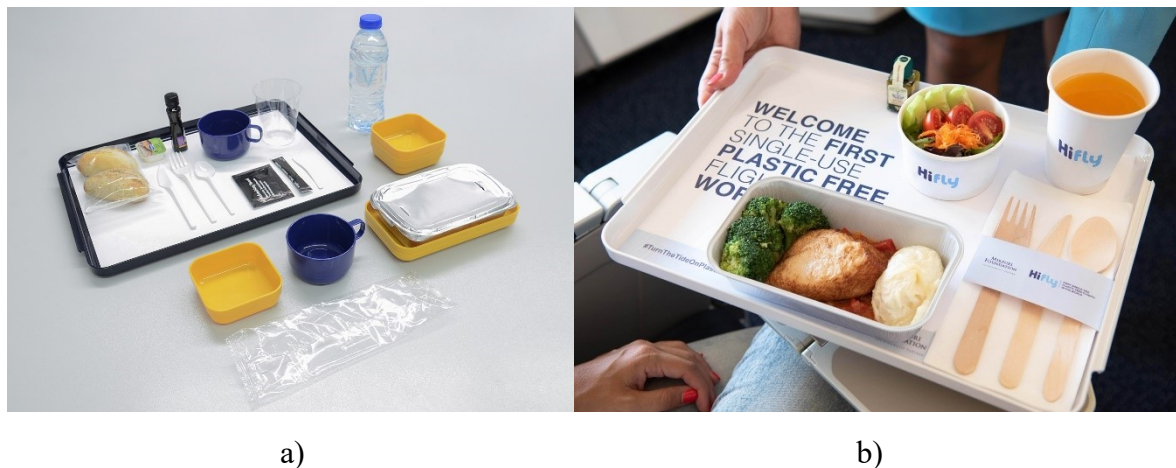
One of the most important and concrete environmental initiatives that Hi Fly has been responsible for was the operation of the first flight without single-use plastic items on board. Mirpuri Foundation's Head of PR explained the process towards becoming the first single-use plastic-free airline in the world:

We started with trials, we had a year of trials, to make sure that we were choosing the right products and exchanging cutlery and plates and cups and plastic wrapping blankets and even trash bins. Our goal was to remove everything that was non-essential single-use plastic on board aircraft and to exchange for alternatives that were not made out of plastic. We did the first trial flight in the end of 2018, in Boxing day, 26th of December. These were the first single-use plastic free flights in the world to ever be done. Then we took another year to develop and make sure that we could definitely exchange products. And then, from the start of 2020, Hi Fly became the first and, at this point, the only airline to fly without non-essential disposable plastic on board the aircraft. (Appendix D)

Despite having attained the objective of performing flights without any single-use plastic items on board – evolving from what is presented in Figure 15a, to what is exhibited in Figure 15b – there is an ongoing process. The airline aims to continue searching for more and better alternatives to plastic, once again proving that corporate sustainability incites companies to continuously look up to innovate and reinvent themselves (Eccles et al., 2014). In a near future, as confirmed by Hi Fly’s Chief Corporate Affairs Officer (Appendix D), the airline will test Mirpuri Foundation’s Good Bottle⁴⁵ on its flights.

Figure 15

Plastic-Free Flights: Before and After



Note. Source: Hi Fly’s internal presentation

⁴⁵ The Good Bottle is a 100% biodegradable bottle that was launched in 2021 and aims to be an alternative to plastic water bottles. It was produced by the Mirpuri Foundation in collaboration with Minho University.

Plastic usage has been gaining importance in the context of corporate sustainability (Derqui, 2020), and Hi Fly demonstrated how this issue is extremely important for the aviation industry. With the trial flights, the airline could realize that for each commercial passenger long haul flight that is operated without single-use plastic it is possible to prevent 350kg of this material (Hi Fly, 2020b).

Member of the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce (since 2019)

Furthermore, in 2019, Hi Fly became a member of the United for Wildlife⁴⁶ Transport Taskforce. This taskforce was created five years ago “to facilitate collaboration between the transport sector and law enforcement to prevent wildlife trafficking across the world” (United for Wildlife, 2021, para. 1).

The partnership is guided by 11 commitments that provide guidance for the transport industry on how to operate regarding illegal wildlife trade. To sum up these commitments, that Hi Fly has shared on its intranet, as a member of the Transport Taskforce, the airline has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards the carriage of wildlife products, is committed to raising awareness of the issue among passengers, customers and staff, and to encourage other entities from the sector to follow its steps.

Wildlife trafficking is a very serious issue for aviation, as traffickers recurrently take advantage of air travel to smuggle wildlife products. According to ROUTES (2019) airports across the world have more than 50 wildlife seizures a day and 20000 seizures a year.

Sustainable Cabin Forum (2019)

In partnership with the Mirpuri Foundation and IATA, in 2019, Hi Fly organized a sustainability-dedicated event – the Sustainable Cabin Forum – that gathered airlines and airport operators to discuss single-use plastic and catering waste in aviation. The goal was

⁴⁶ The United for Wildlife led by the Duke of Cambridge and the Royal Foundation, aims to tackle illegal wildlife trade by bringing together multiple entities in two taskforces – Transport and Financial Taskforces (<https://unitedforwildlife.org/>).

to share what Hi Fly had learned and implemented so far, so that more players would feel inspired to follow the airline's steps. Ana Agostinho, Mirpuri Foundation's Head of PR explained the initiative:

We organized the sustainable cabin forum here in Portugal that gathered representatives from the industry from all over the world. Airlines and airports, and all the industry, came together to learn about the plastic free flights and how Hi Fly did it. They sat down for the first time with the European Commission to go over this subject of single-use plastic and catering waste and that was the first time, a ground-breaking initiative, that joined the airlines with the European Commission for the first time ever. IATA played a role there and was also very keen on detailing Hi Fly as a role model for other airlines. (Appendix D)

“Racing for the Planet” sponsorship (since 2019)

Since 2019, Hi Fly is the main sponsor of the Mirpuri Foundation Racing Team and its boat “Racing for the Planet” (Figure 16). Through sponsoring this professional sailing team, Hi Fly is assisting the Foundation in raising awareness of climate change, the focus of the campaign. This year, the team competed in The Ocean Race Europe, an important sailing competition that was seized as a platform to divulge this environmental message.

Figure 16

Racing for the Planet Boat



Note. Source: Mirpuri Foundation's website

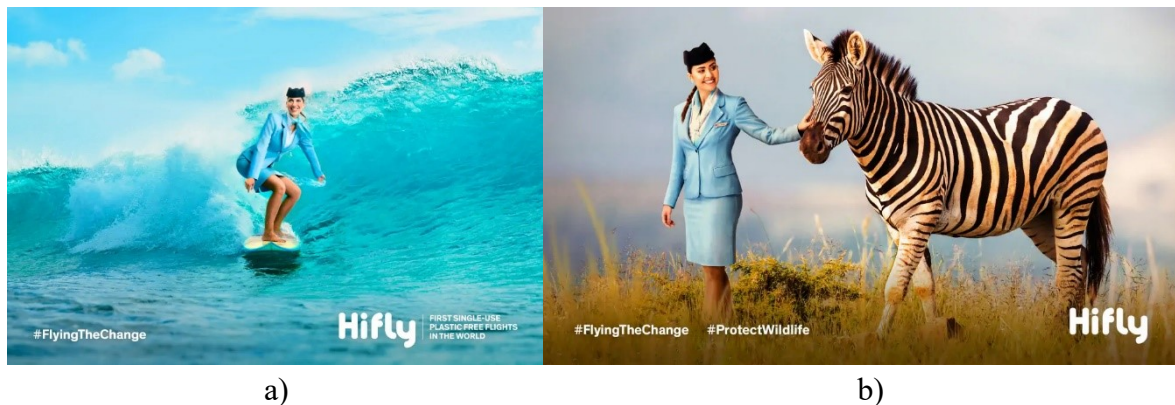
Environmental campaigns (2019 and 2021)

Apart from supporting Mirpuri Foundation’s campaigns “Turn the Tide on Plastic”, “Save the Coral Reefs” and “Racing for the Planet”, by displaying the messages on aircraft livery or through sponsoring, Hi Fly has also promoted two picture-based campaigns that aimed to raise awareness of environmental issues: #FlyingTheChange (Figure 17a) and #ProtectWildlife (Figure 17b).

#FlyingTheChange was launched in 2019, on World Oceans Day (June 8), and was designed to remember the importance of ocean conservation. #ProtectWildlife was launched in the beginning of 2021 and aimed to raise awareness of illegal wildlife trade. Both campaigns consisted in a series of images that were shared on Hi Fly’s social media channels. Employees of the airline volunteered to be part of this campaign, being depicted in the images.

Figure 17

Hi Fly’s Picture Campaigns



Note. Source: Hi Fly’s website

“25by2025” pledge (2019)

Regarding the social dimension of corporate sustainability, Hi Fly has also signed the 25by2025 pledge by IATA, which aims to increase female representation in the industry by

25% until 2025 – in a bid to make this business sector more gender balanced. When it comes to senior managers, Hi Fly has already achieved this percentage, demonstrating an effort to take human rights and gender equality into consideration.

Humanitarian flights (2020)

Another important corporate social sustainability initiative was the operation of humanitarian flights, both to fight the Covid-19 pandemic and to answer Beirut’s needs when the city was partly destroyed by a chemical explosion.

When it comes to responding to the global health crisis, a cargo flight to Shanghai (China) was performed in order to collect medical equipment and other supplies that were highly needed in Portugal at the beginning of 2020. This flight brought back to Portugal 35 tonnes of protective equipment. The cargo flight that Hi Fly operated to Beirut transported 45 tonnes of donated relief, including urgent medical supplies and food (Figure 18).

Figure 18

Humanitarian Flight to Beirut



Note. Source: Hi Fly’s website

Offsetting carbon emissions (until 2022)

The last corporate sustainability effort that I would like to mention is Hi Fly's work towards becoming a carbon neutral airline. To attain this objective until the end of 2022, the Portuguese airline is considering and testing several carbon offset programs in partnership with the Mirpuri Foundation. This objective, however, may be delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer stressed: "It could have already happened, but the Covid-19 really messed it up. We had more projects in progress, but they had to stop because the market stopped".

Despite the latter, until the airline cannot offset all its carbon emissions, it should be noted that Hi Fly is already implementing measures that, at least, help to reduce carbon emissions. In fact, one of these practices has already been pointed out: constant fleet renewal. Moreover, some operational adjustments were made, including the use of FANS (Future Airline Navigation Systems) – to ensure that the most direct route is chosen in every flight, reducing fuel burn – and single engine taxiing – by shutting down one of the engines while taxiing, 20 to 40% of ground-level fuel burn and carbon dioxide emissions are reduced (Hi Fly 2019a). This year, the airline also announced that it will be the first airline to test a new wingtip that is able to reduce carbon emissions by 2%.

5.2. Internship tasks and activities

During the curricular internship, which took place from October 19, 2020, to February 18, 2021, I had the opportunity to understand how a Communications Department of a large company functions, while having first-hand contact with daily routines and tasks of communication professionals. Hi Fly's Communications Department is headed by Sílvia Mirpuri, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, who was my supervisor during the internship and the person to whom I reported. The Communications Department is closely linked to the Marketing Department and to the Mirpuri Foundation, the non-profit organization with which many of the corporate sustainability initiatives are implemented, as previously addressed.

Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, my internship was completed both onsite and through remote work, which enabled me to experience both styles of working and understand their respective advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage of working at the office was the ability to have face-to-face meetings with my supervisor, which allowed me to better understand the tasks at hand, directly ask questions whenever needed, and be taught how to use the intranet and websites' backoffices more easily. Moreover, when it comes to this Internship Report, working at the office also enabled participant observation, which yielded insightful data. The main disadvantage when working at the office was, in fact, the advantage of working at home: time management. Remote work allowed me to gain extra hours which were not being spent on transports and going to the workplace every day. Moreover, it allowed me to be more focused on tasks that required a deeper level of concentration, not being distracted by parallel conversations that usually happen at the open space area where I work.

During the first week of the internship my only task was to get to know the company and the language that is used by the airlines to communicate. In fact, these days were essential for my overall work. One must remember that each sector has its particular style of communication, which means that getting familiarized and studying the words, expressions and technicalities associated with the industry is the first step before being able to properly communicate. This was accomplished through carefully reading internal documents, analysing social media posts, both from Hi Fly and other airlines, and scanning multiple aviation news.

After the first week I started to perform my tasks, which can be divided into two main subgroups: routine tasks and specific communication initiatives. While the first group encompasses social media management, clipping, intranet posting, writing and translation of press releases, database updating and website updating, the second group includes specific tasks related to a particular event or initiative. I will now detail each of them further.

- **Social media management**

Social media were a main part of my internship. While at first I was only in charge of writing copies and liking and/or commenting on other airlines' and clients' posts, I was progressively given more responsibilities, starting to develop social media plans and implementing those after my supervisor's approval. Since Hi Fly's Communications Department also manages the group's communications, the first social media plans that I developed were for other companies of the Aviation Division, namely MESA, LSKY and Safeport. When it comes to these companies, I was also tasked with following accounts of potential clients in order to help increase the number of followers.

In addition to the latter, monitoring comments and looking for potential negative comments was something that I did for all the mentioned companies and Hi Fly. I should also note that, as all the companies have sustainability concerns, some of the posts that I had the chance to do were specifically addressing corporate sustainability.

The fact that I had never worked with social media made this task extremely educational and enjoyable, teaching me more about Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. I became more aware of the specificities of each of these social media platforms and understood that simple actions, like liking and commenting on clients' posts, help to generate engagement and frame Hi Fly as a friendly airline. Since this task continues to be one of my main responsibilities during my professional internship, I would also say that my ability of copywriting has improved. Some posts I did can be consulted in Annex B.

Being involved in social media management also made me realize that this area interests me more than I knew, raising my interest in enrolling in an extracurricular course in order to learn more about this area and become more skilled.

- **Clipping**

As in many public relations and communication internships, doing monthly clipping reports was also one of the tasks that I was responsible for. During the four months of the internship,

the most common topics that were covered in international media⁴⁷ were: Hi Fly's humanitarian flights to Beirut, cargo and repatriation flights, regular lessors, A380 phase out and farewell flight and #ProtectWildlife campaign.

Although it was not the first time that I did clipping, I consider that this task was still important. It provided me with a lot of knowledge about the company, not only helping me to develop this Internship Report, but also involving me in the company's operations. Moreover, doing clipping made me realize that Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives raise media's attention, being frequently covered.

- **Intranet posting**

The intranet was another channel that I had the chance to learn more about during the internship. Hi Fly's intranet (Figure 19) is regularly updated by the Communications Department in order to share news, videos and images covering novelties and developments about Hi Fly and the other organizations of the Mirpuri Investments Group (including the Mirpuri Foundation). However, the intranet is also where employees can find documents about the company's structures and procedures to follow.

At the beginning of the internship, I was taught on how to use the backoffice of the intranet and started to be responsible for posting content. Usually, the news that were shared on the companies' websites were also shared on the intranet, as well as the videos that were posted on the YouTube account. Most of the content that I shared on the intranet was focused on Hi Fly's A380, which was being phased out.

As I had never accessed an intranet's backoffice, having the opportunity to learn more about this channel was very useful. I feel that this channel aggregates all information and documentation that Hi Fly employees may need to pull, being a convenient outlet to easily find information. However, in my opinion, Hi Fly's intranet should be restructured, as modernizing its layout would certainly make it even more appealing for employees.

⁴⁷ Since national media coverage is analysed by a communications agency hired by Hi Fly, I was only responsible for international media.

Figure 19

Hi Fly's Intranet Homepage



- **Press releases**

Press releases are a key part of any Public Relations professional. During the internship I had the chance to write several press releases, especially for MESA, the maintenance and engineering company of the group. In the beginning of 2021, MESA opened a new hangar in Beja Airport, meaning that it was necessary to communicate about this new installation and share the new services available. Some press releases I wrote were focused on the first cabin modifications performed by MESA at the new hangar. One example can be consulted in Annex C.

Since in a previous internship I had only translated press releases, this task was extremely valuable. It was also a challenging one, since communicating about aviation maintenance and engineering required asking engineers for information that was not always simple to understand and convert into day-to-day language.

- **Database update**

Another common task performed by public relations and communications trainees is database update. As such, updating media lists was also part of my duties. Considering that this is a very technical task, and knowing that I had already done it before, I would say that this was the least important and enriching activity.

Nevertheless, I do recognize the importance of having media lists updated. Press releases should not only be sent at the right time, but also to the most appropriate media outlets. This meant that, at Hi Fly, I had to be aware that even though all companies belong to the aviation sector, there are specific media outlets for aircraft aviation (MESA) and other for business aviation (Safeport), for example.

- **Website update**

Updating Hi Fly's website was another task I was assigned to do. The first update was on the management's section. This involved sending emails to all managers in order to assess if their curriculums had changed since the last revision. New managers were also asked to send their curriculums via email, so that I could adapt them into a short paragraph to post on the website.

Another update has to do with the aircraft specifications. Whenever the operational departments send an email informing that a change was made to an aircraft, it is necessary to update the website accordingly.

Therefore, learning how to use the backoffice of websites was also a plus of this internship, providing me with a new skill. Moreover, this task shows how departments must be able to work together and make information accessible to the Communications Department.

- **A380 “Save the Coral Reefs” farewell**

The main communication initiative in which I was involved was the A380’s Tribute (Figure 20). This consisted in the creation of a tribute mural, with messages from employees and outsiders (Figure 21). Apart from printing all received messages to produce the mural, I had to write the email to be sent to everyone who contributed to this initiative, responding to both internal and external stakeholders and adjusting the message when necessary.

The phase-out of the Airbus A380 also counted with a farewell event to which all employees and some outsiders, such as plane spotters, were invited. This event consisted in visiting the aircraft before it departed for its final flight with the airline. I was tasked with writing the invitations to both internal and external stakeholders and sending them via email. After receiving replies of the interested people, I had to create a database with all invitees and their personal information, so that it could be sent to Beja airport, from where the A380 took off for the last time with Hi Fly.

Still regarding the A380 phase-out, I was also responsible for gathering all relevant information about the aircraft so that Hi Fly could produce a news piece⁴⁸ and an institutional video⁴⁹ that shared all the aircraft milestones, including curiosities, records, visited airports and all destinations. To gather this information, I had to consult several departments and read all press releases and media news on the A380.

I believe that this task was the one that truly sparked my interest in Hi Fly’s sustainability work. It was very interesting to see how the “Save the Coral Reefs” message has touched both insiders and outsiders. Most messages that I received to produce the mural were from people who were thanking Hi Fly for having used this plane for raising awareness of a serious

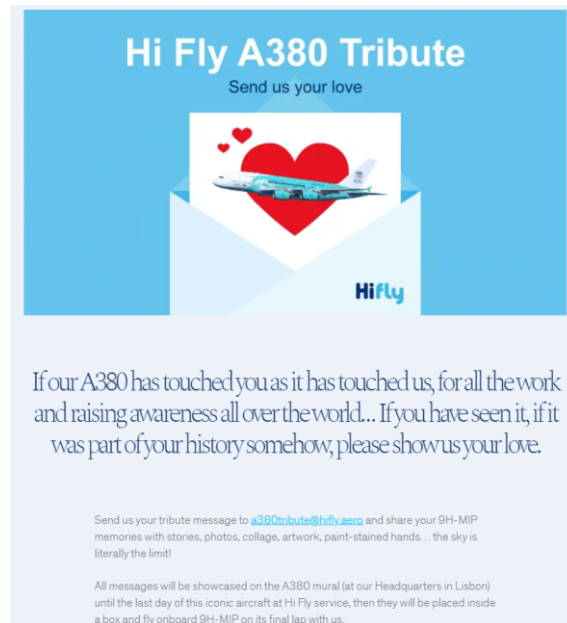
⁴⁸ <https://hifly.aero/media-center/a380-historical-highlights/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyZGSmxQAW8>

environmental issue, or even inciting the airline to reproduce this livery in another plane in order to keep this important message travelling around the world.

Figure 20

Hi Fly's A380 Tribute Initiative



Note. Source: Hi Fly's website

Figure 21

A380 Tribute Mural



Note. Source: Hi Fly's YouTube account video

- **#ProtectWildlife campaign**

Another non-routine task I performed had to do with the #ProtectWildlife campaign, already discussed above. Although I was not involved in the development of #ProtectWildlife campaign – which was crafted before I started my internship –, I had the opportunity to share the posts on Hi Fly’s social media channels and the intranet. This involved the adaptation of the copy for the different platforms (e.g., choosing hashtags to use, shortening the copy for Twitter).

Although all tasks were important for my personal development as a communications professional, I felt that I should seize the opportunity of working in a sustainable company to explore this thematic. Linking it with internal communication was also the right decision because, throughout my Master’s Degree, I have developed a particular theoretical interest in this branch of communication. As a result, the fact that some of the tasks gave me the opportunity of being involved in both communication of corporate sustainability and internal communication made this internship especially relevant for this research.

Chapter 6: Hi Fly Case Study

This last chapter aims to present and analyse the findings of both qualitative and quantitative components of the study. Based on these, the discussion will reflect on each of the specific goals of this Internship Report, trying to accomplish the general goal of the research, as well as to provide an answer to the research question: “What are the best internal communication practices to engage employees in corporate sustainability?”.

6.1 Analysis of exploratory data

Through participant observation, document analysis and two exploratory interviews, it was possible to get a comprehensive picture on how Hi Fly communicates its focus on corporate sustainability to its employees. Moreover, the participant observation and exploratory interviews already provided me with some insights on the workforce’s level of engagement in this matter. Together with the Theoretical Framework, these conclusions were the basis to develop the questionnaire that was sent to all employees. The findings of the qualitative component of the study are presented below.

6.1.1 Participant Observation

As Hi Fly’s employee, I had a privileged position that allowed me not only to be at the company’s headquarters, but also to interact with other employees and experience the company’s culture and daily routines. Attending to the objectives of this Internship Report, some important conclusions retrieved from participant observation are:

About Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability-related internal communication

- When I joined the company, I did receive a sustainable kit composed by a Mirpuri Foundation’s reusable bag and glass bottle. Moreover, I was sent a company’s presentation, via email, in which the commitment to sustainability is illustrated throughout 5 slides (Annex D).

- Although both the welcome kit and Hi Fly’s presentation were provided by the Human Resources Department, I came to realize that the presentation that is sent to all new joiners is prepared and updated by the Marketing Department, under the supervision of the Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, from the Communications Department.
- During the four months of my curricular internship, there was one internal action of corporate social sustainability. This action consisted in a blood donation, in partnership with Instituto Português do Sangue e da Transplantação (IPST), which was organized by the Human Resources Department. The employees were sent an email informing them about this activity and inviting them to participate. 32 employees participated.
- Apart from the blood donation action, during the first four months at the airline, I did not receive emails with corporate sustainability-related information. The intranet, however, was periodically updated with sustainability-focused messages⁵⁰.
- The office counts with an internal TV system, with televisions both at the reception and Hi Fly Caffè, the eating area. These TVs display corporate videos, most of which are also shared on Hi Fly’s YouTube account. During the four months of my curricular internship, the TVs were mainly displaying videos of the A380 “Save the Coral Reefs” aircraft, which, as previously said, was being phased out. After that, the TVs started to display videos of the Mirpuri Foundation Racing Team and its “Racing for the Planet” boat, sponsored by Hi Fly, which was going to participate in The Ocean Race Europe, starting in May 2021.
- The #ProtectWildlife campaign, launched in January 2021, was shared on the intranet. Moreover, the campaign’s images were also displayed on computers’ screen savers. Although this was not an internal campaign, an effort was made to raise employee awareness of illegal wildlife trade and poaching by sharing the campaign in more than one internal channel.
- The #ProtectWildlife campaign was produced by the Communications Department, in strict collaboration with the Marketing Department.

⁵⁰ More about the intranet will be discussed in Document Analysis.

About employee engagement in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts

- Hi Fly Building employees follow the company's directives related to sustainability. I could confirm that, on a daily basis, employees use glass bottles instead of single-use plastic water bottles and many prefer to take their lunch in glass containers instead of plastic ones.
- As previously said, Hi Fly Building has recycling stations on every floor. From what I could observe, in my work area, employees participate in recycling efforts.

6.1.2 Document Analysis

Although much of the document analysis was done in order to develop the previous chapter – in which I presented Hi Fly airline, its sustainability policy and its corporate sustainability initiatives –, some conclusions retrieved from this method are also useful for the accomplishment of the research goals of this Internship Report:

About Hi Fly's corporate sustainability-related internal communication

- Although the corporate website has a “Sustainability” page (Annex E) – with a brief summary of Hi Fly's main corporate sustainability initiatives, links to additional documents (such as the sustainability policy) and to the Mirpuri Foundation's website –, there is no sustainability section on the intranet.
- Concerning the intranet, Hi Fly's news, images and videos that are related to corporate sustainability are usually shared on the “Flash News” section, along with other that address operations, new acquisitions, achievements, events in which the company participates, etc.
- Intranet's corporate sustainability messages usually cover ongoing and new corporate sustainability initiatives, activities/actions involving employees, sustainability events in which Hi Fly participates and sustainability issues that the world is facing (frequently focusing on plastic, marine conservation and wildlife conservation).
- The “Mirpuri Foundation” section is also used to share sustainability-related messages. These range from news/videos about the Foundation's initiatives,

news/videos about sustainability events in which the Foundation participates (sometimes as Hi Fly's representative), short awareness-raising messages about environmental issues, etc.

- Still regarding the intranet, environmental and sustainability awareness dates, are seized to recall ongoing initiatives. Figure 22 shows one example.

Figure 22

World Wildlife Day: Intranet Communication



- Intranet's sustainability messages are almost always the same as the messages that are shared for external publics. This means that the content is not adapted for the intranet. News that are found on Hi Fly's and Mirpuri Foundation's websites are also published on the intranet. The same is true for some social media posts, of which the photo(s) and copy are also shared on the intranet.
- Despite not being personalized for internal publics, Hi Fly's news that are shared on the intranet are usually thorough, explaining the airline's corporate sustainability initiatives in detail and providing tangible results when possible.
- Five news⁵¹ about participatory activities were found on Mirpuri Foundation's website (2 beach clean-ups, 1 ocean clean-up and 2 surf classes).

⁵¹ (1) <https://mirpurifoundation.org/mirpuri-news/news/mirpuri-foundation-leads-beach-clean-up-day/>

(2) <https://mirpurifoundation.org/mirpuri-news/news/beach-clean-up-at-cabo-da-roca/>

(3) <https://mirpurifoundation.org/mirpuri-news/news/ocean-clean-up-in-cascais/>

(4) <https://mirpurifoundation.org/mirpuri-news/news/surfing-for-sustainability/>

(5) <https://mirpurifoundation.org/mirpuri-news/events/surfing-at-praia-grande/>

6.1.3 Exploratory Interviews

In order to complement the information that was collected through the two previous methods, the exploratory interviews (Appendices C and D), conducted with Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer (Sílvia Mirpuri) and Mirpuri Foundation's Head of Public Relations (Ana Agostinho), also provided important insights regarding Hi Fly's internal communication addressing corporate sustainability. I would like to highlight the following:

About Hi Fly's corporate sustainability-related internal communication

- Both interviewees believe that Hi Fly employees are the image of the company, ascribing a vital importance to internal communication. According to Sílvia Mirpuri, it is important to use internal communication as a means to foment sustainable behaviours that are aligned with the company's sustainability mission and values. Moreover, for Ana Agostinho, the fact that the employees are the "face of the company" means that they have to be informed and engaged in the airline's sustainability policy in order to act as brand ambassadors and pass on the message to external stakeholders. As she said:

When I'm hosting these sustainability workshops to cabin crew, I say this all the time "You are the face of the company. If someone asks you 'why are you using this cup and not a plastic cup?' or 'why are you wrapping blankets without plastic?', you need to be able to say 'because Hi Fly has this sustainability policy and we were the first to fly without disposable plastic and blah blah blah'". So, they need to be the face of the company, they need to be fully aware of what we are doing together and what we want to achieve. (Appendix D)

- The airline's main goals with corporate sustainability-related internal communication are to: inspire a behavioural change in employees, make them proud in working for a sustainable company, engage employees, lead by example and make aviation more sustainable. One illustrative quote of these goals is found in Sílvia Mirpuri's interview:

If we can get Hi Fly employees to behave more sustainably and to hold on to these sustainability matters, to be proud of working in a sustainable company, and to take those lessons home, we are reaching many people, and I think this is a great environmental contribution. (Appendix C)

- In 2017, and in collaboration with the Mirpuri Foundation, the company started to make internal actions with the aim of raising awareness of sustainability issues and

engaging employees in the company's corporate sustainability efforts. Some examples of actions that were mentioned by the interviewees were: beach clean-ups, training sessions/sustainability workshops, surf classes, guest sailings, film sessions.

- Although internal actions are perceived as a main channel for sustainability-related communication with Hi Fly employees, participatory activities and face-to-face sustainability training were forced to stop due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as both interviewees highlighted. Clearly expressing that internal communication was jeopardized because of the global pandemic, Mirpuri Foundation's Head of PR said:

Well, it's quite difficult at the moment because you are dealing with a pandemic. The last year and a half has not been exactly how it was before in terms of internal communication. You usually had a lot of specific activations, a lot of events, a lot of workshops and, unfortunately, this is not possible now because of the pandemic. From a communications perspective, we would love for the pandemic to be over so we can go back to the events and communicating and trying to engage people onsite, with human contact level, which obviously we are missing because of the pandemic. (Appendix D)

- During this health crisis period, according to the interviewees, the most used channels for communicating corporate sustainability with employees were the email, the intranet, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn) and the website.
- Even though social media, such as the Instagram, are not an internal channel, both interviewees mentioned these platforms as one of the most important channels to communicate with employees.
- When it comes to internal communication content, as pointed out by Sílvia Mirpuri, most corporate sustainability-related messages focus on plastic or other Mirpuri Foundation campaigns' themes that are supported by Hi Fly ("Save the Coral Reefs" and "Racing for the Planet – #StopClimateChange"). More generically, Ana Agostinho said that communication on this subject is focused on the initiatives and their outcomes.
- For Ana Agostinho, when planning internal communication, Hi Fly has to take into account that most staff is not based at the office.

- Hi Fly has promoted two-way communication in order to collect employees inputs and feedback. One example was provided by Ana Agostinho:

(...) we had a briefing with all the managers to explain in detail what we were doing. Then, we had a second one with employees (...) and we had a call to action: “What can we do? From your perspective – from the commercial department, from de comms department, from the cabin crew, from the travel department – what can we do to make sure that we achieve and we are able to fulfil this commitment?”. And they all gave out suggestions and they all played a big role in what the company is doing when it comes to wildlife. (Appendix D)

- Even though there were occasions in which employees were called out to provide their opinions, Sílvia Mirpuri admits that most suggestions that are provided by the employees are spontaneous, that is, the company does not have a formalized place/channel through which employees can give their opinions concerning corporate sustainability. Notwithstanding, employees tend to send suggestions via email and Hi Fly listens and value its employees’ ideas.
- There is no segmentation of the internal audience when it comes to internal communication dealing with corporate sustainability. However, one of the interviews indicated that interests may be different according to departments.
- Supporting what had already been concluded through participant observation, Sílvia Mirpuri mentioned that the Human Recourses Department is also involved in internal communication addressing sustainability matters.
- The interviewees recognize that there is room for improvement when it comes to internal communication about corporate sustainability. Sílvia Mirpuri stressed that Hi Fly could communicate more: “We can make more. We can do more webinars, more internal workshops” (Appendix C). Ana Agostinho also stressed that the company could communicate more via email or the intranet, paying attention, however, not to overcommunicate.
- For Ana Agostinho the main challenge of internal communication addressing corporate sustainability is to make sure that it engages the employees and makes them aware that sustainability is a common goal, requiring action by everyone.

