

TRAINING FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS: STRATEGY, CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND DIGITALISATION

Resources for Facilitators & Learners

April 2024

re:GREEN

**re:GREEN - Green and Digital Skills for Rural
Entrepreneurs**

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1. Introduction

Learning opportunities are a composite part of multiple transitions going on in the EU: Digital Transition, Green Transition, Sustainability Transition, and other transformations currently taking place across Europe. Accordingly, Rural Entrepreneurs (RE) are adult lifelong learners with greater needs and fewer opportunities (Fernandes & Kerneis, 2020). They are the target group under the Erasmus+ KA220 adult education Green and Digital Skills for Rural Entrepreneurs (re:GREEN) project (November 2022 - May 2024), which is co-funded by the Erasmus+ program.

This training package has been developed as a response towards the needs of (prospective) rural entrepreneurs in Germany, Lithuania, and Sweden. Prior to the creation of the training programme, a preparation phase has been conducted in order to better identify the needs, interests and challenges of the mentioned group.

The report on the results of this preparation phase – which you can consult [here](#) – demonstrated a need to bolster the competences of (prospective) rural entrepreneurs in the fields of business management, as well as green and digital skills. For this reason, 6 training modules have been developed by the re:GREEN partners: two of them focusing on business strategy, two focusing on circular economy practices, and two dedicated to applying digital skills in communications and marketing.

2. The Training Content

In this document, you will find the detailed content of each of these modules, as follows:

BLOCK 1. ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS STRATEGY

- Module 1. Rural Entrepreneurship Business Strategy and Operations.
- Module 2. Strategic Partnerships and Clients.

BLOCK 2. CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRACTICES FOR RURAL BUSINESSES

- Module 3. Circular Economy (CE) practices & Circular business models.
- Module 4. Step-by-step: rethink your business model & incorporate CE practice

BLOCK 3. DIGITALISATION OF RURAL BUSINESSES AND DIGITAL SKILLS

- Module 5. Sustainable Digital Marketing
- Module 6. External Digital Communication and Greenwashing.

The content of the training package can be used in its entirety or adapted to the needs of specific learning groups. The training is framed for an online setting but can also be adapted to in-person or hybrid contexts.

The best way to navigate the training package is to do so from the needs of the rural entrepreneurs. Each of the training package's three sections presented below is independent from the other two. Hence, one can choose to conduct all three sections, or to deliver only one or two of them. Activities can be used individually or combined among themselves to provide a comprehensive learning opportunity for rural entrepreneurs and those interested in the circular economy throughout Europe.

To decide which of the sections or activities to deliver, it is recommended to first conduct a needs analysis with the rural entrepreneurs and learners who will be trained. This will allow the identification of the skills that a specific group of learners needs the most.

After conducting the needs analysis, a decision must be taken to choose the modules and activities that better fit the learners' needs and interests.

These modules are supported by additional content. For instance, Module 2 is supported by a collection of [funding opportunities](#) in the partner countries, and Module 3 is supported by a [video tour of a community café in Lithuania](#), as well as by a collection of [Business Models](#).

Bear in mind that, although the sections are independent, the modules within each section are correlated. For this reason, it is highly recommended to conduct both modules from the chosen blocks/sections.

The detailed delivery plan including activities and content of each module can be found within the next pages.

Note for trainers: Annexes in each module contain materials for the learners, including activities and worksheets.

The re:GREEN Consortium wishes you a happy learning!

3. Modules' Content

Module 1- Rural Entrepreneurship Business Strategy and Operations

Total duration of the module: 3 hours

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this module, the learners will be able to:

- Develop strategy and plan operations for rural enterprises integrating CE practices and applying digital skills.
- Apply strategic analysis and planning tools SWOT and PESTEL separately or together, as the need may be.
- Use sustainable business model canvas for connecting business strategy with business operations (strategic partnerships for scaling business, channels for reaching clients, etc.).

Description of activities

1. Introduction (10 min)

Shortly introduce yourself, with the goal of building a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Encourage the participants to turn on their cameras. Prior to the session write a short script on "Digital Housekeeping" and repeat it at the start of every session (prepare a proposal, agree on "on-line learning rules").

Additional resources are shared in the Google Classroom, so make sure everyone is signed up as a learner ("students"), and co-facilitators and trainers are signed up as "teachers".

2. Check-in (10 min)

Introduce the trainer, engage participants, check expectations

Then, ask the participants these questions: **How are you feeling today? What do you hope to learn? What is your motivation to be here?** Ask the participants to share their answers by unmuting themselves or use digital tools like Mentimeter or padlet and have the participants write their answers. Ask if anyone wants to comment on what they wrote. Depending on the group, answer the questions yourself either at the beginning or after everyone else.

Material:

Suggestions: use Mentimeter or padlet for displaying learners' input

Pass the imaginary ball by having the participants call out the next person to talk by name.

3. Get-to-know-each-other and/or team building activity (15 min)

Engage participants, get to know each other, break the ice

Ask the participants: **Please show us an item which best represents / has special meaning to your business venture. Why have you chosen it?** [browse, choose, post, explain]. Give the participants 3 minutes to find the item and think of the story. Then, every participant gets 1-2 minutes to briefly present themselves (name, enterprise / venture, place they are from or they are based in, etc.) and share the story behind the item with the others.

Material: *Suggestions:* Photos, icons or pics on Miro board or Emoji on Mentimeter.

Participants can either upload or post on Miro board or show the item on camera.

4. Introductory activity (20 min)

Understand what strategy is...

Ask the participants to define strategic planning with a guiding question "What is strategy?". Give the participants 2-3 minutes to put their answers on Mentimeter or padlet. Ask participants to write down their definitions. After, show the participants the definition of strategy given by Michael Porter ([Annex I](#)). Indicate that Michael Porter was an important trailblazer in the field of strategy. Now, ask the participants to share their thoughts. Depending on the size of the group, divide the participants into break-out rooms

(max. 3-4 people). Give them 5 minutes to share their thoughts on the information presented. You can use guiding questions: What information was new or unclear to you? How have you addressed this topic in your business venture? Ask them to share what strategic planning tools they have used before or know of, writing them down in Mentimeter or padlet. Gather everyone back into the main session and ask each group to briefly share what was discussed: go over the answers of the participants. Explain that in order to come up with a strategy, it is important to understand the internal and external factors that are impacting it. Therefore, today's session will focus on using strategic planning tools, in particular SWOT and PESTEL analysis.

Material:

Suggestions: use Mentimeter or padlet for displaying, sharing and saving participants' output.

5. *Main activity 1 (40 min)*

Understand what SWOT analysis is and how to perform it on a rural entrepreneurial venture.

Explain the participants that before identifying external macro-environmental aspects that have an impact on rural enterprises, it is beneficial to look internally, namely at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These two have to do a lot with the external factors we will review in our next activity. But first we look inside. Now, provide a short explanation of what SWOT analysis is. Explain that SWOT analysis can be used in various settings: to analyse the whole organisation, market, industry, business unit, or just one activity.

Initially highlight that the first two factors, Strengths and Weaknesses, show the internal factors present in the company, relevant to the topic of analysis, and that can be controlled. Strengths focus on the positives, and Weaknesses – on the negatives. These factors could include resources (human, physical, and financial), past experience, as well as any competitive advantages or gaps. Both are fully internal factors.

The other two factors, Opportunities and Threats, include external elements that you cannot control. Opportunities hold a positive focus, and Threats – a negative. The latter has to do with hazards and risks. These two (SWOT) groups of factors could include trends (economy, industry, technology, etc.), regulations, funding sources, changing demographics, etc. Emphasize that in this case, Opportunities should not include the ways the company could succeed, but simply indicate external events that could be leveraged to the company's advantage.

You can use the figure in [Annex IV](#) to illustrate the definition and provide guiding questions for the analysis. However, make sure to underline that the participants should not answer the questions blindly, but use them after running out of ideas, as valuable insights can be easily lost by focusing on generic aspects.

Now, send the participants into the break-out rooms. Explain that they will now have 20 minutes to perform SWOT analysis of the social business presented in the case they worked on previously. Ask the participants to keep in mind the environmental, social and digital aspects, as these are the main topics of the whole training curriculum. Participants can use the template in [Annex III](#) to present their work. After the time is up, gather everyone into the main session and ask the groups to show their analyses and briefly present them. Encourage the groups that are not presenting to ask questions about both the content and the process.

After all groups present, initiate a short reflection using Mentimeter or Canva whiteboard. Guiding questions: what was the most difficult part about this activity? What sources did you use to complete it? How confident do you feel about your capabilities of performing SWOT analysis after this activity?

At the end of the activity, ask the participants to give a score on their understanding of the topic (recommended to use Mentimeter or padlet).

Material:

Suggestions: Canva whiteboard or Mentimeter.

- [Annex III](#)
- Miro board is also an option but it is more complex to set up: use it if you have sufficient time to prepare.

Comments:

The duration of the activity may vary depending on the group size and the knowledge of the participants.

6. *Main activity 2 (40 min)*

Understand what PESTEL analysis and its components are;

Perform PESTEL analysis on a rural entrepreneurial venture. As an introduction to the activity, provide a short explanation of what PESTEL analysis is, and what it helps to achieve. You may use the figure in [Annex IV](#) to illustrate the definition and expand on it.

Explain to the participants that now they will be sent into break-out rooms (max. 5 people). They have 5 min to discuss the information presented – what questions do they have, what was not fully clear, which part requires further explanation? Then, gather everyone back in the main session and collect the questions from the participants (recommended to use Canva whiteboard). In case some participants are already familiar with the tool, ask them to share the answers to the questions on the board, and expand on them where needed. Try to engage the participants by having each group fill out the “Peer-to-peer feedback form” on Canva whiteboard.

In this activity, the participants will work in groups on their own ventures: the group will have to select one or two if they are similar. Send the participants into the break-out rooms (max. 3-4 people). In case some participants hold higher level of knowledge about strategic planning, try to not put them in the same group to promote a knowledge-sharing environment between the participants. The groups now have 30 minutes to select the venture/s (the case they will work on) and perform PESTEL analysis. Ask the participants to especially focus on the environmental (greening) and digital (digitization) aspects of their chosen case as these are the main topics of the whole training curriculum. Participants can use the template in Annex IV to present their work. After the time is up, gather everyone into the main session and ask the groups to show their analyses and briefly present them. Encourage the groups that are not presenting to ask questions about both the content and the process.

After all groups present, initiate a short reflection using Mentimeter. Guiding questions: what was the most difficult part about this activity? What sources did you use to complete it? How confident do you feel about your capabilities of performing PESTEL analysis after this activity?

Material:

Suggestions: Canva whiteboard, padlet or Mentimeter.

- [Annex IV](#)

Comments:

- The duration of the activity may vary depending on the group size and the knowledge of the participants.
- The duration of the activity may vary depending on the group size and the knowledge of the participants.

7. *Main activity 3 (15 min)*

Understand how sustainable business model canvas connects business strategy

Explain to the participants that today, we will use the insights that PESTEL and SWOT analysis uncovered and start building the business strategy. The analysis allows one to understand the business environment and market in which the enterprise operates and helps to make informed business strategy and tactical decisions.

Explain to the participants that now they will be sent into break-out rooms (max. 3-4 people). They have 5 min to discuss the information presented. (Make sure to explain how what learners worked on in Module 1 connects to Business Operations and Clients Segmentation which they are working on now, in Module 2.)

Then, gather everyone back in the main session and collect the questions from the participants (recommended to use Canva whiteboard, padlet or Mentimeter). Then proceed to discuss learners' output. (During testing phase, do not forget to write down learners' feedback about the task and tools.)

In case some participants are already familiar with the tool, ask them to share the answers to the questions on the board, and expand on them where needed. Try to engage the participants – ask if they would like to elaborate on the question they have written. At the end of the activity, ask the participants to give a score on their understanding of the topic (recommended to use Mentimeter or Canva whiteboard).

Suggestions: Canva whiteboard, padlet or Mentimeter.

Material:

- [Annex II](#)

Comments:

- The duration of the activity may vary depending on the group size and the knowledge of the participants.

8. Final activity / Final debriefing (5 min)

Retain what was learned in this module

Open a digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter, and ask the participants to be ready to type in their answers. They have 90 seconds to answer each question, providing as many keywords as possible. Questions to ask:

- What did I learn today?
- What would I like to deepen my knowledge in?
- What did I not understand or did not see the value in?

After the time is up, review each question, encouraging the participants to comment on their answers. Approaching the last question, encourage the participants to elaborate on what they indicated, and answer any questions about the content. Inform the learners that upcoming modules will also focus on the topics of circular economy, green and digital skills.

Material:

Suggestions: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

9. Sharing of resources (2 min)

Share the list of references for extra materials. All but the last of annexes contain good quantity of materials for self-paced, independent and individual learning.

Material:

- A file with list of references.
- Google Classroom is also ok.

10. Feedback collection (5 min)

Introduce to participants a few questions prepared beforehand that allow them to share their experiences. Examples include:

- How did you feel during this training?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- What did you learn that was new and what did you already know?

11. Check out and closing (5 min)

This is the last activity of the module.

Using a whiteboard, Miro board or Mentimeter, ask the participants to draw a simple drawing or share a photo which reflects how they are currently feeling.

As in the beginning, ask the participants to unmute themselves and by passing an imaginary ball (calling out the next person to speak by name), ask them to elaborate on their drawing or picture.

After everyone has shared, share about your drawing/picture, thank the participants for joining and close the training.

1.1. Annex I. What is strategy?

What is business strategy?

Michael Porter is the founder of the modern strategy field and one of the most influential thinkers on management and competitiveness. He is the author of 19 books and over 100 articles and has been included in the Top Ten Management Thinkers list curated by Thinkers50 every year since 2001.¹ **“Strategy is the creation of a unique and valuable position, involving a different set of activities”** (Porter, M. E., 2008)². [re:GREEN note: Educator can show the learners this video³ of Michael Porter explaining what strategy is.]

“Strategy is the intent. It determines what needs to be done and why and has a way of assessing its effectiveness.

It’s your mission, vision, and long-term plan to achieve your goals.

It involves intentional and focused high-level thinking that defines a direction to take in the future. Strategies are aligned with the goals, objectives, and broad vision you want to achieve.

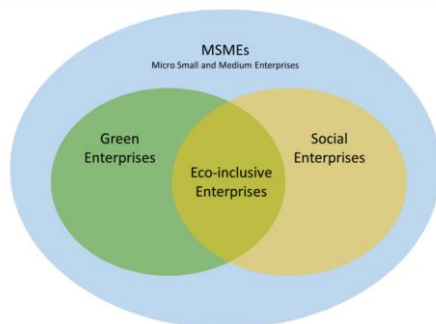
Typically, strategy is formed by leaders within the organization. Group-, product-, or campaign-level strategies should be clearly related to the strategy set at the top.”⁴

How does “greening business strategy” and “digitalizing business” look in SMEs?

Every rural entrepreneurial venture is born as an MSME, that is micro- small or medium enterprise. Such businesses are crucial in local economies because they create value and positive ecological and social impact. Thus, International Labour Organization’s insights are especially relevant here: “The terms green, social, and eco-inclusive enterprises are often muddled by connotations in the literature and used interchangeably, resulting in a lack of clarity. Regardless of the ambiguity around these terms, green, social, and eco-inclusive enterprises have received significant attention in the last decade due to the belief that they can create alternative and innovative solutions to the world’s social and environmental problems. Although the data is limited, green, social, and eco-inclusive enterprises likely represent a much smaller share of the entrepreneurial ecosystem than traditional MSMEs.” (ILO, 2020, p. 16).

Figure “Greening and digitizing small business ventures”.

Figure 2. Typology of MSNs



Source: ILO (2020, p. 18).

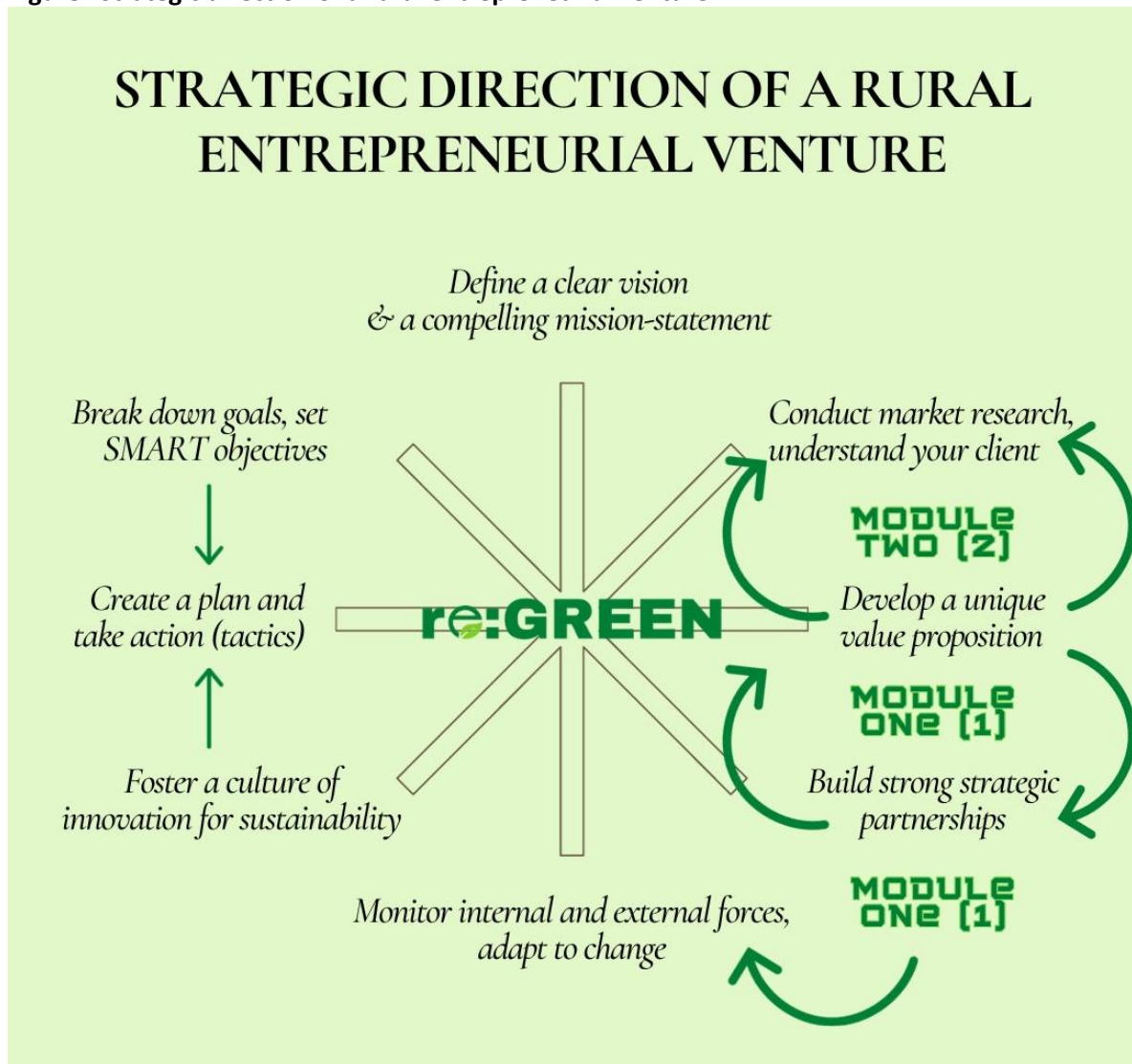
¹ The Essential Porter. The Essential Porter - Institute For Strategy And Competitiveness - Harvard Business School. (n.d.). <https://www.isc.hbs.edu/about-michael-porter/Pages/the-essential-porter.aspx>

² Porter, M. E. (2008). The five competitive forces that shape strategy. *Harvard business review*, 86(1), 78.

³ What is Strategy? (2009). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibrxIP0H84M&ab_channel=AmirMohtasebi

⁴ Perry, E. (February 23, 2023) Strategy vs. tactics: the difference is execution. Professional development. Acquired from: <https://www.betterup.com/blog/strategy-vs-tactics#:~:text=Strategy%20is%20the%20intent,to%20take%20in%20the%20future>

Figure “Strategic direction of a rural entrepreneurial venture”.



Source: created by LISVA's Ieva Žebrytė who was inspired by Perry (February 23, 2023) *

The figure illustrates how the two modules of block 1 of the re:GREEN trainings interrelate in terms of subject-matter and flow of activities. It also shows what other aspects of a business model rural entrepreneurs should be mindful of when focusing on their strategy and business model, strategic networking (strategic partners) and client segments.

References for this Annex:

ILO (2020) Growing green: Fostering a green entrepreneurial ecosystem for youth - Geneva: International Labour Organization. ISBN: 978-92-2-032041 9. Acquired from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_755851.pdf

Perry, E. (February 23, 2023) Strategy vs. tactics: the difference is execution. Professional development. Acquired from: <https://www.betterup.com/blog/strategy-vs-tactics#:~:text=Strategy%20is%20the%20intent.,to%20take%20in%20the%20future.>

1.2. Annex II. Value proposition and strategic direction.

Just as any entrepreneurial venture, an organization run by a rural entrepreneur must establish a clear strategic direction (vision, mission, strategic goals and objectives). A simple way of thinking about it in terms of timeline, strategizing and planning is that the vision is very long term and faraway aim; that the mission is composed of medium-term SMART * goals and objectives which are achieved through strategic action, strategic partnerships, marketing and other strategies.

For the strategic direction to effectively work for your venture’s development, all of the above must be related to the value proposition at the centre of the business model.**

* SMART⁵ – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

** Sustainable, resource-efficient and/or circular [economy] business model canvas

“Why is it important to understand the strategy versus tactics debate?”

The main benefit of understanding the difference between strategic objectives and tactics is that it allows you to separate the strategic thinking process.

This helps to create a clear strategy that doesn’t get bogged down in tactical details.

It can be all too easy to fall into the specifics of how you will enact your grand strategy.

This could keep you from spending time as a leadership team or business owner developing an overall strategy that aligns closely with each goal your company has defined. <...> “Strategy is often confused with tactics because both refer to the specific path to getting something done. However, strategy is far more nuanced. A tactic is an action taken: it’s not good or bad in and of itself. A business strategy is a way of determining if a tactic is in alignment with the overarching goals and values of the organization.” (Perry, 2023, p. n/a).

Value proposition is where components of strategy and tactics meet through the business model.

Figure “Sustainable, resource-efficient and/or circular [economy] business model canvas”

Sustainable-CE business model canvas for rural entrepreneurs

Purpose: ...		Unique Value Proposition: ...	Environmental & Social Impact: ...	
Problem: ...	Key Activities: ...		Customers, consumers (client segmentation): ...	Solution: ...
Standard/s: ...	Key Partners: ...		Key Metrics: ...	Beneficiaries: Community, territory
Key Resources:			Channels for reaching customers, consumers:	
Cost Structure:		Income Structure:		

⁵ <https://www.planarty.com/blog/smart-goals#:~:text=By%20having%20SMART%20Goals%20and,moving%22%20through%20life%20quite%20randomly.>

*** regional enterprise, in Lithuania, means a business idea being generated and/or venture being implemented outside the capital city Vilnius and/or top 5 biggest cities on the national territory.

To provide the participants with more information on PESTEL and SWOT analyses, you can refer to these sources:

- Business To You, 2016. *Scanning the Environment: PESTEL Analysis*. Available at <https://www.business-to-you.com/scanning-the-environment-pestel-analysis/>
- Gomer, J., & Hille, J. (2014). *An Essential Guide to SWOT Analysis*. Columbia University. <http://mci.ei.columbia.edu/files/2012/12/An-Essential-Guide-to-SWOT-Analysis.pdf>
- *What is PESTLE Analysis? An Important Business Analysis Tool*. PESTLE Analysis. (2023, April 28). <https://pestleanalysis.com/what-is-pestle-analysis/>
- Website [The business model analyst](#) provides a number of examples of PESTEL and SWOT analyses for different firms and sectors.

1.3. Annex III. Template for SWOT analysis.

“A SWOT analysis is a framework used in a business’s strategic planning to evaluate its competitive positioning in the marketplace. The four points of a proper SWOT analysis are Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.”⁶

Template for “SWOT Analysis” *	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Figure “SWOT analysis template with questions”.

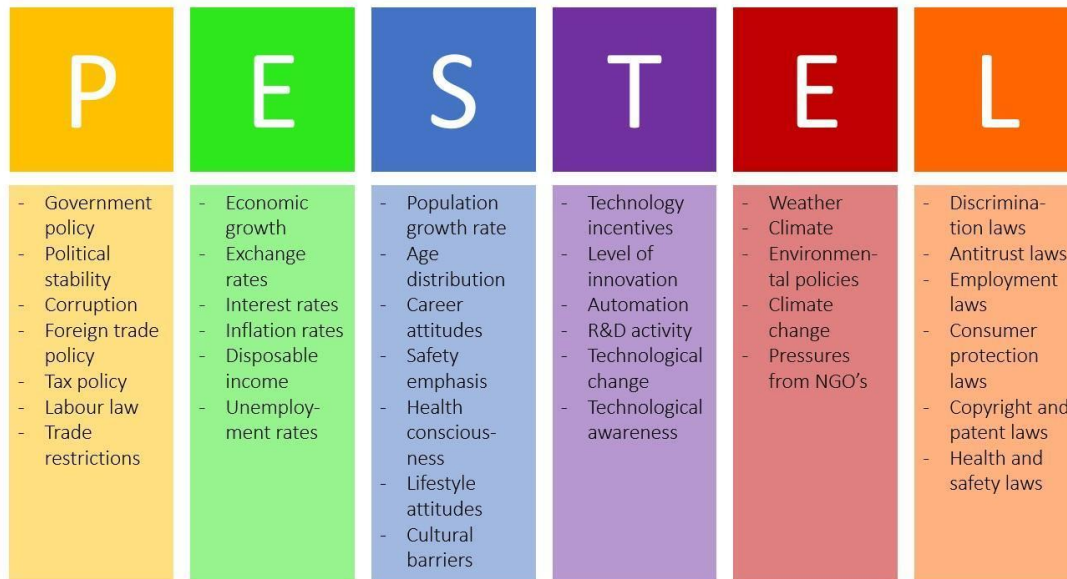
<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our strongest asset? • What knowledge do we have on our team that is beneficial or unique? • What are all of the assets we have? • What unique resources do we possess? • What is our competitive advantage? • What’s our unique selling or value proposition? • Can we easily get additional capital, if we want to? • What business processes work successfully? 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have gaps on our team? • What do we not have that we need to be competitive? • What tangible assets do we not have but currently need? • What business processes need improvement? • What knowledge or assets do our competitors have that we do not? • What technology needs to be updated? • Does one customer make up more than 10% of our business? • What expertise do we lack?
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a current need in the market that we could be addressing? • What trends might positively impact us? • What talent is available that we could hire? • Are there products our customers ask for that we could provide? • Can we offer something that our competitors don’t? • Can we increase our pricing in some way? 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any upcoming law or regulation changes that will impact us? • Are our competitors offering new products now or in the near future? • Are we dependent on a single manufacturer or supplier? • What happens if a natural disaster strikes either where we do business or where we get products/materials from? • How easy is it for someone to poach key employees?

Source: White, J., & Botorff, C. (2022, May 11). *What is a SWOT analysis? Download our free template.* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/what-is-swot-analysis/>

⁶ White, J., & Botorff, C. (2022, May 11). What is a SWOT analysis? Download our free template. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/what-is-swot-analysis/>

1.4. Annex IV. Template for PESTEL analysis

“PESTEL Analysis is a framework or tool used by” organizations to “analyse and monitor” the external macro-environment factors that have an impact on an enterprise, organization, company, venture, or an entire industry. It examines the factors in the external environment by organizing them into categories under Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal dimensions.⁷



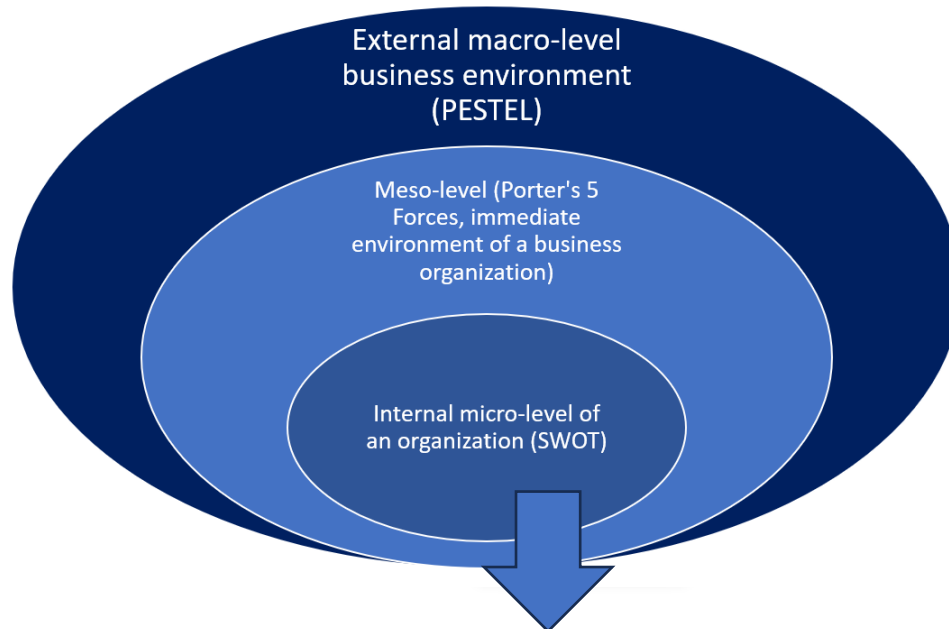
Source: de Bruin, L. (2016, September 18). *Scanning the Environment: PESTEL Analysis*. Business To You. <https://www.business-to-you.com/scanning-the-environment-pestel-analysis/> and Libguides: Industry Research: Pestel Analysis. PESTEL Analysis - Industry Research - LibGuides at Washington State University. (2023). <https://libguides.libraries.wsu.edu/c.php?g=294263&p=4358409>

Template for PESTEL analysis for [...] enterprise / venture					
Political dimension	Economic dimension	Sociocultural dimension	Technological dimension	Environmental dimension	Legal dimension
/local economy-specific factor description/ /national economy-specific factor description/	/local economy-specific factor description/ /national economy-specific factor description/	/local economy-specific factor description/ /national economy-specific factor description/	/local economy-specific factor description/ /national economy-specific factor description/	/local economy-specific factor description/ /national economy-specific factor description/	/local economy-specific factor description/ /national economy-specific factor description/

⁷ Libguides: Industry Research: Pestel Analysis. PESTEL Analysis - Industry Research - LibGuides at Washington State University. (2023). <https://libguides.libraries.wsu.edu/c.php?g=294263&p=4358409>

1.5. Annex V. Understanding how external business environment connects with rural entrepreneurial venture business model.

Figure “Connecting external and internal business environment with the business model”.



Sustainable-CE business model canvas for rural entrepreneurs

Purpose: ...		Unique Value Proposition: ...	Environmental & Social Impact: ...	
Problem: ...	Key Activities: ...		Customers, consumers (client segmentation): ...	Solution: ...
Standard/s: ...	Key Partners: ...		Key Metrics: ...	Beneficiaries: <i>Community, territory</i>
Key Resources:			Channels for reaching customers, consumers:	
Cost Structure:		Income Structure:		

Source: developed by the authors based on based on Žebrytė (2022), Osterwalder et al. (2005) and Osterwalder & Pigneur (2009, 2011).