About employee engagement in Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts

- Both interviewees believe that the workforce is aware of the airline’s corporate sustainability efforts.
- According to the interviews, employees have changed their behaviours due to Hi Fly’s efforts in raising their awareness of sustainability issues, especially when it comes to plastic. Hi Fly’s Chief Corporate Affairs Officer highlighted:

No one talked about plastic when we did that campaign [Turn the Tide on Plastic] (...). Since then (...) everyone was bringing their bottles. (...) They were using reusable bags. I believe it had an impact and that we truly raised their awareness. (Appendix C)

6.2 Analysis of primary data

Having presented the findings of Phase 1 of this study, the primary data will now be displayed, showcasing Hi Fly employees’ perceptions concerning the company’s sustainability journey, their engagement in corporate sustainability initiatives and their needs and preferences regarding internal communication dealing with this subject.

Sample description

Biographic and demographic data were collected through the first section of the questionnaire – “Demographic information” –, corresponding to questions 1 to 4. These four questions collected data concerning participants’ age, gender, years working at Hi Fly and job position. Table 7 summarizes this information for the 200 participants. Although it was not possible to compare this data with the reality of the company/population⁵², one can understand that the sample is not homogeneous, showcasing that Hi Fly has different groups of employees.

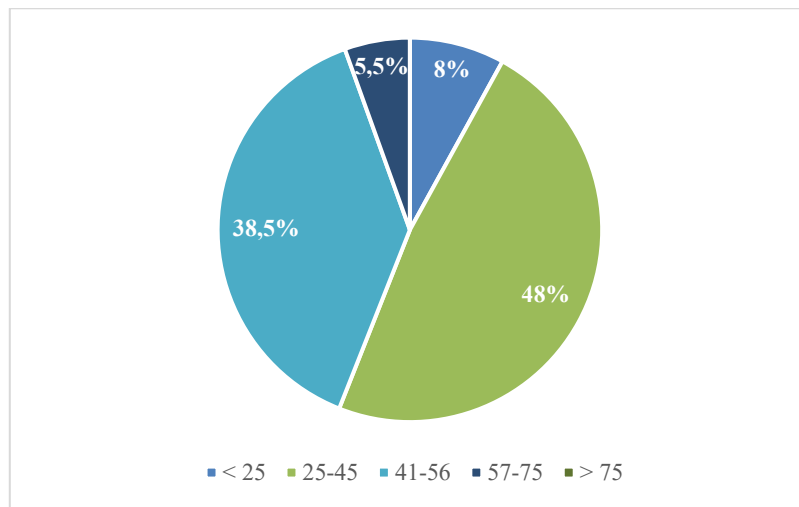
⁵² The Human Resources Department did not have a systematized document that could be shared.

Table 7*Sample Description*

<u>Data item</u>		<u>Absolute frequency</u>	<u>Relative frequency</u>
Age	< 25	16	8%
	25-40	96	48%
	41-56	77	38,5%
	57-75	11	5,5%
	> 75	0	0%
Gender	Female	55	27,5%
	Male	144	72%
	I prefer not to say	1	0,5%
Years working at Hi Fly	< 1 year	25	12,5%
	1-2 years	37	18,5%
	3-5 years	65	32,5%
	6-10 years	33	16,5%
	> 10 years	40	20%
Job position	Employee/staff	173	86,5%
	Line manager/supervisor	15	7,5%
	Senior manager	12	6%

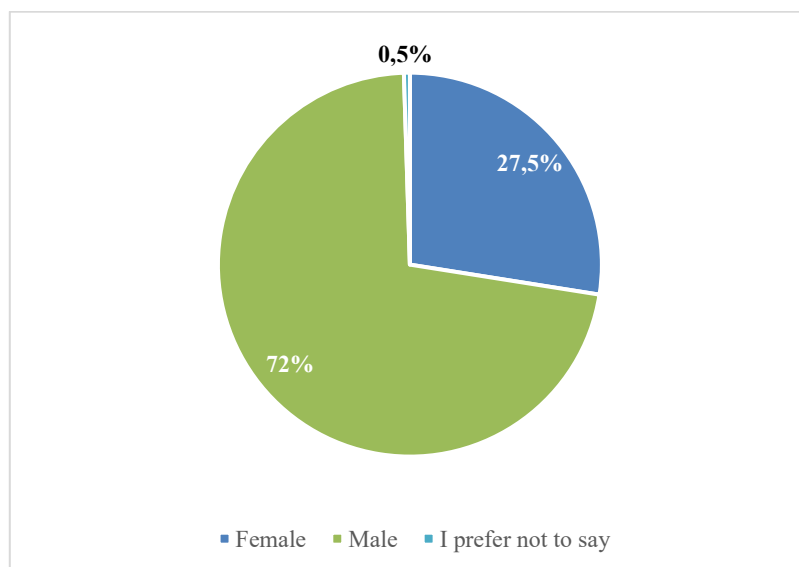
Concerning the age of the participants (Figure 23), most respondents (86,5%) have between 25 to 56 years old, meaning that they are Millennials (48%) or members of Generation X (38,5%). Moreover, only 8% of the respondents are younger than 25 years old (Generation Z), and only 5,5% have between 57 to 75 years old (Baby Boomers). Not surprisingly, the sample does not include employees with more than 75 years old (Silent Generation).

Figure 23
Age



When it comes to gender (Figure 24), 72% of the respondents are male and only 27,5% are female. In addition, 0,5% of the respondents chose the option “I prefer not to say”. The fact that there are more male than female respondents is consistent with the industry’s characteristics – as pointed out before, the aviation industry is striving to increase female representation.

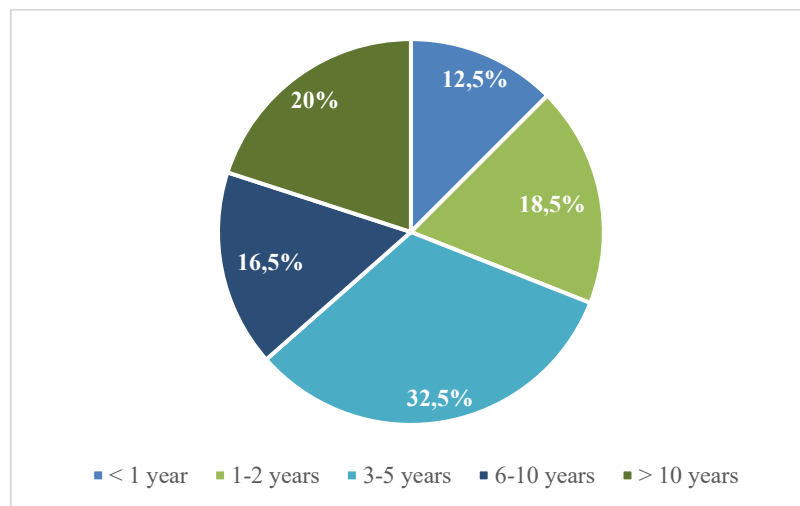
Figure 24
Gender



Regarding the years that the participants have been working at Hi Fly (Figure 25), the sample is quite heterogeneous. The biggest percentage – 32,5% – is found in 3 to 5 years interval, followed by 20% who are working at Hi Fly for more than 10 years, 18,5% for 1 to 2 years, 16,5% for 6 to 10 years, and 12,5% for less than 1 year. Thus, it is concluded that more than two thirds (69%) of the respondents have been working for the company for at least three years, and more than one third (36,5%) for at least 5 years.

Figure 25

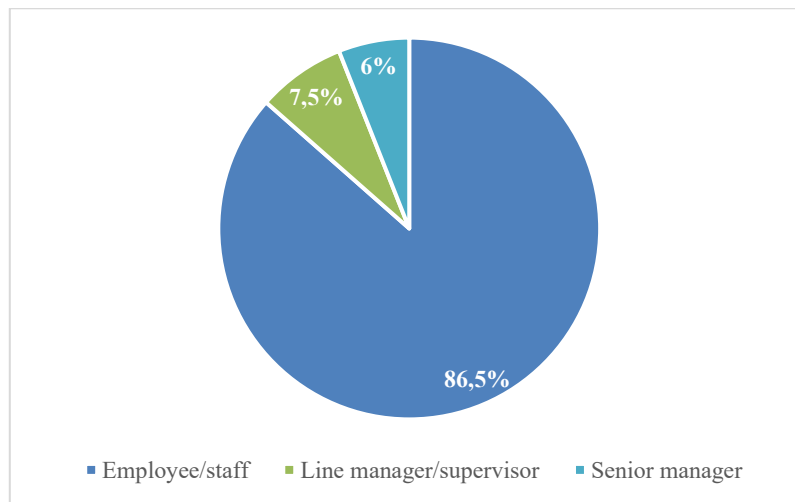
Years Working at Hi Fly



As for the job position (Figure 26), the sample is composed of 86,5% participants who belong to the employees/staff group (encompassing employees from Hi Fly building, pilots and cabin crew members), 7,5% line managers/supervisors and 6% senior managers.

Figure 26

Job Position



Results

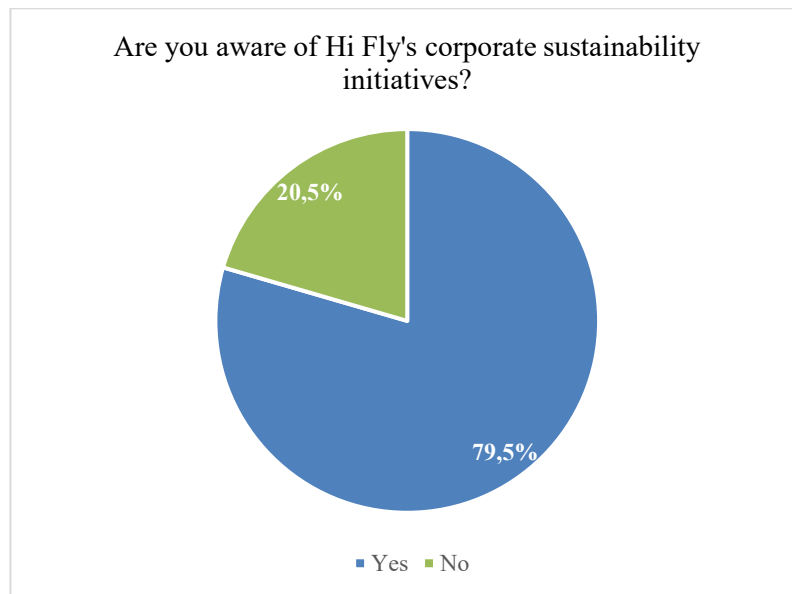
Now that the sample has been described, it is possible to analyse the responses to the three other sections of the questionnaire: “Awareness of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives”, “Engagement in Hi Fly’s sustainability” and “Hi Fly’s internal communication about corporate sustainability”.

Awareness of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives

The first question of this section aimed to understand how many employees from the sample are aware of the company’s sustainability work (Figure 27). The purpose of this item was twofold. First, it provided me with a first impression of how well Hi Fly is informing its employees regarding its corporate sustainability efforts. Second, it allowed me to exclude the employees who were not aware of the company’s sustainability work from the three following questions, as well as from the “Engagement in Hi Fly’s sustainability” section – if they are unaware, they cannot be engaged. 79,5% of the respondents said to be aware of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives, with 20,5% being unaware.

Figure 27

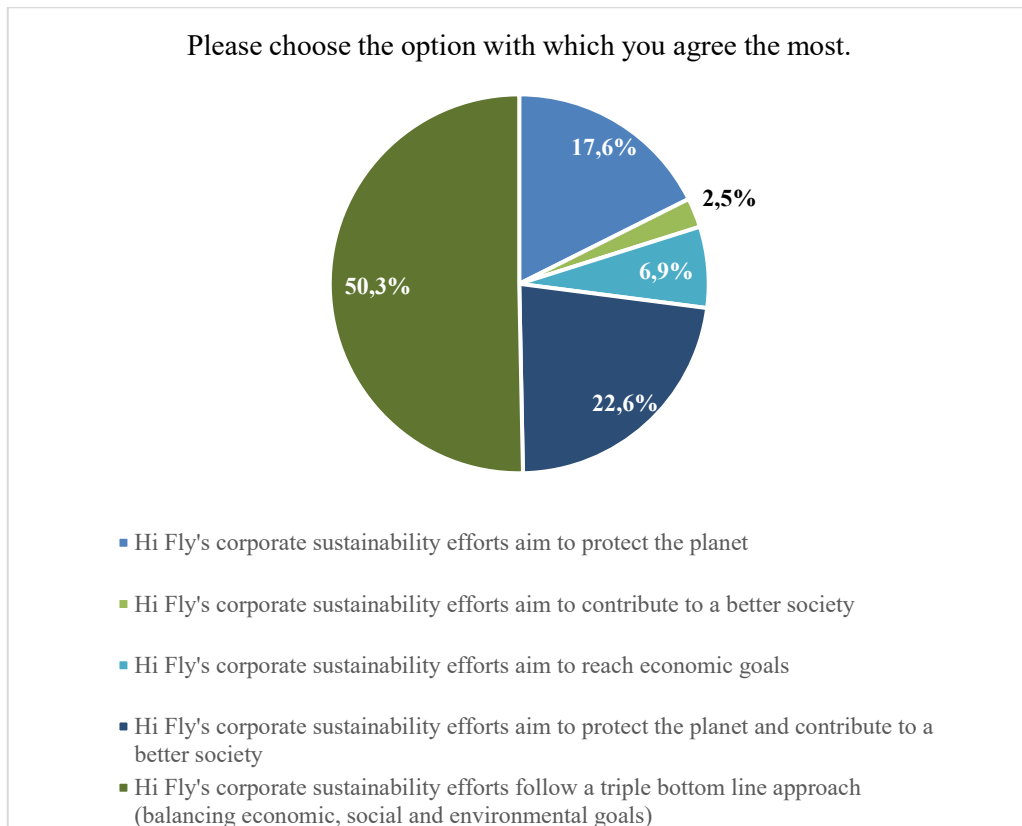
Question 5



Having filtered the aware employees (159 out of 200), the second item of the questionnaire aimed to identify which corporate sustainability dimensions do the employees believe Hi Fly is tackling (Figure 28). Half of the respondents (50,3%) affirmed that Hi Fly is following a triple bottom line approach, balancing economic, social and environmental goals. Moreover, 22,6% of the employees believe that Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts are directed towards protecting the planet and contributing to a better society, omitting the economic dimension of corporate sustainability. Other respondents, however, think that Hi Fly is only tackling environmental goals (17,6%), with few (2,5%) believing that Hi Fly is only trying to reach social goals with its corporate sustainability efforts.

Figure 28

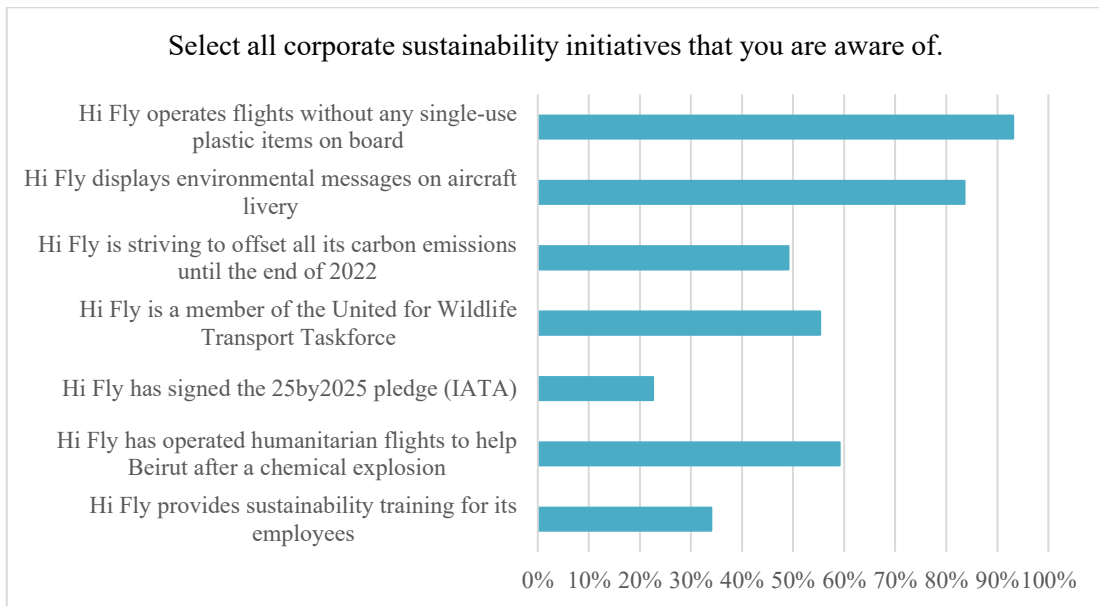
Question 6



The following item tried to assess which corporate sustainability initiatives Hi Fly employees are more aware of (Figure 29). Almost all respondents (93,1%) are aware that Hi Fly operates flights without single-use plastic items on board, proving the popularity of this initiative among employees. Next, the display of environmental messages on aircraft livery is the second most well-known initiative, with 83,6% of the employees selecting that option. Moreover, more than half of the participants (59,1%) are aware that Hi Fly has operated humanitarian flights and that the airline is a member of the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce (55,3%). Less than half of the employees (49,1%) know that the airline is considering programs to offset all its carbon emissions. When it comes to sustainability training, surprisingly, only 34% are aware that Hi Fly provides it to its employees. Lastly, few (22,6%) know that the airline is a signatory of IATA's 25by2025 pledge.

Figure 29

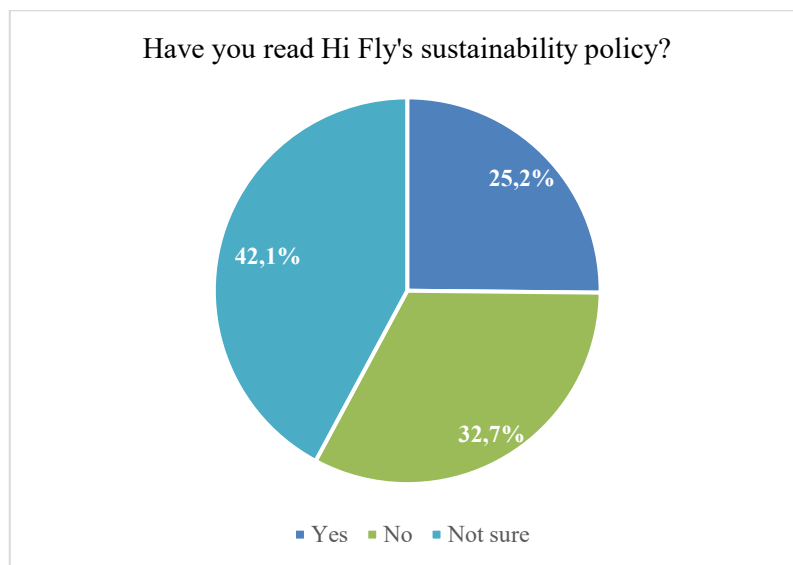
Question 7



Closing this section, respondents were also asked if they had already read Hi Fly’s sustainability policy (Figure 30). 42,1% of the employees responded that they were not sure, 32,7% answered “No” and only 25,2% confirmed that they had read it.

Figure 30

Question 8



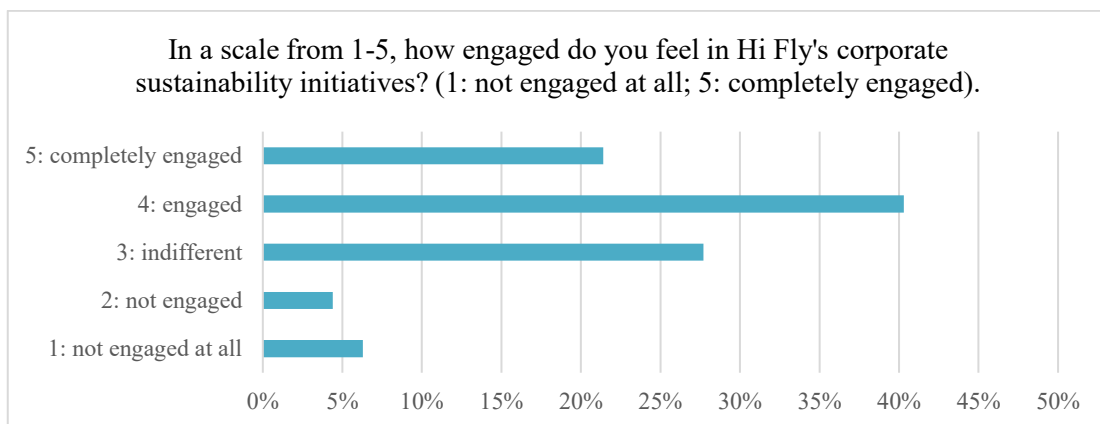
Engagement in Hi Fly's sustainability

After collecting data regarding the level of awareness, the aware employees (159 out of 200) were invited to answer a section which aimed to assess their level of engagement regarding Hi Fly's initiatives dealing with sustainability matters.

The first question simply asked them to rate their level of engagement in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives using a Likert scale from 1 (not engaged at all) to 5 (completely engaged). As one can see in Figure 31, all levels of engagement gathered responses. However, there are more engaged employees (61,7%) than neutral/indifferent (27,7) or not engaged employees (10,7%). Moreover, the "completely engaged employees" (21,4%) surpass by 15% the "not engaged at all employees" (6,3%), which is a positive conclusion. When calculating the average, the score is 3,7.

Figure 31

Question 9



In order to better assess employees' level of engagement in corporate sustainability, the second item of this section presented the employees with eight affirmations that aimed to assess other aspects that, according to the literature, are linked to engagement in corporate sustainability (i.e., identification, positive communication behaviours, participation, sustainability knowledge, pride, feeling of personal involvement and commitment).

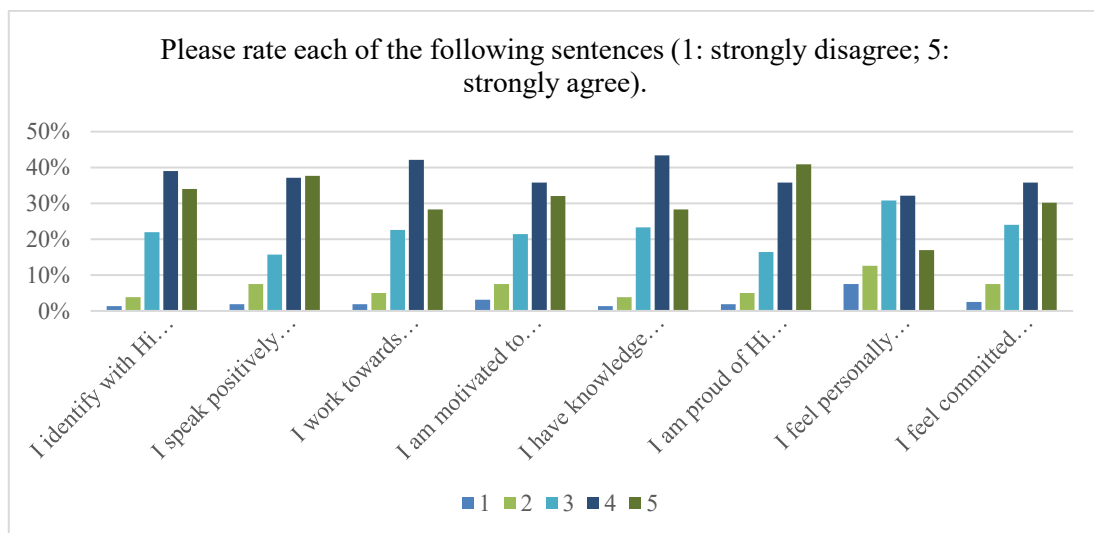
The affirmations presented to the employees were:

- I identify with Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives
- I speak positively about Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts to outsiders
- I work towards helping the company to become more sustainable
- I am motivated to participate in Hi Fly’s sustainability initiatives
- I have knowledge about sustainability
- I am proud of Hi Fly’s sustainability work
- I feel personally involved in the success of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives
- I feel committed to Hi Fly’s sustainability mission

By analysing Figure 32, one understands that the affirmations were quite positively rated. In fact, 4 was the mode for six of the sentences, and 5 was the most common number for two of the affirmations. Moreover, numbers 4 and 5 were used by 70% or more of the respondents to rate all the sentences except for three of them⁵³.

Figure 32

Question 10



⁵³ “I am motivated to participate in Hi Fly’s sustainability initiatives, “I feel personally involved in the success of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives” and “I feel committed to Hi Fly’s sustainability mission”.

Considering each of the sentences separately, for “I identify with Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives”, only 1,3% of the participants answered that they strongly disagreed with the affirmation. Moreover, only 3,8% rated the sentence with a 2. 22% of the respondents positioned themselves at the middle of the scale, rating the sentence with a 3. 34% chose 5 for this sentence, expressing a strong identification with Hi Fly’s sustainability work, followed by 39% who evaluated the affirmation with a 4.

When it comes to “I speak positively about Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts to outsiders”, the answers also account for a positive tendency, with 37,7% rating the affirmation with a 5 and 37,1% with a 4. Notwithstanding, 15,7% of the employees selected number 3 to evaluate this sentence, with remaining employees opting for number 2 (7,5%) and number 1 (1,9%).

Looking at “I work towards helping the company to become more sustainable”, only 1,9% expressed that they strongly disagreed with this sentence, rating the affirmation with 1. In addition, only 5% of the respondents opted for number 2. A higher percentage of employees (22,6%) preferred the neutral position of the scale – number 3. Moreover, a significant proportion (42,1%) opted for number 4, and 28,3% (slightly less than in previous affirmations) completely agreed that they work to help the company become more sustainable.

For “I am motivated to participate in Hi Fly’s sustainability initiatives”, numbers 1 and 2 were, once again, poorly selected – 3,1% and 7,5% respectively –, demonstrating that less than 11% of the participants disagree with the affirmation. 21,4% gave the affirmation a 3, followed by 32% who rated the sentence with a 5 and 35,8% with a 4.

Regarding “I have knowledge about sustainability”, a large part of the respondents rated the sentence with a 4 (43,4%), followed by 23,3% who gave this sentence a 5, 21,4% who rated it with a 3, 3,8% who marked 2, and only 1,3% who completely disagreed with the affirmation.

Concerning pride, a significant large group (76,7%) of employees agreed with the sentence “I am proud of Hi Fly’s sustainability work”. 40,9% rated the sentence with a 5 and 35,8% with a 4. Providing less positive responses, 16,4% of the respondents positioned themselves

as indifferent to this sentence, rating it with a 3, followed by 5% who gave this affirmation a 2, with the remaining 1,9% selecting 1.

“I feel personally involved in the success of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives” exhibits a less positive tendency than previous affirmations, showcasing higher percentages of disagreement and neutrality. In total, 50,9% of the participants rated the sentence with 1 (7,5%), 2 (12,6%) or 3 (30,8%). Moreover, only 17% of the respondents completely agreed with this affirmation, which is a relatively low percentage when comparing to other sentences. Notwithstanding, 32,1% of the employees rated the affirmation with a 4.

Lastly, when it comes to “I feel committed to Hi Fly’s sustainability mission”, 2,5% of the respondents rated the sentence with a 1, followed by 7,5% who chose 2 for this affirmation, 24% who opted for 3, 30,2% who chose 5 and, finally, 35,8% who selected 4.

To get a more comprehensive vision of the affirmations, Table 8 shows the averages for each of them, as well as the global average. Therefore, the sentence that achieved a higher average was “I am proud of Hi Fly’s sustainability work”, scoring a 4,1. Next, employees classified with a 4 both “I identify with Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives” and “I speak positively about Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts to outsiders”. Following, three affirmations were scored with an average of 3,9: “I work towards helping the company to become more sustainable”, “I am motivated to participate in Hi Fly’s sustainability initiatives” and “I have knowledge about sustainability”. Commitment to Hi Fly’s sustainability mission reached a 3,8 average. Finally, the affirmation that achieved the lowest average was “I feel personally involved in the success of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives”. Nevertheless, even this sentence achieved a positive mark (3,4). Overall, all the sentences were classified with a high mark, with the total average being 3,9.

Table 8*Question 10: Averages*

	Average	Total average
I identify with Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives	4	3,9
I speak positively about Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts to outsiders	4	
I work towards helping the company to become more sustainable	3,9	
I am motivated to participate in Hi Fly's sustainability initiatives	3,9	
I have knowledge about sustainability	3,9	
I am proud of Hi Fly's sustainability work	4,1	
I feel personally involved in the success of Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives	3,4	
I feel committed to Hi Fly's sustainability mission	3,8	

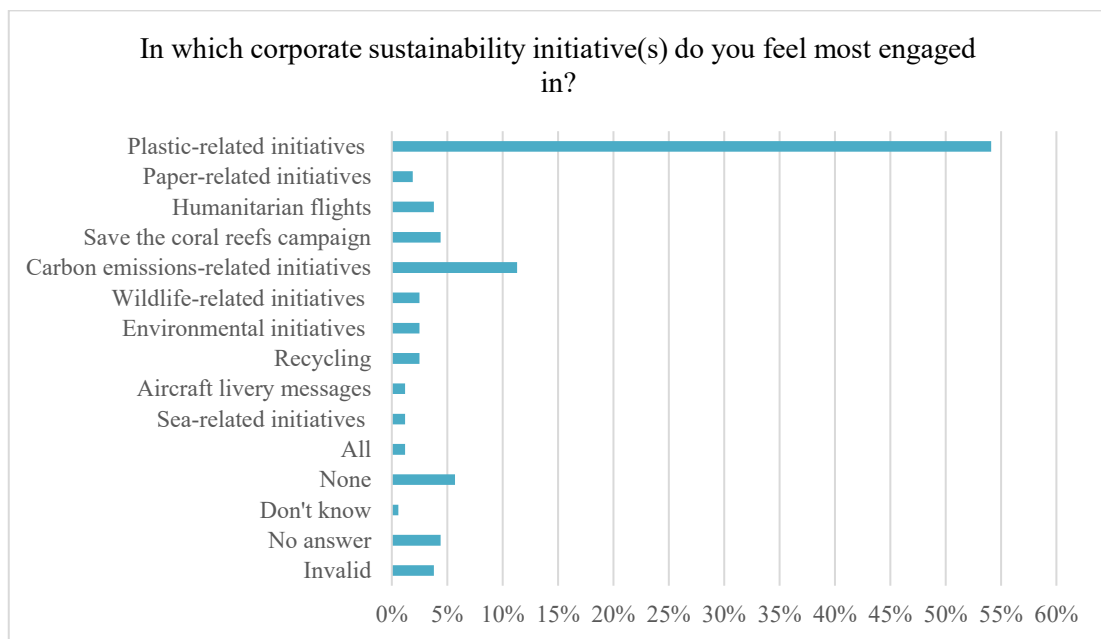
The following item of this section was the first open-ended question of the questionnaire, trying to assess in which corporate sustainability initiatives Hi Fly employees are most engaged in. Responses were content analysed and aggregated in order to be easily interpreted. As Figure 33 shows, most employees (54,1%) expressed to be engaged in plastic-related initiatives. Some representative examples of answers that fell into this category are: "plastic free", "plastics reduction", "plastic free flights", "the fight against plastic over usage", "no plastic", "stop single use plastic usage", "plastic free environment" and "reducing plastic in daily activities".