A traditional business model canvas is a tool used in strategic planning and tactical execution of strategic plans. “A business model describes the rationale of how an organisation creates, delivers, and captures value. <...> The nine blocks cover the four main areas of a business: customers, offer, infrastructure, and financial viability” (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2009). It is a one-page canvas, developed by Alex Osterwalder in 2008 as a follow-up to his dissertation defended

in 2006. Sustainable Business Model Canvas (below) has been adapted by the authors to fit the trainers' needs of presenting learners with tools tailored to Circular Economy and/or resource efficient business models for rural entrepreneurs.

There is no straight line from Business Strategy to Business Tactics and then to Business Operations; however, to adopt different tools and hone skills the learners are encouraged to simply think of this in terms of a linear relationship or a step-by-step process. **Business Operations are sets of practices within an entrepreneurial venture which have to do with the people and processes and are directed at value creation and exchange (Žebrytė, forthcoming).**

References for this Annex:

Osterwalder, A., Pigneur, Y., & Tucci, C. L. (2005). Clarifying business models: Origins, present, and future of the concept. *Communications of the association for IS*, 16(1), 1.

Osterwalder, A. & Pigneur, Y. (2009). *Business Model Generation*. Preview. Self-published.

Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2011). Aligning profit and purpose through business model innovation. *Responsible management practices for the 21st century*, 61-76.

Žebrytė, I. (2022). *Playbook para docentes en Emprendimiento Sostenible*. Universidad de La Frontera. Available at: <https://docencia.ufro.cl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Playbook-V6.pdf>

1.6. Annex VI. Application of Knowledge Assignment Module 1.

Use the sheet below to build your action plan in pairs.

First part, as per usual, is to identify your goal. The next part, *actions*, should provide clear steps that you and your team will take to reach the goal. They will help you to plan out the upcoming process, and to see where you are right now in regard of reaching your goal. Add responsible persons, timeline, resources, potential difficulties and desired outcomes for each action.

Action Plan													
Goal	<i>Describe here one specific business goal. Start with the goals which emanate from your strategic objectives. Make one action plan for each of the goals under each strategic objective. (It seems like a lot of time spent on planning but the time spent on making the actions plan, observing where it overlaps with actions plans for other goals and objectives, as well as other similar endeavours will save the rural entrepreneur much more time later, just doing business, creating value and impact in their local economies.)</i>												
Action Plan	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Actions</td> <td><i>steps you plan to take to achieve your goal</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Persons in charge</td> <td><i>staff members who will be handling each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Timeline</td> <td><i>deadline for each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resources</td> <td><i>assets you need to allocate for each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Potential barriers</td> <td><i>factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Outcomes</td> <td><i>desired result for each step</i></td> </tr> </table>	Actions	<i>steps you plan to take to achieve your goal</i>	Persons in charge	<i>staff members who will be handling each step</i>	Timeline	<i>deadline for each step</i>	Resources	<i>assets you need to allocate for each step</i>	Potential barriers	<i>factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step</i>	Outcomes	<i>desired result for each step</i>
	Actions	<i>steps you plan to take to achieve your goal</i>											
	Persons in charge	<i>staff members who will be handling each step</i>											
	Timeline	<i>deadline for each step</i>											
	Resources	<i>assets you need to allocate for each step</i>											
	Potential barriers	<i>factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step</i>											
Outcomes	<i>desired result for each step</i>												
Evidence of Success	<i>Which indicators will you use to assess whether you've reached your goals?</i>												
Tracking and Evaluation Process	<i>How will you track your progress to make sure you'll reach your goals?</i>												

Module 2- Strategic partnerships and clients

Total duration of the module: 3 hours

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this module, the learners will be able to:

- Identify clients' needs and detect possible ways of meeting those needs through client segmentation.
- Develop a "client persona" profile.
- Make their venture-specific strategic partner map.
- Develop a "desired strategic partner" profile.

Description of activities

1. Check-in (15 min)

Engage participants, check expectations

Shortly greet the participants, with the goal of lightening the mood and creating a warm atmosphere. Encourage the participants to turn on their cameras. Ask the participants:

How are you feeling today? Percentage-wise, how present are you to start learning? What are your expectations 4 today's module (looking at the title)?

Ask the participants to share their answers by unmuting themselves (suggestion: pass the imaginary ball by having the participants call out the next person to talk by name) or use digital tools like padlet or Mentimeter and have the participants write their answers. Ask if anyone wants to comment on what they wrote.

Material:

Suggestions: padlet or Mentimeter.

Comments:

Depending on the group, answer the questions yourself either at the beginning or after everyone else.

2. Get-to-know-each-other and/or team building activity 10 min

Engage participants, get to know each other, break the ice

As the participants already know each other, offer a short team-building activity. Ask the participants to answer some light-hearted questions (depending on the group's common characteristics, or external factors (end of the year, etc). For example:

How did your rural business idea come about?

What is your 2024 New Year's Resolution as a rural entrepreneur?

Material: Suggestions: Canva whiteboard or Mentimeter.

3. Introductory activity - reminder 10 minutes

Recap of the last module

Ask the participants to openly share by unmuting themselves what they remember from the last training session. Encourage to start with naming keywords or short topics and ask the participants to add more information as the activity goes on. After a few minutes, show the

participants illustrations from the previous module (SWOT, PESTEL), and shortly summarize the key aspects.

You can also hold this activity using a Canva whiteboard, padlet or Mentimeter. Suggestions: Canva whiteboard, padlet or Mentimeter.

Material:

Module 1 materials and [Annex I](#)

4. Main activity 1 30 minutes

Explain to the participants that this activity will focus on practically applying the knowledge acquired in previous activities. However, this time it will be focused on “Strategic Partnerships” as an essential part of a business model shown in Annex II. The template for this activity is presented in Annex V.

Explain to the participants that now they will be sent into break-out rooms (max. 3-4 people). They will have 5 min to discuss the information presented and take notes of the questions do they have; what was not fully clear; which part requires further explanation? Then they will have 15 minutes to complete as much of the “Strategic Partner Mapping template” as they can manage within the time limit.

The participants go on into their break rooms while the trainers pop-in and out answering questions and helping learners with their technical issues.

Although the task is individual, participants should discuss and share ideas with each other. After the time is up, get everyone back into the main room and ask if someone would like to share questions, thoughts, or remarks. Collect the questions from the participants on Canva whiteboard, padlet or Mentimeter. In case some participants were already familiar with the tool, ask them to share the answers to the questions on the board, and expand on them where needed. Try to engage the participants – ask if they would like to elaborate on the question they have written down. Make sure that all questions are answered before moving on to explaining the Action Plan assignment.

Material: The visual prop for this activity is available in [Annex IV](#).

5. Action Plan. Knowledge application assignment for “between modules” 15 minutes

Build an Action Plan for building a strategic partnership

Explain to the participants that the next module will focus on implementing organizational strategy through a business model, which will help to further develop and strengthen your social enterprise plan. To have a jump start on that tomorrow, and to conclude what was presented today, talk about the insights uncovered by the analyses and plan how to use them. For this autonomous and individual assignment instructions may be found on the worksheet, in Annex V. Build an Action Plan that shows how you will take advantage of an opportunity for your business through building a strategic partnership

To empower the learners do not call the action plan assignment “homework”.

6. Main Activity 2 40 – 45 minutes

Detect possible ways of meeting clients’ needs through client segmentation

Provide the learners with the following context:

Creating Ideal Client Personas.

Demographics: Describing your target customer's key features

Challenges: Explaining what challenges your target customer faces

Goals: Identifying what your target customer wants to achieve

Values: Detailing what your target customer cares about the most

Ideal Client Timeline: Past to Present

Material:

- Suggestions: Canva whiteboard, Google Jam Board, padlet or Mentimeter.
- [Annex III](#)

Comments:

The duration of the activity may vary depending on the group size and the knowledge of the participants.

7. Action Plan 25 minutes

Build a plan that shows how you will take advantage of Social business model canvas

Explain to the participants that now that they have seen what the process of filling out the Social business model canvas looks like, they can create an action plan which will help to prepare a Social business model canvas for their businesses. Ask them to take this time to prepare an Action plan on how they will create the canvas for their business, indicating the actions needed, persons in charge, timeline, resources, and potential barriers. Advice to take time and think about every section of the Social business model canvas – which people in your team should be involved? What additional information is needed? Should more research be done to make fact-based statements?

Send the participants into break-out rooms in pairs, if possible, pairing them according to their industry or sector. Give the participants the action plan worksheet in Annex IV, and allow 20 minutes to work on it. Although the task is individual, participants can discuss and share ideas with each other. After the time is up, get everyone back into the main room and ask if someone would like to share questions, thoughts, or remarks.

Material: [Annex IV](#)

8. Final activity / Final debriefing re Block 1 5 minutes

Retain the learnt information in this module

Open a digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter, and ask the participants to be ready to type in their answers. They have 90 seconds to answer each question, providing as many keywords as possible. Questions to ask:

1. What did I learn today? What would I like to deepen my knowledge in? What did I not understand or did not see the value in?
2. What do you leave with today? (Roundtable)

After the time is up, review each question, encouraging the participants to comment on their answers. Approaching the last question, encourage the participants to elaborate on what they indicated, and answer any questions about the content. Inform the learners that upcoming modules will also focus on the topics of circular economy, green and digital skills.

After this, ask the participants to share (by writing it down on a digital whiteboard, Miro board or Mentimeter) one thing that they will do with their team after this training. If someone would like to, encourage them to elaborate on the answer.

Material: Suggestions: Canva whiteboard, padlet or Mentimeter.

9. Sharing of resources related to Block 1 2 minutes

To provide the participants with resources for more information on Social business model canvas can refer to these sources:

- A. Osterwalder & Yves Pigneur 'Business model generation: A handbook for visionaries, game changers, and Challengers'
- What is a social business model canvas?. Social Business Design. (2022, May 19). <https://socialbusinessdesign.org/what-is-a-social-business-model-canvas/>
- What is a social business model canvas?. Social Business Design. (2022). <https://socialbusinessdesign.org/what-is-a-social-business-model-canvas/>

Additional tools which assist in developing Business model canvas:

- Customer exploration map. Business Model Toolbox. (2021, March 23). <https://bmtoolbox.net/tools/customer-exploration-map/>
- Value proposition canvas. Strategyzer. <https://www.strategyzer.com/canvas/value-proposition-canvas>

10. Feedback collection 5 minutes

Introduce to participants a few questions prepared beforehand that allow them to share their experiences. Examples include:

- How did you feel during this training?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- What did you learn that was new and what did you already know?

11. Check out and closing 5 minutes

This is the last activity of the module.

Ask the participants to think of the most important thing that they are taking from this training.

Using a whiteboard, Miro board or Mentimeter, ask them to choose an emoticon or type out a word which summarizes it.

Participants are welcome to react, and elaborate on their answer. After everyone has shared, share about your emoticon/word, thank the participants for joining and close the training.

Material: Suggestions: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

2.1. Annex I. Rural entrepreneurial venture stakeholders: strategic partners and clients

Same business model canvas, new information.

Figure “Sustainable, resource-efficient and/or circular [economy] business model canvas”

Sustainable-CE business model canvas for rural entrepreneurs

Purpose: ...		Unique Value Proposition: ...	Environmental & Social Impact: ...	
Problem: ...	Key Activities: ...		Customers, consumers (client segmentation): ...	Solution: ...
Standard/s: ...	Key Partners: ...		Key Metrics: ...	Beneficiaries: <i>Community, territory</i>
Key Resources:			Channels for reaching customers, consumers:	
Cost Structure:		Income Structure:		

[Instructions for the educator: in this module the learners focus on the “Key Partners”, “Clients, customers, consumers” and “Beneficiaries” blocks of the canvas].

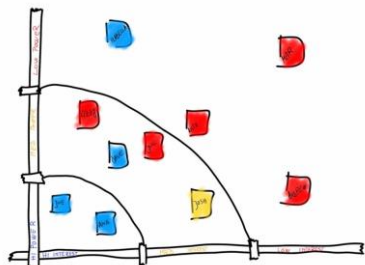
2.2. Annex II. Strategic partner mapping and radar visual & template.

Figure “Strategic Partner Mapping Step 1: ”



Source: adapted by the authors, taken from EKT, LDK & LiSVA (forthcoming).

Figure “Strategic Partner Mapping Step 2: stakeholder radar”.



c039067d1cfb

Source: <https://medium.com/the-corporate-startup/stakeholder-radar->




Template for recording the data for your venture’s “Stakeholder radar” *			
	Low power	Medium power	High power
Low interest			
Medium interest			
High interest			


2.3. Annex III. Client Focus. Segmentation of Clients

Figure “Ideal Client Persona”



Canva template for Client Persona description

Persona 1  **re:GREEN**  **LIETUVOS SOCIALINIO VERSLO ASOCIACIJA**  TIP: Duplicate these pages to repeat the exercise for another persona.

	Awareness	Consideration	Purchase	Onboarding	Advocacy
User Actions (Activities)	Add your thought here	Add your thought here	Add your thought here	Add your thought here	Add your thought here
Touchpoints (Interaction Points)	Example: Email, Website, or Store				
Pain points (Obstacles, barriers, or bottlenecks)	Add your thought here				
Emotions (Mood Meter)					
Possible Solutions (Improvements to experience)	Add your thought here				

2.4. Annex IV. Application of Knowledge Assignment Module 2.

Use the sheet below to build your action plan.

After identifying an opportunity, think how you could use it for organization's advantages (remember "strengths" from SWOT analysis). In other words, try to specify what you would like to achieve through this opportunity. It will be your *goal* in this exercise (see below). Try to be concise and concrete.

The next part, *actions*, should provide clear steps that you and your team will take to reach the goal. They will help you to plan out the upcoming process, and to see where you are right now in regard of reaching your goal. Add responsible persons, timeline, resources, potential difficulties (remember "threats" from SWOT analysis) and desired outcomes for each action.

Keep in mind the key topics of this training – circular economy, green and digital skills. Focusing on an opportunity that is related to these factors will help you in further modules of this training.

Action plan for committing a Strategic Partner as an ally for your business venture													
Opportunity	<i>Opportunity for getting a strategic partner on board with your organization's strategic direction. For this exercise, an opportunity to be addressed can be (but is not restricted to):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Upcoming EU Funding Programme call</i> - <i>Lack of product/service that would solve our customer's problem</i> - <i>New and rising trend within your sector</i> - <i>Changing demographics in your region</i> - <i>Strong strategic partnership opportunity</i> - <i>New regulations or policies within your sector</i> 												
Goal	<i>Consider which aspects of your organization's strategic direction are in need of a strategic partner/s, <u>and</u> potential stakeholder's interests (think of co-creation and exchange of value)</i>												
Action Plan	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Actions</td> <td><i>steps you plan to take to achieve your goals</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Persons in charge</td> <td><i>staff members who will be handling each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Timeline</td> <td><i>deadline for each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resources</td> <td><i>assets you need to allocate for each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Potential barriers</td> <td><i>factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Outcomes</td> <td><i>desired impact or result for each step</i></td> </tr> </table>	Actions	<i>steps you plan to take to achieve your goals</i>	Persons in charge	<i>staff members who will be handling each step</i>	Timeline	<i>deadline for each step</i>	Resources	<i>assets you need to allocate for each step</i>	Potential barriers	<i>factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step</i>	Outcomes	<i>desired impact or result for each step</i>
	Actions	<i>steps you plan to take to achieve your goals</i>											
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	Resources	<i>assets you need to allocate for each step</i>											
	Potential barriers	<i>factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step</i>											
Outcomes	<i>desired impact or result for each step</i>												
Evidence of Success	<i>Which indicators will you use to assess whether you've reached your goals?</i>												
Tracking and Evaluation Process	<i>How will you track your progress to make sure you'll reach your goals?</i>												

Module 3 – Circular Economy practices & Circular business models

Total duration of the module: 3-3.5 hours

Learning outcomes:

By the end of this module, the learners will be able to:

- Identify diverse circular economy practices that are relevant to rural businesses.
- Recognize different circular business models that enhance the environmental footprint of rural businesses.
- Explain how to apply diverse circular economy practices that reduce the negative impact of rural businesses on the environment and boost positive impact.

Description of activities

1. Check-in (10 min)

Engage participants, check expectations

Ask participants:

- How are you feeling today?
- What are you most looking forward to today? What do you hope to learn?

Then, ask them to share their answers either in a circle by unmuting themselves, or use a digital tool such as a digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter. If using a digital tool, ask participants to write their answers. Then, ask them if anyone wants to comment on what they shared. Don't forget to also introduce yourself and answer the questions as well!

Material:

Suggestions: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

2. Get-to-know-each-other and/or team building activity 10 min

Engage participants, get to know participants

Ask participants to answer to the question:

- Which movie/cartoon/book character most translates your personality as rural entrepreneurs/rural workers?

To do so, create a Miro or White board where they can add a fun picture. Give them 5 min to consider and complete the task. Then, ask them to present themselves (name, company, sector) and share why they chose the images they did.

Material:

Suggestions: A digital whiteboard or Miro board

3. Introductory activity 20 minutes

Understand what the Circular Economy is

Start by asking participants to define the circular economy.

- What do they know about it?
- What are the main aspects?
- What positive economic (profit) effects can the circular economy have on businesses?

Again, working with a digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter, ask participants to write down their definitions. Give them 5-10 min to do so.

Then, present the definition of the Circular economy as described by the European Parliament. This can be written down in the digital whiteboard or Miro board.

“The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended.

In practice, it implies reducing waste to a minimum. When a product reaches the end of its life, its materials are kept within the economy wherever possible thanks to recycling. These can be productively used again and again, thereby creating further value.” (European Parliament, 2023).

Optionally, you can show to participants [this video](#) (European Parliament, 2018) of the European Parliament.

In addition, share two quotes regarding the economic benefits of the circular economy:

- According to the World Economic Forum, “Research shows that the circular economy offers a \$4.5 trillion economic opportunity by reducing waste, stimulating innovation and creating employment” (McGinty, 2021)
- Finally, “The ability to reuse materials in the production of new products instead of sourcing new materials can, in the long run, reduce operational costs. Reusing existing materials also takes away from an industry’s dependency on resources that are otherwise volatile, whether in price or availability”. (Wright, 2023)

Now, still showing the definition, ask participants if anything in these quotes seems surprising to them. Reflect on whether their initial thoughts were close to what they read now.

Explain: What is innovative about the circular economy is the idea of moving away from a linear model, which has been predominant since the Industrial Revolution, and which is based on the take-make-dispose approach. Given the planetary boundaries, increased population, and reduced resource availability, this model has become unsustainable, which creates a need for a new, more resilient model. As a result, “the circular economy gives us the tools to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss together, while addressing important social needs” (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, n.d.).

Material:

Suggestions: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

4. Main activity 1 20 minutes

With this activity, we aim to brainstorm about strategies or practices that can be used to promote the circular economy.

Explain to participants that now they will brainstorm about how they can promote the circular economy in their business.

To do this, participants will work in groups.

1. Bring the learners into groups of 3-4 people.

2. Share with participants: The circular economy is a model “where waste is eliminated, resources are circulated, and nature is regenerated” (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, n.d.). It is based on three principles, which are driven by design: “eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials (at their highest value), and regenerate nature” (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, n.d.).
3. Based on this definition and the one shared at the start of the lesson, ask them to brainstorm about what are the strategies of the circular economy for 10 minutes. Meaning, what would be simple actions that would enable them to promote the circular economy? Have them write their answers in a digital whiteboard, Miro board, or provide them with a worksheet.
4. Once the time is over, invite the learners to come back to plenary. Each group may present their ideas to the others. Meanwhile, the trainer collects the ideas on a poster or whiteboard to make them visible for the group. Each group may have between 2-4 minutes to present, depending on the number of groups.

Then, introduce to participants the 9 Rs of the Circular Economy by showing them the image in [Annex I](#).

Explain to participants that the Rs are strategies or practices that can be used to promote the circular economy. This framework is based on the waste hierarchy, going from the strategy with the biggest circularity (R0) to the one with the least (R9). This means that the least resources are recovered through R9 and that most value is lost in the material. Suggestions: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

Material:

- [Annex I](#)
- The duration of the activity may vary depending on the group size.

5. *Main activity 2 30 minutes*

With this activity, we aim to understand how to apply diverse circular economy practices that reduce the negative impact of rural businesses on the environment and boost positive impact.

Tell participants that now, we'll focus on how the circular economy can operate in rural communities.

Introduction activity (optional):

1. Tell participants to think about the 9 Rs that they have just seen in the last activity and the fact that the circular economy also involved innovation through online or mobile platforms. Remind them that the circular economy can be applied through all sectors and industries.
2. Then, give them 5 minutes to reflect on how these practices and innovation could have an impact in rural lives or their own activities.
3. Ask participants to share their ideas. (Note: take notice if anyone mentions regeneration or digital tools).

Now, tell participants that we will work with 3 cases.

1. Divide participants into groups of 3-4 people. Ideally, divide participants according to their sectors, so that they can work on the case that most resembles their area of activity.

2. Then, hand out the cases in Annex II to each group accordingly. The re:GREEN business models can also be used for this activity.
3. Give participants 20 minutes to read the cases and work on the worksheets. Inform them they'll be asked to present their conclusions afterwards, through 2-3 min presentations.
4. After time is up, bring participants back to the main room and have them share their presentations.
5. Open up a discussion so that participants can exchange ideas across sectors.

Material:

Suggestions: A digital whiteboard or Miro board.

- [Annex II](#)
- [re:GREEN Business Models](#)

Comments:

For the introductory activity, you can feed in some ideas if necessary: improved regional resilience, capability for innovation, a diversified economy, new employment types, social patterns or overall well-being.

Examples: applying new ideas for recycling in forestry and agriculture, re-using biomass from local landscaping and gardening businesses, or recycling building materials used in the public sector

6. *Main activity 3 40 minutes*

With this activity, we aim to recognize different circular business models that enhance the environmental footprint of rural businesses.

Now that we've seen what the circular economy is, which strategies or practices it operates through, and some examples of how it can operate in rural areas to reduce negative environmental impact, it's time to look into circular business models.

Put participants in groups of 3-4 people and give them 10 minutes to work together. The main working question is: how can a circular business model look like?

At the end of the 10 minutes, bring participants back to the main room and have them share their conclusions.

Now, give participants 5-10 min to read [Annex III](#), which describes an approach to circular business models and includes a graph explaining that circular business models can operate in different parts of the value chain. Explain that circular business models are based on the same principles we've seen before: they seek to keep resources in the cycle, extend the use phase of products and resources, intensify their value, and reduce material consumption.

After going through Annex III, explain that they will think how to apply this to their business models in the next activity. Then, have participants have a final discussion for 5 min.

- What do you think of these models and approaches?
- Do you believe they are useful to you?
- Are there any questions for now?

Material:

- [Annex III](#)
- *Suggestions*: A digital whiteboard or Miro board and Mentimeter.

7. *Action Plan 45 minutes*

With this activity we aim to build a plan that outlines which circular economy's approaches and practices can be useful for your business.

Introduce to participants that, in the next module, we'll go deeper into a step-by-step to rethink your business model and incorporate Circular Economy practices. For now, we'll build a plan to outline which circular economy's approaches and practices can be useful for your business.

1. Divide participants into couples. Ideally, divide them according to their sector and area (e.g., dairy farmers, farmers of crop, etc).
2. Give the participants the action plan worksheet in Annex IV and give them 30 minutes to work on it. The working question is "Which circular economy's approaches and practices can be useful for your business?" Instructions can be found in the worksheet.
 - a. Tell participants to use the opportunity to brainstorm with their pairs, as this will be useful for the next module.
3. After time is up, bring participants back into the main room and have them share the main ideas they've collected in the action plan. Additionally, have them share if they had any questions or met any issues while visualising how to incorporate circular economy approaches and practices into their business.

Material:

- [Annex IV](#)
- Optionally, this activity can be worked on as a homework. In this case, participants will work individually in their plans.

8. *Final activity / Final debriefing 15 minutes*

With this activity, we aim to retain the information learnt in this module.

Now, you can use a digital white or Miro board to collect the participants' main learning points and identify doubts or points for further discussion.

1. Explain the activity to participants: they will now see a few questions, and they are asked to answer them as honestly as possible. There will be three buckets: This is what I learnt; this is what I wish I learnt more of; This is what I didn't understand.
2. Give participants 5 minutes to write in the buckets. Set some concentration music in the background.
3. After participants are done, go through the three buckets, asking participants if they'd like to add anything about what they wrote. When you get to the last bucket, give participants a chance to ask questions. Ideally, give a chance for the other participants to try and answer the questions. If it is a common question, you can provide the answer yourself, or say you will research more about it and share the information as soon as possible with all.

9. Sharing of resources 2 minutes

In terms of resources, you can share with participants the Ellen MacArthur foundation, which provides several different resources to learn more about the circular economy. In addition to that, a few other resources include:

- Business Models for the Circular Economy: Opportunities and Challenges for Policy (OECD, 2019). Available at [policy-highlights-business-models-for-the-circular-economy.pdf \(oecd.org\)](#)
- The future of packaging in the circular economy 5 actions for long-term success. (Accenture, 2023) Available at <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/sustainability/future-of-packaging>
- Winning the consumers of the future with the circular economy. (Accenture, 2021) Available [here](#).
- Circular Design Guide. Available [here](#). (Circular Design Guide, n.d.)
- Circular Business Model Design Guide. (PA Consulting, 2020) Available [here](#).
- Learn Circular Skills. (Circular Skills, n.d.) Available at: <https://circularskills.eu/>
- GO-GRASS. This is a project that will develop a set of small-scale bio-based solutions to unlock the overlooked potential of grassland across Europe and create new business opportunities for rural areas. Available [here](#).

10. Feedback collection 5 minutes

To get to know the opinion of the participants about the training module and be able to improve next time.

Collect the feedback of the participants regarding:

- The content delivered
- The structure and methodology
- The trainers' abilities
- The timing
- Any other aspects that may be considered relevant

11. Check out and closing 2 minutes

To close the training session with gratitude.

Finally, go through the last activity with participants. Prepare previously in a white or Miro board three spaces for participants to write:

- What among what you learnt did you enjoy the most?
- How do you feel about the training?
- Write here your contact information if you'd like to stay in touch with other participants!

After participants are done writing, you can close the training and thank them for joining.

3.1. Annex I

J. Kirchherr et al.

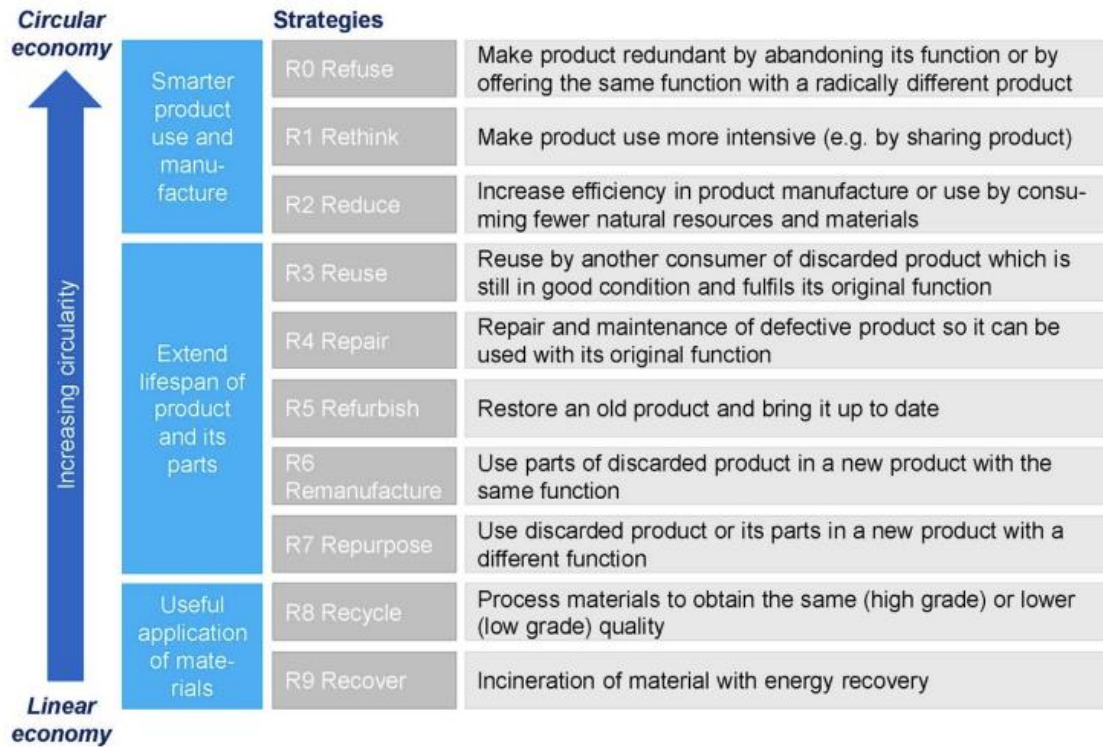


Figure 1 - Source: Julian Kirchherr, Denise Reike, Marko Hekkert, *Conceptualizing the circular economy: An analysis of 114 definitions*, *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, Volume 127, 2017, Pages 221-232, ISSN 0921-3449, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2017.09.005>, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921344917302835>

3.2. Annex II

Case 1 – A regenerative circular approach to forestry: Agroforestry

First, let's understand what regeneration means. Regenerative systems integrate a circular approach in contrast to the linear system. It addresses the problem with our system: "By pursuing a one-way, extractive approach to modern agriculture, vast amounts of soil reaches the point at which it is degraded and no longer productive. According to the Nature Conservancy, an area of arable land greater than the size of England is abandoned every year, meaning ever more rainforests or savannah need to be ploughed up to replace this loss." (Jeffries, 2019).

In contrast to this, it offers a solution: For rural areas, regenerative practices can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by building healthy soils which have better ability to sequester carbon and thus help fight against climate change. Regenerative practices focus on regenerating natural systems by using practices that are adapted to the local context, resembling more closely the natural ecosystems, and that thus optimize biodiversity by recognizing the interactions of the larger natural system. For instance, "crops need insects to pollinate, surface and groundwater to irrigate, microbes to cycle nutrients, and soil to provide a strong and fertile growth medium". As it does so, it shifts the focus from extractive, linear thinking that seeks profit overall to establish cycles of regeneration. "Such a path could not only feed our growing human population with diverse and high-quality food, but do so in a way that rebuilds, rather than degrades ecosystems" (Jeffries, 2019).

Now, let's see which form it can take in practice. **Source of information:** (Jeffries, 2019)

In the early 80's, a Swiss farming pioneer called Ernst Gotsch moved to South America and bought a farm called Fugidos da Terra Seca. The name means 'escaped from the dry land', as the farm was located in a drought prone area of Brazil's Atlantic Forest that had been deforested, degraded and abandoned. Immediately he set about restoring the forest, in one year planting over 500 hectares of cocoa, bananas and other greenery. His efforts restored the ecosystem, rebuilt soil fertility and produced many high quality cash crops. He even bought back water, reviving 14 long forgotten springs, so that soon it was renamed as Olhos D'Agua, or 'Tears in the Eyes'.

Gotsch's approach to integrated agricultural-forest ('agroforestry') systems began when he was working at the Zurich-Reckenholz institute. He realised that plants need not only soil, water and fertiliser, but also the right micro-climatic conditions to thrive. So he turned his attention away from the individual plants themselves, and focused instead on the conditions around them.

In agroforestry, food and non-food plants are grown together, creating a highly biodiverse and productive system. Each species brings a different benefit: nitrogen-fixing for fertility; soil carbon to feed micro-organisms and provide structure to prevent erosion and retain water; fruits and vegetables for revenue and to attract animals that pollinate and cycle nutrients; and taller, leafy species to provide shade and dead foliage for the forest floor.