In second place are the carbon emissions-related initiatives, with 11,3% of the respondents mentioning strategies to mitigate carbon emissions. Some illustrative answers that were aggregated under this theme are: "reduction of carbon emissions", "carbon footprint reduction", "CO2 emission reduction", "carbon neutral flights", "save the planet with less CO2" and "saving fuel".

Other mentioned initiatives were “Save the Coral Reefs” campaign (4,4%), humanitarian flights (3,8%), recycling (2,5%), wildlife-related initiatives (2,5%), environmental initiatives⁵⁴ (2,5%), paper-related initiatives (1,9%), aircraft livery messages (1,2%) and sea-related initiatives⁵⁵ (1,2%).

Adding to the latter, 5,7% of the employees wrote “none”, assuming their low level of engagement in Hi Fly’s sustainability, 4,4% did not provide an answer to this question, two employees (1,2%) mentioned that they were engaged in all corporate sustainability initiatives, and one employee said “don’t know”. 3,8% of the answers were not considered valid because they did not accomplish the objectives of the question.

Figure 33
Question 11



⁵⁴ This category aggregates answers which did not specify any particular initiative. Two examples are: “the environmental side” and “I feel more engaged in protecting the Planet”.

⁵⁵ Two people said “about sea” and “The Ocean Race”.

As the previous question also asked “Why?”, some of the participants (41 out of 159) provided an explanation for the chosen corporate sustainability initiative(s) (Figure 34). First, 26,8% answered that they were also aware of the harmful effects of plastic. Some responses that were aggregated under this first explanation are: “[I feel most engaged in avoiding the use of single-use plastic materials,] because this is one of the most important sources of pollution in our planet”, “[Less disposable plastic.] Because it is covering more and killing, and in a fast way, our planet”, “[No plastic on board.] Plastic is a big problem in our oceans”, “[Flights without any single-use plastic items on board.] Plastic pollution has a direct and deadly effect on wildlife”, “[No plastic,] as it is very harmful to life on planet earth”, “[No plastics.] When I see them in the sea it makes me aware of the critical situation worldwide”.

Moreover, 24,4% of the respondents affirmed that their engagement was fostered due to their personal involvement in the initiative, mostly because it has to do with their job role. One respondent said to be engaged in humanitarian flights “because my goal is to keep A/Cs flying safely”. Others said to be engaged in plastic-free flights “because I deal with it every day when I work” and “because they are the only initiative I can participate in, since I am a Cabin Crew Member”. Other respondent also said “because I was involved somehow in the project”, referring to the environmental messages on aircraft livery.

A next set of explanations were related with the positive impact of the initiatives on the planet and society. 19,5% of the respondents provided answers such as “[To end with the plastic problem.] Because contributes to the preservation of all species including us!” and “[Plastic-free.] Because I think this is a huge factor on the ocean and marine life which we can’t survive without one or the other”.

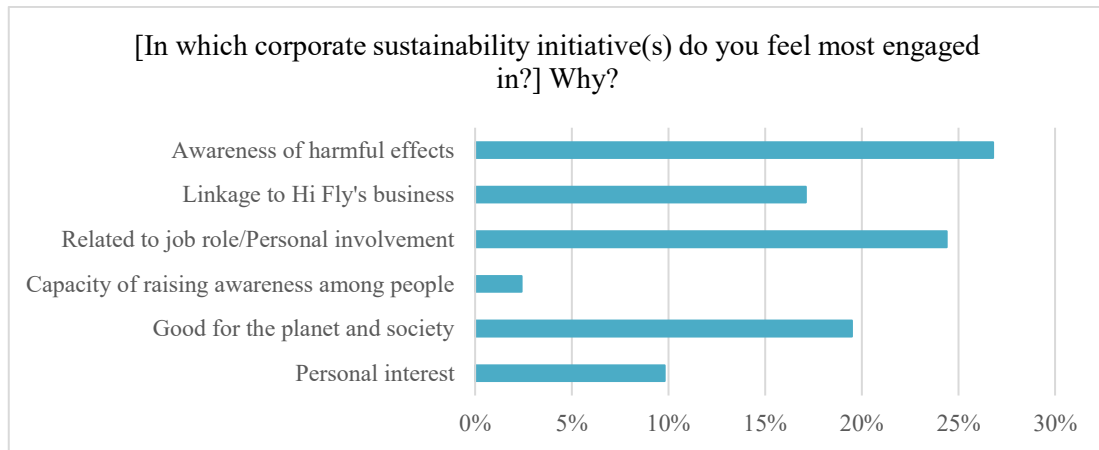
The linkage to Hi Fly’s business was another justification provided by some of the respondents. An illustrative answer is “[Reducing plastics on board,] as commercial aviation does use an incredible amount of disposable plastic”.

Two less prevalent explanations were related to personal interest (e.g., “[About sea]. I practice surf, so for me is the most important), accounting for 9,8% of responses, and the capacity of raising awareness among people (e.g., “Environmental messages in the aircraft

livery really make a difference on people’s minds. It has a strong positive impact in Hi Fly’s image”), accounting for 2,4% of the answers.

Figure 34

Question 11: “Why?”



The employees were then asked to reveal their opinion about the workforce’s level of engagement in the company’s sustainability efforts. Confirming previous data, as Figure 35 on the following page shows, most respondents (78%) affirmed that Hi Fly employees are engaged in Hi Fly’s sustainability.

The next question served as a filter question in order to gather the aware employees whose job roles are not directly related to sustainability (Figure 36). These employees could be less engaged on the matter and in Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts, deserving further inquiry. 54,7% of them (87 out of 159) do not have job roles directly related to sustainability. One explanation for the high percentage of employees with job roles related to sustainability (45,3%) has to do with the fact that all pilots and cabin crew members are responsible for putting into practice Hi Fly’s sustainability directives related to operations – such as the strategies to reduce carbon emissions and the single use plastic-free flights.

Figure 35
Question 12

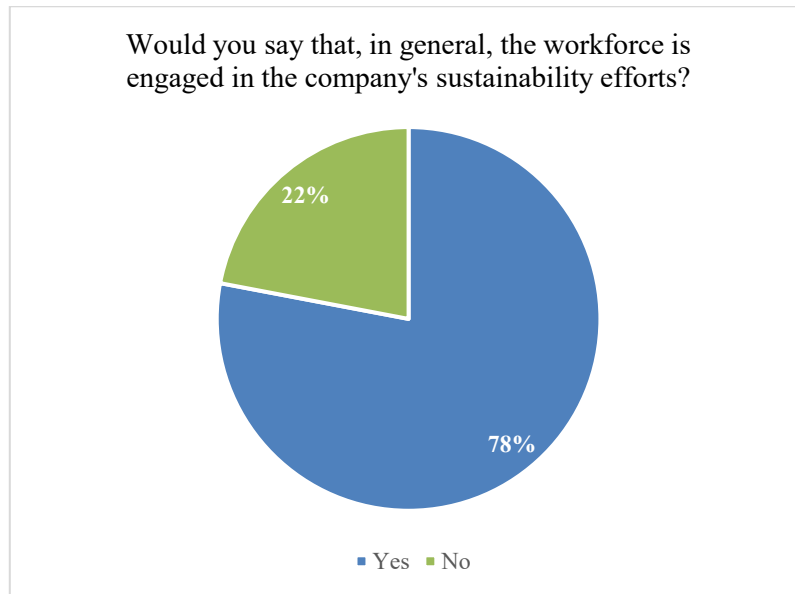
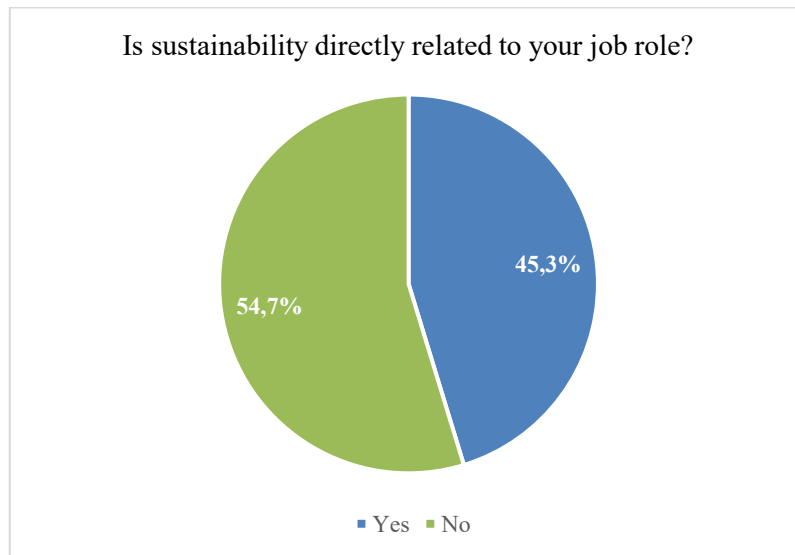


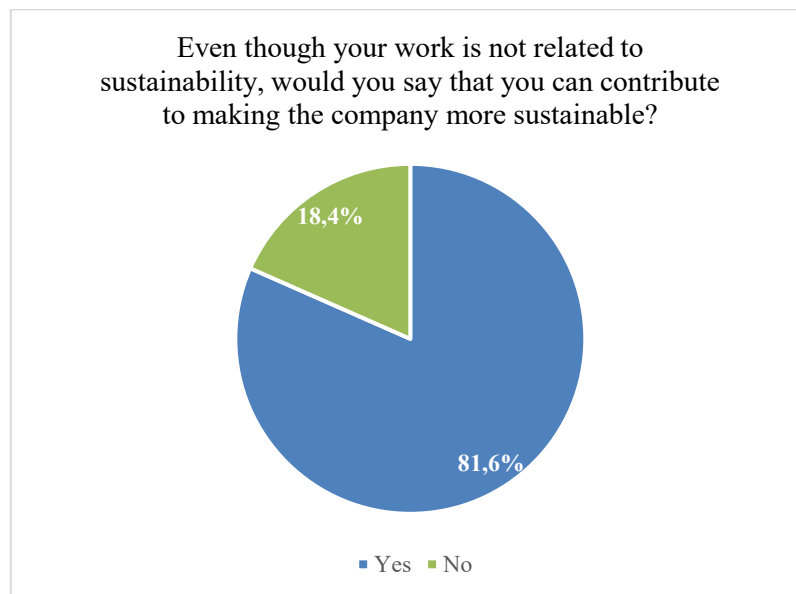
Figure 36
Question 13



Having gathered the employees whose job role is not related to sustainability, these were asked if they felt that they could help the company to become more sustainable (Figure 37). A very positive proportion came out of this question, with 81,6% of these employees agreeing that they can help Hi Fly in its sustainability journey, and only 18,4% disagreeing.

Figure 37

Question 14



The same employees were then asked an extra question according to their “Yes”/“No” answer. The ones who had answered “Yes” were further asked on how they could help the company to become more sustainable. The results of this open-ended question are presented in Figure 38. The ones who had answered “No” were asked why, being presented with several options from which they could chose more than one. The results are presented in Figure 39.

Figure 38

Question 15

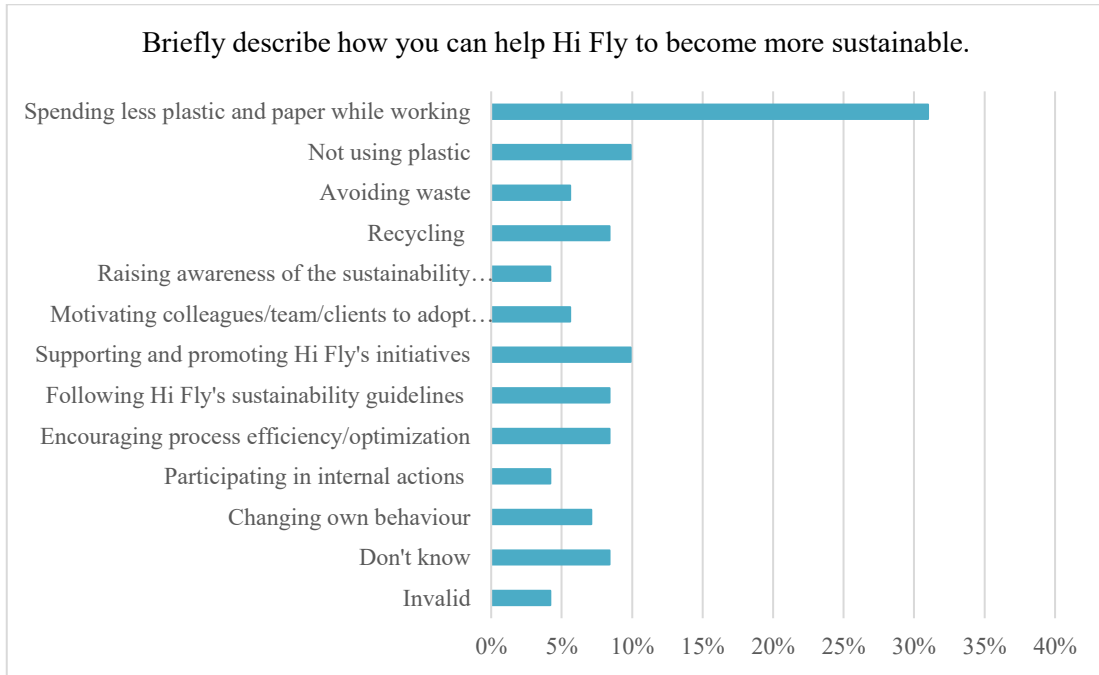
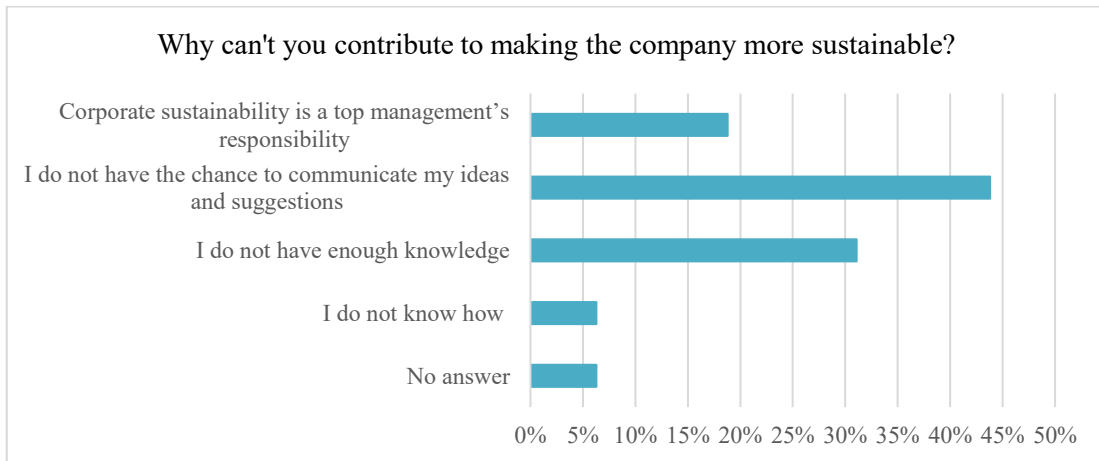


Figure 39

Question 16



Regarding the question “Briefly describe how you can help Hi Fly to become more sustainable”, employees provided a wide range of responses. Nevertheless, the most common answers fall into “spending less plastic and paper while working”, being mentioned by 31% of the employees. Some examples of answers that were aggregated on this first category are: “reduce paper or the use of plastic in the office environment”, “example: I tend not to use the printer, only for needed documents to be signed”, “paperless workspaces, full digital approach”, “reducing consumable materials during work activity”.

Similar to the first theme, but focusing on total abolition of plastic, 9,9% of the employees answered “not using plastic”. Also 9,9% of the employees referred that they can help Hi Fly to become more sustainable by supporting and promoting its initiatives. Answers that fall into this category range from “talking to other people about Hi Fly” to “contribute to disseminate the message” and “promote the initiatives, by sharing in the social network for example, making other people aware of these policies and its importance to all of us”.

Recycling was mentioned by 8,4% of the employees. The same amount affirmed that they help Hi Fly on its sustainability journey by following its directives (e.g., “putting in action all the measure already applied”, “following Hi Fly policies”, “following sustainability policies such as avoid single plastic use, optimize water and energy consumptions”). Also 8,4% said encouraging process efficiency/optimization. Some illustrative answers are “by optimizing the procedures, daily work and tasks to reduce the planet resources consumption” and “for example by proposing a modification to the aircraft to reduce fuel consumption or proposing an internal measure to save costs/energy”.

Other ways to help Hi Fly to become more sustainable which were mentioned by the employees whose job role is not directly related to sustainability were: changing own behaviour (7%), avoiding waste (5,6%), motivating colleagues/team/clients to adopt sustainable behaviours (5,6%), raising awareness of the sustainability mission/policies among colleagues/team/providers/clients (4,2%) and participating in internal actions (4,2%). 8,4% of the respondents answered “don’t know” and 4,2% provided answers that were not aligned with the question, being invalid.

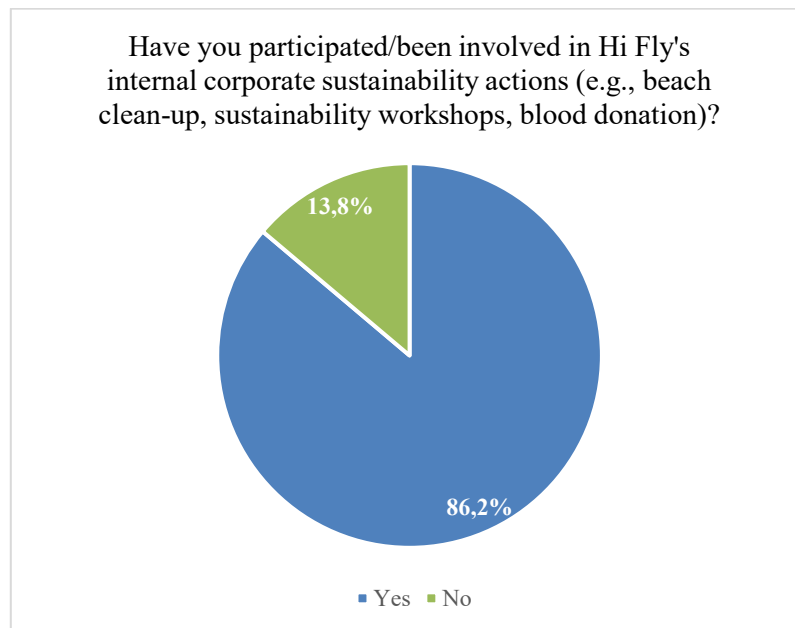
With this said, when considering the overall of the answers, one can say that employees whose job role is not related to sustainability know that they can help Hi Fly mainly through resources-related initiatives/behaviours and positive communication behaviours.

When it comes to the employees who had answered that they cannot contribute to making Hi Fly more sustainable, most (43,8%) chose the option “I do not have the chance to communicate my ideas and suggestions” to justify it. This was followed by “I do not have enough knowledge”, with 31,1% of the respondents selecting this option. “Corporate sustainability is a top management’s responsibility” was also chosen by 18,8% of the employees. Lastly, two respondents chose the option “other” with one answering “I do not know how” and the other not providing a response.

Once again addressing all aware employees, the following item intended to explore to what extent Hi Fly employees participate in internal actions related to sustainability (Figure 40). This was the least positive item of the whole section, revealing that only 13,8% of the respondents have been involved in sustainability-related actions. 86,2% have never participated.

Figure 40

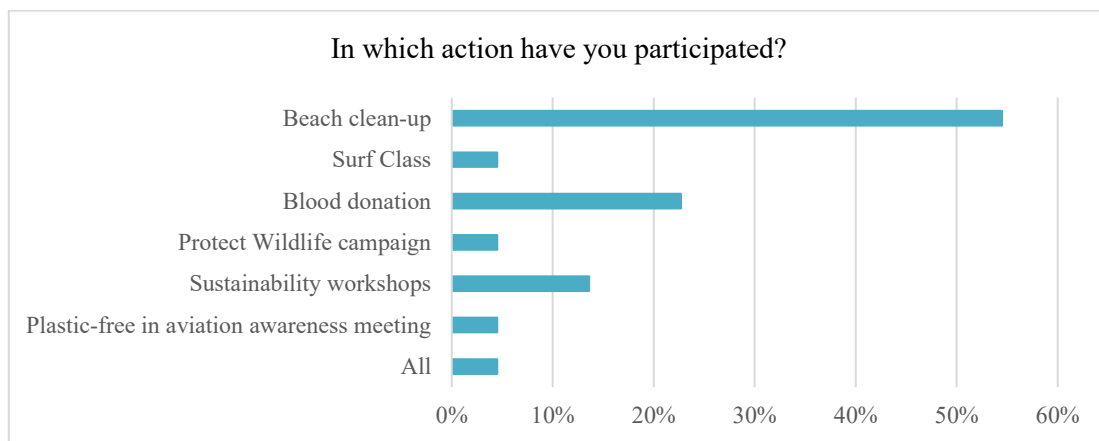
Question 17



The respondents that have participated in internal actions were asked in which action they had been involved (Figure 41). The majority (54,5%) participated in beach clean-ups, 22,7% participated in a blood donation, 13,6% were at sustainability workshops, 4,5% participated in a surf class, and the same percentage were at a plastic-free aviation awareness meeting. 4,5% answered “All”.

Figure 41

Question 18



72,7% of these employees said that participating in internal actions contributed to raise their knowledge about sustainability and 27,3% said that it didn't (Figure 42). However, all the employees who have participated in internal actions agreed that these helped to increase their interest in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts (Figure 43).

Figure 42
Question 19

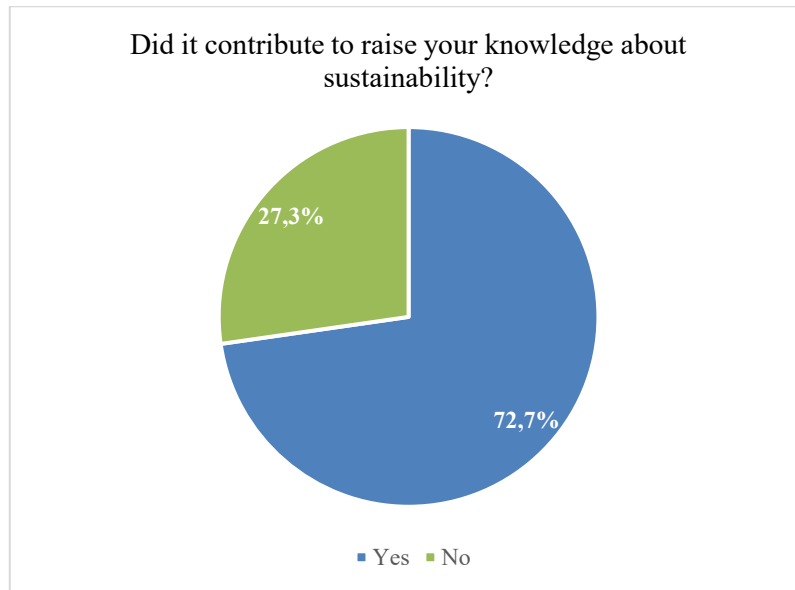
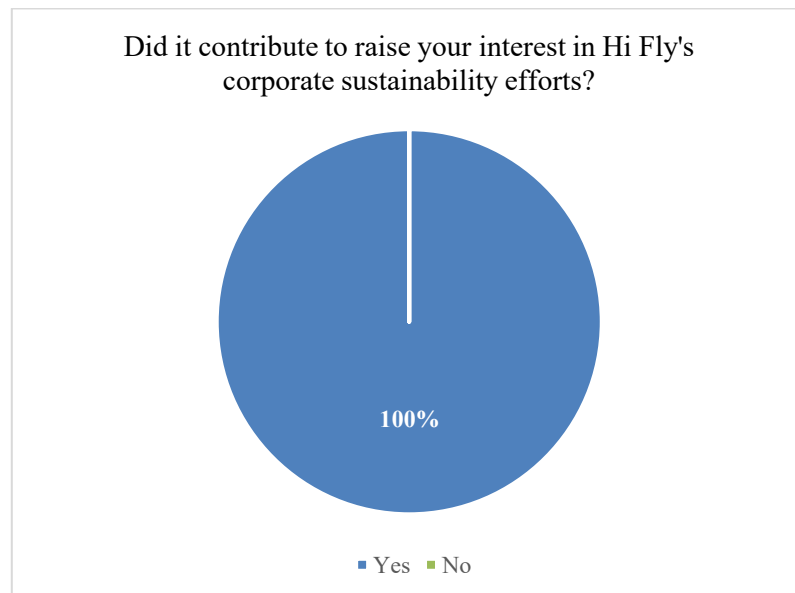


Figure 43
Question 20



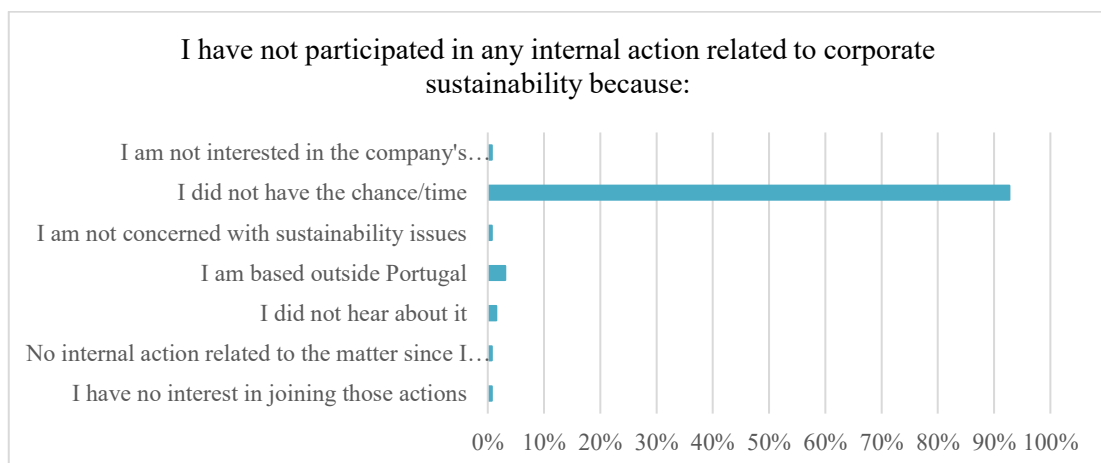
The 86,2% of the aware employees who have never participated in an internal action were invited to explain why this lack of involvement happened. They were offered three options from which to choose and could also opt for “other” and provide their own answer. After analysing the responses, the results are presented in Figure 44.

The results reveal that lack of participation in internal actions does not mean that employees are not interested in the company’s sustainability work, nor that they are not concerned with sustainability issues – only 1,4% of the respondents provided those explanations. Moreover, it also does not mean that employees are not interested in joining these actions, with only 0,7% of the employees providing that answer.

The most common explanation for the low participation rate was “I did not have the chance/time” (92,7%). Another response which could be aggregated under “I did not have the chance/time” was “I am based outside Portugal”, mentioned by 3,1% of respondents.

Lastly, 1,5% of the employees said that they did not hear about internal actions and 0,7% answered that there hasn’t been an internal action related to the matter since he/she joined the company⁵⁶.

Figure 44
Question 21



⁵⁶ This respondent, however, has been in the company for 1-2 years, meaning that there have been sustainability actions since he/she joined the company. With this said, the employee may have not heard of/been informed about the internal sustainability actions.

Hi Fly's internal communication about sustainability efforts

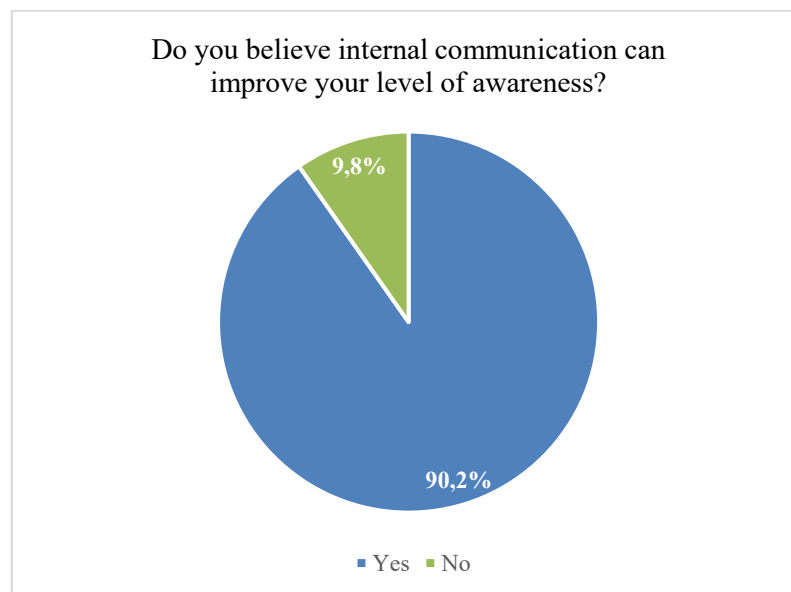
The last section of the questionnaire – “Hi Fly’s internal communication about sustainability efforts” – was answered by the whole sample. However, to make this section suitable for both aware and unaware employees of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives, some adaptations were made for each of the groups. Results are presented below, starting with the questions that were made to not aware employees, followed by the questions that were made to aware employees.

- **Not aware employees**

The first question that was asked to unaware employees simply wanted to understand to what extent these participants saw internal communication as a tool to raise their awareness of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives (Figure 45). Not surprisingly, almost all respondents (90,2%) agreed that internal communication can improve their level of awareness. Only 9,8 answered “No”, finishing their questionnaire at this point.