As the area is a man-managed farm, there is some degree of human planning and management. For example, the approach follows the principles of ecological succession, using a sequence of plant species that mirrors how a natural ecosystem

would re-establish itself after a forest fire or other shock event. In terms of maintenance, the most important activity is the need for constant pruning. This increases the amount of soil carbon as well as allowing more sun to penetrate to the plants in the lower stacks of the forest.

Gotsch's intervention has transformed a barren piece of unproductive land into one of the most fertile and biodiverse parts of the Atlantic Forest. The cocoa produced in the farm is such high quality that it earns 4x more than conventional cocoa. The successful transformation has since attracted many followers and led to farmers adapting the system in different contexts across Brazil.

Case 2 – A regenerative circular approach to agriculture: Agroecology

First, let's understand what regeneration means. Regenerative systems integrate a circular approach in contrast to the linear system. It addresses the problem with our system: "By pursuing a one-way, extractive approach to modern agriculture, vast amounts of soil reaches the point at which it is degraded and no longer productive. According to the Nature Conservancy, an area of arable land greater than the size of England is abandoned every year, meaning ever more rainforests or savannah need to be ploughed up to replace this loss." (Jeffries, 2019).

In contrast to this, it offers a solution: For rural areas, regenerative practices can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by building healthy soils which have better ability to sequester carbon and thus help fight against climate change. Regenerative practices focus on regenerating natural systems by using practices that are adapted to the local context, resembling more closely the natural ecosystems, and that thus optimize biodiversity by recognizing the interactions of the larger natural system. For instance, "crops need insects to pollinate, surface and groundwater to irrigate, microbes to cycle nutrients, and soil to provide a strong and fertile growth medium". As it does so, it shifts the focus from extractive, linear thinking that seeks profit overall to establish cycles of regeneration. "Such a path could not only feed our growing human population with diverse and high-quality food, but do so in a way that rebuilds, rather than degrades ecosystems" (Jeffries, 2019)

Now, let's see which form it can take in practice. **Source of information:** (Jeffries, 2019)

Vuon — Ao — Chuong (VAC) are the Vietnamese words for garden, fishpond and pig or poultry shed. The trio of words refer to a small-scale system of intense and highly productive domestic agriculture. VAC integrates different types of plant and animal cultivation into a compact space, linking the different growing enterprises to create an interconnecting flow of materials, powered by gravity. VAC is an example of farming in a way that brings natural ecological processes into the agricultural production system, also called 'agroecology'. In areas where VAC is practised, farmer revenue can be 3–5 times, even 10 times, more than growing two crops of rice per year.

The development of a typical VAC farm starts with the digging of a pond. The excavated material can be used in the foundations of a house or animal sheds, as well as for a raised vegetable garden. The pond naturally fills due to rainfall and the water table, creating a growing area for vegetables, fish, and livestock. Plants are grown in terraces

to make optimum use of sunlight, with farmers practicing intercropping; growing different varieties that work together and all bring benefits to the ecosystem.

A variety of fish species are selected to make use of resources at all water depths. Aquatic vegetable plants are cultivated in the pond as well as trellised above the water surface. Pig and poultry are bred near to the pond and fed various garden by-products, and their manure is used for fish feed. During the dry season the pond bed is used to fertilise the vegetable garden. The whole system is operated according to a monthly schedule by the farmer's family, who eat the products and contribute their own waste to the system.

The VAC model was originally developed for the Red River in Northern Vietnam but has since been modified to suit the climates of Vietnam's coasts, river deltas, and mountains. In each of these different zones, the mix of species differ but the principles remain the same. It's about enhancing diversity and strengthening relationships between species.

The adaptation and extension of VAC from its traditional northern base suggests that smallholder farmers around the world could discover a combination of symbiotic plant and animal species to suit their local climate, social, and environmental context. The expansion of integrated duck-rice farming from Japan across many countries in Southeast Asia as well as the use of Mulberry-Fish pond model in Southern China are good illustrations of this.

Agroecology can also work at a large scale, as proven by Doug Tompkins in his 700 acre farm in Argentina. For Tompkins' farm, the first priority was to stabilise, preventing erosion control, through contouring, terracing and planting. Second was to revitalise tired soils by restoring fertility and soil structure. The third step was to implement a diverse and organic production regime, with a focus on building agricultural and natural biodiversity.

Tompkins knew that the interplay between the farm and the surrounding natural environment would be key. So he deliberately retained large blocks of 'wild', either natural savannah forests or lowland marshes, to provide ecosystem services that would be valuable to his farm. These wild areas would be habitats for insect pollinators, wind breaks or flood management.

As for the crops, Tompkins' planting plan is characterised by high diversity. In the winter 'fine grains' are grown — rapeseed, wheat, barley, rye, oats, and flax; while in the summer thick grains are preferred — soya, sorghum, quinoa, as well as six other varieties. Low maintenance cover crops such as peas and radish provide further insurance against soil erosion, as well as suppressing weed and acting as 'green manure' to help build soil fertility. Once high organic matter is built up in the topsoil, yields are every bit as high as 'chemical' farms.

As well as arable fields, the farm supports a number of other complementary enterprises, such as 540 acres of orchards (with nine different types of produce, including pecans, almonds, figs, and peaches) and livestock breeding to convert grass

and other inedible plants into manure. The farm aims to keep as much biomass on the farm as possible, to maintain soil fertility.

As Tompkins describes it, “there are really multiple farms layered onto one property”. These sub-enterprises connect together in a mutually-reinforcing way, as well as with the surrounding natural ecosystem. In this way the whole system is optimised, leading to high and diverse yields, low input costs and better tasting crops.

Case 3 – Digital innovation and the circular economy: The sharing economy

Here, we will see two ways in which the sharing economy can be integrated into rural areas. Firstly, we’ll investigate how it can aid collaboration between producers and thus increase efficiency, reduce waste, and foster value creation. Secondly, we’ll look at how the sharing economy can promote the development of rural areas through tourism and other activities.

Collaboration

Source: Adapted from the article "Unleashing sharing economy for rural development - Opinion - The Jakarta Post", which was published in thejakartapost.com. Click to read: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/05/03/unleashing-sharing-economy-for-rural-development.html>. (Nathan, 2019)

Did you know that forty percent of all the food grown in the developing countries is lost during the post-harvest and processing stages, and that research shows that a majority of the losses happen due to the lack of infrastructures such as well-maintained milling machines or warehouses?

Now, imagine that a coffee farmer who owns a de-pulping machine can list the equipment on the platform that connects service providers and customers. Another coffee farmer who needs a de-pulping machine could rent it through the platform and return it as soon as the work is completed; products such as e-wallets can let them settle the payments with much ease. Thanks to sharing economy, described as “a socioeconomic system enabling an intermediated set of exchanges of goods and services between individuals and organizations which aim to increase efficiency and optimization of under-utilized resources in society,” the farmer who lends the machine earns extra income which she might not have received had the machine remained idle. The consumer farmer paid only for the duration he used the machine, thus significantly reducing the cost of ownership yet getting the much-needed access to infrastructure. They both could leave reviews which will help others in the community to overcome information asymmetries and to decide who the best lenders and the buyers are, incentivizing the best market behaviour. This is just one example, and the opportunities are limitless ranging from inputs to capital.

The idea of sharing economy is also compatible with rural sociology. In a typical rural setup, occupations mostly involve a totality of cultivators — a few who own farm equipment and many who don’t — and in a community are usually a few in several non-agricultural pursuits. With this right ratio of providers, users, and actors who could be intermediaries, the rural setup provides a favourable natural setting for the development of sharing economy.

One of the other essential criteria required for building a thriving sharing economy platform is a phenomenon called network effect, whereby increased numbers of people or participants

improve the value of a good or service. The development of the network effort will be aided by the homogeneity in the psychological traits of the rural population, but only if the value proposition is well-communicated and the users believe that the system is credible, reliable, and ethical. Policymakers can play an important role in supporting the development of such systems.

Tourism

Source: Adapted from Battino and Lampreu (2019). “The Role of the Sharing Economy for a Sustainable and Innovative Development of Rural Areas: A Case Study in Sardinia (Italy)”. *Sustainability* **2019**, 11(11), 3004; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11113004> (Battino & Lampreu, 2019)

The collaborative economy has affected many different sectors, but transport, accommodation, and food service have been particularly impacted. It also highlights initiatives such as home sharing, (evidenced by platforms as Airbnb, Homestay, and Couchsurfing) and food sharing, a term that indicates various forms of food communion in opposition to food wastefulness. This model is well suited to rural contexts, where lodging availability can be minimal or completely absent, as can be food service as well.

In this way, the sharing economy could be an important ally in the planning of the development of rural and inland areas, by obviating a lack of essential services, not only for the hiker, but for the tourist in general. In order to create opportunities where local characteristics can become the protagonists in a competitive scenario, a modern digital program is essential.

Let's see an example of which form this can take in practice.

Born in 2014 in a small municipality in Sardinia (Italy), the project of Nughedu Welcome (NW) emerged from an intuition of the young mayor of the village who, in cooperation with “Nabui” decided to adopt urgent measures against the ongoing phenomenon of depopulation. NW is a development project based on social eating, driven forward by a group of resident people who, in 2015, gathered together in a cultural association and underwent a hard training process for one year. Baptized as the “first social eating village of Italy”, NW consists of eight cooks and seven further staff members.

The whole process follows a precise order: Display of lunch or dinner meals, all genuinely homemade and prepared by the members themselves with typical local products and at “0 km”; menu/price proposal; and, after being posted on Gnammo, the product/service can finally be purchased online. At the end of the transaction, people receive a coupon that they will need to personally enjoy the experience on site. This all then gets posted on the website and on Facebook, to ensure maximum visibility.

The social eating events realized by the association usually take place in the centre of the village, and some of them host a hundred people, but some of them can also take place in other small rural areas nearby or inside the private houses of the residents. In these latter cases only about 8–10 guests at a time are hosted.

At the end of the experience, visitors can leave a review on the Gnammo platform or on other social network sites.

Worksheet for cases 1 and 2

According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, n.d.) , regenerative outcomes can be achieved through different approaches, for example: regenerative agriculture, agroecology, organic, permaculture, agroforestry, and conservation agriculture. The practices they might adopt will depend on the context, but could include:

- minimising soil disturbance
- maintaining living roots in the soil year-round by using cover crops and rotating different types of crops
- increasing crop diversity, through mixed cropping and intercropping
- integrating trees, through agroforestry and other means
- rotational grazing of livestock
- using inputs made from organic matter, which can either dramatically reduce or entirely remove the need for synthetic agricultural inputs

Based on this, work on the following questions:

Worksheet	
How can the practice describe in this case reduce the negative impact of rural businesses on the environment and boost positive impact?	
Which circular economy practices or strategies would you say could benefit the practice you've seen in this case? Refer to Annex I	
Which additional benefits that the practice you've seen in this case could bring to the community can you identify?	
Which additional economic benefits that the practice you've seen in this case could bring to the business can you identify?	

Worksheet for case 3

Now that we've seen some examples, imagine the different ways in which sharing platforms could be used to support your business or your community. Then, work on the questions below.

Worksheet	
How can the practice described in this case reduce the negative impact of rural businesses on the environment and boost positive impact?	
Which circular economy practices or strategies would you say could benefit the practice you've seen in this case? Refer to Annex I	

Which additional benefits that the practice you've seen in this case could bring to the community can you identify?	
Which additional economic benefits that the practice you've seen in this case could bring to the business can you identify?	

3.3. Annex III

According to Geissdoerfer, Pieroni, Pigosso, & Soufani (2020), circular business models can be defined as business models that are cycling, extending, intensifying, and/or dematerialising material and energy loops for two purposes:

1. to reduce the amount of resource that enters the system.
2. to reduce the waste and emission leakage out of an organisational system.

To do this, companies can:

- resort to recycling measures (cycling)
- use phase extensions (extending)
- use a more intense use phase (intensifying)
- substitute products by service and software solutions (dematerialising).

What do these models comprise (Geissdoerfer, Pieroni, Pigosso, & Soufani, 2020)?

- **Cycling** means that materials and energy are recycled within the system, through reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishing, and recycling. For example, decommissioned industrial robots can be reused in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), where their reduced purchasing cost enables a viable way to increase productivity through automatization.
- **Extending** resource loops implies that the use phase of the product is extended, through long-lasting and timeless design, marketing that encourages long use phases, maintenance, and repair. For example, Patek Philip builds upmarket mechanical watches that last for a long time and have a timeless design that has not changed considerably over the past decades. A marketing campaign supports this with the slogan “you never actually own [this watch]. You merely look after it for the next generation”.
- **Intensifying** resource loops implies that the use phase of the product is intensified through solutions such as sharing economy or public transport. For example, car sharing can reduce idle times of cars and driven mileage per user significantly compared to a conventional ownership-based system.
- **Dematerialising** resource loops describes for instance offering services or product service systems instead of physical products to fulfil the same function for the user. This can reduce the number of produced products and enhance the customer experience at the same time. Nevertheless, the product-service system has to be purposefully designed for resource decoupling, otherwise it could generate undesired or rebound effects that could trigger resource consumption increase.

The definition of these business models is summarized on the figure below (Figure 2).

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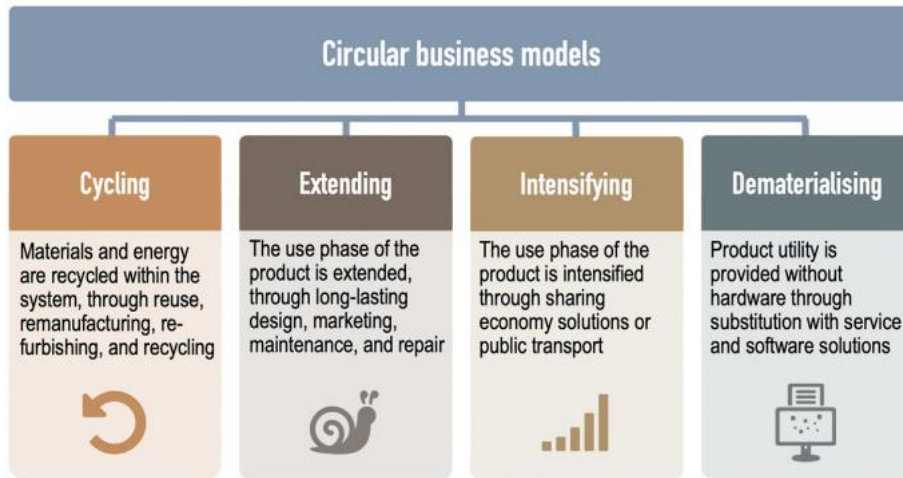


Figure 2 - Source: Martin Geissdoerfer, Marina P.P. Pieroni, Daniela C.A. Pigosso, Khaled Soufani (2020). "Circular business models: A review", Journal of Cleaner Production, Volume 277, 123741, ISSN 0959-6526, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.123741>. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652620337860>

It is important to note that efforts towards implementing circular practices to achieve more circular business models (such as the ones on the descriptions above) can occur in different parts of the value chain, as indicated below.