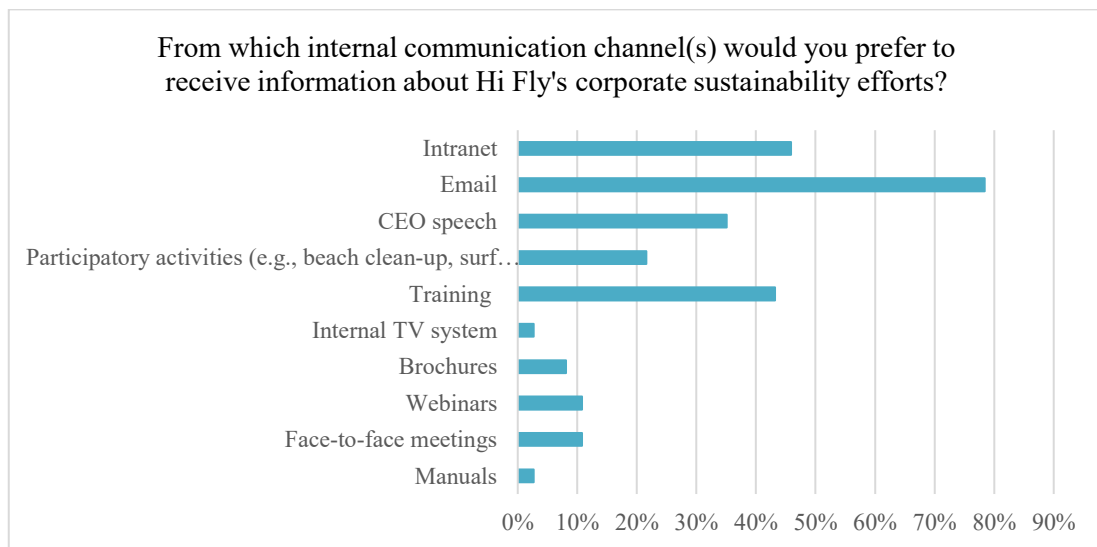
Figure 45

Question 22



The respondents who answered “Yes” were then invited to respond to three questions that tried to assess their preferences and needs regarding internal communication addressing corporate sustainability. When it comes to channels, as Figure 46 shows, the preference lies on email, with 78,4% choosing this option. The other internal channels chosen by the employees were: intranet (45,9%), sustainability training (43,2%), CEO speech (35,1%), participatory activities (21,6%), webinars and face-to-face meetings (10,8% each), brochures (8,1%), manuals and internal TV system (2,7% each). One can understand that preferences lie on electronic media formats, followed by face-to-face communication. Except for internal TV system, print media channels are the least preferred by these participants.

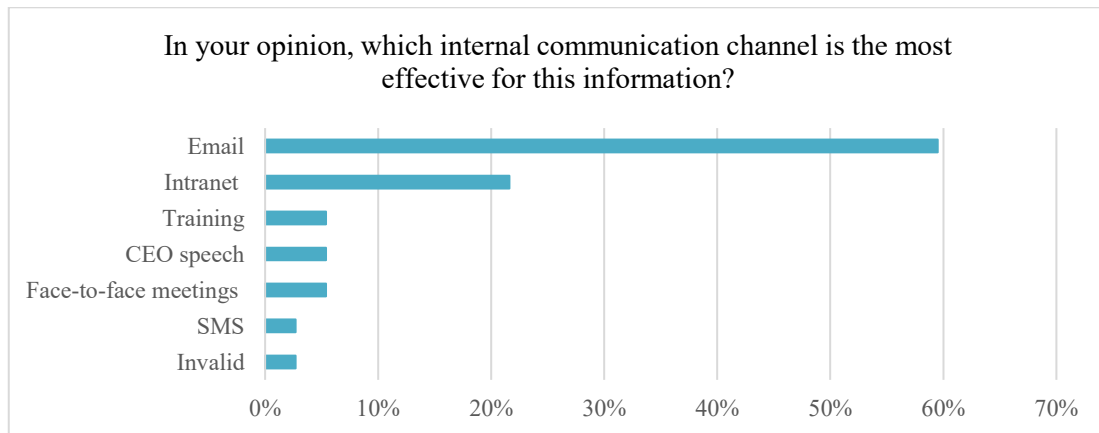
Figure 46
Question 23



Through an open-ended question, respondents were also asked to provide their opinion about which internal channel they believed was most effective to communicate corporate sustainability-related information (Figure 47). Once again, email was the most mentioned channel (59,5%), followed by the Intranet (21,6%). Face-to-face meetings, CEO speech and training account for 5,4% of responses each. 2,7% also mentioned SMS. One response was not considered valid (2,7%). What follows from this data is that no one mentioned print channels, supporting that it is not a popular format among this group of employees.

Figure 47

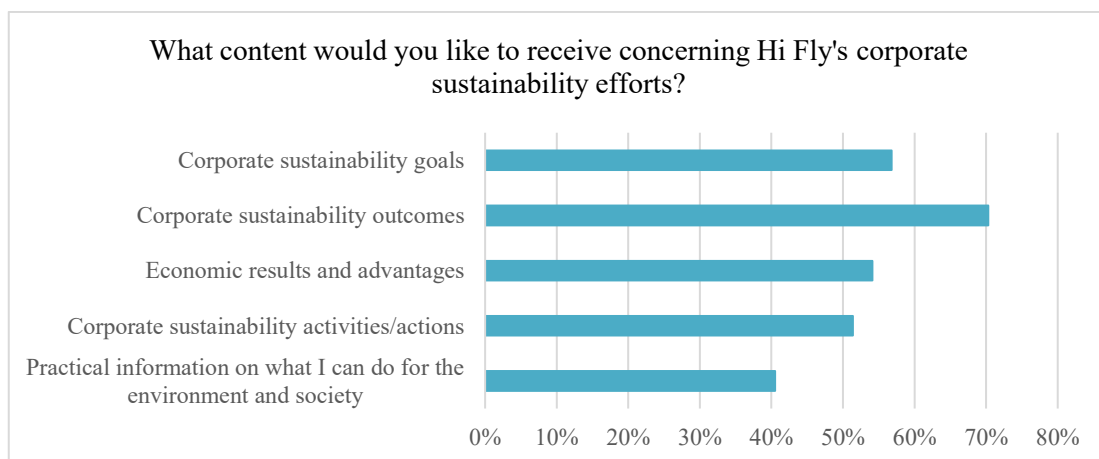
Question 24



Concerning internal communication content, many respondents expressed their interest in receiving information regarding corporate sustainability outcomes (70,3%), as Figure 48 shows. More than half also want to receive information concerning corporate sustainability goals (56,8%), economic results and advantages (54,1%) and corporate sustainability activities/actions (51,4%). “Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society” was chosen by less employees (40,5%).

Figure 48

Question 25



- **Aware employees**

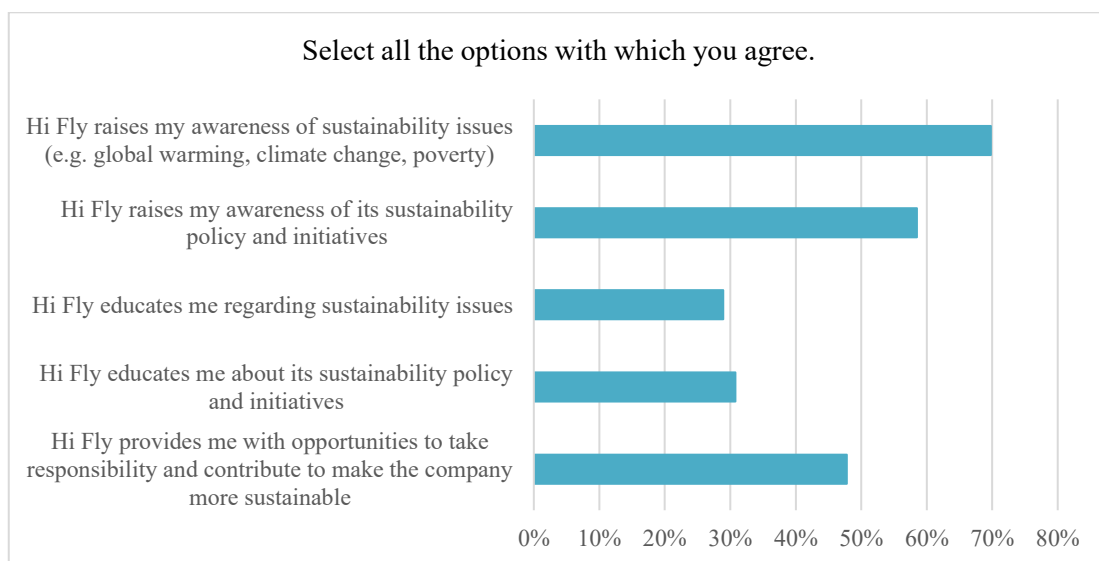
Moving on to the questions that were presented to aware employees, the section started by collecting the employee perspective regarding general aspects related to internal communication. Thus, five sentences were introduced, asking employees to select the ones with which they agreed (Figure 49). Almost 70% of the employees agreed that Hi Fly raises its employees’ awareness of sustainability issues, which is a rather positive conclusion. More than half (58,5%) also believe that Hi Fly raises awareness of its sustainability policy and initiatives.

When it comes to “Hi Fly provides me with opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to make the company more sustainable”, which tackles two-way communication and involvement of employees in corporate sustainability, less than half of the respondents chose this option (47,8%).

Concerning education, which, among other things, can be connected to sustainability training, less than one third of the employees (30,8%) agreed that Hi Fly educates its employees regarding its sustainability policy and initiatives, as well as about sustainability issues (28,9%).

Figure 49

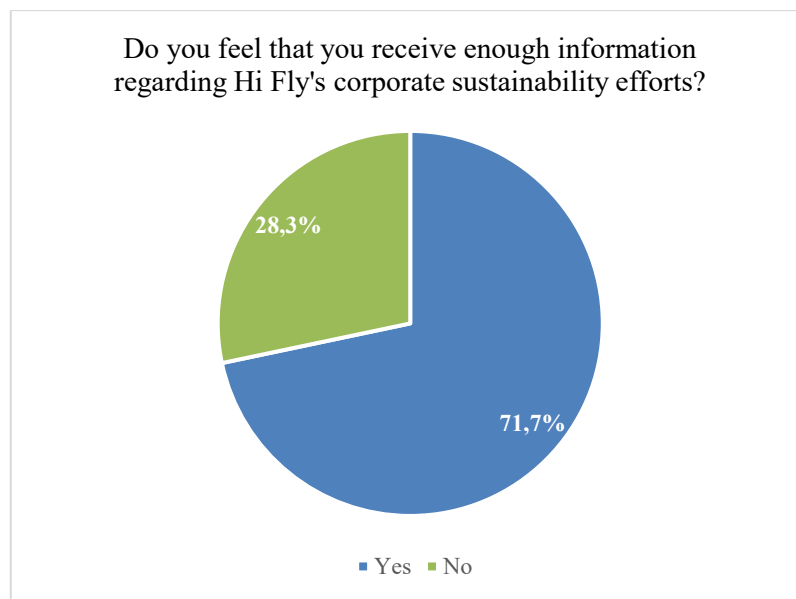
Question 26



Aware employees were also asked to provide their opinion on whether they feel that they receive enough information regarding Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts (Figure 50). This item provides a positive frame: 71,7% answered "Yes" while 28,3% chose "No".

Figure 50

Question 27



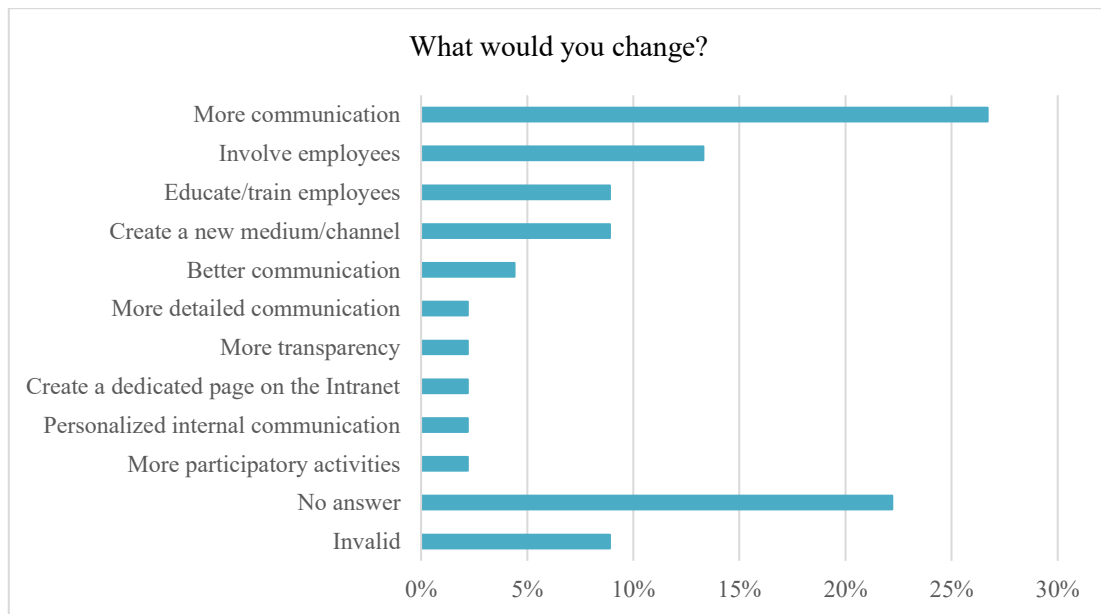
The employees who had answered "No" were invited to respond to an extra question, which aimed to assess what, according to these employees, is failing in Hi Fly's internal communication addressing corporate sustainability. The answers to this open-ended question were content analysed and coded, with results being present below on Figure 51. 26,7% of these employees asserted that they would want more communication on the topic. As clearly stated by one of the respondents "I would really like to receive more quantity information about the sustainability efforts". Another also said: "Disseminate more information about other initiatives that are not as spoken about".

Moreover, 13,3% of the employees who feel that they do not receive enough information claim that they would want to be more involved. One employee said "Have a space where

collaborators can give ideas”. Another illustrative answer that fell on this category is “I wouldn’t mind to be involved in more activities”.

Other answers to this item were: educate/train employees (8,9%), create a new medium⁵⁷ (8,9%), better communication (4,4%), more detailed communication (2,2%), more transparency (2,2%), create a dedicated page on the intranet (2,2%), personalized internal communication (2,2%) and more participatory activities (2,2%). In addition, 22,2% of the employees did not provide any answer and 8,9% provided suggestions to improve Hi Fly’s sustainability instead of its internal communication on the topic, being considered invalid.

Figure 51
Question 28

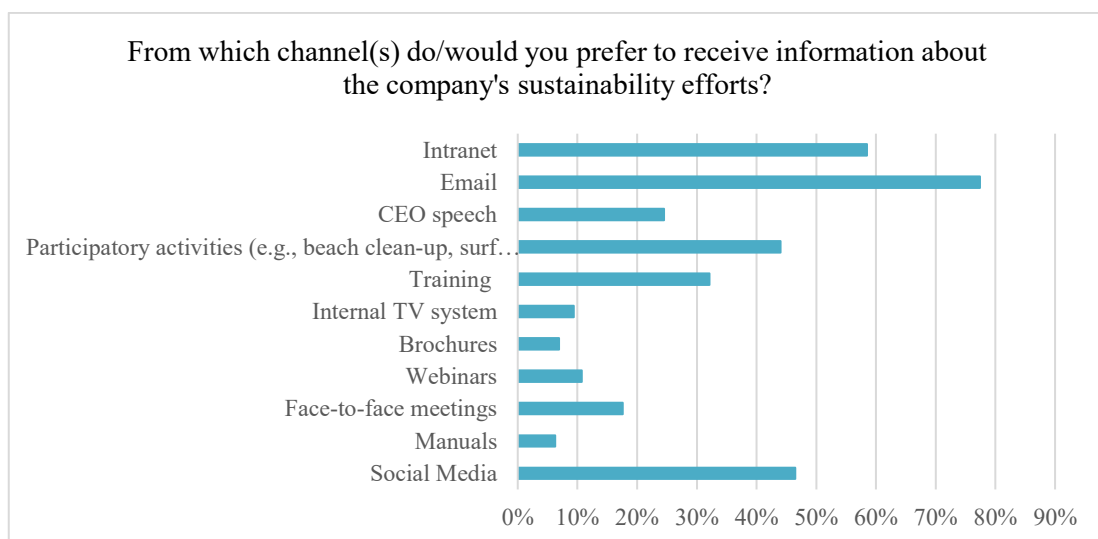


⁵⁷ Participants mentioned newsletter and magazine.

After this, all aware employees were invited to answer items about their preferences and needs concerning internal communication about corporate sustainability. When it comes to channels, for the aware employees I wanted to include social media (Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter). Although these are not an internal channel, both the literature and exploratory interviews highlight these platforms as a good one to communicate with employees. In fact, during the internship, I could also notice that some employees interact with Hi Fly’s social media posts, which may mean that employees are aware of Hi Fly’s sustainability because of these channels. All the other channels which were considered for this item were the same as the ones presented to not aware employees.

Having this said, as Figure 52 shows, likewise results of not aware employees, email is the preferred channel among aware employees (77,4%). Moreover, the intranet, as in the unaware employees, comes in second place for the aware employees (58,5%). In third place come social media (46,5%). Participatory activities were selected by 44% of the employees, followed by training (32,1%), CEO speech (24, 5%), face-to-face meetings (17,6%), webinars (10,7%), internal TV system (9,4%), brochures (6,9%) and manuals (6,3%). As in unaware employees, print media channels come last in terms of preferences.

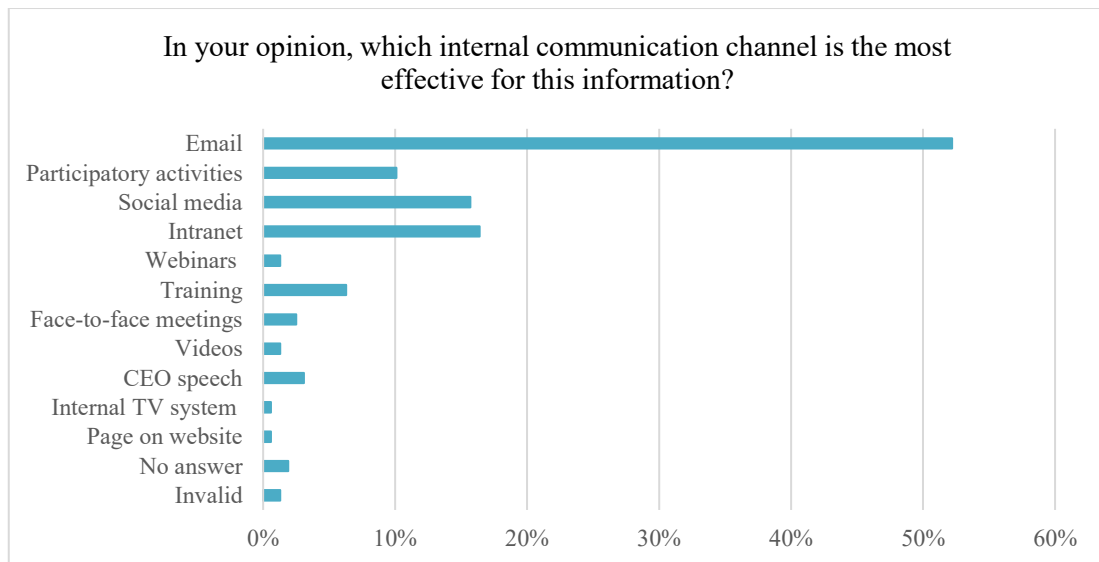
Figure 52
Question 29



Aware employees were also asked, in an open-ended question, to give their opinion on the most effective internal communication channel for corporate sustainability-related information (Figure 53). Email was, once again, the most mentioned channel (52,2%). Moreover, the intranet came one more time in second place (16,4%). Although the question asked for “internal channel”, as “social media” were added to the last question, employees also provided this answer (15,7%). The other channels that were mentioned were: participatory activities (10,1%), training (6,3%), CEO speech (3,1%), face-to-face meetings (2,5%), webinars (1,3%), videos (1,3%), internal TV system (0,6%) and dedicated page on website (0,6%). Although the percentage is minimal, the corporate website also appeared on this item, even though it is not an internal channel. As this was an open-ended question, some employees did not provide an answer (1,9%) and some of the answers could not be considered valid (1,3%).

Figure 53

Question 30



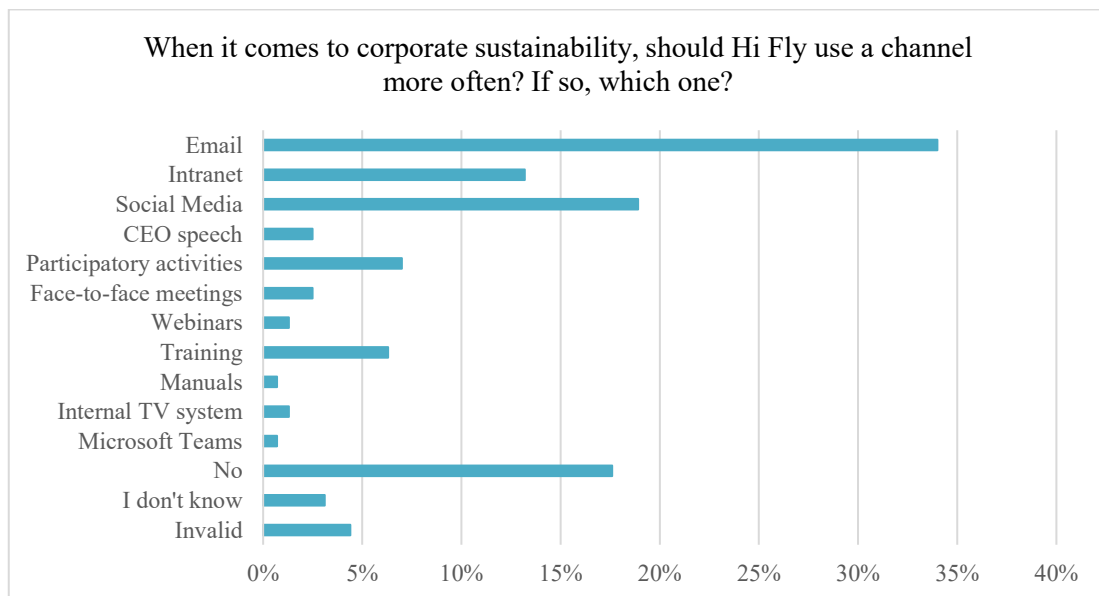
Still regarding preferences for channels, the respondents were asked if they would like Hi Fly to use a specific channel more often when it comes to corporate sustainability-related communication (Figure 54). Aligned with former results, 34% of the respondents would like

to see more communication through email. However, coming up as the second most common answer were social media, with 18,9% of the employees mentioning these platforms. The intranet comes in third place on this item (13,2%). Moreover, employees expressed that they would also like to see more communication on the matter through participatory activities (7%), training (6,3%), CEO speech (2,5%), face-to-face meetings (2,5%), webinars (1,3%), internal TV system (1,3%), manuals (0,7%) and Microsoft Teams (0,7%). Internal social media came on this item for the first time, with Microsoft Teams, even though the percentage of employees who mentioned this channel is minimal.

In spite of the latter, it is important to note that 17,6% of the employees answered “No”, probably meaning that they are content with how Hi Fly channels its communication dealing with corporate sustainability, as well as with the frequency of this communication. Moreover, as in other open-ended questions, some employees stated “don’t know” (3,1%) and there were some responses which did not accomplish the objective of the question (4,4%).

Figure 54

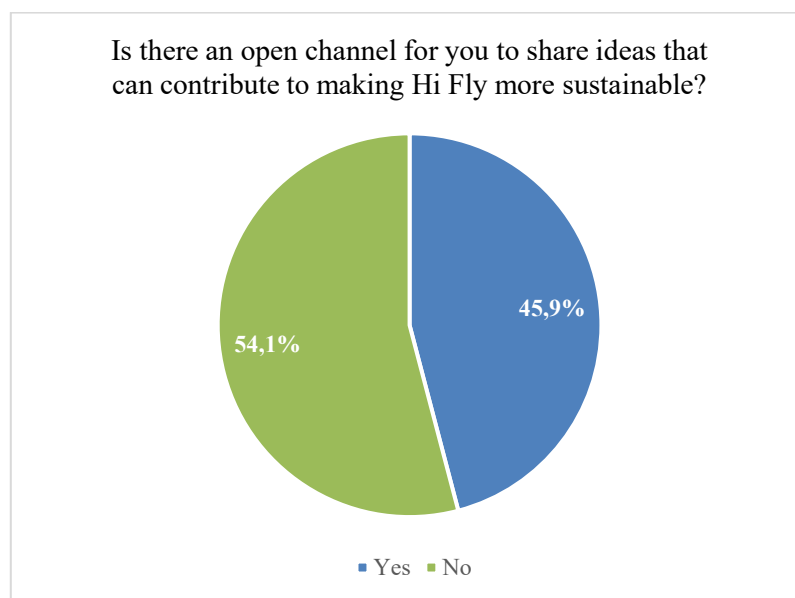
Question 31



Following the assessment of channel preferences, another important question was asked, trying to assess if Hi Fly has two-way communication mechanisms (Figure 55). 54,1% of the respondents said that they do not have an open channel to share ideas and suggestions in order to contribute to Hi Fly's sustainability journey, which is more than the percentage of employees who said that this open channel exists (45,9%).

Figure 55

Question 32

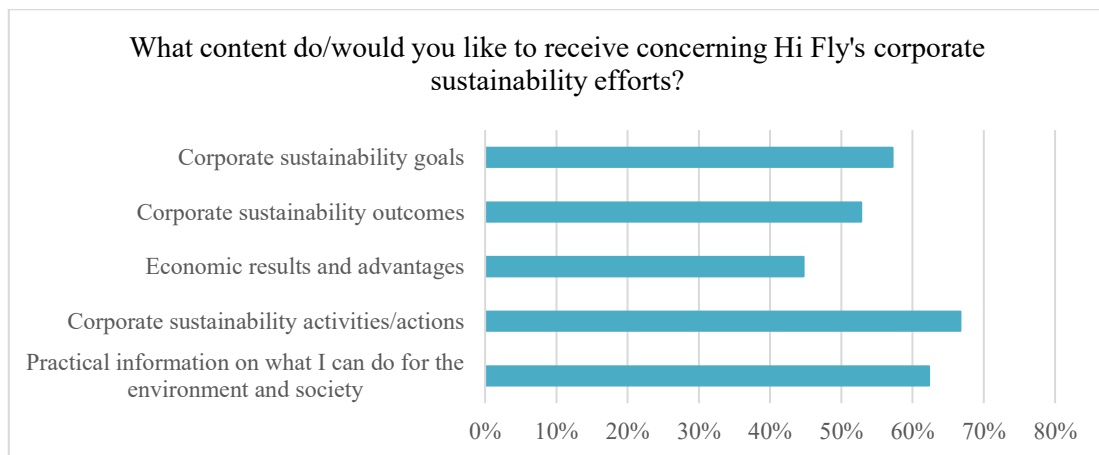


Regarding content, for the aware employees the most important content to receive regarding corporate sustainability is related activities and actions (66,7%), as Figure 56 shows. For these employees it is also important to receive practical information on what to do for the planet and society (62,3%). Corporate sustainability goals came in third place (57,2%) and corporate sustainability outcomes achieved the fourth place (52,8%) according to aware employees. Less than half of the employees marked "Economic results and advantages" (44,7%).

One understands that the answers provided by the aware employees are different from the ones provided by not aware employees, for whom corporate sustainability outcomes is the most important content.

Figure 56

Question 33



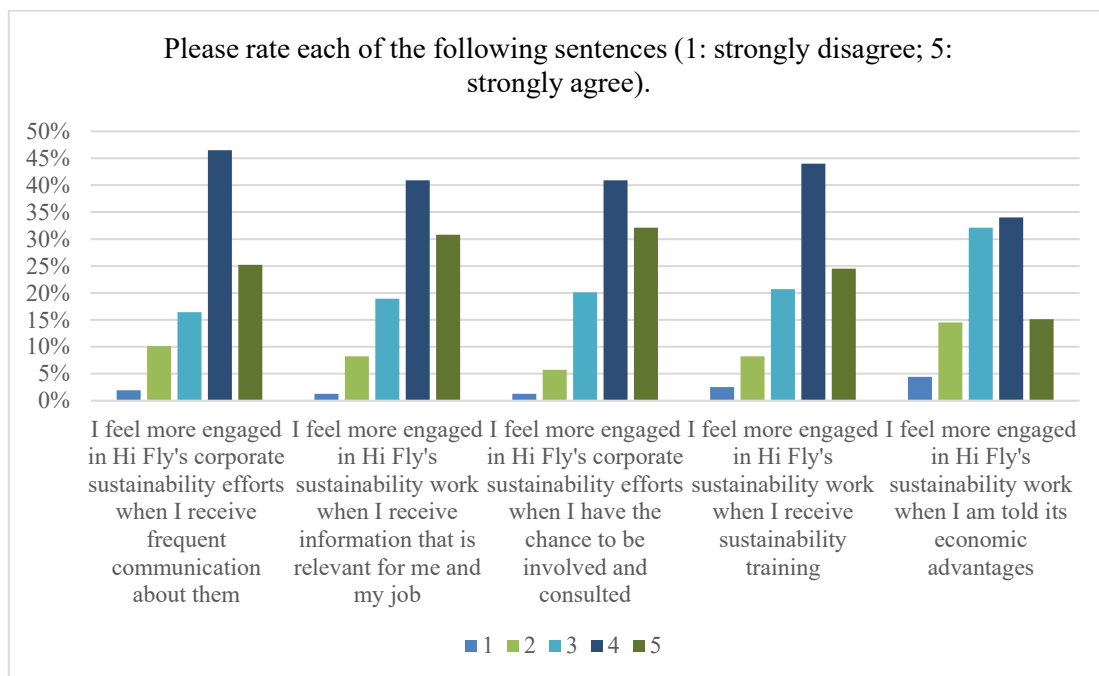
The last item which was only addressed to aware employees aimed to assess the influence of internal communication on the employees' level of engagement in corporate sustainability. The following affirmations were considered to be the most important to present to employees:

- I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts when I receive frequent communication about them
- I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I receive information that is relevant for me and my job
- I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts when I have the chance to be involved and consulted
- I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I receive sustainability training
- I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I am told its economic advantages

Employees had to rate the affirmations from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as Figure 57 shows. Just by looking at the graphics, one can tell that the least important aspect to increase Hi Fly employees' engagement in the company's sustainability is to tell economic advantages of sustainability efforts, which, in fact is aligned with the results of the previous item. However, each sentence deserves a careful analysis.

Figure 57

Question 34



For “I feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts when I receive frequent communication about them”, more than 70% of the employees marked a 4 (46,5%) or a 5 (25,5%), expressing their agreement with the sentence. 16,4% of the employees gave the sentence a 3, 10,1% marked 2 for this affirmation and only 1,9% totally disagreed with it.

The second sentence – “I feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s sustainability work when I receive information that is relevant for me and my job” – was also positively rated, with 40,9% answering number 4 and 30,8% answering number 5. Number 3 accounted for 18,9% of the

responses, number 2 reached 8,2% of the answers and number 1 only received 1,3% of the responses.

When it comes to “I feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts when I have the chance to be involved and consulted”, most respondents (40,9%) chose 4, agreeing with the answer. Moreover, 32,1% opted for number 5, strongly agreeing with the sentence. 20,1% chose the neutral number of the scale, number 3, while 5,7% chose number 2 and 1,3% chose number 1.

The fourth affirmation “I feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s sustainability work when I receive sustainability training also sees most of the responses falling on number 4 (44%) and 5 (24,5%), meaning that most respondents agree that sustainability training is important for their levels of engagement in the matter. Nevertheless, 20,7% marked number 3, 8,2% chose number 2 and 2,5% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this affirmation.

Lastly, “I feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s sustainability work when I am told its economic advantages” received almost the same number of responses on the agreement side of the scale than on the neutral and disagreement side of the scale. 34% of the employees chose number 4, 32,1% selected number 3, 15,1% opted for number 5, almost the same percentage (14,5%) chose number 2 and 4,4% expressed their total disagreement with the sentence.

In order to better assess the previous sentences and understand which of these aspects are more valued by the employees, Table 9 shows the averages for each affirmation. Therefore, the aspect that makes employees feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s sustainability work is the opportunity to be involved and consulted, ranked with a 4. Following this, “I feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s sustainability work when I receive information that is relevant for me and my job” achieved an average of 3,9. Moreover, receiving frequent communication about Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts and sustainability training were both classified with a 3,8. Lastly, employees rated “I feel more engaged in Hi Fly’s sustainability work when I am told its economic advantages” with a 3,4, a much lower average than the previous. The overall average is 3,8, which shows that, globally, all these aspects are important for Hi Fly employees in order to feel engaged in the company’s corporate sustainability work and efforts.

Table 9*Question 34: Averages*

	Average	Total average
I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts when I receive frequent communication about them	3,8	3,8
I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I receive information that is relevant for me and my job	3,9	
I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts when I have the chance to be involved and consulted	4	
I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I receive sustainability training	3,8	
I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I am told its economic advantages	3,4	

To close the questionnaire, the employees (both the aware and the not aware employees who believe that internal communication can help raise their level of awareness of Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives – 196 out of 200) were asked to give suggestions to improve Hi Fly's internal communication addressing corporate sustainability. Although suggestions were quite varied, an effort was made to aggregate the most similar responses, with results being present in Figure 58.

The most common suggestion was to communicate more about the subject, with 13,3% of the employees providing answers such as "I believe that a more regular communication thru dedicated channels would improve a better understanding of Hi Fly's actions towards sustainability".

Secondly, some employees (11,2%) also suggested that Hi Fly should do more events, meetings and participatory activities related to sustainability. Two demonstrative answers of this category are: "Promoting more social events where they talk about corporate sustainability" and "Teambuilding about sustainability outside the working hour". Some respondents even gave concrete examples of events, meetings and participatory activities to

put into place, such as “an awareness day”, “an annual session from CEO to all employees related with the results of the annual goals” and “clean the forest”.

Another suggestion which was provided by 10,2% of the employees was to increase employee involvement in corporate sustainability. Among the responses that fell into this category were: “Make employees feel more like a part of it”, “To have more activities involving the Hi Fly’s teams, so that we can feel that we are part of the process” and “Communication should be both ways”. Two employees provided concrete suggestions on how to increase involvement: “By creating a space where employees could share (text, photos) and give examples of sustainability focusing on a daily basis but also regarding aviation” and “A suggestion box for activities and changes on Hi Fly headquarters building”.

The fourth most prevalent suggestion was to send emails with sustainability information, news and Hi Fly’s initiatives (6,6%). Some answers of this theme are: “Monthly updates on Lisbon/Portugal/World sustainability actions, by email to all Hi Fly employees”, “When actions or measures are launched, I suggest informing employees by e-mail”.

A group of employees (5,6%) also suggested that Hi Fly should provide more training. As one employee said: “I believe that more training sessions would be a much more effective way”.

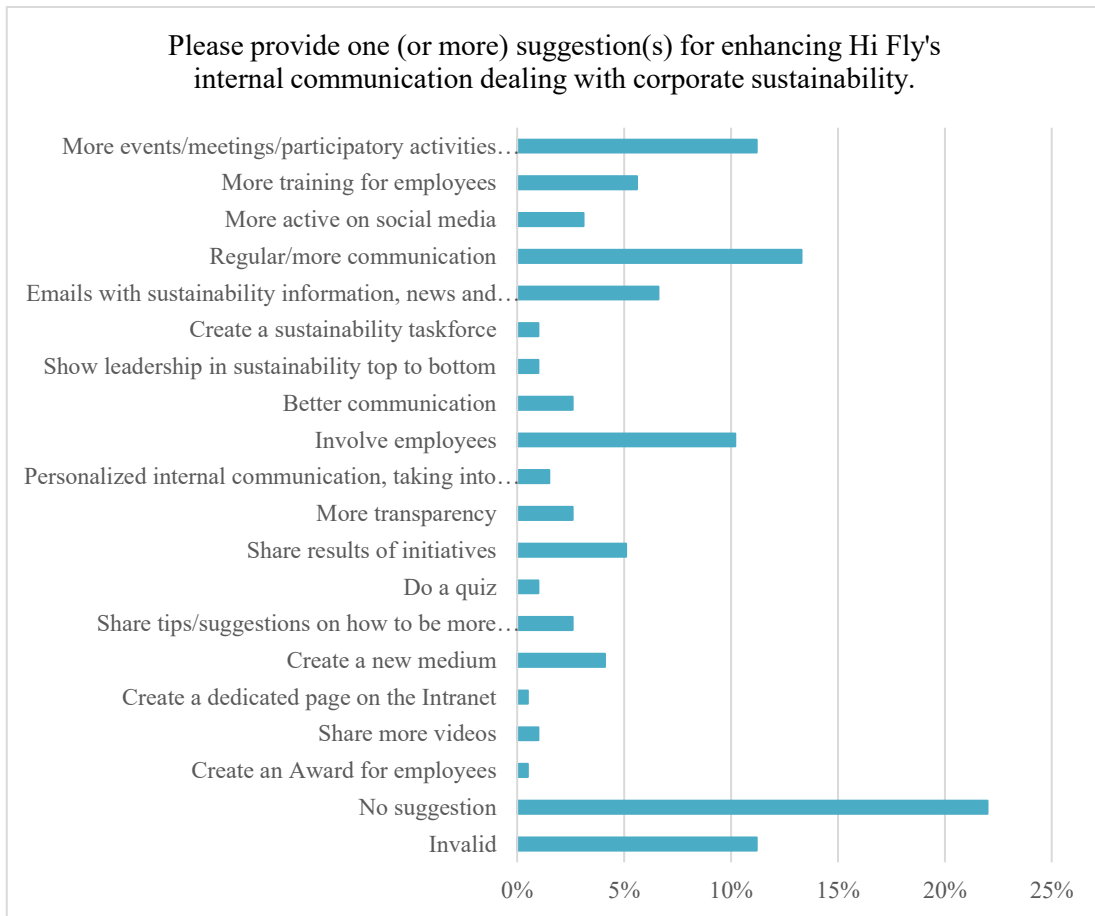
Other less frequent suggestions were: to share more results of the initiatives (5,1%), to create a new medium (e.g., newsletter, app, monthly magazine) (4,1%), to post and interact more on social media (3,1%), to provide better communication (2,6%), to be more transparent (3%), to share tips/suggestions on how to be more sustainable (2,6%), to personalize internal communication according to employees’ needs and the company’s functioning (1,5%), to create a sustainability taskforce (1%), showing leadership in sustainability from top to bottom (1%), to do a quiz (1%), to share more videos (1%), to create a sustainability page on the intranet (0,5%) and to create an Award for “the most sustainable employee” (0,5%).

As usual, as this was an open-ended question, 22% of the respondents did not provide a suggestion. However, it is important to highlight that 16,3% of these employees did not provide a suggestion because they are already satisfied with the internal communication on the topic (e.g., “I think Hi Fly is making an excellent job on that so far, just keep it that way).

Other responses were also invalid because the respondents provided suggestions to improve Hi Fly’s sustainability instead of tips to enhance internal communication on the topic.

Figure 58

Question 35



6.2.1 Crossing sample description data with results of the questionnaire

As mentioned in the Theoretical Framework, internal communication needs and preferences can be influenced by several employee variables, such as the generation (Neill, 2015; Walden et al., 2017; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017) and the employment relationship (Welch, 2018). Hence, it is now relevant to cross data from the sample description – age, years working at the Hi Fly and job position – with the questionnaire’s results that have to do with employee needs and preferences for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability. For this purpose, both aware and not aware employees will be considered, joining results from questions 23 and 29⁵⁸ (which address channel preferences), and questions 29 and 33 (which focus on content needs).

- **Crossing age (generation) with results from questions 23 and 29 (channel preferences for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability)**

When considering age and its influence in channel preferences (Tables 10 and 11), it is perceptible that Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers prefer to receive corporate sustainability-related information through email, with this channel being the most selected across the three generations (Millennials: 80%; Generation X: 76%; Baby Boomers: 90%). However, when it comes to Generation Z, the same number of employees (62,5%) selected both email and participatory activities, showcasing a double preference.

Moreover, for both Millennials and Generation X, the intranet is the second most preferred channel, being selected by 49,5% of Millennials and 68% of employees from Generation X. Baby Boomers, however, put CEO speech in second place in terms of preferences, with 53,5% of employees from this generation selecting this channel, while Generation Z has social media as their second most preferred channel (53,3%).

Coming in third place of channel preferences, social media are also highly ranked for both Millennials (49,4%) and Generation X (43,1%). Furthermore, Generation Z and Baby Boomers have training as their third most preferred channel for sustainability internal

⁵⁸ Although the questionnaire presented more than one item addressing channel preferences, questions 23 and 29 were the most suitable for crossing purposes because, unlike the others, they are not open-ended.

communication, with 50% of employees from both generations choosing this channel. However, the same number of Baby Boomers who have selected training has also chosen the intranet (50%).

The intranet comes in fourth place for Generation Z, with 43,8% of employees from this generation selecting this channel. Participatory activities are the fourth preference for both Millennials (42,1%) and Generation X (37,3%), while brochures were chosen by 30% of Baby Boomers, showcasing that this is the fourth preferred channel for this mature generation.

Once again, Millennials and Generation X have the same channel – training – as their fifth preference (32,6% and 30,7% respectively). Generation Z puts CEO speech and face-to-face meetings in fifth position (37,5% selected each of these channels), while Baby Boomers put three channels as their fifth and last preference for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability: webinars, face-to-face meetings and manuals (10% selected each channel).

Continuing to share the same preference, the sixth and the seventh preferred channels for both Millennials and Generation X are CEO speech (Millennials: 20%; Generation X: 28%) and face-to-face meetings (Millennials: 14,7%; Generation X: 14,7%). At this order of preference, Generation Z puts webinars and manuals as their sixth most preferred channels (12,5% selected each channel) and internal TV system and brochures as their least preferred (6,3% selected each channel).

Webinars, internal TV system, brochures and manuals are the least preferred channels by Millennials and Generation X, with slight differences in terms of percentages from one generation to the other, as it can be seen in Table 10.

The description presented in the former paragraphs makes it clear that Millennials and Generation X are the ones with the most similar preferences. Moreover, it is relevant to note that social media were more and more selected as the age diminished, which is congruent with the fact that younger generations are the most connected to the digital world. Not even one Baby Boomer selected this channel. Participatory activities and internal TV system are also two channels that do not seem to appeal to this mature generation.

Table 10*Age (Generation) & Channel*

Channel/Age (generation)	< 25 years (Generation Z)	25-40 years (Millennials)	41-56 years (Generation X)	57-75 years (Baby Boomers)
Intranet	43,8%	49,5%	68%	50%
Email	62,5%	80%	76%	90%
CEO speech	37,5%	20%	28%	60%
Participatory activities	62,5%	42,1%	37,3%	0%
Training	50%	32,6%	30,7%	50%
Internal TV system	6,3%	7,4%	10,7%	0%
Brochures	6,3%	7,4%	4%	30%
Webinars	12,5%	10,1%	10,7%	10%
Face-to-face meetings	37,5%	14,7%	14,7%	10%
Manuals	12,5%	4,2%	5,3%	10%
Social Media ⁵⁹	53,3%	49,4%	43,1%	0%

⁵⁹ This channel was only considered for aware employees, meaning that this line of the table only takes into account results from question 29.

Table 11*Age (Generation) & Channel: Order of Preferences*

	Generation Z	Millennials	Generation X	Baby Boomers
1st	Email & Participatory activities	Email	Email	Email
2nd	Social Media	Intranet	Intranet	CEO speech
3rd	Training	Social Media	Social Media	Intranet & Training
4th	Intranet	Participatory Activities	Participatory Activities	Brochures
5th	CEO speech & face-to-face meetings	Training	Training	Webinars, Face-to-face meetings & Manuals
6th	Webinars & Manuals	CEO speech	CEO speech	-
7th	Internal TV system & Brochures	Face-to-face meetings	Face-to-face meeting	-
8th	-	Webinars	Internal TV system & Webinars	-
9th	-	Internal TV system & Brochures	Manuals	-
10th	-	Manuals	Brochures	-

- **Crossing age (generation) with results from questions 25 and 33 (content needs for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability)**

When considering age and content needs for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability, unlike channel preferences, there does not seem to be a pattern or many similarities across the several generations (Tables 12 and 13).

“Corporate sustainability goals” was the type of content that was most pointed out by Generation Z (87,5%), “practical information on what I can do for the environment and society” comes as the first content necessity for both Millennials (77,3%) and Baby Boomers (70%) and “corporate sustainability activities/actions” is what Generation X most wants to hear about regarding this matter (69,3%).

“Corporate sustainability outcomes” was selected by almost the same proportion across all generations (Generation Z: 68,8%; Millennials: 65%; Generation X: 57,3%; Baby Boomers: 60%), taking middle level positions when it comes to employee content needs, as showed in Table 13.

“Economic results and advantages” come in last for both Generation Z (50%) and Generation X (44%), however the percentages show that there are still many employees from these generations who are eager to know about financial results of corporate sustainability efforts. “Corporate sustainability goals” was the least selected content by Millennials (56, 8%) and Baby Boomers (40%), but, once again, the percentages are high, meaning that, in general, there is interest in receiving this type of information.

Table 12*Age (Generation) & Content*

Content/Age (generation)	< 25 (Generation Z)	25-40 (Millennials)	41-56 (Generation X)	57-75 (Baby Boomers)
Corporate sustainability goals	87,5%	56,8%	53,3%	40%
Corporate sustainability outcomes	68,8%	65%	57,3%	60%
Economic results and advantages	50%	60%	44%	60%
Corporate sustainability activities/actions	62,5%	76%	69,3%	60%
Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	68,8%	77,3%	48%	70%

Table 13*Age (Generation) & Content: Order of Preferences*

	Generation Z	Millennials	Generation X	Baby Boomers
1st	Corporate sustainability goals	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Corporate sustainability activities/actions	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society
2nd	Corporate sustainability outcomes & Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Corporate sustainability activities/actions	Corporate sustainability outcomes	Corporate sustainability outcomes, Economic results and advantages & Corporate sustainability activities/actions
3rd	Corporate sustainability activities/actions	Corporate sustainability outcomes	Corporate sustainability goals	Corporate sustainability goals
4th	Economic results and advantages	Economic results and advantages	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	-
5th	-	Corporate sustainability goals	Economic results and advantages	-

- **Crossing years working at Hi Fly with results from questions 23 and 29 (channel preferences for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability)**

When looking at how the years working at Hi Fly may affect channel preferences (Tables 14 and 15), one understands that except for employees that are working at the company for less than one year – who prefer social media (55%) –, all the other groups unquestionably prefer the email for receiving corporate sustainability-related information (1-2 years: 80,6%; 3-5 years: 84,4%; 6-10 years: 78.8%; > 10 years: 81,6%).

Moreover, the second most common preference is the intranet, coming in second place in terms of preference for three of the groups (1-2 years: 63,9%; 6-10 years: 72,7%; > 10 years: 73,7%). However, employees who are working at Hi Fly for less than one year put training as their second preference (52%) and employees from the interval 6 to 10 years have social media as their second most preferred channel (48,3%).

Participatory activities tend to assume middle-high level positions in terms of preference, just like social media (Table 15). Furthermore, CEO speech and training assume middle level positions for most employee groups. Face-to-face meetings, webinars and internal TV system take middle-low positions. Manuals and brochures take the lower positions in terms of preference across all groups.

Having this said, the most relevant conclusion which can be taken from crossing the years working at Hi Fly with channel preferences concerns sustainability training: as the years working at Hi Fly increase, the preference for training decreases.

Table 14*Years Working at Hi Fly & Channel*

Channel/Years working at Hi Fly	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	> 10 years
Intranet	44%	63,9%	37,5%	72,7%	73,7%
Email	48%	80,6%	84,4%	78,8%	81,6%
CEO speech	32%	8,3%	32,8%	21,2%	31,6%
Participatory activities	36%	52,8%	32,8%	33,3%	54,5%
Training	52%	33,3%	32,8%	30,3%	28,9%
Internal TV system	0%	13,9%	4,7%	12,1%	10,5%
Brochures	4%	11,1%	7,8%	9,1%	5,3%
Webinars	12%	13,9%	9,4%	0%	18,4%
Face-to-face meetings	28%	22,2%	15,6%	12,1%	10,5%
Manuals	12%	5,6%	3,1%	9,1%	2,6%
Social Media ⁶⁰	55%	46%	40,9%	48,3%	44,4%

⁶⁰ This channel was only considered for aware employees, meaning that this line of the table only takes into account results from question 29.

Table 15*Years Working at Hi Fly & Channel: Order of Preferences*

	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	> 10 years
1st	Social Media	Email	Email	Email	Email
2nd	Training	Intranet	Social Media	Intranet	Intranet
3rd	Email	Participatory activities	Intranet	Social Media	Participatory activities
4th	Intranet	Social Media	CEO speech, Participatory activities & Training	Participatory activities	Social Media
5th	Participatory activities	Training	Face-to-face meetings	Training	CEO speech
6th	CEO speech	Face-to-face meetings	Webinars	CEO speech	Training
7th	Face-to-face meetings	Internal TV system & Webinars	Brochures	Internal TV system & Face-to-face meetings	Webinars
8th	Webinars & Manuals	Brochures	Internal TV system	Manuals & Brochures	Internal TV system & Face-to-face meetings
9th	Brochures	CEO speech	Manuals	-	Brochures
10th	-	Manuals	-	-	Manuals

- **Crossing years working at Hi Fly with results from questions 25 and 33 (content needs for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability)**

Concerning how the years working at Hi Fly may influence content needs for internal communication dealing with corporate sustainability (Tables 16 and 17), it is curious to note that “corporate sustainability activities/actions” is the most selected response by all groups (1-2 years: 77,8%; 3-5 years:57,8%; 6-10 years: 60,6%; > 10 years: 68,4%), except for employees working for less than one year at Hi Fly – in which the higher percentage falls in “corporate sustainability goals” (64%).

Moreover, another aspect worth highlighting is that “economic results and advantages” is the least selected answer across all groups (<1 year: 52%; 1-2 years: 50%; 3-5 years: 40,6%; > 10 years: 52,6%) except for employees who work at Hi Fly for at least 6 years and up to 10 full years. For this group, “practical information on what I can do for the environment and society” was the one that received less responses (39,4%).

Table 16*Years Working at Hi Fly & Content*

Content/Years working at Hi Fly	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	> 10 years
Corporate sustainability goals	64%	61,1%	54,7%	54,5%	55,2%
Corporate sustainability outcomes	60%	69,4%	51,6%	42,4%	57,9%
Economic results and advantages	52%	50%	40,6%	42,2%	52,6%
Corporate sustainability activities/actions	56%	77,8%	57,8%	60,6%	68,4%
Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	60%	63,9%	48,4%	39,4%	65,8%

Table 17*Years Working at Hi Fly & Content: Order of Preferences*

	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	> 10 years
1st	Corporate sustainability goals	Corporate sustainability activities/ actions	Corporate sustainability activities/ actions	Corporate sustainability activities/ actions	Corporate sustainability activities/ actions
2nd	Corporate sustainability outcomes & Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Corporate sustainability outcomes	Corporate sustainability goals	Corporate sustainability goals	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society
3rd	Corporate sustainability activities/actions	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Corporate sustainability outcomes	Corporate sustainability outcomes & Economic results and advantages	Corporate sustainability outcomes
4th	Economic results and advantages	Corporate sustainability goals	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Corporate sustainability goals
5th	-	Economic results and advantages	Economic results and advantages	-	Economic results and advantages

- **Crossing job position with results from questions 23 and 29 (channel preferences for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability)**

Regarding job position and channel preferences, the email and the intranet are the preferred channels for all employees, whether they are staff, line managers/supervisors or senior managers, as Tables 18 and 19 indicate. The email, however, sees an increase of preference from employee/staff (71%), through to line manager/supervisor (80%) and senior manager (83,3%). The same happens with the intranet (employee/staff: 54,4%; line manager/supervisor: 66,7%; senior manager: 75%).

After these two main preferences for channels, the employee/staff group shares similar preferences with line managers/supervisors. Both groups have social media in third place (employee/staff: 44,7%; line manager/supervisor: 53,3%) and participatory activities in fourth (employee/staff: 37,3%; line manager/supervisor: 46,7%). Differently, for senior managers participatory activities come in third place (66,7%) and CEO speech in fourth (58,3%). For this group, social media only comes in fifth place. However, it should be noted that, when looking at percentages, 50% of senior managers chose social media.

Assuming the fifth channel preference for employee/staff is training (34,4%). The same proportion of line managers/supervisors selected training and CEO speech (26,7% for each channel), taking the fifth place of preferences. CEO speech also comes next in line for the employee/staff group (24,3%), being the sixth most preferred channel for this group. Other middle-low positions are occupied by internal TV system, webinars, face-to-face meetings and brochures for all job positions (Table 19).

Manuals were not chosen by any participant whose job position is line manager/supervisor or senior manager, also being the least selected channel, along with brochures, by employee/staff group (6,5%).

One understands that, apart from the email and the intranet, preferences for channels seem to be slightly influenced according to the job position. One clear example is seen in senior managers, who demonstrate to have much more interest in CEO addresses and participatory activities than other employees.

Table 18*Job Position & Channel*

Channel/Job position	Employee/staff	Line manager/supervisor	Senior manager
Intranet	54,4%	66,7%	75%
Email	71%	80%	83,3%
CEO speech	24,3%	26,7%	58,3%
Participatory activities	37,3%	46,7%	66,7%
Training	34,3%	26,7%	41,7%
Internal TV system	7,1%	20%	8,3%
Brochures	6,5%	13,3%	8,3%
Webinars	8,3%	20%	33,3%
Face-to-face meetings	17,2%	6,7%	16,7%
Manuals	6,5%	0%	0%
Social Media ⁶¹	44,7%	53,3%	50%

⁶¹ This channel was only considered for aware employees, meaning that this line of the table only takes into account results from question 29.

Table 19*Job Position & Channel: Order of Preferences*

	Employee/staff	Line manager/supervisor	Senior manager
1st	Email	Email	Email
2nd	Intranet	Intranet	Intranet
3rd	Social Media	Social Media	Participatory activities
4th	Participatory activities	Participatory activities	CEO speech
5th	Training	CEO speech & Training	Social Media
6th	CEO speech	Internal TV system & Webinars	Training
7th	Face-to-face meetings	Brochures	Webinars
8th	Webinars	Face-to-face meetings	Face-to-face meetings
9th	Internal TV system	-	Internal TV system & Brochures
10th	Brochures & Manuals	-	-

- **Crossing job position with results from questions 25 and 33 (content needs for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability)**

Content needs are quite variable according to the job position (Tables 20 and 21). When it comes to employees/staff, their content needs are: corporate sustainability activities/actions (62,1%), practical information on what I can do for the environment and society (59,8%), corporate sustainability goals (55%), corporate sustainability outcomes (54,4%) and economic results and advantages (46,7%).

Presenting a different order, line managers/supervisors responses reveal that their needs start with corporate sustainability outcomes (73,3%), followed by corporate sustainability goals and corporate sustainability activities/actions (66,7% for each) and economic results and advantages and practical information on what I can do for the environment and society (40 % each).

Lastly, senior managers put corporate sustainability goals as their first content need (75%). This is followed by corporate sustainability activities/actions (66,7%), practical information on what I can do for the environment and society (58,3%) and corporate sustainability outcomes and economic results and advantages (50% each).

Table 20*Job Position & Content*

Content/Job position	Employee/staff	Line manager/supervisor	Senior manager
Corporate sustainability goals	55%	66,7%	75%
Corporate sustainability outcomes	54,4%	73,3%	50%
Economic results and advantages	46,7%	40%	50%
Corporate sustainability activities/actions	62,1%	66,7%	66,7%
Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	59,8%	40%	58,3%

Table 21*Job Position & Content: Order of Preferences*

	Employee/staff	Line manager/supervisor	Senior manager
1st	Corporate sustainability activities/actions	Corporate sustainability outcomes	Corporate sustainability goals
2nd	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Corporate sustainability goals & Corporate sustainability activities/actions	Corporate sustainability activities/actions
3rd	Corporate sustainability goals	Economic results and advantages & Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society	Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society
4th	Corporate sustainability outcomes	-	Corporate sustainability outcomes & Economic results and advantages
5th	Economic results and advantages	-	-

Although crossing data from the sample description with results from items that do not deal with internal communication preferences and needs was not a goal of mine, while doing the crossings I realized that:

- All senior managers and line managers/supervisors who have participated in this questionnaire are aware of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts. Therefore, all not aware employees belong to the group whose job position is “employee/staff”.

- Although it could be expected that participants who have been working at Hi Fly for a long time would all be aware of its corporate sustainability efforts, there are not aware employees in all intervals (< 1 year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years and > 10 years).
- All participants with less than 25 years and with 57 to 75 years have not participated in internal actions. Moreover, respondents that work at the company for less than 1 year have also not been involved in any internal action yet.

6.3 Discussion

Having presented the results of both Phases of this study, it is now indispensable to highlight some aspects in order to accomplish the goals and provide an answer to the research question. Specific goals will be discussed first as they are the ones that allow me to take conclusions regarding the research question, which is mirrored in the general goal: To investigate the best internal communication practices to increase employee engagement in corporate sustainability.

One specific goal of this study was **“To analyse Hi Fly’s internal communication practices regarding corporate sustainability”**. Knowing that this airline is leading by example and contributing to making the aviation sector more sustainable, it was relevant to examine how the company communicates this commitment to its own people, the employees.

According to the interviewees, Hi Fly has several goals for its internal communication addressing corporate sustainability, namely: (1) to foster behaviours that are aligned with Hi Fly’s sustainability mission, (2) to engage employees in the company’s sustainability efforts, (3) to build pride among employees, (4) to lead by example, and (5) to make aviation more sustainable. Therefore, internal communication is approached from a strategic point of view, aiming to support the company’s corporate sustainability goals and to, accordingly, influence knowledge, feelings and behaviours of employees – the three main objectives of internal communication, according to Dewhurst and FitzPatrick (2019).

Indeed, just by looking at internal communication practices that are targeted at new joiners, these three objectives are evident. From the moment employees join the company, they are immediately immersed in Hi Fly's sustainability mission through a welcome kit that nudges them into adopting environmentally conscious behaviours (i.e., to stop using single-use plastic bottles and bags). Moreover, newcomers are sent an internal presentation, via email, strategically using communication to make sure that the employees are instantly aware of the company's key positions regarding sustainability and main initiatives (i.e., plastic-free flights, waste management, carbon mitigation strategies and advocacy campaigns). To deepen knowledge about the company's sustainability policy, goals, and the sustainability issues that the company tackles, new employees are also provided with a sustainability training session, which is known to assist in developing sustainability ambassadors (Derqui, 2020; Sullivan, 2014). As informed employees are more productive and more willing to contribute to the companies' goals (Argenti, 1998; Martinez & Hurtado, 2018), these early communications are extremely important.

It is noticeable that the airline recognizes the importance of communicating its sustainability strategy internally, being conscious that corporate sustainability should be a common goal and that the employees are not only the main interface through which external publics are exposed to the airline, but also an important source of information concerning corporate sustainability (Allen, 2016; Kataria et al., 2013; Sullivan, 2014). Because of this, apart from communications for new joiners, Hi Fly implements a multiplicity of communication tactics to convey this commitment on a more regular basis to all employees.

Firstly, the airline makes sure that, at the office, the commitment to sustainability is visible at all times, which is a good practice when it comes to engaging employees in the company's sustainability journey (Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016). Undoubtedly, sustainability "is pretty much everywhere" (Ana Agostinho, Mirpuri Foundation's Head of PR, Appendix D). Televisions at the office display corporate videos that usually have a strong sustainability message, and computer screen savers are used to always make sure that sustainability is present in employees' minds (wether through the display of campaigns' images or the "Racing for the Planet" boat, sponsored by Hi Fly).

Considering the Covid-19 pandemic, nowadays, electronic channels, such as the latter, are actually the most used to communicate internally about corporate sustainability. Adding to

internal TV system and computer screen savers, the email, the intranet, the website and social media, are also used to communicate with employees about corporate sustainability. The email, however, is mainly used to invite employees to participate in internal actions, such as corporate volunteering. The fact that the email is seldom used is a surprising conclusion, since it is perceived as one of the most effective for Hi Fly's characteristics as a company. As Ana Agostinho, Mirpuri Foundation's Head of PR, said:

You need to analyse the company that you're working for and act accordingly to the needs and the characteristics of the company itself. In this case, you have a lot of people that are not based at the office; you have cabin crew that are based elsewhere all the time, and they don't have access to intranet. So, if you put something on the intranet, only people at the office will see it. If you are working on board an aircraft or based in New Zealand, for instance, you will not have easy access to the intranet, but you will have to the email, because it is there on our phones. So, my opinion is that it works better if you just send an email. (Appendix D)

Contrarily to many companies (Ceres, 2018), Hi Fly highly values sustainability training, which is proved by the fact that the company was the first of its sector to provide it to cabin crew. Thus, apart from new employees, cabin crew members are provided with more regular sustainability training sessions. This training, which used to be conveyed in a face-to-face format, was forced to stop due to the pandemic and is now being re-established and converted into a virtual format, adding one more electronic channel to the list. The educational purpose of this internal communication practice is clear. Recalling one of the sessions, Ana Agostinho said:

(...) we did a microplastics makeup workshop with cabin crew to make sure that they are all aware of the microplastics within the makeup – as they need to wear makeup every time, we told them how to do it in a more sustainable way. (Appendix D)

Participatory activities, consisting of face-to-face events for which employees are invited, such as beach clean-ups, surf classes and guest sailings, were regularly implemented before the pandemic, being considered one of the most effective channels for sustainability-related communication. Speaking of a beach clean-up, Sílvia Mirpuri, Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, said: "They [employees] have fun, enjoy it, (...) and become more aware of the issues" (Appendix C). However, due to the health crisis restrictions, these actions were almost removed from the internal communication practices during the past year and a half. Nevertheless, the implementation of these activities represents another great internal communication effort, as they are known to help raising employees' awareness of social

issues and creating more knowledgeable employees regarding sustainability (Koch et al., 2019).

An interesting fact to point out is that print formats are rarely (or even never) used by Hi Fly to communicate internally about this subject, which is aligned with the waste management strategies and paper-free mentality. Even though it makes total sense for this company, other authors had said that newspapers were a main channel for this communication (Engert & Baumgartner, 2016).