Figure 1. **Circular business models operate in different parts of the value chain**

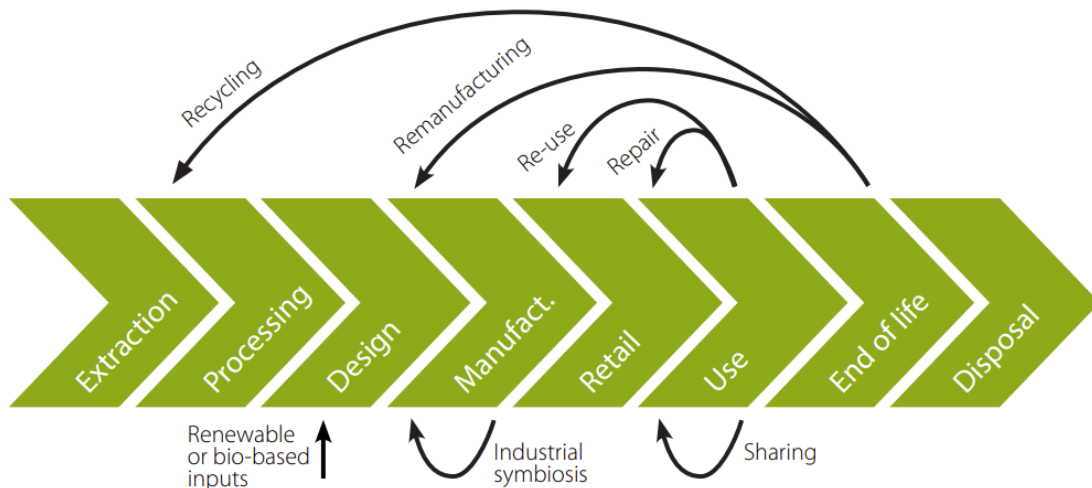


Figure 3 - Source: OECD (2019), Business Models for the Circular Economy: Opportunities and Challenges for Policy, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a2q9dd62-en>. Available at [policy-highlights-business-models-for-the-circular-economy.pdf \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/policy-highlights-business-models-for-the-circular-economy.pdf)

An example would be a company that encourages consumers to return their products after using, so they can be recycled or remanufactured into something else. Another example can be illustrated by the enterprise [Nudie Jeans](#), which has [repair shops](#) that encourages consumers to repair their products to extend their usability. Finally, a good example of how products can be shared to extend their life are library goods. Two libraries of goods can be found in Lund, Sweden:

Fritidsbanken is an initiative of the municipality and it rents out sporting equipment that would otherwise in many cases be purchased and used for a short time; and [Circle Centre](#) is a volunteering initiative where people can not only rent a variety of things they would otherwise buy, but also repair their things independently and participate in educative events.

Now that the business models are clear, let's check examples of key business model considerations that can be made for the circular economy in relation to each type of circular business model on the table below (Geissdoerfer, Pieroni, Pigosso, & Soufani, 2020). It is noteworthy that these considerations are inspiring examples of how a business can rethink their:

1. Value proposition: this means reconsidering the service they are offering and to whom.
2. Value creation and delivery: this means reconsidering how they will produce and deliver their products.
3. Value capture: this means reconsidering what the expected revenue streams and model are, as well as cost drivers. In summary, it means rethinking how they will generate income and where this will stream from.

<i>Considerations</i> →	<i>Value Proposition</i> <i>Main products/services</i> <i>Customer segments/market</i> <i>Customer needs/problems</i> <i>How do you address them?</i>	<i>Value Creation & Delivery</i> <i>Key value chain elements</i> <i>Resources and capabilities</i> <i>Core competencies</i>	<i>Value Capture</i> <i>Revenue streams</i> <i>Costs drivers</i> <i>Revenue model, like leasing, razor & blade, platform fees, etc.</i>
Business model ↓			
Cycling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reuse - Repair - Remanufacture /refurbish - Recycle - Design for X/Modularity - Reverse logistics - Incentives to return cores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used, repaired remanufactures, refurbished or recycled materials or organic feedstock - New customer segment in need for affordable and green products - Taking back products to transform in new resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suppliers outsourcing and collaborations to close-the-loop - Incentives to encourage consumers to take back products (e.g., jars or containers) - Reverse supply chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional revenues from residual values - Savings with reduced costs for resource input
Extending: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-lasting products - Upgradability - Timeless design - Marketing/consumer education encouraging long product life - Maintenance/product support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-lasting products with time-less design, maintenance, support, etc. - New customer segment in need for reliability and savings. - Providing premium high-quality products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services operations - Durable/repairable product design - Digital capabilities - Service network collaboration - Marketing/consumer education - Long-term customer relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revenues from high-quality products or servicing - consumer loyalty - revenue from model based on service packages of tailored contracts

<p>Intensifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing models - Rental/leasing models - User cooperatives - Open elements/creative commons - Pooling models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Product as a service, collaborative consumption services - Segment of existing or new customers in need of lower total cost of ownership and/or up-front investments - Providing functionality or the temporary availability of products instead of ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity management - Digital capabilities - Transportation and logistics - Reselling and redistributing products - Slow and close the loop capabilities or collaborations - Product-service systems design - Contract and customer relationship management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recurrent revenues from temporary service contracts, long term customer relationships - Increased long-term profit margins due to saving from using products longer - Pricing per unit of service (e.g., time, number of uses), rental or leasing fees
<p>Dematerialising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Software instead of hardware - Service instead of product - Consumer education rationalising demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services substituting or reducing the need for hardware - New customer segment in need of expertise in certain non-core activities, convenience, lower total cost of ownership - Providing turn-key solutions or the results for customer needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technology design for digitalization - Product-service systems design - Slow and close-the-loop capabilities or collaborations (e.g., repair, refurbish) - Consumer education rationalising demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recurrent revenues from services subscriptions or contracts, long-term customer relationships - Increased profit margins due to additional value from uniqueness and savings from using products for longer and efficiency gains in operations (e.g., transportation) - Pricing per agreed results (e.g., pay-per-light)

3.4. Annex IV

Use the sheet below to build your action plan in pairs. An example of a *problem* to be addressed can be (but is not restricted to):

- Loss of resources throughout the production process and/or value chain (such as through waste generation)
- Lack of opportunities for consumers/users to reuse or repair your products. This can address your products' design.
- High use of virgin material in your production.
- High use of plastic or other unsustainable resources in your production.
- High emissions during transportation. This could include lack of optimization of space in transportation methods (meaning your packaging might need to be improved); high carbon emission from means of transportation chosen; high distances your products need to travel to reach the final consumer; etc.
- Lack of access to machinery or technology that can optimize your production, reducing waste and resource consumption. This can address collaboration opportunities such as through the sharing economy.

For the problem you choose, make sure to think about which circular economy practices or strategies can be useful to address it. This will become a part of your *goal*. For instance, if you're talking about your waste generation, some ideas could be to collaborate with other producers to bring in byproducts from their production into yours or find ways to recycle or reuse your waste (for instance, is your waste useful to any other producer?). In this case, your goal could thus be to explore collaborations to reuse my waste.

Then, the *actions* could include explore contacts, set out a price plan and amounts to be delivered to the other producer, and put in place a good structure to collect and transport waste.

Don't forget to have a clear plan that has indicators (how will you measure your progress? For instance, how much of your waste do you want to bring to other producers to reuse it?), a timeline, responsible persons, and a way to track your progress (how often will you assess your progress, and how will you do so?).

Have in mind what we've learnt in this module! Regeneration, the sharing economy, the 9Rs of the circular economy, the circular economy definition, and the four different business models.

Action Plan		
Problem		
Goal		
Action Plan	Actions	steps you plan to take to achieve your goals
	Persons in charge	staff members who will be handling each step

	Timeline	deadline for each step
	Resources	assets you need to allocate for each step
	Potential barriers	factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step
	Outcomes	desired result for each step
Evidence of Success	Which indicators will you use to assess whether you've reached your goals?	
Tracking and Evaluation Process	How will you track your progress to make sure you'll reach your goals?	

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Wright, A. (2023, July 25). *The Economic Benefits of a Circular Economy*. Retrieved from Rubicon: <https://www.rubicon.com/blog/economic-benefits-circular-economy/>

Martin Geissdoerfer, Marina P.P. Pieroni, Daniela C.A. Pigosso, Khaled Soufani (2020). "Circular business models: A review", *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Volume 277, 123741, ISSN 0959-6526, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.123741>. Available at: (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652620337860>)

Module 4 – Step-by-step: rethink your business model and incorporate Circular Economy practices

Total duration of the module: 165 or 190 minutes (depending on the chosen Action Plan option)

What will I learn in this module?

By the end of this module, the learners will be able to:

- Examine ways to incorporate circular economy practices to their rural business(es).
- Implement a strategy to make their business model(s) more circular and greener.

Description of activities

1. Check-in 5 min

Engaging the participants and discovering their energy levels to better adapt to their needs.

Start by asking participants:

- What is your energy level today? (high – medium – low)
- How looking forward are you to this training? (a lot! – neutral – feel a little lazy about it)

For this, you can prepare a Mentimeter poll.

2. Get-to-know-each-other and/or team building activity 2 min

Preparing participants for the training module through movement.

As participants will already know each other from the previous module, this activity can be replaced by an energizer.

Ask participants to stand up for a minute and do some stretching with you. This will provide them with the energy they need to work on this module!

3. Introductory activity - Reminder 10 min

Connecting with participants' previous knowledge. What do participants remember from the previous module on Circular Economy and Circular Business Models?

Ask them to brainstorm using the table on Annex I. This can be done on a whiteboard such as Miro or Jamboard.

Material:

- [Annex I](#), whiteboard

4. Main activity 1 – simple and circular practices 15 min

To provide participants with simple practices that they can easily implement into their businesses.

To begin, we will learn some quick examples of simple but circular practices that can facilitate the implementation of Circular Economy into our businesses. These will serve as inspiration to work on our business models later on.

For this, present the list in Annex II, which contains circular and simple practices that rural businesses can incorporate.

Then, ask participants:

- Which ones do you like the most or find most useful for your business?

Invite them to select the 2-3 practices they find the most meaningful for themselves and write the corresponding number of these practices in the chat, following the numeration in Annex II.

Material:

- [Annex II](#), chat

5. *Main activity 2 – steps towards a circular business model 90 min*

To support the participants in building enhanced circular business models.

Now, let's start building up on the participants' business models to make them more circular.

Ask the participants to complete Annex III, which contains 4 points. Go point by point to not overwhelm the participants, making 4 rounds, 1 per point. All rounds will follow the same structure:

- The trainer explains the exercise (2 min).
- Participants are given a specific amount of time to complete it:

Point 1 – 15 minutes

Point 2 – 20 minutes

Point 3 – 20 minutes

Point 4 – 15 minutes

- The trainer allows 3 minutes for questions/doubts by the end of the exercise.

Still, be aware that participants might have questions during the exercises as well, not only at the end of these. Make sure to be available and attentive to answer their requests. If you don't know the answer to any of their questions, explain you will search for them and come back to them later.

Before starting the 4 rounds, introduce the whole activity by explaining that the participants will go through 4 steps that will allow them to discover how to make their business more circular and sustainable.

If there are colleagues who work together in the same company, ask them to complete this activity together as a group.

Now, start the first round by introducing point 1 of Annex III and follow the structure mentioned above. Do the same for all 4 rounds, following the 4 points of Annex III.

You can provide participants with a whiteboard or a shared Google Doc to complete this activity in a more comfortable manner.

Material:

[Annex III](#), [Annex II](#), whiteboard or Google Docs

6. *Debriefing 15 min*

To reflect on the learning outcomes of the previous activity.

Bring participants back to plenary after completing the 4 rounds of the previous activity, and discuss the following questions together:

- How did you feel about this activity?
- What is the thing that caught your attention the most?
- How does this activity create value for your business?

- Are there still any unsolved questions you would like to ask?

7. Action Plan 5 min or 30 min

To support participants into developing a strategy to make their business models more circular.

In Module 3, participants completed an action plan to work on one single problem. Here, they will be invited to work on one action plan for each of the non-circular aspects and their corresponding proposed solutions they identified while completing Main activity 2 – steps towards a circular business model.

This is a very long process, which has been described in Annex IV. For this reason, the trainer here has 2 options, depending on the amount of time available at this stage of the module:

- 1- Use this as homework – Explain to the participants how to complete the action plan, following the instructions of Annex IV, and ask them to do this with their colleagues once they are back to work. (5 minutes)
- 2- Ask participants to choose the most meaningful non-circular aspect from the table they completed in point 3 of Annex III and to complete the action plan only for this point. In this way, they will have a reference on how to proceed later with the other identified non-circular aspects. If choosing this option, invite those participants who are work colleagues and work together in the same company to do this as a group. You may use a whiteboard or Google Docs to allow participants to complete this more comfortably. (30 minutes)

Material:

[Annex IV](#), table completed from point 3 ([Annex III](#)), a whiteboard or Google Docs (if the long option is chosen)

Comments:

Whichever option is chosen by the trainer, participants will need to continue working on developing their action plans for the identified non-circular aspects of their business after this training, as this is a long process that can take from several weeks to years.

Therefore, it is crucial for the trainer to note this among the participants and explain that the compilation of all the action plans they develop for each of the identified non-circular aspects will, eventually, determine their strategy towards building a circular business model.

If possible, the trainer can offer him/herself to follow up with the participants every 3-6 months to monitor their progress.

8. Final activity / Final debriefing 10 min

To reflect on the value of this training module and the participants' businesses.

Let's use this final activity to dream and think about value. Because in the end, the ultimate goal of making our businesses more circular is to bring additional, positive value to society and the planet.

Prepare the following questions on a whiteboard such as Miro or Jamboard and allow participants to anonymously place post its with their answers for each of the questions. Give them 7 minutes to do so:

- Which value has this training module brought to you personally?

- Which value has this training module brought to your business?
- Which additional value will your business bring to its value chain, its customers and other stakeholders after you implement your action plan(s)? And to the world?

Once the 7 minutes are gone, the trainer can comment on the answers. Also, invite the participants to share any of their answers and reflections with the group, if they wish.

Material: whiteboard

9. *Sharing of resources 2 min*

To share additional knowledge with the participants.

The resources used for this module are the same as for Module 3. Some additional resources that may be of interest are:

Articles, books and texts

- Halme, P. (2023, August 28). Green career paths from ecodesign to food waste restaurants. EPALE - European Commission. <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/green-career-paths-ecodesign-food-waste-restaurants>
- Lewandowski, M. (2016). Designing the Business models for Circular Economy—Towards the Conceptual Framework. Sustainability, 8(1), 43. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8010043>
- Nußholz, J. L. (2017). Circular Business models: defining a concept and framing an emerging research field. Sustainability, 9(10), 1810. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9101810>
- Geissdoerfer, M. (et. al.) (2020). “Circular business models: A review”, Journal of Cleaner Production, Volume 277, 123741, ISSN 0959-6526, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.123741>. Available at: (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652620337860>)
- Uvarova, I., et. Al. (2020). Challenges of the introduction of circular business models within rural SMEs of EU. 1804-9796. <https://doi.org/10.20472/ES.2020.9.2.008>
- de Vries, H. (2021). How to innovate business models for a circular bio-economy?. Vol 30, Issue 4. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2725>
- Donner, M. (2020). A new circular business model typology for creating value from agro-waste. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.137065>
- Zucchella, A., Previtali, P. (2018). Circular business models for sustainable development: A “waste is food” restorative ecosystem. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2216>
- Achillas, C., Bochtis, D. (2020). Toward a Green, Closed-Loop, Circular Bioeconomy: Boosting the Performance Efficiency of Circular Business Models. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su122310142>
- Salvador, R. et. Al. (2021). Key aspects for designing business models for a circular bioeconomy. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.124341>

Multimedia

- Closing the Loop Film. (2019, April 22). Closing the Loop (Full Film) - English with Multi-Language Subtitles [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g0AYbEoOGk>
- TEDx Talks. (2018, February 13). The Circular Economy: A Simple explanation | Cillian Lohan | TEDxYouth@EEB3 [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbm1MCTobVc>
- Latitude33. (2016, March 26). Sustainable Business - Wealth from Waste Documentary on how business is creating a circular economy [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJ95arxbz24>

10. Feedback collection 5 min

To get to know the opinion of the participants about the training module and be able to improve next time.

Collect the feedback of the participants regarding:

- The content delivered
- The structure and methodology
- The trainers' abilities
- The timing
- Any other aspects that may be considered relevant

11. Check out and closing 5 min

To close the training session with gratitude.