With this said, the company uses a range of channels aiming to reach the five purposes stated by Yeomans and FitzPatrick (2017): push messages, pull information, aid understanding, generate debate and build community. The least accomplished, however, is the fourth – generate debate. Although two-way communication about corporate sustainability has been promoted through the implementation of face-to-face meetings in which employees were asked to provide their input about a specific initiative, most corporate sustainability-related communication is top-down. Moreover, there is no dedicated and permanent channel through which employees are incited to provide their suggestions or ideas regarding corporate sustainability. This is a disadvantage because employee feedback can help the company to improve its performance (Pintão et al., 2018), while cocreation of sustainable practices with employees also engages them in the company's sustainability work (Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016).

Although there is no dedicated channel at the moment, it is important to note that some employees still manage to make their input reach top management. Sílvia Mirpuri, Hi Fly's Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, addressed this aspect when she said:

(...) sometimes we receive emails with suggestions. It's good. We don't have "give us your ideas" anywhere, but the truth is that people do it. And when they see a good initiative, they also send it to us, because they know that we are interest in this topic and want to ask us "why don't we do this?" (Appendix C)

Moreover, when the latter happens, the company strives to actively listen to their employees, applying and implementing the suggestions whenever possible. Ana Agostinho stressed this by remembering that one corporate volunteering action (a diving clean-up) was done because one employee suggested it (Appendix D).

Content wise, as Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts are very focused on reducing plastic and eliminating single-use plastic, internal communication usually addresses the harmful effects of this material, both on the planet and human health. Moreover, considering that Hi Fly employees also have access to the "Mirpuri Foundation" section on the intranet, messages on marine and wildlife conservation – two of the Foundation's areas of intervention – are also very frequent. The company normally seizes special dates, such as environmental awareness dates, to remember its initiatives and provide updates on them. Most messages share tangible evidence or concrete results that were achieved through the initiatives, which is a good practice for avoiding greenwashing accusations (Alevizou et al., 2019). The least positive aspect concerning content is that, for traditional channels such as the intranet, the messages are not adapted, something that could be done in order to increase the sense of belonging to the company and upgrade internal communication.

According to the interviewees, current internal communication efforts have already paid off, with employees changing their behaviours. Although this cannot be attested for employees who are not based at the office, nor in their personal lives, it is true that Hi Fly Building employees follow Hi Fly's directives and contribute to a more environmentally friendly workspace. The interviewees are also confident that these behaviours are taken home, which is something that Ulus and Hatipoglu (2016) say usually happens when employees are engaged. In the end, although there are areas that should be improved, it seems that Hi Fly is being able to strategically use internal communication to ensure that the employees are the embodiment of Hi Fly's sustainability mission and values, and to guarantee that they can "be actively the face of Hi Fly" (Ana Agostinho, Appendix D) when addressing external publics.

To close the discussion around the first goal of this study, it is relevant to mention that the debate on where internal communication should be placed inside a company is highly perceptible when looking at Hi Fly's internal communication addressing corporate sustainability. At the airline, there are three departments involved in this communication: the Communications Department, the Marketing Department and the Human Resources Department. Moreover, as the airline's main sustainability partner, the Mirpuri Foundation, as pointed out, is also responsible for much of this communication, almost functioning as Hi Fly's Sustainability Department. Despite this, as each department (and the Mirpuri

Foundation) is responsible for specific and different tasks, each of them complements the other instead of resulting in overlapping of functions.

Having understood how Hi Fly communicates its commitment to corporate sustainability internally, it is now essential to comprehend if this communication matches employees' expectations. Exactly because of this, the second goal of this Internship Report was **“To comprehend Hi Fly employees' needs and preferences regarding internal communication addressing corporate sustainability”**. As highlighted in the Theoretical Framework, when looking at internal communication from a strategic point of view, one important aspect to contemplate is that this communication should be employee-centred, considering employees' communication needs and putting these first (Ruck, 2015). Despite this fact, many communication professionals operate without this knowledge (O'Murchú, 2015), underlining the relevance of this specific goal.

Welch and Jackson (2007) emphasize that assessing employees' preferences and needs for channels and content is the most important. The questionnaire that was sent to all Hi Fly employees enabled to understand that, when it comes to channels, both employees who are aware and employees who are unaware of the airline's corporate sustainability initiatives prefer the email for internal communication about corporate sustainability. As preferences for channels were assessed through more than one question, this conclusion was reinforced. Moreover, Ana Agostinho had also predicted this answer when she said:

I would say that email is the most constant tool to get to the employees because everyone has email, and everyone has access to email not just on the computer, but also on the phone, so they can go through it at the office or when they are working somewhere else. It is easily seen by everyone. (Appendix D)

Furthermore, according to the results, the second employees' preference for channels lies on the intranet. This conclusion is interesting because, even though the literature had pointed out that employees usually prefer face-to-face communication (Bharadwaj, 2014; Men, 2014; Mishra et al., 2014; Smith & Mounter, 2008), and put face-to-face meetings (Kataria et al., 2013) and sustainability training as one of their first preferences for corporate sustainability communication (Balčiūnaitienė & Petkevičiūtė, 2020), Hi Fly employees seem to prefer electronic media channels over face-to-face communication. This could be explained due to the size of the company and its own characteristics. On one hand, as it is not sensible to believe that internal communication can be mainly conducted through face-

to-face in large companies (Welch & Jackson, 2007), one-way communication can be effective in these organizations (Constantin & Baias, 2015). On another hand, many Hi Fly employees are always travelling or not based in Portugal, possibly making them more aware of the impossibility of face-to-face communication.

Despite the latter, sustainability training is a quite relevant channel for Hi Fly employees, being selected as one of their preferred channels by 43% of not aware employees, and 32% of aware employees. Both groups also mentioned this channel as one of the most effective for this communication (5% not aware employees; 6% aware employees), and aware employees agreed that this channel is useful in order to make them feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work.

From all channels, according to the sample of this study, print formats (e.g., brochures and manuals) are the least preferred by Hi Fly employees. This conclusion is aligned with results from previous studies, which indicated that print media formats were being overpassed in terms of preference by electronic media (Men, 2014; Woodal, 2006, as cited in Welch, 2012, p. 248).

Still regarding channel preferences, when comparing aware and not aware employees, there is one salient difference. When considering both questions 23 and 24 for unaware employees and questions 29 and 30 for aware employees, it is possible to conclude that participatory activities are more valued by aware employees than not aware employees. Compared to 44% of aware employees who have selected participatory activities as one of their preferred channels for communicating Hi Fly's sustainability efforts, only 22% of not aware employees selected this channel. Moreover, not even one unaware employee indicated this channel as the most effective for communicating sustainability, as opposed to 10% of aware employees. This may have to do with the fact that aware employees are probably more eager to participate in these activities, indicating this channel as their preferred face-to-face communication method.

Regarding content, all topics that were addressed (corporate sustainability goals, corporate sustainability outcomes, economic results and advantages, corporate sustainability activities/actions, and practical information on what I can do for the environment and society) reached considerably high percentages (> 40%) for both aware and not aware

employees, indicating that these are relevant themes to address in internal communication about corporate sustainability.

However, according to the results, aware and unaware employees exhibit different needs. While aware employees' first content need is corporate sustainability activities and actions, not aware employees favour corporate sustainability outcomes. Therefore, for employees who are not aware of the corporate sustainability initiatives, it seems that it would be more important to know how Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts contribute to the company and to the world in general. Furthermore, from all types of content that were assessed, not aware employees showcased that receiving practical information on what to do for the benefit of the environment and society would be the least important for them. Differently, and despite the fact that the literature highlighted the importance of showcasing economic results for gaining employees' support (Kataria et al, 2014; Polman and Bhattacharya, 2016), for aware employees it is the economic results and advantages that interest them the least. This result was reinforced by item number 34 of the questionnaire. When asked to rate "I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I am told its economic advantages", the average of answers falls in 3,4 – only a little above the neutral point (3).

Previous studies have indicated that employees' preferences and needs for internal communication content and channels may vary according to aspects such as the employment relationship (Welch, 2018) and generation (Neill, 2015; Walden et al., 2017; Yeomans & FitzPatrick, 2017). Because of this, demographic variables were also considered in this study. According to the literature, Millennials would be expected to exhibit different preferences from previous generations (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, as cited in Walden et al., 2017, p. 78; Neill, 2015). However, this study showcased that the order of preferences between Millennials and Generation X are very similar. Comparing these generations to Baby Boomers, the main differences are related to social media and participatory activities, which were not selected by Baby Boomers, but were positioned in 3rd and 4th place by Millennials and Generation X.

The employees who belong to Generation Z, however, exhibited some interesting differences when compared to other generations. Although they have put email in 1st place in terms of preference, as all the other generations, they demonstrated to have a double preference, with email and participatory activities achieving the same number of responses (62,5%). This

showcases that this generation probably wants more face-to-face communication than the others, also valuing the possibility of being involved in group dynamics. Moreover, social media appear in 2nd place for this generation, reinforcing that these platforms are ever more important and that the tendency is for these to be more and more preferred. During her interview, Ana Agostinho said: “I think social media always work – and we do have a lot of employees who engage with our social media posts” (Appendix D). Similarly, Sílvia Mirpuri is also knowledgeable that employees use these platforms to get information about the company (Appendix C).

When it comes to understanding if the time working at Hi Fly affects content and channel preferences and needs, one relevant conclusion is that sustainability training is more valued by employees who are working at the company for less than one year than by other groups. This is comprehensible because, according to the results, employees who are working for less than 1 year at the airline are also the ones who most feel the need to be educated regarding the company’s corporate sustainability goals. This aligns with what Welch (2018) points out: new entrants and long serving employees can have different communication necessities.

The study also aimed to assess if the job position could have an influence in channel and content preferences for internal communication about corporate sustainability. Results indicated that there are not many significant differences when it comes to the order of preferences for channels. Senior managers, however, seem to value CEO speech much more than employee/staff and line managers/supervisors, with 58% of senior managers selecting this channel as one of their favourite, and only 24% and 27% of staff and line managers selecting it. When looking at the percentages from the crossing of age (generation) with channels, participatory activities, the email and the intranet also exhibit a rising preference from employees through to seniors. Content wise, all employee/staff, line managers/supervisors and senior managers seem to have a different first need. While employees/staff put information on corporate sustainability activities/actions as their first content need, line managers put corporate sustainability outcomes and senior managers corporate sustainability goals. Nevertheless, as all groups want all type of content, it is possible to conclude that, despite being suggested in the literature on the topic (Font &

Cochrane, 2005; Kataria et al., 2013), segmenting the internal audience according to the job position would not be that relevant for Hi Fly, as long as all these topics are covered.

Another goal of the study was **“To take conclusions on how engaged Hi Fly employees are in corporate sustainability”**. As addressed in the Theoretical Framework, when it comes to corporate sustainability, companies can develop two types of engaged employees: bystanders and participating employees (Savitz, 2013). While the first are characterized by being aware and satisfied with their company’s sustainability efforts, the second are actively involved in the company’s sustainability efforts (Savitz, 2013). Taking into consideration that Hi Fly has many employees whose job role is directly related to sustainability (45% according to the questionnaire), the company has an inherent capacity of developing participating employees. For instance, pilots can help the company deliver its corporate sustainability environmental goals by following saving fuel procedures on their flights, and cabin crew directly manage inflight catering and operate Hi Fly’s single-use plastic-free flights. However, other aspects must be considered in order to be able to take conclusions regarding the workforce’s engagement levels.

When analysing the literature on the topic, there are several variables that come up as linked to employee engagement in corporate sustainability, whether as antecedents, outcomes or characteristics of the engaged state. Some of these are: awareness (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016), sustainability knowledge (Font & Cochrane, 2005; Moran, 2019; Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016), pride (Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016), identification (Lacy et al, 2009), positive communication behaviours (Galpin & Whittington, 2012; Sullivan, 2014), feeling of personal involvement (Bridger, 2015), commitment (Sullivan, 2014) and participation in company’s sustainability efforts (Savitz, 2013). Therefore, an analysis of these variables is indispensable in order to take conclusions on employees’ level of engagement in corporate sustainability.

Awareness is the first step for creating both bystander and participating employees (Ulus & Hatipoglu, 2016). According to the interviewees of this study, the workforce is aware of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives. Even though the questionnaire did not confirm that 100% of the employees is aware of the airline’s sustainability initiatives, aware employees stand for 80% of the sample, which is a very high percentage. Detailing this level of awareness, question 6 of the questionnaire enabled to confirm that most aware employees

know that the airline's corporate sustainability efforts tackle both environmental and social issues (73%), disconfirming a possible presumption that they would only be aware of Hi Fly's effort to protect the planet. However, results did indicate that employees are more aware of corporate environmental sustainability initiatives, especially the ones that are related to aircraft, such as the single-use plastic-free flights and environmental messages on aircraft livery. Thus, corporate social sustainability initiatives are less known by the employees. In fact, the questionnaire revealed that very few aware employees (23%) know that Hi Fly is committed to making the company more gender balanced by being a signatory of the 25by2025 pledge. Knowing that lack of awareness may explain why some employees do not contribute to companies' corporate sustainability efforts (Kataria et al., 2013), an opportunity for Hi Fly's internal communication is to help raise awareness of initiatives that are less known by the employees, consequently fostering more engagement in those.

For several authors, engagement in corporate sustainability also starts with educating employees (Font & Cochrane, 2005; Moran, 2019), proving the importance of sustainability knowledge (Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016). The questionnaire enabled to assess that about 72% of the aware employees believe that they have this knowledge. However, it is important to highlight that, when considering question 26, only 29% of the same employees agreed that Hi Fly educates them regarding sustainability issues. This probably means that Hi Fly's workforce is composed by employees who are themselves concerned with sustainability matters, which, in fact, is confirmed by Sílvia Mirpuri:

“If we were all drinking from plastic bottles and filling the garbage with it, Hi Fly would be a sick company, in which its own employees would not feel well, because they have their own individual conscience and because, fortunately, many of them, have a lot of environmental consciousness.” (Appendix C)

Moreover, some answers to open questions of the questionnaire revealed this alignment between employees' personal values and the company's sustainability values. To provide a few examples, when employees were asked to provide the explanation for engaging in a specific initiative, three of them said: “because I care about the future of my children and our planet”, “because it's better for the planet and I do that at home [plastic-free]”, “the excessive use of plastic and the quantity of plastic that gets to the sea worries me, it is something I feel I can help with by changing my way of living every day”.

When it comes to pride, strategies that are able to promote pride in the company's corporate sustainability efforts are known to raise employee engagement in corporate sustainability (Polman & Bhattacharya, 2016), with internal communication playing an important role in building it (Glavas, 2012). The questionnaire showed that a high percentage of aware employees (77%) agree to be proud in Hi Fly's sustainability work. For Sílvia Mirpuri (Appendix C) there were two initiatives that made employees very proud: the operation of the first single-use plastic-free flight and the display of the message "Save the Coral Reefs" on the largest aircraft of the world, the A380.

Furthermore, concerning identification with corporate sustainability initiatives, 73% of aware employees agreed that they identify with Hi Fly's efforts, once again possibly indicating that Hi Fly employees have similar values to the ones of the company. Considering that identification can be interpreted as an outcome of employee engagement in corporate sustainability (Lacy et al, 2009), this conclusion is very positive when it comes to the assessment of employees' level of engagement in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability.

Another strong indicator of engagement in corporate sustainability is positive communication behaviours: when engaged, employees communicate about the company's sustainability strategy (Galpin & Whittington, 2012) and advocate for their company (Sullivan, 2014). The results of the questionnaire show that most aware employees (75%) agree that they speak positively about Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts to outsiders. This high percentage possibly indicates that Hi Fly has many employees who act as sustainability champions (Sullivan, 2014), which is a symptom of an engaged workforce in corporate sustainability. The questionnaire indicates that even employees whose job role is not directly related to sustainability know that one way in which they can help Hi Fly to becoming more sustainable is through raising awareness of the company's sustainability mission (both inside and outside the company), motivating people to adopt sustainable behaviours, and supporting and promoting Hi Fly's initiatives – all characteristics of sustainability champions.

As employee engagement definitions allude to the feeling of being "personally involved in the success of the business" (Bridger, 2015, p.7), it was also important to understand if employees felt this way when it comes to corporate sustainability. For Ana Agostinho, "making sure that they [employees] are fully aware of their importance in terms of

sustainability” and “making sure that this is not just a single department, that this is part of the culture of the organizations, and that they are part of it” is the most challenging task when communicating corporate sustainability (Appendix D). According to the questionnaire’s results, only 49% of the aware employees agreed that they feel personally involved in the success of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives. This low percentage may indicate that employees do not feel that they are regarded as partners in achieving sustainability goals, possibly not having enough opportunities to provide their input or take responsibility, two important aspects, according to Sullivan (2014) and Balčiūnaitienė and Petkevičiūtė (2020) respectively. In fact, question 26 enabled to confirm that less than half of aware employees (48%) feel that Hi Fly provides them with opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to make the company more sustainable. Moreover, question 32 show that only 46% of the aware employees consider that they have an open channel to share ideas that can contribute to making the company more sustainable. Once again, these conclusions provide an opportunity for improving Hi Fly’s internal communication, which can be strategically managed in order to foster this feeling of personal involvement.

Another symptom of an engaged employee is commitment to the company’s values (Anitha, 2014). Therefore, when it comes to the sense of commitment to the company’s sustainability mission, the questionnaire enabled to assess that 66% of aware employees agree that they are committed. This percentage indicates that there is room for improvement.

The last variable to consider before being able to produce a general conclusion on the workforce’s level of engagement is participation. When employees are engaged with the company’s sustainability strategy, they work to execute it (Lacy et al, 2009). 70% of the aware employees who have answered the questionnaire indicated that they work towards making Hi Fly more sustainable. The significance of this result is strengthened by findings from questions 14 and 15, which only focussed on employees whose job role is not directly related to sustainability. From this group of employees, 82% believe that they can contribute to making the company more sustainable in several ways, including spending less plastic and paper while working. In fact, through participant observation I could attest that employees do not use plastic bottles and participate in recycling efforts, possibly indicating that they are interested in the company’s sustainability efforts and actively contributing to

its sustainable journey. All together, these conclusions, make me believe that Hi Fly has a considerable number of participating employees.

However, the previous assumption must be taken cautiously, as it should be noted that motivation to participate in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives was also assessed and yielded a slightly lower percentage of agreement (67,8%), as the results showed. Moreover, and even though the main reason for not participating seems not to be lack of motivation/interest, results demonstrate that few employees have participated in internal actions related to corporate sustainability so far. The blood donation, for example, only counted with 32 participants, for example, which is a low number taking into consideration the employees who work at the building.

Taking all variables into consideration, as well as the triangulation of data, it is possible to say that, despite less positive trends concerning feeling of personal involvement and commitment, a considerable number of Hi Fly employees seems to be engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability. This presumption is strengthened by looking at the averages of item 10, the one that evaluated most of the exposed variables and attained a 3,9 total average in a scale from 1 to 5. Moreover, responses to questions 9 and 12 also back up that most Hi Fly employees are engaged in corporate sustainability. Question 9 was a self-evaluation question on employees' own level of engagement, attaining an average of approximately 4 (3,7), falling on the engagement side of scale. Question 12 also revealed that 78% of the aware employees believe that the workforce is engaged in the company's sustainability efforts.

In spite of the latter, also considering the averages to question 9 and item 10, it is possible to say that the levels of engagement in corporate sustainability could be higher. Purportedly, high levels of engagement would generate averages closer to 5. Moreover, as question 11 shows, this engagement appears to be very focussed on one specific initiative, the Turn the Tide on Plastic campaign, which aggregates the operation of plastic-free flights and all other efforts to reduce and/or eradicate plastic. This conclusion was forecasted by Ana Agostinho, who said:

I think plastic [“Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign] is the initiative that raised most awareness and impact, because people are more and more aware of the problems that the planet is facing, and they are more activists now than they were before. For the employees that have kids they are very determined to make sure that they grow in a safe environment, so they are even more committed now than they were before. So, I think that plastic, the “Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign, was the one that was able to engage the most with the staff.

Considering the just detailed variables and taking into consideration that plastic-related initiatives are the ones that last for longer, require most activity/participation from employees and have had more activations around them (Ana Agostinho, Appendix D), it becomes clear why these are the corporate sustainability initiatives in which Hi Fly employees are most engaged.

The last specific goal of this Internship Report is **“To contribute with practical suggestions on how to better engage employees in working with sustainability at Hi Fly”**. Having understood how Hi Fly communicates its commitment to corporate sustainability, what employees prefer and need regarding this communication, and their level of engagement in the company’s corporate sustainability initiatives, it is now possible to reflect on whether Hi Fly employees are content with current internal communication, making recommendations on how Hi Fly can better engage its employees in working with sustainability through this communication.

When balancing what was discussed so far, it is perceptible that Hi Fly is already implementing internal communication practices that are known to greatly contribute to employee engagement in corporate sustainability, such as sustainability training and participatory activities. However, results show that there are weaker areas that can be improved, starting with the amount of communication. In fact, this is acknowledged by both interviewees, who recognized that more communication could be done.

Although most employees of the sample (80%) are aware of Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability initiatives, as previously stressed, it should be noted that 28% of them do not feel that they receive enough communication regarding Hi Fly’s corporate sustainability efforts. Moreover, when considering that only 59% of aware employees agreed that Hi Fly raises their awareness of its sustainability policy and initiatives, it seems clear that Hi Fly should communicate about this subject more often. This recommendation gains even more significance because, as the questionnaire’s results show, frequent communication is

something that helps Hi Fly employees to feel more engaged in the company's sustainability initiatives. Indeed, in a scale from 1 to 5, aware employees evaluated the sentence "I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts when I receive frequent communication about them" with a 3,9 (average), demonstrating that regular communication is an important aspect for them.

Also, when asked to provide suggestions on how to enhance Hi Fly's internal communication addressing corporate sustainability, a large portion of employees (40%) contributed with suggestions that refer to more communication, whether generically or through a specific channel.

As the email emerged as the unequivocal favourite channel for Hi Fly employees, one of the first suggestions is to increase communication of corporate sustainability through this channel. As addressed, currently, the email is only being used to inform employees of internal actions and invite them to participate. Thus, considering the results, this is a weakness of Hi Fly's corporate sustainability-related internal communication. In order to communicate more through this channel, the company could create an electronic monthly newsletter, as some employees suggested. This medium could cover Hi Fly's own initiatives, but also news of what is happening around the world regarding sustainability issues.

Another recommendation is to promote more sustainability training workshops, a suggestion that was also mentioned by the employees. Even though Hi Fly already provides sustainability training, the fact that only 34% of the aware employees know that the company provides this training attests that the airline has still not been successful in providing sustainability training companywide. As sustainability training only started to be implemented since 2017 at the office, and in 2019 for cabin crew, chances are that many employees have not taken the training, especially when considering that it was forced to stop due to the pandemic. Therefore, Hi Fly could organize a monthly session until sustainability training has successfully reached not only new entrants, but all employees.

As employees who get involved in participatory activities are more likely to become participating employees (Savitz, 2013), Hi Fly should also try to promote more of these as soon as the global health crisis allows. As it was addressed, few employees have participated in participatory activities so far, but the ones who have been involved clearly expressed that

these contributed to increase their interest in the company's sustainability work, reinforcing the potential of this channel to communicate about this subject (Koch et al., 2019). Since the lack of participation was not explained by lack of interest, a possible alternative explanation, which was strengthened by the document analysis, is that the airline does not promote these initiatives that regularly, making it more difficult for employees to have the chance to participate.

Furthermore, since results were less positive when it comes to the feeling of personal involvement, an extra effort to involve employees should be made. In order to elevate this feeling there should be more opportunities for two-way communication. Therefore, Hi Fly can create dedicated channels for employees to give suggestions, as, in fact, some employees also recommended. Considering Hi Fly employees' preference for electronic channels, a sustainability section on the intranet could be created and could have a space where employees were incited to contribute with their ideas for corporate sustainability. Being able to channel ideas would create more involvement, while the feedback could also help to improve the company's performance (Pintão et al., 2018), generating a win-win situation.

The increasing importance of social media also indicates that this is a channel in which Hi Fly should invest, increasing posting frequency and, once again, trying to involve employees in the process, as it was done in the past by the airline with the campaigns #FlyingTheChange and #WildlifeProtection. This also creates a win-win situation, as the company also gains image benefits (Pomper, 2015): it is more credible if employees are the ones voicing their commitment and explaining the company's strategies, avoiding possible greenwashing accusations from external publics.

Considering employees interest in social media, it could be interesting to consider internal social media, a tool that not only is adequate for Hi Fly's characteristics as a company, dissolving geographic barriers (Men et al., 2020), but that could also increase two-way communication (Men, 2014), a current gap.

Content wise, communication should include more information on corporate social sustainability initiatives, since these are the ones that employees are less aware of, as previously seen. Moreover, internal communication should also focus more on sharing and explaining the sustainability policy. As the results of the questionnaire showed, few

employees have read this seminal document for the airline. In order to share the sustainability policy, new entrants should be sent this document via email, in addition to the company's presentation. Another option to disseminate this document is to put it available on the intranet. This could be done on the new sustainability section, which would make it easier for employees to pull information on corporate sustainability and provide the perfect place for a daily/weekly sustainability tip, just like the daily quote that is currently shared on the homepage of this channel.

These suggestions aim to better match Hi Fly employees' expectations for internal communication addressing corporate sustainability, ensuring that they only receive the right messages through their preferred channels. By doing this, it is expected that employees will respond and engage more, ultimately benefiting the company in its sustainability journey.

Taking everything into account, it is possible to accomplish the general goal and provide an answer to the research question by highlighting some internal communication **best practices** that, according to this study, may help **to increase employee engagement in corporate sustainability**:

- Communicate frequently about your commitment to corporate sustainability: employees want to know what the company is doing to help the planet and contribute to a better society. The fear of over-communicating should not lead to under-communicating.
- Try not to focus your internal communication on your most recognized initiatives: be balanced and make sure that all initiatives are covered in order to raise employee awareness of all company's sustainability efforts.
- Be sure to foster two-way communication: employees should feel that they are part of the sustainability journey too. This can be done through placing a suggestion box at the office or creating a sustainability section on the intranet where employees have a dedicated space to channel their ideas.
- Do not disregard the email as a channel for this communication: the email can be the most suitable channel to communicate with employees. A monthly electronic newsletter may be a good option.

- Make sure that new joiners immediately understand your sustainability mission: this can be done by promoting a sustainability training session for new entrants and providing desk-drop promotional items.
- Ask employees to share their experience of working for a sustainable company on the company's social media accounts: social media are a great channel to communicate with both internal and external audience about corporate sustainability efforts. Employees can share their experience of working for a sustainable company in a campaign designed for social media. This will not only involve the employees, but also deliver positive outcomes in terms of external reputation.
- Promote participatory activities regularly and try to communicate them in advance: participatory activities, such as corporate volunteering, are very effective when it comes to foster the employees' interest in the company's sustainability work. These should be communicated across several internal channels and, if possible, in advance, so that employees can rearrange their work and be able to participate.

It should be bear in mind that this is a case study, meaning that it aims to shed empirical light on the topic (Yin, 2018) by proposing clues and lessons learned. Notwithstanding, each company has its particularities and internal communication practices must always be adapted.

Conclusions

This Internship Report, focused on Hi Fly airline, aimed to contribute to the literature on internal communication and corporate sustainability, trying to expand existent few clues on which internal communication practices work best to engage employees in corporate sustainability and related initiatives.

When a company decides to integrate sustainability, it is vital to have employees aligned with the sustainability mission and eager to contribute to the company's efforts that are directed towards protecting the planet and contributing to a better society (Lacy et al., 2009; Sullivan, 2014; UNEP, 2011). If managed appropriately, internal communication serves as a powerful tool to gain employees' support (Font & Cochrane, 2005) and create sustainability champions, the ones who are truly engaged in helping the company deliver its sustainability goals and proudly voice their commitment (Sullivan, 2014).

By conducting a case study-mixed methods, insightful conclusions were taken not only on how Hi Fly communicates its commitment to sustainability internally, but also about employees' preferences and needs regarding this communication. Since, as far as I know, no previous study on this topic tried to understand if the level of awareness impacts employees' preferences and needs regarding internal communication addressing corporate sustainability, one valuable insight for academia is that, according to this research, the level of awareness appears to affect channel preferences and content needs for this communication.

As a sustainable company from the aviation sector, Hi Fly has been implementing several internal communication practices that are known to be helpful in increasing employee engagement in the company's sustainability efforts. Hi Fly was the first of its sector to launch sustainability training for its cabin crew, also providing this training to employees from the office. Participatory activities, such as corporate volunteering, are also occasionally organized, being considered as an engaging channel to align employees with the sustainability mission. Moreover, communications through the intranet, email, social media and corporate website usually address corporate sustainability, mainly focusing on new and ongoing initiatives.

The research enabled to conclude that, although previous evidence claims that face-to-face communication is the preferred channel among employees, for corporate sustainability-related information Hi Fly employees prefer the email. While most employees are aware of and engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability initiatives, a considerable number would like to receive more communication on this topic. Therefore, one aspect to improve at Hi Fly is to communicate more frequently about its focus on corporate sustainability. Moreover, a considerable portion of employees do not feel that there is an open channel to contribute with suggestions that could make the company more sustainable. Thus, creating a sustainability section on the intranet where employees are incited to give ideas regarding corporate sustainability could be a good solution for Hi Fly, given its employees' preferences for electronic channels.

Since the goal of this study was to answer "What are the best internal communication practices to engage employees in corporate sustainability?", it was possible to propose several practices based on what could be learnt through Hi Fly case study. Some best practices are: to communicate frequently about the company's corporate sustainability initiatives, to make sure that internal communication covers all company's efforts, to foster two-way communication by creating dedicated channels where employees can share their opinions and suggestions, and to involve employees in social media campaigns.

To conclude, as one of the interviewees said, "one cannot ambition to change the world without changing their own home first" (Ana Agostinho, Appendix D). Therefore, companies that aim to sustain and elevate their corporate sustainability strategy should invest time and resources in internal communication, making sure that the employees become partners in this endeavour.

- **Limitations and suggestions for further research**

Several limitations to this study must be reinforced, as they may have hindered results and influenced its validity. The most obvious limitation to this study was the Covid-19 pandemic. Considering that almost no human contact level is allowed during this period, internal communication was not planned nor implemented as it was before the global health crisis.

Although an effort was made not to base my whole assessment on current internal communication practices, this fact must be pointed out, as it may have influenced my analysis of Hi Fly's internal communication, possibly leading to less accurate conclusions. Moreover, the pandemic context may have also influenced employees' responses to the questionnaire when it comes to channels, leading them to opt more for electronic channels and less for face-to-face communication methods.

Another potential limitation worth highlighting has to do with participant observation. As Hi Fly's employee, it is more difficult to work as an external observer, which may have led to some biases (Yin, 2018). Nevertheless, an effort was made to avoid this possible limitation.

Furthermore, the sample that was used for the quantitative component of the study did not encompass the ideal number of employees for it to be considered significant, representing a 5,7% margin of error for a 95% confidence level. This limitation could have possibly been surpassed if the questionnaire had been divulged on more channels, such as the intranet, which was not possible due to company's policies. Moreover, the questionnaire was open for responses during the holiday season (end of July and August), meaning that many employees were out of the office and without access to their email – the channel that was used to send the link to access the questionnaire. To balance the sampling error, results from the qualitative component of the study were useful in order to triangulate and confirm some data.