Ask participants to say or write (in the chat) one sentence that describes what they take from this training.

Close the training by thanking the participants for their assistance.

Material: Chat

4.1. Annex I

Fill in the next table to help you remember all that we learned in the previous module (Module 3 - Circular Economy practices & Circular business models).

What is Circular Economy?	Which are the 9Rs of Circular Economy?	What were the main outcomes we got from the case studies we worked on?	What did we learn about circular business models?	Which problem did you choose to work on for your Action Plan?

4.2. Annex II

This is a list of green, circular and simple practices that rural businesses can incorporate into their business models and operations to improve their environmental impact in little and easy steps.

1. **Switch to reusable absorbents** to clean instead of using single use ones.
2. **Use towels** instead of paper to dry your hands in the WC.
3. **Reuse PPE gloves.**
4. **Use a dry erase board** instead of paper notes and paper for meetings or any other activities.
5. **Add plants.** Plants help remind people of the importance of the environment and can also help cleanse the air.
6. **Unplug** all the devices after use and keep the lights off when not in use.
7. **Avoid home laundering.** If using uniforms or other clothing, avoid home laundering and use industrial laundering instead. It is much more efficient as it requires less energy and water!
8. **Start using recycled materials** (e.g., recycled paper) instead of new materials as much as possible.
9. **Refillable ink.** Use refillable ink to print that cuts down on discarded toner units.
10. **Encourage yourself and your employees to reuse** as much as possible with small actions such as using a reusable bottle of water, using glass lunch boxes, equipping your kitchens with real (non-plastic) utensils, etc.
11. **Reduce employee travel.** Provide the opportunity to work from home when possible, organize carpool to your office or provide incentives for your employees to use public transport.

12. **Make being sustainable fun** – put several reminders hanging from the doors of the office, organize a competition to see which employee is more sustainable, encourage participation in volunteering and local initiatives for the environment, plant trees, etc.
13. **Host donation drives regularly.** Once a year, encourage employees and customers to donate clothes, toys, books, furniture, etc. for those who need it the most.
14. **Encourage a plant-based diet.** Encourage your colleagues to eat plant-based by providing healthy and plant-based snacks in the office and ordering plant-based food for the company's events. Also try to buy from local sources!
15. **Upgrade or repair your equipment.** Schedule some time every couple of weeks to check and revise your material and equipment. If you see that these are deteriorating, take action and repair them before it's too late!
16. **Upcycle old equipment and furniture.** Allow employees to take items home and repurpose.
17. **Manage your waste.** Sit down with your team and reflect: Which waste do you produce? How could this waste become useful? For example, if you consume a lot of coffee, the leftovers can be given to companies which use coffee grounds to create other products.
18. **Digitalize** as many processes as possible – invoicing, communication with customers and suppliers, etc. In this way, you'll reduce physical waste such as paper waste.
19. **Ship responsibly.** Order multiple things from the same place at once with no-rush shipping. Rushed packages mean more trucks clogging roads in cities—which makes more traffic, and more pollution.
20. **Manage your packaging.** Try to reduce your packaging, make it reusable or substitute it for sustainable packaging. The best option is definitely to reduce it!
21. **Buy from local producers and suppliers.** This will decrease your transport CO2 emissions.
22. **Use environmentally friendly products.** Avoid products with chemicals and other polluting substances. From soaps in the WC to cleaning utensils, there are plenty of natural and green options! You can also use those products that have less packaging or don't require it at all, such as solid soaps.
23. Remember that every business is different - Hold a **brainstorming session** in your company with your colleagues to come up with other small but meaningful solutions that can make your business more sustainable and that are easy to implement for you!
24. **Create different committees** to be in charge of monitoring that all the new actions you set for sustainability are actually happening. This can be as easy as assigning 2 people to check that all devices are unplugged by the end of the day, other 2 to check if the WC towels need to be changed, etc.
25. **Train your team.** Train your team in sustainability through courses and learning activities. If you are here, you are already getting this done! There are also plenty of free sources and tools out there that you can use without spending any money!

If you already conduct some of these actions, CONGRATULATIONS! You are on the correct path towards building a more sustainable business.

4.3. Annex III

Follow the next steps in order to discover how to make your business more circular and environmentally friendly.

1. Which is your business model?

From the business models presented already in Module 3, do you think there is any that corresponds to your business model? If yes, which? If not, how would you roughly describe your business model in a few sentences? Write down your answer and keep it for later, we will come back to it!

**For this exercise, you don't have to accurately describe your business model. Instead, try to find those characteristics that you think describe your business model best. The goal is just to gather those attributes that truly describe your business and the way you operate. To help you, you may try thinking of:*

- *What is your value proposition?*
- *What are your key activities?*
- *How sustainable is your business?*
- *Who are your customers? And your beneficiaries?*
- *Who are your key partners?*
- *What is your business' contribution to society?*
- *Which other attributes define your business?*

[Insert your answer here]

Here you have a reminder of the 4 business models we learnt about in Module 3:

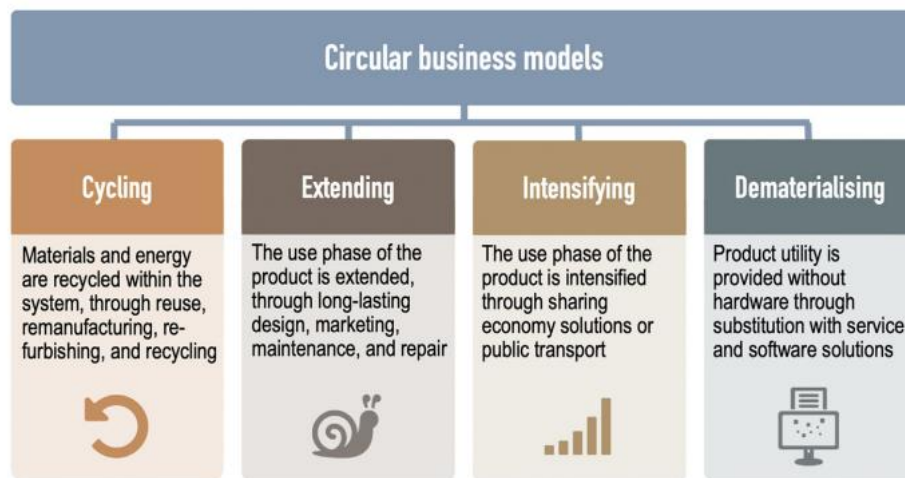


Fig. 3. Circular business model strategies, developed from Bocken et al. (2016) and Geissdoerfer et al. (2018a,b).



2. How circular is your business?

We can only start making our business more circular by identifying the aspects that are already circular and those that are not within our business model. During the Action Plan of Module 3 you already worked on a problem and found solutions for it. But that's only the beginning! A business is composed of many areas, and they all need to be assessed.

Bring back the problem you chose for Module 3 and place it in its corresponding business area in the table below. Then, continue completing the table by reflecting on all the other proposed areas. Please feel free to add more areas if you think your business models include more relevant areas that are not mentioned here.

The table also includes an **example (in red)** for you to have a reference. Below the table, you can also find guiding questions that will help you assess the different aspects of each business area.

BUSINESS AREA	HOW CIRCULAR DO YOU THINK THIS AREA CAN BE CONSIDERED? *	CIRCULAR ASPECTS - WHICH ASPECTS OF THIS AREA ARE ALREADY CIRCULAR?	NON-CIRCULAR ASPECTS - WHICH ASPECTS OF THIS AREA NEED TO BE IMPROVED TO MAKE IT MORE CIRCULAR?
PRODUCTS & SERVICES	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our products are reusable. - Our products don't use chemicals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The packaging is still made of plastic.
TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS			
BUSINESS ETHICS & STRATEGY			
HUMAN RESOURCES			
COMMUNICATION & MARKETING			
FINANCES & MANAGEMENT			
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT			
VALUE CHAIN			

*In a scale from 0 to 5, where 0 is “not circular at all” and 5 is “completely circular”.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

PRODUCTS & SERVICES:

- Which aspects of your products are already circular and sustainable? For instance, you can think about the type of materials your products contain or the packaging. You can also think about the source of the materials, noting if your products are locally sourced or not.

- When it comes to services, think about the impact of your services. Do they require large amounts of fossil fuel energy? Do they produce waste?

TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS

- Which means of transport are used within your company?
- Do your employees, your products, your raw materials or your equipment travel long distances, going across country borders?
- Does your company produce waste?
- Does your company use mainly fossil fuel energy?

BUSINESS ETHICS & STRATEGY

- Do your mission, vision, values and business strategy include environmental responsibility and/or goals?

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Do your employees receive environmental education in a regular manner?
- Are there any actions or strategies implemented for your employees to behave in a greener way? (See examples in [Annex II](#))

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

- Do you promote environmental awareness and environmental action through your communication and marketing strategies?
- Is your communication & marketing sustainable (e.g., it does not use lots of paper, it's mainly digital, etc.)?

FINANCES & MANAGEMENT

- Do you implement sustainable actions already from high management positions in your business?
- Do you make financial decisions prioritizing not only profit but also the environmental impact these can have?
- Do your investment decisions take into account the environmental impact? For instance, investing in companies which work with fossil fuels would make your investment portfolio less circular and you would be contributing to environmental degradation.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- Do you conduct research to make your business model more sustainable?

VALUE CHAIN

- When building a sustainable business model, we not only need to take into account the impact of our own company but also of those we collaborate with and who are part of our value chain.
- Do you try to choose suppliers and stakeholders who are aligned with you in terms of environmental values?
- Do you try to educate/support them to become greener?

3. Finding solutions towards circularity

Come back to the table in point 2 and add another column to reflect on the question “How can I make those aspects identified as NON-CIRCULAR become more circular?”.

Feel free to use the list of [Annex II](#) to get some inspiration. Again, you can see an **example below in red**.

BUSINESS AREA	HOW CIRCULAR DO YOU THINK THIS AREA CAN BE CONSIDERED ? *	CIRCULAR ASPECTS - WHICH ASPECTS OF THIS AREA ARE ALREADY CIRCULAR?	NON-CIRCULAR ASPECTS - WHICH ASPECTS OF THIS AREA NEED TO BE IMPROVED TO MAKE IT MORE CIRCULAR?	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS - How can I make those aspects identified as NON-CIRCULAR become more circular?
PRODUCTS & SERVICES	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our products are reusable. - Our products don't use chemicals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The packaging is still made of plastic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchange the plastic packaging for a biodegradable one. - Use packaging only on those products that are liquid or can be damaged.
TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS				
BUSINESS ETHICS & STRATEGY				
HUMAN RESOURCES				
COMMUNICATION & MARKETING				

FINANCES & MANAGEMENT				
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT				
VALUE CHAIN				

4. What do you think about your business model now?

You are doing an amazing job! So far, you have identified those aspects of each of your business' areas that are circular and those that are not circular. You also identified possible solutions for the non-circular aspects. Come back to point 1 where you described your current business model and reflect on the questions:

- After completing these exercises, did your perception of your current business model change? Is your business as circular as you thought in all the evaluated areas?

[Insert your answer here]

- If you'd manage to implement all the proposed solutions to your business model, would you describe your business model differently? To which of the 4 presented business models (cycling, intensifying, dematerialising or extending) would yours correspond, if any? Why?

*Note: Your business model could also adopt strategies from several of the presented business models and be a combination of those.

[Insert your answer here]

4.4. Annex IV

Use the following table to complete your action plan with your work colleagues during or after this training as indicated by the trainer. For doing so, you will need the table you completed in [point 3 of Annex III](#). Please be aware that every proposed solution mentioned on point 3 (Annex III) will need its own action plan. That's the reason why we recommend you start with the most meaningful one first, and slowly build up on it by adding others as you walk your path towards a more sustainable business model.

Hence, start by choosing one non-circular aspect from the ones you mentioned on the table of point 3 (Annex III), together with your preferred proposed solution for that aspect. Then, write these down on the table below, in their corresponding sections.

Now, it is time to complete the other sections of the action plan for this specific proposed solution:

Add the steps you will follow to achieve the proposed solution (actions), the persons in charge, the deadlines (timeline) and resources you will need. Also think about potential barriers you will find on your way and what you'd like to achieve for each of the steps you set. Lastly, don't forget about setting your indicators to measure your success (evidence of success) and to monitor and evaluate the whole process and the result once the timeline is over (tracking and evaluation process).

Action Plan		
Non-circular aspect		
Proposed solution		
Action Plan	Actions	steps you plan to take to achieve your proposed solution.
	Persons in charge	staff members who will be handling each step
	Timeline	deadline for each step
	Resources	assets you need to allocate for each step
	Potential barriers	factors that can potentially hinder the completion of each step
	Outcomes	desired result for each step
Evidence of Success	Which indicators will you use to assess whether you've reached your proposed solution?	

Tracking and Evaluation Process	How will you track your progress to make sure you'll reach your proposed solution?
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Congratulations! You've got your action plan for one of the non-circular aspects you identified. Now, you can go ahead and implement your plan for this non-circular aspect! But don't forget to schedule another working session with your colleagues to design the next action plan for the next non-circular aspect from table in point 3 (Annex III) that you'd like to work on.

Repeat this process and keep on designing action plans for all the identified non-circular aspects of your business. Think that the compilation of the different action plans for each of the identified non-circular aspects will become the milestones of your strategy towards building a (enhanced) circular business model.

We are aware that this process can be overwhelming if you have identified many non-circular aspects in your business. But do not worry! Take this as a process and trust it. Go at your own pace. It is completely fine if it takes a long time to complete all the action plans. What truly matters is to walk the path towards contributing to a greener world for all. That's the ultimate goal of building a circular business model. Just stay committed and don't give up! If you arrived here, it means you already overcame the hardest step – the first one!

Module 5- Sustainable Digital Marketing

Total duration of the module: Minimum 2.5 hours

Learning Outcomes:

- **Become familiar** with diverse digital marketing platforms that are relevant to businesses in rural sectors.
- Identify sustainability of using digital marketing tools to reach the proper customer.
- Explain how to promote rural products in diverse platforms that will attract and answer questions about business aim and impact.

Description of activities

1. *Check-in* 5 min

Engaging the participants and discovering their energy levels to better adapt to their needs.

Ask participants:

- How are you feeling today? Ask participants to use emotions with emojis in a virtual room.
- What do you expect to learn/gain from the training? (expectations)

Share their answers by unmuting (microphones) themselves.

Material: Mentimeter

2. *Get-to-know-each-other and/or team building activity* 10 minutes

Build connections and a sense of community, explore participants preferences

Ask participants to answer the question:

Which are the best digital tools to consider for promoting sustainable products or services?

Create a visual board in Miro or other relevant online platform, add possible digital tools icons, like:

- Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Company website or blog
- Email marketing software
- Video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube)
- Virtual events or webinars
- Influencer collaborations
- Sustainability-focused apps
- Other added by participants

Participants can add their name next to the tool they've chosen, along with a brief explanation of why they selected that tool.

Material: Digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter. can be used.

3. *Introductory activity* 15 minutes

Understand the basics of Sustainable Digital Marketing

- Start the training session by expressing your excitement about exploring the world of Sustainable Digital Marketing together.

- Begin discussion by asking participants a question: "When you hear the term 'Sustainable Digital Marketing,' what comes to your mind?" Give them time to reflect.
- Use a digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter to create a visual space, where participants can share their perceptions. Write the question at the top and encourage participants to contribute their ideas in real-time.
- Briefly introduce the definition of Sustainable Digital Marketing. Explain the term Sustainable Digital Marketing. Sustainability - development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Digital marketing is defined as the use of numerous digital tactics and channels to connect with customers where they spend much of their time: online. Sustainable Digital Marketing means promoting a brand's sustainable and ethical products or services and eco-friendly practices in a way that is profitable for both the company, our planet, and its people, in the long run.
- Share with participants why Sustainable Digital Marketing is relevant in today's business world. Briefly explain that Sustainability in marketing helps reduce the negative impact of business operations on the environment, including pollution, waste, and depletion of natural resources. This approach is crucial for the long-term health of our planet. Having one effective website, one good Facebook page (or any other social media channel) and keeping both active would be more sustainable instead of creating new pages/groups for extra product launching which is time consuming. And these extra platforms often don't get that many followers and usually "die" shortly without having any impact on the customer.
- To enhance engagement, ask participants to share their thoughts on the importance and potential benefits of Sustainable Digital Marketing. Encourage them to consider how it aligns with their own business goals and values.
- Ask them how they are implementing or plan to implement the [GDPR rules](#) in their business's digital marketing platforms.
- Summarize the key takeaways from the discussion.