Still regarding the questionnaire, for privacy reasons, departments were not considered. However, one of the exploratory interviews alluded that corporate sustainability initiatives may not appeal exactly the same to employees from different departments. Therefore, it would have been interesting to be able to verify this though.

As social media channels were only considered for aware employees, comparisons between aware and not aware employees were not possible when it comes to these platforms. Therefore, if I were to do the questionnaire again, I would have added this channel for unaware employees as well.

So that the employee perspective could have been better assessed, few semi-structured interviews could have been conducted with selected employees, capturing employees' views of internal communication addressing corporate sustainability in a richer way. Due to lack of time, however, this data collection method was not considered.

Future research may apply a multiple-case study on this topic in order to understand if employees' preferences and needs are different according to companies' characteristics, such as the size and sector. This would provide clues on whether Hi Fly employees' preference for the email over face-to-face communication can be explained due to the fact that Hi Fly is a large organization – as suggested by the literature – or if it may have to do with the company's sector characteristics – employees who are not based at the office and are always traveling.

It would also be interesting to see in detail if demographic variables influence the levels of engagement in corporate sustainability. For instance, future research could try to understand if employees who are working at a company for more time are the ones who exhibit higher levels of engagement. Although this was not an objective of this study, it was possible to understand that there were some unaware employees in spite of working for Hi Fly for more than 10 years, for example. Thus, understanding the influence of these variables would greatly contribute to the literature on this topic.

As this study indicated that the level of awareness of corporate sustainability initiatives affects channel preferences and content needs for internal communication on this subject, it would be important to explore this hypothesis further. Knowing which practices work best for less aware employees is important because awareness of corporate sustainability initiatives is a critical antecedent for engagement. Thus, conducting this research would greatly contribute to expand what is already known regarding how to engage employees in corporate sustainability through internal communication.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Guide

At the beginning...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the purpose of the study and interview • Clarify the interviewee’s role inside the company and linkage to corporate sustainability • Clarify the “corporate sustainability” definition • Ask permission to record

Topic	Main questions	Sub-questions
Hi Fly’s sustainability	Since when did Hi Fly commit to sustainability?	
	Why did Hi Fly start to incorporate sustainability?	
	Is corporate sustainability part of the company’s overall strategy?	
	Does Hi Fly take into consideration environmental and social issues?	Can you provide some concrete examples?
	Which sustainability initiatives are most important to the airline?	
	How would you describe Hi Fly’s sustainability program?	
	Has Hi Fly been awarded or recognized due to its corporate sustainability practices?	
	Is Hi Fly part of a sustainability initiative such as the United Nations Global Compact?	
	When it comes to its sustainability efforts, does Hi Fly work independently or in partnership with other organizations?	
	What is your opinion on the company’s sustainability policy?	

Internal communication about corporate sustainability	To which stakeholders do you communicate about the company's sustainability efforts?	
	What is your opinion on the importance of communicating the company's sustainability work to employees?	Have you noticed any changes on employees' behaviours and/or attitudes in working with sustainability due to this communication?
	What are your goals when communicating sustainability efforts with employees?	
	Besides the communications department, is anyone else in charge of communicating the company's sustainability efforts?	
	How do you communicate corporate sustainability to employees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which channels are used? • Which content? • Do you segment the internal audience?
	Do you know which communication practices work best to engage employees in Hi Fly's sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which channels do employees normally use to access sustainability information? • Which content/type of information do employees prefer? • Which internal initiatives work best to reach the employees?

	In your opinion, what does not work in order to reach employees regarding this topic?	
	Would you say that sustainability training is important?	
	Does Hi Fly put in place two-way communication mechanism when it comes to corporate sustainability? Can employees contribute with ideas and opinions?	
	What are the main challenges of communicating corporate sustainability to employees?	
	(How) Do you assess internal communication dealing with sustainability issues? Do you have employees' feedback on it?	
	Do you think that internal communication about sustainability issues could be improved?	How could it be improved?
Employee engagement in corporate sustainability	Are Hi Fly's employees aware of sustainability issues and the airline's sustainability initiatives?	
	Which sustainability initiatives do you believe employees are most engaged with?	
	Do employees give suggestions and contribute to make Hi Fly a more sustainable company?	

Closing the interview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything you would like to add regarding this topic? For example, best practices, success stories you would like to share. • Thank for the interview

Appendix B – Questionnaire

Hi Fly's internal communication about corporate sustainability

This questionnaire aims to gather data for my Master's Internship Report entitled "Exploring the best internal communication practices for optimal employee engagement in corporate sustainability: Hi Fly case study". The Internship Report comes as part of my Master's Degree in Communication Sciences: Communication, Organization and Leadership at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

If you have 5-10 minutes to spare, I would really appreciate if you could answer this questionnaire about your company. By completing it, you will not only be helping a colleague to finish her Master's Degree, but also providing information that Hi Fly can use in order to potentially enhance its internal communication about its corporate sustainability efforts.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts: (1) Demographic information, (2) Awareness of Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives, (3) Engagement in Hi Fly's sustainability, (4) Hi Fly's internal communication about corporate sustainability. All your answers are completely anonymous and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Feel free to contact me if you need any further information (stsobreiro@hifly.aero or susanatsobreiro@gmail.com) and thank you so much for taking part!

Demographic Information

1. Age:

(mark only one option)

- a. < 25
- b. 25-40
- c. 41-56
- d. 57-75
- e. > 75

2. Gender:

(mark only one option)

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. I prefer not to say
- d. Other: _____

3. How long have you been working at Hi Fly?

(mark only one option)

- a. < 1 year
- b. 1-2 years
- c. 3-5 years
- d. 6-10 years
- e. > 10 years

4. What is your current job position?

(mark only one option)

- a. Employee/staff
- b. Line manager/supervisor
- c. Senior manager
- d. Other: _____

Awareness of Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives

5. Are you aware of Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No (skip to question 22)

6. Please choose the option with which you agree the most.

(mark only one option)

- a. Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts aim to protect the planet

- b. Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts aim to contribute to a better society
- c. Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts aim to reach economic goals
- d. Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts aim to protect the planet and contribute to a better society
- e. Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts follow a triple bottom line approach (balancing economic, social and environmental goals)

7. Select all corporate sustainability initiatives that you are aware of.

(tick all that apply)

- a. Hi Fly operates flights without any single-use plastic items on board
- b. Hi Fly displays environmental messages on aircraft livery
- c. Hi Fly is striving to offset all its carbon emissions until the end of 2022
- d. Hi Fly is a member of the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce
- e. Hi Fly has signed the 25by2025 pledge (IATA)
- f. Hi Fly has operated humanitarian flights to help Beirut after a chemical explosion
- g. Hi Fly provides sustainability training for its employees

8. Have you read Hi Fly's sustainability policy?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

Engagement in Hi Fly's sustainability

9. In a scale from 1-5, how engaged do you feel in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives? (1: Not engaged at all; 5: Completely engaged).

(mark only one option)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Please rate each of the following sentences (1: Strongly disagree; 5: Strongly agree).

(mark only one option per row)

	1	2	3	4	5
I identify with Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I speak positively about Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts to outsiders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work towards helping the company to become more sustainable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am motivated to participate in Hi Fly's sustainability initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have knowledge about sustainability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am proud of Hi Fly's sustainability work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel personally involved in the success of Hi Fly's corporate sustainability initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel committed to Hi Fly's sustainability mission	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. In which corporate sustainability initiative(s) do you feel most engaged in? Why?

12. Would you say that, in general, the workforce is engaged in the company's sustainability efforts?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. Is sustainability directly related to your job role?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes (skip to question 17)
- b. No

14. Even though your work is not related to sustainability, would you say that you can contribute to making the company more sustainable?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No (skip to question 16)

15. Briefly describe how you can help Hi Fly to become more sustainable.

(skip to question 17)

16. Why can't you contribute to making the company more sustainable?

(tick all that apply)

- a. Corporate sustainability is a top management's responsibility
- b. I do not have the chance to communicate my ideas and suggestions
- c. I do not have enough knowledge
- d. Other: _____

17. Have you participated/been involved in Hi Fly's internal corporate sustainability actions (e.g., beach clean-up, sustainability workshops, blood donation)?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No (skip to question 21)

18. In which action have you participated?

19. Did it contribute to raise your knowledge about sustainability?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. Did it contribute to raise your interest in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No

(skip to question 29)

21. I have not participated in any internal action related to corporate sustainability because:

(tick all that apply)

- a. I am not interested in the company's sustainability work
- b. I did not have the chance/time
- c. I am not concerned with sustainability issues
- d. Other: _____

(skip to question 26)

Hi Fly's internal communication about corporate sustainability

22. Do you believe that internal communication can improve your level of awareness?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No (end of questionnaire)

23. From which internal communication channel(s) would you prefer to receive information about Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts?

(tick all that apply)

- a. Intranet
- b. Email
- c. CEO speech
- d. Participatory activities (e.g., beach clean-up, surf class)
- e. Training
- f. Internal TV system
- g. Brochures
- h. Webinars
- i. Face-to-face meetings
- j. Manuals
- k. Other: _____

24. In your opinion, which internal communication channel is the most effective for this information?

25. What content would you like to receive concerning Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts?

(tick all that apply)

- a. Corporate sustainability goals
- b. Corporate sustainability outcomes
- c. Economic results and advantages
- d. Corporate sustainability activities/actions
- e. Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society
- f. Other: _____

(skip to question 35)

26. Select all the options with which you agree.

(tick all that apply)

- a. Hi Fly raises my awareness of sustainability issues (e.g., global warming, climate change, poverty)
- b. Hi Fly raises my awareness of its sustainability policy and initiatives
- c. Hi Fly educates me regarding sustainability issues
- d. Hi Fly educates me about its sustainability policy and initiatives
- e. Hi Fly provides me with opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to make the company more sustainable

27. Do you feel that you receive enough information regarding Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts?

- a. Yes (skip to question 29)
- b. No

28. What would you change?

29. From which channel(s) do/would you prefer to receive information about Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts?

(tick all that apply)

- a. Intranet
- b. Email
- c. CEO speech
- d. Participatory activities (e.g., beach clean-up, surf class)
- e. Training
- f. Internal TV system
- g. Brochures
- h. Webinars
- i. Face-to-face meetings
- j. Manuals

k. Social Media

l. Other: _____

30. In your opinion, which internal communication channel is the most effective for this information?

31. When it comes to corporate sustainability, should Hi Fly use a channel more often? If so, which one?

32. Is there an open channel for you to share ideas that can contribute to making Hi Fly more sustainable?

(mark only one option)

- a. Yes
- b. No

33. What content do/would you like to receive concerning Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts?

(tick all that apply)

- a. Corporate sustainability goals
- b. Corporate sustainability outcomes
- c. Economic results and advantages
- d. Corporate sustainability activities/actions
- e. Practical information on what I can do for the environment and society
- f. Other: _____

34. Please rate each of the following sentences. (1: Strongly disagree; 5: Strongly agree).

(mark only one option per row)

1 2 3 4 5

I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts when I receive frequent communication about them

I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability work when I receive information that is relevant for me and my job

I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's corporate sustainability efforts when I have the chance to be involved and consulted

I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I receive sustainability training

I feel more engaged in Hi Fly's sustainability work when I am told its economic advantages

35. Please provide one (or more) suggestion(s) for enhancing Hi Fly's internal communication dealing with corporate sustainability.

Your answers have been registered. Thank you for taking part!

Appendix C – Transcription of Hi Fly’s Chief Corporate Affairs Interview

Interview – Sílvia Mirpuri (Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Hi Fly)

Quando é que a Hi Fly começou a ter preocupações de sustentabilidade?

Desde o início, sempre foi uma preocupação. Desde a sua formação que a empresa tem o objetivo de ser paper free, acabar com o papel não só nos escritórios mas nos aviões também, por exemplo. “Cockpit paper free” talvez tenha sido o primeiro grande passo que demos. A ideia é acabar com o uso do papel, minimizar os processos e tornar a empresa eficiente gastando menos recursos à natureza. Por outro lado, também sempre investimos numa frota moderna. Aquando da escolha dos aviões, sempre tivemos em conta aviões mais recentes, mais eficientes e que gastem menos combustível, também em função do ambiente. Aliás, o nome Hi Fly é um nome de uma empresa moderna e que se entende prática e proativa. Já viu que “Hi” é olá “Fly” é voo. Portanto, o nosso mote era “Olá voa”, que é uma empresa simples, livre de complicações. E uma empresa para ser livre de complicações tem de ser uma empresa que pense no mundo e na sustentabilidade e uma empresa moderna. E tudo o que é moderno é mais amigo do ambiente também, digamos assim.

Portanto, desde o início. As primeiras iniciativas foram relacionadas com “paper free” e a escolha da frota, que sempre foi pensada muito a dedo para ser uma frota moderna.

Diria que houve algum ano de viragem, para se tornar uma empresa ainda mais sustentável?

2017, quando patrocinámos o barco “Turn the Tide on Plastic”, chegámos à conclusão de que em termos de sustentabilidade estávamos mais focados na empresa do que nas pessoas. Com a campanha “Turn the Tide on Plastic” levámos esse compromisso de sustentabilidade que já tínhamos desde a origem da Hi Fly – sempre tentámos fazer tudo direitinho do ponto de vista ambiental – mais longe. Começámos a chegar às pessoas, envolvendo imenso os funcionários da Hi Fly. A Hi Fly patrocinou a regata costeira da Volvo Ocean Race, aqui em Lisboa, e levámos todos os funcionários a ver essa regata. E nessa altura fizemos imensa coisa: fizemos garrafas reutilizáveis e demos a toda a gente – portanto, acabámos com as garrafas de plástico aqui na empresa –, organizámos team buildings, fizemos beach clean-ups, fizemos sessões de formação, a Ana deu imensas palestras, fizemos aulas de surf. A

Mirpuri Foundation como parceiro de sustentabilidade da Hi Fly é que ativou estas ações, que no fundo foram todas para as pessoas da Hi Fly.

Porque é que a Hi Fly começou a incorporar preocupações de sustentabilidade?

Acho que nem deve haver um motivo, devia ser uma obrigação de todas as companhias aéreas. Acho que devemos perguntar é “porque é que alguma não o faz?”, porque devíamos todos fazer, é um processo natural. Nós não deveríamos ser a exceção, devíamos ser a regra e devíamos era perguntar se alguém não o faz qual é o porquê. Deveria ser a preocupação principal de toda a gente. E, felizmente, penso que está a ser, pelo menos de muitas empresas, estamos sempre a ver iniciativas nesse sentido.

Acha que a sustentabilidade empresarial é parte da estratégia da empresa?

Acho. Porque a sustentabilidade, lá está, está relacionada com modernidade e eficiência. Fazendo um paralelismo, para entendermos melhor, toda a gente sabe que o açúcar dá sono e que dá moleza e que não dá proatividade. E nós vemos por exemplo na LSKY, que é uma empresa de inflight catering, que a comida que as pessoas de negócios pedem são sempre saladas e coisas mais saudáveis. Portanto, as pessoas mais inteligentes, mais proativas, sabem que se comerem um bolo vão ficar com sono e não vão ter rendimento, e que se comerem uma salada vão ter energia para continuarem as reuniões à tarde. É a mesma coisa com a Hi Fly. Se todos bebêssemos de garrafas de plástico e enchêssemos o lixo cheio de plástico era uma empresa doente, era uma empresa em que os próprios funcionários iam sentir-se mal, porque têm a sua consciência individual e porque também são pessoas que, na maioria, felizmente, têm muita consciência ambiental, e nem iam gostar de trabalhar num sítio onde houvesse papel por todo o lado, tintas por todo o lado, plástico por todo o lado, lixo... É um ambiente que é negativo. Portanto, faz parte sim, para valorizar e para posicionar a Hi Fly como uma empresa moderna, limpa... Valoriza. É uma empresa que tem mais valor por ter um compromisso de sustentabilidade tão elevado.

A Hi Fly tem preocupações de sustentabilidade tanto ambientais como sociais?

Tem, também fazemos muitas ações de solidariedade: fizemos os voos para Beirute, fizemos colheita de sangue, fizemos voos para Changai para ir buscar máscaras e equipamentos de proteção a custo zero. O Governo estava demorado a mandar aviões, ninguém ia lá buscar

nada, e nós fomos, abdicando da nossa margem de lucro para ir buscar equipamento. E trouxemos o avião carregado de máscaras que, na altura, faziam imensa falta. Eu lembro-me que em minha casa só tinha quatro máscaras, uma para cada um. Veja bem a falta que havia de máscaras nesse mês. Ninguém tinha e uma máscara era ouro. Na altura era mesmo importante e termos ido buscar máscaras teve muito valor.

Pode elencar mais algumas iniciativas ambientais?

Tentamos consciencializar as pessoas o máximo possível, fazemos campanhas com frequência. Temos os ecrãs com screen savers de imagens das campanhas de sustentabilidade. Porque se sensibilizarmos uma pessoa e essa pessoa sensibilizar outros que sensibilizam outros, conseguimos chegar a milhões de pessoas. Portanto, se nós conseguirmos que os funcionários da Hi Fly tenham um comportamento mais sustentável e que se agarrem a estas questões de sustentabilidade, que tenham orgulho de trabalhar numa empresa sustentável, e que levem para casa esses ensinamentos, estamos a chegar a muita gente e acho que isso é um grande contributo ambiental.

Depois temos ações mais práticas como a The Good Bottle. A The Good Bottle é da Fundação, e ainda nem comunicámos isso, mas vai ser testada nos voos da Hi Fly. Vamos ser a primeira companhia aérea a usar estas garrafas quando estiverem produzidas industrialmente.

Acha que existe alguma iniciativa que possa ser classificada como a mais importante para a Hi Fly?

O patrocínio da campanha da Mirpuri Foundation “Racing for the Planet”, que foi um investimento muito grande, mas que moveu a empresa toda e que proporcionou fazer os guests sailings, aproximar os colaboradores do mar. Foi importante. Gostávamos de ter feito com toda a gente e muito mais, mas não fizemos por causa do Covid.

Outra grande iniciativa que a Hi Fly fez foi o Sustainable Cabin Forum, em que juntámos companhias aéreas do mundo inteiro para partilhar o que podemos fazer para a cabine, para o avião, ficar mais sustentável. Tinha a ver com os lixos do catering e com o single-use plastic. Foi um evento inédito, porque nós juntámos aqui todas as companhias aéreas mais importantes e fizemos um mega evento na Penha Longa. Tivemos aqui a Emirates, a Qantas,

as maiores companhias do mundo, e temos vídeos dos representantes dessas grandes empresas a dizerem que vieram aprender com a Hi Fly.

O primeiro voo sem plástico do mundo também foi um acontecimento marcante. Acho mesmo que o mais importante que a Hi Fly fez foi o primeiro voo sem plástico do mundo.

Como descreveria a política de sustentabilidade da Hi Fly?

Acho que é inovadora. Não há tantas companhias aéreas no mundo assim com uma política de sustentabilidade tão cerrada. Também temos o nosso compromisso em acabar com as emissões de carbono que também é algo muito importante e que há de ser, que há de acontecer. E que já poderia ter acontecido, mas o Covid atrapalhou tudo na verdade. Tínhamos mais projetos em curso e que tiveram que parar porque o mercado parou.

A Hi Fly faz parte de alguma iniciativa global de sustentabilidade?

A United for Wildlife. A Hi Fly é membro da United for Wildlife. Essa também é muito importante. Somos um dos membros da task-force. Até há uma fotografia do meu irmão [Paulo Mirpuri, CEO da Hi Fly] com o Príncipe William, que é o Chefe da Taskforce.

Além da Mirpuri Foundation, e no que toca à sustentabilidade corporativa, a Hi Fly trabalha com mais organizações?

Com as Nações Unidas, já fomos parceiros no barco “Turn the Tide on Plastic”, tivemos lá os nossos dois logotipos, estivemos juntos pela mesma causa. E também somos parceiros das iniciativas de sustentabilidade da The Ocean Race.

E quais são as vantagens de trabalhar com uma ONG, como a Mirpuri Foundation?

Amplificar a mensagem, chegar a mais pessoas, trocar experiências e evoluir.

Qual a sua opinião acerca do trabalho de sustentabilidade da Hi Fly?

Acho que já chegámos muito longe mas ainda temos que fazer mais. Porque queremos chegar sempre ao máximo que conseguimos. É um processo evolutivo, que não acaba nunca. Estamos sempre a ter ideias novas e não se pode parar, porque estamos longe de conseguir alcançar a salvação para o mundo, não é?

A que stakeholders comunicam as práticas de sustentabilidade da Hi Fly?

Todos os funcionários. Clientes também. Parceiros, fornecedores... Quando fazemos as nossas ações convidamos sempre todos. Portanto, clientes, parceiros, fornecedores e funcionários.

Qual a importância de comunicar os esforços de sustentabilidade internamente, aos colaboradores?

Muita, porque eles são a imagem da empresa e quanto melhor comportamento eles tiverem, também melhor a imagem da Hi Fly. É a imagem dos colaboradores toda junta que forma a imagem da Hi Fly. Portanto, é muito importante que tenham um comportamento que vá de acordo com aquilo em que a empresa acredita. Não gostaríamos de ter funcionários a beber garrafas de plástico e a deitar para o lixo. Tentamos todos os dias sensibilizar para que isso não está certo.

Já notou alguma alteração de comportamento e atitude devido a esta comunicação interna?

Imensa. Especialmente depois da primeira Volvo Ocean Race, da “Turn the Tide on Plastic”. Ninguém falava de plástico quando nós fizemos essa campanha, era um assunto que não existia, as pessoas nem pensavam nisso e, desde então, para já, aqui nunca mais houve garrafas de plástico, e acredito que eles também tenham levado esse ensinamento com eles. Todos traziam as garrafas e andavam sempre com as garrafas. Usavam sacos reutilizáveis também. Acho que surtiu efeito e que sensibilizámos realmente as pessoas. Pessoas que não estavam para aí viradas, acordaram e começaram a mudar os comportamentos.

Só para ter uma ideia, um dos nossos funcionários contou-me que se está cheio de sede e vai a um café pede uma água das pedras, porque é em vidro. E foi um funcionário daqui que fez isso, derivado à campanha “Turn the Tide on Plastic”. É um bom exemplo, porque era uma coisa que ele nunca faria antes.

Quais são os principais objetivos quando comunicam questões relacionadas com sustentabilidade aos colaboradores?

Tentamos que tenham comportamentos mais sustentáveis no dia a dia. Portanto, a conversa cliché, todos juntos fazem a diferença. Tentamos que tenham um comportamento melhor:

que usem sacos reutilizáveis, que não deitem garrafas de água de plástico para o lixo, que andem de bicicleta. E há muita gente que vem de bicicleta para o trabalho.

Portanto, o objetivo é que os funcionários da Hi Fly mudem os comportamentos efetivamente, não é só para mostrar.

Na Hi Fly quem está responsável por comunicar os esforços de sustentabilidade corporativa aos colaboradores?

O departamento de comunicação. E quando entra um novo funcionário os Recursos Humanos também lhes dão um guia de como as pessoas se devem comportar. Os Recursos Humanos também estão envolvidos. Por exemplo, quando nasce um bebé, antes dávamos fraldas e cremes em embalagens de plástico; agora damos uma manta e mais algumas coisas, mas tudo sem plástico e sustentável e com uma mensagenzinha a dizer que já estamos a fazer bem ao bebé e que pelo bebé devemos manter a coisa num nível sustentável. Também é uma ação gira que tem tudo a ver.

E como comunicam a sustentabilidade corporativa aos colaboradores?

Antes, através de ações de team building, era especialmente através das ações de team-building, como aulas de surf, beach-clean ups, guest sailings no barco. Fazíamos palestras, visionamentos de filmes. Fizemos até uma vez um visionamento de um ocean clean-up. Portanto, fazíamos muita coisa mesmo. Atualmente, emails, ações virtuais, às vezes fazemos webinars, para os quais eles também são convidados. E temos ações ao ar livre, como a campanha da The Ocean Race.

Depois temos a intranet. Newsletter não temos, porque pomos tudo no Facebook e nas redes sociais e os nossos colaboradores seguem-nos. E o site.

Qual o conteúdo que comunicam mais?

Muito à volta do plástico, plástico, plástico, e agora “Stop Climate Change”. E também não podemos esquecer a campanha dos corais, “Save the Coral Reefs”. Tivemos o maior avião do mundo pintado com essa campanha de sustentabilidade. Nunca ninguém fez isso. O preço de pagar publicidade no maior avião do mundo seria milionário. Se tivéssemos ali uma marca comercial teriam que pagar milhões. Nós usámos a maior montra do mundo para dizer “salvem os recifes de corais”, portanto isto também tem muito valor.

Também temos as tips, para os corais e para o plástico. Sugestões que andamos a divulgar.

Segmentam de alguma forma a audiência interna?

Não, vai para toda a gente.

Tem noção de que práticas de comunicação interna resultam melhor para comunicar a sustentabilidade empresarial aos colaboradores?

Ações em que eles estejam envolvidos, como limpezas de praia. Divertem-se, convivem e ver o lixo de perto sensibiliza ainda mais.

Na sua opinião há algum canal/conteúdo que não resulta para comunicar sustentabilidade corporativa aos colaboradores?

Eu acho que tudo pode ser válido, mas talvez se mandássemos manuais extensivos eles não iam ligar nenhuma.

E qual a sua opinião em relação ao treino de sustentabilidade?

Acho importante ensinar por exemplo a separar os lixos, é uma das coisas que queremos fazer e também estamos à espera que se possa fazer. Mas acho que é bom. Tudo o que for prático é bom.

A Mirpuri Foundation também dá formação de sustentabilidade e explica o que a Hi Fly faz a nível de sustentabilidade, para eles [colaboradores], quando chegam, perceberem o trabalho. Ou seja, a Mirpuri Foundation dá formações de sustentabilidade aos funcionários da Hi Fly.

Pode explicar melhor de que forma a Mirpuri Foundation está envolvida na comunicação corporativa da Hi Fly?

A Mirpuri Foundation é o principal parceiro de sustentabilidade da Hi Fly. A Fundação cria iniciativas e textos e informação para sensibilizar os funcionários da Hi Fly. Organiza ações, faz os tais treinos de sustentabilidade, isso é tudo a Mirpuri Foundation que faz. É realmente um parceiro de sustentabilidade.

A Hi Fly tem mecanismos de comunicação bidirecional no que concerne a sustentabilidade empresarial?

Por iniciativa própria às vezes recebemos emails com sugestões. É bom. Porque nós em nenhum sítio dizemos “dê a sua ideia”, mas a verdade é que as pessoas dão. E quando veem alguma iniciativa boa mandam para nós, porque sabem que somos interessados no assunto, e sugerem “porque é que não fazemos isto?”.

E quais são os principais desafios nesta comunicação relacionada com sustentabilidade corporativa?

Eles gostam imenso. Não me lembro de encontrar nenhuma dificuldade. E se alguém não está interessado também nunca nos disseram. Normalmente as pessoas aderem e gostam. É bem aceite o assunto.

Acha que a comunicação interna sobre a sustentabilidade empresarial pode ser melhorada aqui na Hi Fly?

Podemos sempre melhorar, não digo que seja perfeita. Acho que podemos fazer mais ativações. Podemos fazer mais webinars, mais workshops internos. Lá está, também quando a pandemia o permitir.

Acha que os colaboradores da Hi Fly estão familiarizados com questões de sustentabilidade social e ambiental e também com as iniciativas de sustentabilidade corporativa da companhia aérea?

Acho que estão alerta sim. Têm noção que estão numa empresa com muitas preocupações de sustentabilidade.

E eles participam. Por exemplo, as campanhas “Flying the Change” e “Protect Wildlife” foram com pessoas reais. Os próprios funcionários dão a cara pela companhia e isso não é uma coisa assim tão comum. Foi giro ter as pessoas a vestir a farda e a fazer uma campanha a dizer “salvem os animais” ou “não use plástico”. E é um bom engagement, uma boa ação de comunicação interna.

Em quais iniciativas acha que eles estão mais “engaged”?

Tudo o que tenha a ver com o mar, eles gostam. Beach clean-up, aulas de surf têm sempre muita aderência. Guest sailing também.

E o voo sem plástico foi uma coisa que encheu toda a gente de orgulho. As pessoas estavam super contentes, porque anunciámos amplamente. As pessoas andavam mesmo todas satisfeitas e contentes com isso.

Quer acrescentar alguma coisa sobre este tema? Uma melhor prática, uma história de sucesso?

É assim, objetivamente todas as ações que nós fizemos as pessoas gostaram muito. Por exemplo, gostaram muito do 380 e do facto de o 380 dizer “salvem os recifes de corais”. Antes do 380, as pessoas se calhar nem nunca tinham ouvido falar dos recifes de corais, nem sabiam que eles estavam em perigo, só deviam saber que eram giros nas Caraíbas e ponto final. As pessoas ficaram muito orgulhosas e foram todas muito proativas. Foi tudo bom, porque juntou as pessoas à empresa, as pessoas ficaram com mais orgulho na empresa, ficaram mais sustentáveis, mais conscientes do mundo. Foi um ciclo que correu muito bem.

Appendix D – Transcription of Mirpuri Foundation’s Head of PR Interview

Interview – Ana Agostinho (Head of PR, Mirpuri Foundation)

Do you know since when did Hi Fly commit to sustainability?

I can tell you that since I’ve been in the group there has always been this concern with sustainability, but I don’t know what was done before. So, since 2017 there has always been a very strong work with sustainability, also because of the creation of the Mirpuri Foundation in 2016.

And why would you say that the company started to incorporate sustainability?

The reasons that led Hi Fly’s President to create a Foundation are the same that led Hi Fly to integrate sustainability. In other words, it is a principle of the administration, of the President, who is himself concerned with the environment and very connected to nature. He has done expeditions, made a transatlantic trip, an expedition to Everest and ended up getting a first-hand contact with climate change. All this led to the creation of a Foundation. Obviously, owning an airline, the thought was “what can I do, as the President, to create a better world? And how can I make my own company more sustainable?”. I believe this was the vision.

Is corporate sustainability part of the company’s overall strategy?

Yes. It’s not necessarily part of the strategy; it is part of the company itself. The company is based on working sustainably and making employees, and everyone, involved, so that we are able to make a difference inside our house and then elsewhere.

Does Hi Fly take into consideration both environmental and social issues?

They go hand in hand. Once you have a company that aims to make an impact all over the world, you need to take into consideration all the social impact of your actions, the social impact of your business and the employees, and then move forward to what we can all do together for the environment. So, as the sustainability policy states, it’s all based on people, on communities and on the planet.

Can you provide concrete examples of social and environmental initiatives?

Here you need to take into consideration that everything that the Foundation does, all the initiatives, are also linked with Hi Fly. We don't just share the same President; we share the same values. And Hi Fly is the major sponsor of some of the Mirpuri Foundation's initiatives. So, everyone is engaged in the Foundation's initiatives.

Internally, as a company, Hi Fly did several initiatives, such as beach clean-ups, sustainability workshops with cabin crew, but also with Hi Fly's staff; we did surf classes with the staff and employees' children; we did a microplastics makeup workshop with cabin crew to make sure that they are all aware of the microplastics within the makeup – as they need to wear makeup every time, we told them how to do it in a more sustainable way.

Obviously, when we consider Hi Fly as leading by example – which was also the goal of Hi Fly's President –, the environment plays a big role there. So, when he considered how to make aviation more sustainable, what came in mind first was to remove single-use plastic – and to remove the single-use plastic mindset internally, from the structure and the company itself. So, when launching the “Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign, in 2017, a lot was done as well within Hi Fly's structure: we removed all single-use plastic materials on Hi Fly's building – that means that no single-use plastic bottles are allowed in the office –, we started supplying reusable water bottles for all the staff at the building, we installed water stations/refill stations at every single floor of the building – to make sure that people can bring their own bottle and refill it by the place where they work every day –, and we started doing the sustainability workshops around plastic and its impact on human health and the planet. So, we started along the way to change the mindset indoor – doing beach clean-ups as well, doing a lot of activations –, to make sure that people were aware of the problem, and to make sure that they were able to tackle it and go back home and explain to their kids, wives and husbands why single-use plastic is something that we could avoid, that we need to avoid and this is how you do it.

So, we started with the building and trying to change the mindset of the employees. That was phase 1 – because one cannot ambition to change the world without changing their own home first. And then, phase 2 was trying to eradicate single-use plastic on board Hi Fly's aircraft. This was something that took a little bit of time to achieve. We started with trials, we had a year of trials, to make sure that we were choosing the right products and exchanging cutlery and plates and cups and plastic wrapping blankets and even trash bins. Our goal was

to remove everything that was non-essential single-use plastic on board aircraft and to exchange for alternatives that were not made out of plastic. We did the first trial flight in the end of 2018, in boxing day, 26th of December. These were the first single-use plastic free flights in the world to ever be done. Then we took another year to develop and make sure that we could definitely exchange products. And then, from the start of 2020, Hi Fly became the first and, at this point, the only airline to fly without non-essential disposable plastic on board the aircraft.

Obviously, this is not a close deal, this is a work in progress all the time because, well, hopefully, after the pandemic ends, we'll go back to where we were at that point, so we'll have more and more alternatives and more products. When we started, in 2017, the options were very limited in terms of alternatives to plastic. Now it's better and, hopefully, it will be better and better, and we'll always have better products to exchange the ones that we have now. That's the idea: to quick start with something and slowly try to substitute plastic or products for other alternatives that are better for the environment, but also better for human health. We don't want to look back ten years from now and see that we have chosen products, alternatives to plastic, that are creating a deeper impact on human health than the ones that we had before. This is our goal: to limit the consumption of plastic, to eradicate plastic on board Hi Fly's aircraft and to make sure that we can all live without the constant exposure to plastic.

I can also tell you that Hi Fly is part of IATA. We organized the sustainable cabin forum here in Portugal that gathered representatives from the industry from all over the world. Airlines and airports, and all the industry, came together to learn about the plastic free flights and how Hi Fly did it. They sat down for the first time with the European Commission to go over this subject of single-use plastic and catering waste and that was the first time, a ground-breaking initiative, that joined the airlines with the European Commission for the first time ever. IATA played a role there and was also very keen on detailing Hi Fly as a role model for other airlines.

We are also part of IATA 25by2025 and that's an initiative related to gender and inclusion.

Which sustainability initiatives would you say that are most important to the airline?

I think all initiatives are important when related to the staff. Ultimately, when you are running a business, you care about people – and you care about people overall. But you start

by caring with your own people, with your own staff. We deeply value all the initiatives that are able to engage with the staff and that are able to make a difference. I think plastic [“Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign] is the initiative that raised most awareness and impact, because people are more and more aware of the problems that the planet is facing, and they are more activists now than they were before. For the employees that have kids they are very determined to make sure that they grow in a safe environment, so they are even more committed now than they were before. So, I think that plastic, the “Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign, was the one that was able to engage the most with the staff. But I don’t necessarily say that it was the most important. I think that they are all important because they are engaging with the staff and they are making a difference in one area or other.

I would say that the United for Wildlife commitment was also a big initiative from Hi Fly, and it’s also related to the environment, but it’s related specifically to tacking illegal wildlife trade in the industry, in aviation. That was able to engage more people from several departments and I would say that plastic from other departments, so you can’t really say that one initiative is better than the other – is just that sometimes there are initiatives that are easier to engage with, such as beach clean-ups, or sustainability workshops, or surf classes, for instance. But I think that they are all important overall for the strategy and for the culture of the group.

Has Hi Fly been awarded due to its corporate sustainability efforts?

Yes, it has. It has been recognized by IATA for its efforts on sustainability and as a role model for other airlines.

Is Hi Fly part of an initiative such as the United Nations Global Compact?

We are not part of that, but we have met with them, and it is a work in progress.

Why does Hi Fly work in partnership with the Mirpuri Foundation? What are the advantages?

It’s a home-based solution, I would say. It’s like having a huge sustainability department within the group. Obviously, it is a Foundation managed by the same President of Hi Fly, who created this family Foundation based on his commitments to make the world a better place for future generations. As the Mirpuri Foundation efforts are very much focused on

sustainability and creating partnerships with relevant institutions – such as the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Program, the IUCN, the International Coral Reef Initiative –, all these relationships that are created by the Mirpuri Foundation are also linked to Hi Fly. Even though it is not part of Hi Fly, Mirpuri Foundation acts as a sustainability arm of Hi Fly and, in that way, is able to engage with not just the staff, as we mentioned in internal initiatives, but is also able to promote Hi Fly and its efforts all over the world, with all the institutions that we work with.

What is your opinion on the company’s sustainability program?

I am very biased on that. It is a tough question... It is very hard to speak of our own work. What do I think of the sustainability strategy?... It’s exactly as I thought it should be. The sustainability policy is focused on people, it’s focused on the environment, and is focused on communities, and that’s how every sustainability policy should work: it should try to think of people first, and in the environment, and how we can create a balance between them to create a better world to live in. That’s the idea. And how can we achieve that? We can achieve that by engaging with staff, we can achieve that by creating initiatives that are solid and that are thinking ahead in how to protect the environment, and, at the same time, building long-lasting relationships with other Foundations and companies and institutions all over the world that are like-minded and that can work with us because – it’s a cliché – we are stronger together and we can make a deeper impact when working in a collaborative way instead of by ourselves. It’s a way to create a working group that gathers not just Hi Fly’s staff but like-minded people all over the world that wants the same thing: that is to protect the environment and to care about people and the communities. So, I’m biased, but I think it is a good strategy.

To which stakeholders do you communicate Hi Fly’s sustainability efforts?

To everyone. We communicate internally, we communicate to our stakeholders and partners and to the general public.

What is your opinion on the importance of communicating Hi Fly’s sustainability work to employees?

It’s vital. If you don’t have employees that are deeply engaged with the sustainability policy, they will not be actively the face of Hi Fly. I mean, I take the example of cabin crew. When

I'm hosting these sustainability workshops to cabin crew, I say this all the time "You are the face of the company. If someone asks you 'why are you using this cup and not a plastic cup?' or 'why are you wrapping blankets without plastic?', you need to be able to say 'because Hi Fly has this sustainability policy and we were the first to fly without disposable plastic and blah blah blah'". So, they need to be the face of the company, they need to be fully aware of what we are doing together and what we want to achieve. Ultimately, they [passengers] will be asking them "why this and not this?", "why did you remove plastic?", "which alternative did you choose?".

So, if you don't have engaged employees you will not have an engaged company, or, at least, you will have a more productive company if all the employees are engaged and they have sustainability as a common goal.

And have you noticed any changes on employees' attitudes and behaviours due to this communication?

Absolutely. I see employees all the time with reusable bags, for instance, and we used to see people carrying plastic bags, or plastic containers for food. Now you have glass containers or reusable bags, and that's something that people are asking us all the time, for reusable bags. Step by step we are making a difference. If everyone in the world stopped using plastic bags and changed for reusable bags, can you imagine how much plastic would you avoid? That's a lot. So, we need to be able to make a difference one step at a time.

How does the Mirpuri Foundation communicate sustainability to Hi Fly employees?

We communicate our own actions – they are sustained by Hi Fly or in collaboration with Hi Fly. But we also share all Hi Fly's initiatives on the area, so it is a two-sided communication effort. And we do it on social media, websites, email and press releases, I would say.

We also communicate outcomes of initiatives, that we created or that we were part of.

Is there any segmentation of the internal audience?

When it comes to sustainability it goes to everyone the same way, you don't really have a target when it comes to sustainability. You need to communicate sustainability in a more general way, you don't target any specific gender or age.

Do you know which communication practices work best to engage employees in Hi Fly’s sustainability efforts?

I can only give my opinion. In a digital world, I think social media always work – and we do have a lot of employees who engage with our social media posts. I would say that social media probably works better than websites, but they [employees] go to websites to get all the information they need on the initiatives. So, social media is a path to the full article, if I can say that.

But I would say that, internally, emails work best for internal communication, especially when you are promoting an initiative or offering something for the employees. I think that email is probably still the best way to communicate internally.

I think that the intranet is very useful, but it’s not there all the time. The email is there in front of us all the time. You can go to the intranet once a day, but you go to your email frequently. So, when you want to get to the employees fast you do it by email and not with the intranet.

You need to analyse the company that you’re working for and act accordingly to the needs and the characteristics of the company itself. In this case, you have a lot of people that are not based at the office; you have cabin crew that are based elsewhere all the time, and they don’t have access to intranet. So, if you put something on the intranet, only people at the office will see it. If you are working on board an aircraft or based in New Zealand, for instance, you will not have easy access to the intranet, but you will have to the email, because it is there on our phones. So, my opinion is that it works better if you just send an email. It gets through more easily than the intranet.

In your opinion, what does not work in order to reach employees regarding this topic?

Everything works, it just reaches people differently. I would say that email is the most constant tool to get to the employees because everyone has email, and everyone has access to email not just on the computer, but also on the phone, so they can go through it at the office or when they are working somewhere else. It is easily seen by everyone.

What would you say about sustainability training as a channel?

It’s very important. We do it not just to cabin crew, but also to all employees. When you join the company, you automatically gain a sustainability workshop, so you can know exactly

what the sustainability policy of the company is, and what to expect in terms of mission and in terms of goals for the environment and for sustainability. It is very, very important and it is the only way to know exactly what the company is doing. Obviously, you have everything on the internet – you can go online and scroll on the website, Facebook and social media to know exactly what the company is doing. But it's very important that you have the context, and you know what is the idea, what is the goal and what is happening internally. This way, when they read something for them specifically, for the employees, they are fully aware of why they are receiving that email and what is the goal and what is the plan for the company itself.

It is important that they [employees] see the benefits of what the company is doing. So, they learn about it, they read about it, they are part of initiatives and if you are doing an event that is closing an initiative it is important that they are part of that as well and they are able to see first-hand what the company is doing and how the company is doing it.

Can the employees contribute with ideas and suggestions to make the company more sustainable?

Yes, it is not unilateral. You have opinions. I can give you a specific example. When we started the Wildlife Campaign and, specifically, when Hi Fly joined the United for Wildlife Transport taskforce, we had a briefing with all the managers to explain in detail what we were doing. Then, we had a second one with employees from the building and Hi Fly and we had a call to action: “What can we do? From your perspective – from the commercial department, from the comms department, from the cabin crew, from the travel department – what can we do to make sure that we achieve and we are able to fulfil this commitment?”. And they all gave out suggestions and they all played a big role in what the company is doing when it comes to wildlife. So, yes, the idea is to take people into consideration and to make sure that their inputs are also valuable to the company.

We also did a diving clean up because one employee suggested it.

Was the briefing with employees a face-to-face meeting?

Yes.

What are your goals when communicating sustainability efforts to employees?

Engaging them with the company, making sure that they are proud of working in a company that has sustainability as a common goal, to make sure that the company is striving to lead by example and to make aviation more sustainable.

And what are the main challenges when communicating corporate sustainability to employees?

Making sure that they are fully aware of their importance in terms of sustainability, making sure that this is not just a single department, that this is part of the culture of the organization, and they are part of it. They are part of the sustainability policy of the company other than just working in their own department. So, engaging them is always a challenge for every single organization. I think that they are fully committed to sustainability, I think that most people are at the moment, fortunately, but I would say that engaging employees is the challenge itself.

Do you have employees' feedback on internal communication dealing with corporate sustainability?

They know that there's an open channel. I tend to get feedback from them, from several departments. They say: "we should do this" or "we should do this and this and this", or "we should not do this", or "this works better than this". They provide feedback on activations and initiatives that they're part of and say what worked best and what didn't work as good as we thought it would. It's an open channel: we communicate to them, but they provide feedback on the initiative itself and on what they think could be interesting for the organization to do in the future.

Can you provide a concrete example of a feedback you have received?

I would say to communicate with more time. If we have an initiative – and sometimes it isn't possible because we are aware of it very short notice, so this is how we can communicate it as well to the employees – they would have liked to hear about it more thoroughly and with a little bit more time so that they are able to rearrange their work in order to be present at a specific event, for instance. But it's a very challenging industry, when you are working with an airline, especially because everything changes from one day to the other. If a cabin crew,

for instance, confirms his/her presence at an event but then a schedule changes and she/he needs to travel to somewhere else for work... It's quite changeable, so we need to adjust to the employees' needs and work, and I think that's the challenge.

Do you think that internal communication about sustainability issues could be improved?

Well, it's quite difficult at the moment because you are dealing with a pandemic. The last year and a half has not been exactly how it was before in terms of internal communication. You usually had a lot of specific activations, a lot of events, a lot of workshops and, unfortunately, this is not possible now because of the pandemic. From a communications perspective, we would love for the pandemic to be over so we can go back to the events and communicating and trying to engage people onsite, with human contact level, which obviously we are missing because of the pandemic. But we need to make sure that we continue doing the things that we did before online as well. For example, sustainability workshops, that we usually did really, really, often within the company, we need to continue doing them online and improving on that.

Would you say that new employees are lacking this sustainability training because of the pandemic?

We are doing it again now, online, if not possible onsite. This was something that we needed to adjust because of the pandemic.

Another improvement is maybe communicating our sustainability initiatives more often, via email or intranet, without boring anyone. We need to be very careful on not overcommunicating, because people are following our social media and they read about everything online. There needs to exist this balance between communicating accordingly, but not over or under communicating. This is not an improvement but something we constantly need to be aware of and pay attention to.

Do you think that Hi Fly employees are aware of sustainability issues and the airline's sustainability initiatives?

Yes, very much so. They even have screen savers on their computers. It's pretty much everywhere.

Which sustainability initiatives do you believe employees are most engaged in?

I believe the “Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign because it’s the one that lasts longer, it’s the longest campaign that we’ve had so far and it’s the one that requires activity from the employees. I mean, we banned plastic bottles, so they are aware that they cannot carry plastic bottles to the building, for instance, and they all have their own reusable bottle and their own refill station in each floor. If not for anything else, it is something that they see every day, so they can’t really miss it.

I would say the “Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign for sure. That was the one that we did more activations and initiatives around it.

Is there anything you would like to add regarding this topic? A best practice, success story...

I think it’s interesting when you need to see the sustainability policy as a whole and need to adjust it to your company specifically, and to realize that you will have an impact, but the impact can change according to people and depending on the event or initiative.

I remember that we joined the Web Summit in 2018 and we were there on stage, we delivered reusable bottles as a gift and it was a huge success, and we had a lot of people there from Hi Fly, specifically from the IT department and from Engineering. Obviously, they are the core interested in the Web Summit, so they were more engaged with the Web Summit than the other departments. Then you have climate change, and you have people who are dealing with emissions in the aviation industry who are more engaged with the “Stop Climate Change” campaign. So, we impact people differently according to their interests but we need to make sure that we impact everyone generally when it comes to relating their own company to a sustainability purpose and that’s very important. When you have employees that are committed to sustainability and that are proud of working in a place that focuses on sustainability other than just in business, that is very important.

Annexes

Annex A – Hi Fly’s Sustainability Policy



SUSTAINABILITY POLICY TAKING ACTION, FOR A BETTER WORLD

Hi Fly and Mirpuri Foundation

Hi Fly has developed an outstanding reputation in the aviation and business sectors, as well as in consumer markets, by maintaining the highest standards of operational safety, environmental and ethical behaviour.

The Mirpuri Foundation is the main sustainability partner of the Hi Fly, which is committed to making the world a better place for future generations.

We have a long-standing commitment with regard to sustainability, based on a **three-fold approach**, incorporating sustainability in: (1) our corporate operations; (2) across the services we provide, both in the air and on the ground; and (3) through community and environmental projects.

We are committed to **operating with a purpose and successfully, driving sustainable and responsible long-term growth and profitability**, whilst minimising the inherent negative impact and risks, enhancing the benefits of our business, and responding to environmental and social challenges.

Safety, agility and trust are the cornerstones of our business.

Corporate values and strategy, along with applicable laws and regulations, best practices and our common sense and good judgement, form the basis for establishing a set of **wide-ranging principles** and implementing our **commitments towards sustainability**, most notably:

- > To safeguard the integrity of the thousands of people whose safety we are responsible for and to protect our clients and employees' data and privacy;
- > To provide quality, reliable, highly responsive and tailored services to our clients;
- > To meet legal requirements and go beyond mere compliance with the letter of the law; we aim to comply with the spirit of the law and to anticipate future legal demands, as well as market demands and to be aligned with internationally recognised standards and regulations;
- > To act honestly and ethically in the performance of our duties, not tolerating bribery and any other types of corruption, perpetrated either by our people or of, or by, any business partner, government agency or public authority. We are, therefore, committed to mitigating corruption risks, by defining, implementing and monitoring anti-corruption policies and procedures.
- > To build trust among our stakeholders. We are committed to promoting and maintaining sound and transparent relationships with our stakeholders in order to gain insight, meet their relevant needs and strive to exceed their expectations;
- > To be a learning organisation, geared in air transport (and related) industry best practices;
- > To set clear and measurable goals to drive improvement;

- > To contribute towards the sustainable development goals (SDG), by adhering to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all The United Nations Member States;
- > To promote improvement, either through incremental, innovative or disruptive developments; and
- > To monitor, evaluate, carry out regular reviews and communicate our performance.

Moreover, and since sustainable development concerns the balance between economic, environmental and social factors, we have based our Sustainability Policy on, and have further committed ourselves with:

TAKING ACTION, FOR A BETTER WORLD

FOR OUR PEOPLE

Recognising the importance of each individual's creativity and progression, solid teamwork and safe environments.

Our goals:

- To have our people totally engaged.
- To develop our human capital.
- To prevent occupational accidents and have our people committed with safety practices.

FOR OUR PLANET

Embracing our responsibility towards present and future generations, by proactively contributing to a more responsible and sustainable planet.

Our goals:

- To reduce our environmental footprint and move towards carbon neutrality.

FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Helping to strengthen communities and contributing to the enrichment of society.

Our goals:

- To benefit people in our communities by working in partnership with others to help build livelihoods, protect the environment and improve wellbeing.



FOR OUR PEOPLE (employees or outsourced personnel)

- > Promoting and sustaining a work environment that fosters mutual respect, openness and individual integrity, and proactively promote ethical behaviour in the work environment;
- > Encouraging a creative, diverse and supportive work environment;
- > Ensuring fair performance assessments, as well as equal career development opportunities, benefits and rewards, for all workers;
- > Providing a safe and healthy work environment, for the prevention of work-related injuries and ill health, and fostering workers' wellbeing;
- > Investing in the training and qualification of our workers;
- > Fostering workers' engagement and awareness, by recognising that their commitment, involvement and skills are critical to the success of our business and for the development of a sound, quality, safe, environment-friendly and social support-driven culture.

FOR OUR PLANET

- > Promoting the sustainable use of resources and preventing pollution, namely those related to energy consumption (including fuel), water consumption, waste reduction and recycling, as well as air and noise emissions;
- > Applying innovative technology (including fleet renovation), operational procedure adjustments, regular assessments, and maintenance, in order to reduce our environmental footprint;
- > Tackling single-use plastic, by eliminating its use in Hi Fly flights (codes "5K" and "5M") and influencing other players to follow the same course of action;
- > Raising general awareness on environmental issues, namely those concerning plastic pollution and ocean preservation;
- > Striving to combat climate change, by reducing and compensating carbon emissions, which arise from Hi Fly flights, and becoming carbon neutral; and
- > Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems services and combating wildlife trafficking.

FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

- > Establishing mutual-benefit partnerships, ensuring transparent and ethical actions based on trust and thoroughness, thereby contributing to successful and long-lasting relationships;
- > Enforcing Human Rights, by combating all forms of child labour or forced labour in our supply chain;
- > Communicating expectations on sustainability to our suppliers;

- > Honouring the culture, customs, history, and laws of the countries and regions in which we operate; and
- > Promoting and engaging in social contribution activities, as well as fostering community development through corporate volunteering.

To live up to these principles and commitments we are integrating them into our activities, through specific policies, procedures and practices, and with the implementation of action plans. These are applied across the company, including top management decision-making, as well as being embodied in the culture, day-to-day behaviour and tasks performed by all workers, be they employees or outsourced personnel.

Finally, this sustainability policy also aims to influence and encourage our suppliers, clients and other partners, by inviting them to endorse these principles and commitments so that we care and work together towards a better world.

Lisbon, 9th March 2020



Paulo Mirpuri
President

Annex B – Examples of Instagram posts for Hi Fly, MESA, LSKY and Safeport



hifly_airline Gostos: **mirpurifoundation** e 493 outras pessoas
hifly_airline On this World Blood Donor Day, Hi Fly recalls a blood donation action, organized at its headquarters in Lisbon, which involved employees of the company's group.

The activity was conducted in partnership with IPST (Instituto Português do Sangue e da Transplantação) and aimed to contribute to raise Portugal's blood stock levels, known to be low due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This action comes as part of Hi Fly's ongoing commitment to corporate sustainability and was thought to bring a positive impact to society. Although donating blood is always important, this act of solidarity gains an even deeper meaning when the world is facing a global health crisis.

#WorldBloodDonorDay #WBDD2021 #BloodDonation #BloodDonor #SocialResponsibility #SocialImpact #SaveLives #GiveBlood #GiveBloodGiveLife #DonateBloodSaveLives #Health #Wellness #SDG3 #HiFly #HiFlyAirline #WetLease #WetLeaseSpecialist #Covid_19 #WeFlyWeCare



mesa_maintenance Gostos: **mirpurifoundation** e 474 outras pessoas
mesa_maintenance For each minute up in the air, there are hours of maintenance to perform on the ground. 🛠️

#MESA #maintenance #engineering #aircraftmaintenance #aircraftengineering #aircraft #a330neo #airbus #airplane #plane #aviationlovers #hangar #aviation #engine

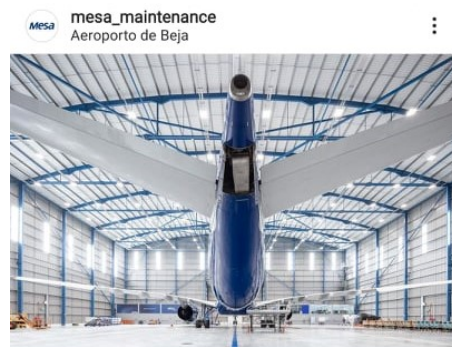
@hifly_airline



hifly_airline Gostos: **mirpurifoundation_racingteam** e 1 620 outras pessoas
hifly_airline Our A340 9H-SUN flying through the infinite skies 🌍

#AllOverTheWorld #A340 #A340300 #9HSUN #CargoVersion #HiFly #HiFlyAirline #CargoFlights #Covid_19 #WeFlyWeCare #AroundTheWorld #HiFlyCargo #aviator #planepics #planepictures #airliners #aircraft #avgeeks #planesdaily #panelovers #panelover #aviationlovers #aviationgeek #planespotters #plane #blue

@raddadaviation



mesa_maintenance Gostos: **mirpurifoundation** e 128 outras pessoas
mesa_maintenance Time to share some #aircraftknowledge!

The APU – auxiliary power unit – is a small turbine engine that is normally located in the tail cone of the aircraft. Its main use is to provide electrical and pneumatic power for aircraft systems when on the ground.

Were you familiar with this part of an airplane?

#MESA #maintenance #engineering #aircraftmaintenance #aircraftengineering #aircraftmechanic #aircraft #airplane #plane #aviation #aviationlovers #airbus #airplanetail #airplanewings #auxiliarypowerunit #hangar #beja

LSKY Isky_inflightcatering



MF Gostos: mirpurifoundation e 59 outras pessoas
Isky_inflightcatering LSKY is the main inflight catering provider for @hifly_airline, a leading wet lease airline that exclusively operates single-use plastic free flights since 2020.

Alongside Hi Fly, LSKY worked hard to revolutionize the way the industry has been dealing with single-use plastic and waste management.

#LSKY #inflightcatering #aviationcatering #catering #cateringservice #inflightmeal #onboardcuisine #sustainability #greenaviation #plasticfree

LSKY Isky_inflightcatering



MF Gostos: mirpurifoundation e 41 outras pessoas
Isky_inflightcatering When your lunch meeting is at 40.000ft 😊

#LSKY #inflightcatering #aviationcatering #executivecatering #catering #cateringservice #luxurycatering #privatejetcatering #inflightmeal #onboardcuisine #gourmet #gourmetfood #deliciousfood #healthyfood #windowview #business

safeport safeport_businessaviation
Aeroporto de Faro



MF Gostos: mirpurifoundation e outras pessoas
safeport_businessaviation Enjoy a fine meal in our welcoming Faro lounge, where sophistication and comfort perfectly align to make you feel at home.

#safeport #safeportfaro #handlingservices #fbo #businessaviation #privateaviation #businessjet #businessaircraft #executivejet #corporatetravel #businesstravel #luxurytravel #airportlounge #exclusivity #assistance #luxurious #gourmetcatering #faro

safeport safeport_businessaviation
Aeroporto de Faro



MF Gostos: mirpurifoundation e outras pessoas
safeport_businessaviation Our sophisticated lounges are the perfect place to relax and recharge in between flights. Will you let us welcome you?

#safeport #handlingservices #businessaviation #privateaviation #businessjet #businessaircraft #executivejet #corporatetravel #luxurytravel #businesstravel #airportlounge #loungedetails #indoordecor #interiordesign #sophistication #luxury #exclusivity #safeportfaro #faroairport

Annex D – Example of press release for MESA

MESA completes first cabin modification in new maintenance hangar

MESA, the engineering and maintenance company of Hi Fly's group, has completed its first maintenance work in the recently opened hangar at Beja's Civil Terminal, Portugal. This first work consisted in a cabin modification of an Airbus A321 from Hi Fly airline.

Hi Fly, a leading wet lease specialist and charter airline operating worldwide, has changed the cabin configuration of its Airbus A321 CS-TRJ, replacing the 153 seats (4 first class, 12 business and 137 economy) for a full economy version of 220 brand new seats, to meet the demands of a new operation that the aircraft has been assigned to.

This work performed by MESA implied several changes, including seats replacement, class dividers removal, PSU (passenger service unit) adaptation, floor covering replacement, placard installation, emergency equipment adaptation, cabin assignment module (CAM) replacement and crew rest removal.

The six-day cabin modification was handled by strictly following certified instructions and drawings to guarantee the continuous airworthiness of the aircraft in post-configuration.

MESA's new hangar covers an area of about 9,500 m² and includes workshops, warehouse, offices, training facilities and other support premises. It operates around the clock 24/7 and is ready to receive and service Airbus A319, A320, A321, A330, A340 and A350, having the capacity to perform maintenance works on up to three aircraft at a time.

About MESA

MESA is an aircraft line/base maintenance provider based in Lisbon, Beja, Brussels and Brisbane. The company is an EASA Part-145 Maintenance Organization, approved under Portuguese Authority (ANAC) with Certificate PT.145.020. The company is oriented to perform maintenance worldwide on Airbus A318, A319, A320, A321, A330, A340, A380 and BOMBARDIER CL-600-2B16.

Sustainability



From January 1, 2020, all Hi Fly's own flights are taking to the air without any single-use plastic items on board.

Hi Fly is committed to contributing to a more responsible and sustainable planet by fighting against the very important issues that are plastic pollution and carbon emissions.

The company is actively implementing and promoting good practices in its business:

- **1st Airline to be completely "Plastic free" by 2020**
Waste management
- **1st Airline to declare that will be carbon neutral by 2022**
Adjustment of operational procedures
New technology (new fleet of A330-900neo)
Carbon Offset Program (under development with Mirpuri Foundation)



Sustainability



The Mirpuri Foundation is the sustainability partner of Hi Fly and the two organisations often dovetail their efforts to take the Foundation's sustainability message to the four corners of the earth.

“Turn the Tide on Plastic” campaign

Hi Fly painted an Airbus A330 with a sustainability message, raising awareness on plastic pollution, operating worldwide.



“Save the Coral Reefs” campaign

Hi Fly is raising awareness for this unprecedented campaign to fight the destruction of coral reefs. If no action is taken, these beautiful ecosystems will disappear by 2050.

Sustainability Campaigns



Through these campaigns Hi Fly is deeply committed to keeping our oceans alive and is fully aligned with the United Nations' goals and **efforts to avoid the destruction of marine ecosystems and its habitats.**

Sustainability - Our Main Programs

First single-use plastic free airline

Hi Fly has undertaken a series of "plastic-free" test flights where over 700 passengers were transported between Portugal and Brazil with the usual food and drink provided - but without a single-use plastic item on board of the aircraft involved.

From January 1, 2020, all Hi Fly's own flights are taking to the air without any single-use plastic items on board. Hi Fly has sourced and developed items made of biodegradable or reusable materials.

Carbon offset

All Hi Fly own flight will be **carbon neutral before the end of 2022.** A number of carbon offset programs are being considered, tested and independently verified for implementation.

Waste management programs

Hi Fly makes a deliberate decision about how materials should be handled. Specific tactics to deal with specific materials are being implemented: **from prevention to reuse, generation, source separation, recovery, collection, transfer, recycling, treatment and correct disposal.**

Annex F – Hi Fly’s corporate website: sustainability page



SUSTAINABILITY

From January 1, 2020, all Hi Fly’s own flights are taking to the air without any single-use plastic items on board.



Hi Fly is committed to contributing to a more responsible and sustainable planet by fighting against the very important issues that are plastic pollution and carbon emissions.

The company is actively implementing and promoting good practices in its business. Hi Fly is the first Airline completely “Plastic free” on its own flights, and was the first Airline to declare that will be carbon neutral by 2022.

Miguel Foundation is the Principal Sustainability Partner of Hi Fly. Learn more [HERE](#) or at www.miguelfoundation.org
[About Hi Fly Sustainability Policy](#)

Carbon Offset

All Hi Fly own flight will be carbon neutral before the end of 2022. A number of carbon offset programs are being considered, tested and independently verified for implementation.

Waste Management Programs

Commercial aviation is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. The potential large environmental impact of aviation needs to be addressed by developing sustainable practices followed by its management and safe disposal. As part of an integrated materials management strategy, Hi Fly makes a deliberate decision about how materials should flow. Specific tactics to deal with specific materials are implemented: prevention, reuse, generation, source separation, recovery, collection, transfer, recycling, treatment and disposal.