Material: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

4. *Main activity 1 (Example) Brainstorming 30 minutes*

Introduce key principles of sustainable digital marketing

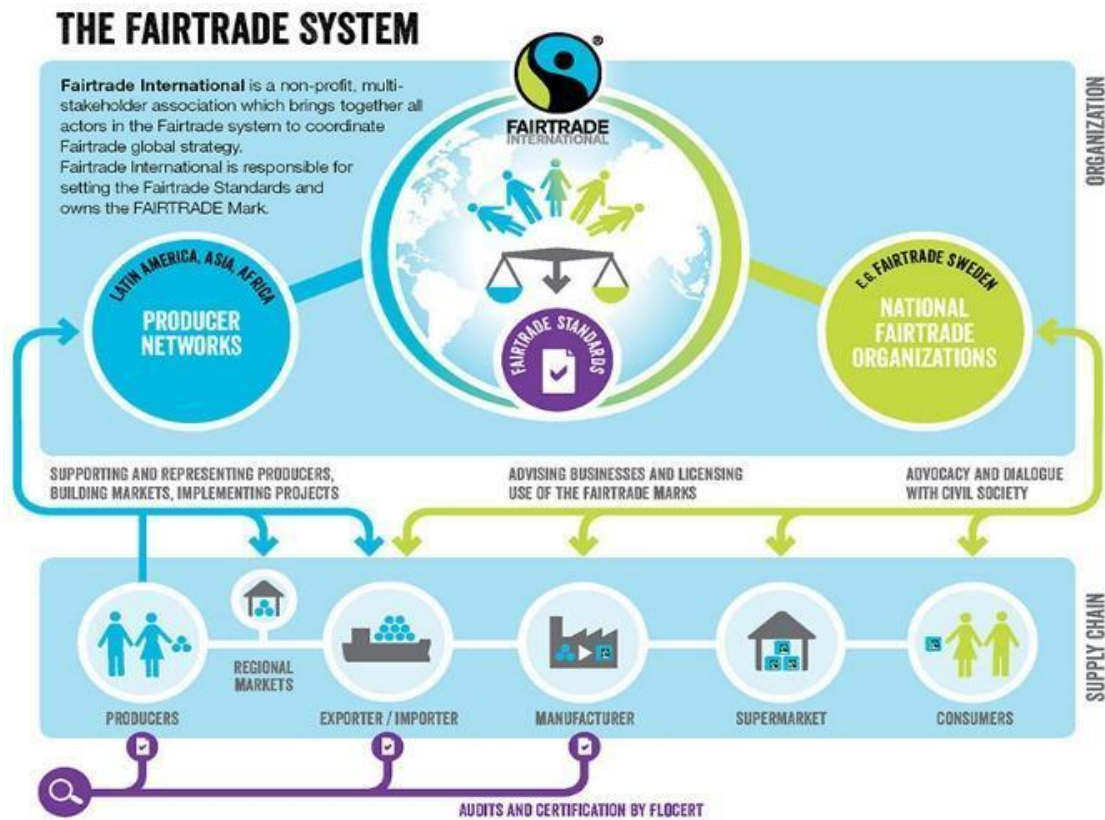
Understanding Principles of Sustainable Digital Marketing

- Begin by briefly recapping the importance of Sustainable Digital Marketing from the introductory activity. Remind participants that it involves combining sustainable practices with effective digital marketing strategies.
- Introduce the core principles of Sustainable Digital Marketing that will be discussed: authenticity, transparency, and customer engagement. Briefly define each principle:

Authenticity: Being genuine and true to one's sustainability efforts in digital marketing campaigns. Transparency: Openly sharing information about sustainability practices, processes, and product/service impact. Customer Engagement: Building meaningful relationships with customers through interactive and informative content.

- To illustrate how these principles are applied in real business scenarios, present a case study of companies that have successfully incorporated them.

- Case Study: Fair Trade Impact Stories present some case study and ask participants to engage in a discussion in pairs (Sample case study will be provided in [Annex I](#))



Fairtrade International. Fairtrade System. Fairtrade International. URL: <https://www.fairtrade.net/about/fairtrade-system>

This picture will be shown by the trainer during this activity to showcase the system of Fairtrade.

Discussion questions:

- How should a fair business communicate about their take-back campaign?
- How does the campaign improve their image?
- How can they know if people really like their take-back idea?
- What problems might they face?
- What are the opportunities and/or benefits?
- Should we try to comply with them because their standards are sustainability standards?
- Can certifications/labels also might reflect some “green washing” or “irregularities” behind them?
- Do you know any certifications/labels and why do you rely on them?

Group Task: Encourage participants to share their own experiences regarding sustainable digital marketing efforts on different platforms. Create some breakout rooms according to the number of participants and give time to share opinions and discuss above mentioned questions including the case study. Participants will write their opinions or answers on a shared online platform.

Key Takeaways: Summarize the key takeaways from the case study and the discussion.

Material:

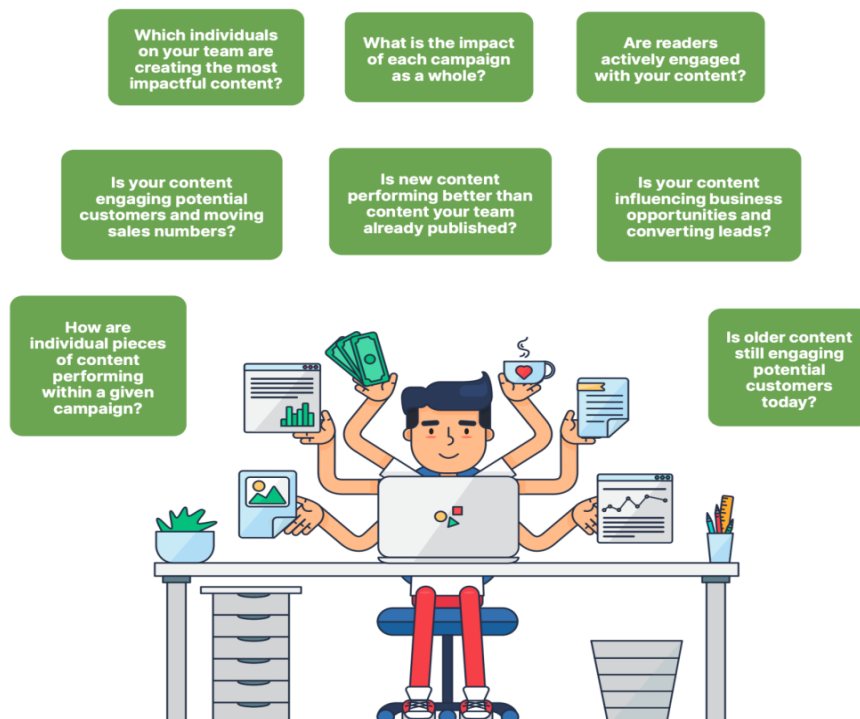
- Online Breakout rooms in Zoom or any other suitable platform, Padlet can be used for sharing individual and group opinions.
- [Annex I](#)

5. *Main activity 2 30 minutes*

Teach participants to create content that resonates with sustainability values

Creating Impactful Content

- This activity will begin by highlighting the importance of creating digital marketing content that resonates with sustainability values, explaining this activity will focus on harnessing the power of storytelling to convey the positive impacts of sustainable products, how to display or portfolio the product and services in a digital platform considering and showcasing sustainable criteria.
- Divide participants into small groups of 3-4 individuals. Ideally, ensure a mix of participants with diverse backgrounds and perspectives in each group.



Parse.ly. (n.d.). CMO's Guide to Content Analytics. Parse.ly. URL: <https://www.parse.ly/resource/cmos-guide-content-analytics/>

- The trainer will display the picture above ([ANNEX 2](#)) containing questions that need to be included in the group discussion.
- Providing Sustainable Product: Introduce teams to a sustainable product. Provide a brief description of the product, its features, and its sustainability attributes.
- Example of a Sustainable Product: Solar-Powered Mobile Charger
- Description: A portable charger powered by solar energy, designed to charge electronic devices using renewable energy.

- Sustainability Attributes: Reduces carbon footprint, eliminates the need for traditional electricity sources, promotes renewable energy adoption.
 - o Note: participants can also research and pick another sustainable product, or the trainer can provide an alternative if the trainer wants to change the mentioned example.
- Instruct each group to brainstorm creative and impactful digital promotional content ideas in order to effectively showcase the assigned product's sustainability attributes. Encourage participants to consider various digital channels such as social media, blog posts, infographics, videos, or interactive quizzes.
- Provide participants with around 10-15 minutes for brainstorming. Encourage them to be creative, innovative, and to think outside the box.
- After the brainstorming time is up, ask each group to present their content ideas with sustainable products to the larger group. They can use a digital whiteboard, Miro board, or verbally present their idea (with image of their product)
- Encourage participants to share their thoughts, which content ideas would be most relevant with the target audience.
- Key Takeaways: Summarize the key takeaways from the activity.

Material:

- Zoom breakout rooms, miroboard, or any other relevant platforms.
- [Annex 2](#)

6. Main activity 3 30 minutes

Apply sustainable digital marketing principles in a practical scenario

Social Media Campaign Simulation

Begin by emphasizing the importance of promoting sustainable marketing. Explain that this activity will allow participants to practically apply the knowledge gained earlier.

- Introduce a hypothetical sustainable product to the participants. (ANNEX 3)
- Provide a brief description of the product's sustainability attributes and its target audience.
- Product: Eco-Friendly Clothing Line Patagonia. Note: trainers can also select another product. (ANNEX 3)

Goal: Introduce/ kick off/ describe your products (mentioned in Annex 3) or service through a social media campaign to target customers and stakeholders with sustainability attributes.

Activity: Divide participants into small teams consisting of 3 to 5 participants per group. Each team will be responsible for creating a social media marketing campaign for the hypothetical sustainable product.

- Assign each team a specific social media platform (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn).
- Instruct each team to create a marketing campaign for the sustainable product on their assigned social media platform. The campaign should include the sustainable digital marketing principles discussed earlier in the main activity 1, such as authenticity, transparency, and customer engagement, etc.

- Encourage teams to include the mentioned components in their campaign (mentioned in ANNEX 3)
- Provide participants with around 20 minutes to plan and design their campaigns.
- After the planning phase, ask each team to present their social media campaign to the larger group. They can use a digital whiteboard, presentation tools, or verbal explanations with picture(s).
- Feedback and Evaluation: After each presentation, encourage other participants to provide feedback.
- Key Takeaways: Summarize the key takeaways from the activity in one word.

Material:

- Zoom breakout rooms.
- [\(ANNEX 3\)](#)
- Timing is adjustable depending on the numbers of participants and their needs.

7. Action Plan 30 minutes

Encourage participants to plan their sustainable digital marketing strategies

Provide participants Sustainable Digital Marketing plan template to fill in groups their own company examples.

Material:

- Zoom breakout rooms.
- [Annex 4](#)

8. Final activity / Final debriefing 5 minutes

Reflect on the learning experience and highlight key takeaways

Ask participants to share one preferred activity from today's learning experience, justifying their choice and what they learned with it. Mentimeter or any other relevant digital platform.

9. Sharing of resources 2 minutes

Share relevant content material Share resources like the Sustainable Digital Marketing Guide, examples of successful sustainable marketing campaigns, and relevant articles or websites.

Also, the resources we have used for this module as examples, learning tools, etc. All of these will be shared as a reference list with participants after finishing the full training.

10. Feedback collection 5 minutes

Introduce to participants a few questions prepared beforehand that allow them to share their experiences. Examples include:

- How did you feel during this training?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- What did you learn that was new and what did you already know?

11. Receive participant feedback

Ask the participants to give their feedback on the training's structure, content, and effectiveness, etc.

Material: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

12. Check out and closing 3 minutes

Activity closing

Ask participants to answer two questions on a digital whiteboard or Miro board:

- What did you enjoy the most from what you learned?
- How do you feel about the training?

Material: Miro board, or Mentimeter.

5.1. Annex I:

Trainer will display and show this picture on the main screen while introducing the core principles of Sustainable Digital Marketing and so on....



Marketing360. Sustainable Marketing: Strategies for a Greener Future. Source: <https://www.marketing360.in/sustainable-marketing-4/>



Abdulhadi, Y. Sustainable Marketing: Now Is the Time. LinkedIn. URL: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/sustainable-marketing-now-time-youssef-abdulhadi/>

The trainer will display this picture also to reflect on sustainable marketing and generate more relevant ideas among participants which will lead to a fruitful group discussion.

Case Study: Fair Trade

Fairtrade changes the way trade works through better prices, decent working conditions and a fairer deal for farmers and workers in developing countries. Fairtrade's approach enables farmers and workers to have more control over their lives and decide how to invest in their future.

As a leader in the global movement to make trade fair, Fairtrade supports and challenges businesses and governments and connects farmers and workers with the people who buy their products.

By choosing Fairtrade, people can create change through their everyday actions. A product with the FAIRTRADE Mark means producers and businesses have met internationally agreed standards which have been independently certified.

Farmers and workers have a strong voice at every level of Fairtrade, from how they invest in and run their local organizations to having an equal say in Fairtrade's global decision-making.

Small-scale farmers and workers are among the most marginalized by the global trade system. At Fairtrade, they are at the heart of everything we do. Unique among certification schemes, producers have an equal say in how Fairtrade is run and are included in all our decision-making.

Fairtrade is far more than a certification scheme. Behind the famous Fairtrade label is one of the largest and most diverse global movements for change, working with 1.9 million farmers and workers, as well as a global grassroots supporter base of more than 2000 Fair Trade Towns in 28 countries, and countless schools, universities, and faith groups.

Fairtrade provides an essential safety net for producers by setting minimum prices for all major commodities, while the unique Fairtrade Premium provides additional funds for farmers and workers to invest as they see fit. Since 2014, Fairtrade producers and farmers have received over €994 million in premium money.

Fairtrade believes the best way to eliminate poverty is to pay farmers a fair price for their produce and workers a fair wage for their labour. They put fair prices first because farmers and workers in developing countries deserve a decent income and decent work.

They are the only global sustainability standard, which is equally owned and managed by producers, for producers, while Fairtrade workers are protected by strong, transparent standards. We support women to set up their own businesses and we train them to become entrepreneurs and community leaders.

Fairtrade is helping to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. The overarching goal, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, is central to Fairtrade. The standards are an essential development tool which goes way beyond certification.

If you are serious about sustainability, Fairtrade is an independent, pragmatic, flexible business partner. For consumers who have hundreds of labels to choose from, Fairtrade provides the trust and confidence to make sustainable shopping choices.

The global Fairtrade strategy is based on the premise that social and environmental justice are at the heart of sustainability. In 2021-2025 the strategy has been shaped by global forces for change, both external and internal. Climate change, inequality and consolidation of market actors, growing demands for social justice, the pandemic that tore through the world in 2020 – all have contributed to the call for change.

The issues that Fairtrade has championed for the past 30 years – responsible business practices, fairer prices for farmers, better treatment for workers – have taken centre stage.

Fairtrade wants to build a world where fairness is the norm. Where everyone benefits from quality products and enjoys quality of life. It's a shared belief based on our common humanity.

That's why our global strategy is based on three key tenets:

1. Decent livelihoods are a human right.
2. Social justice drives sustainability.
3. Radical collaboration powers deep impact.

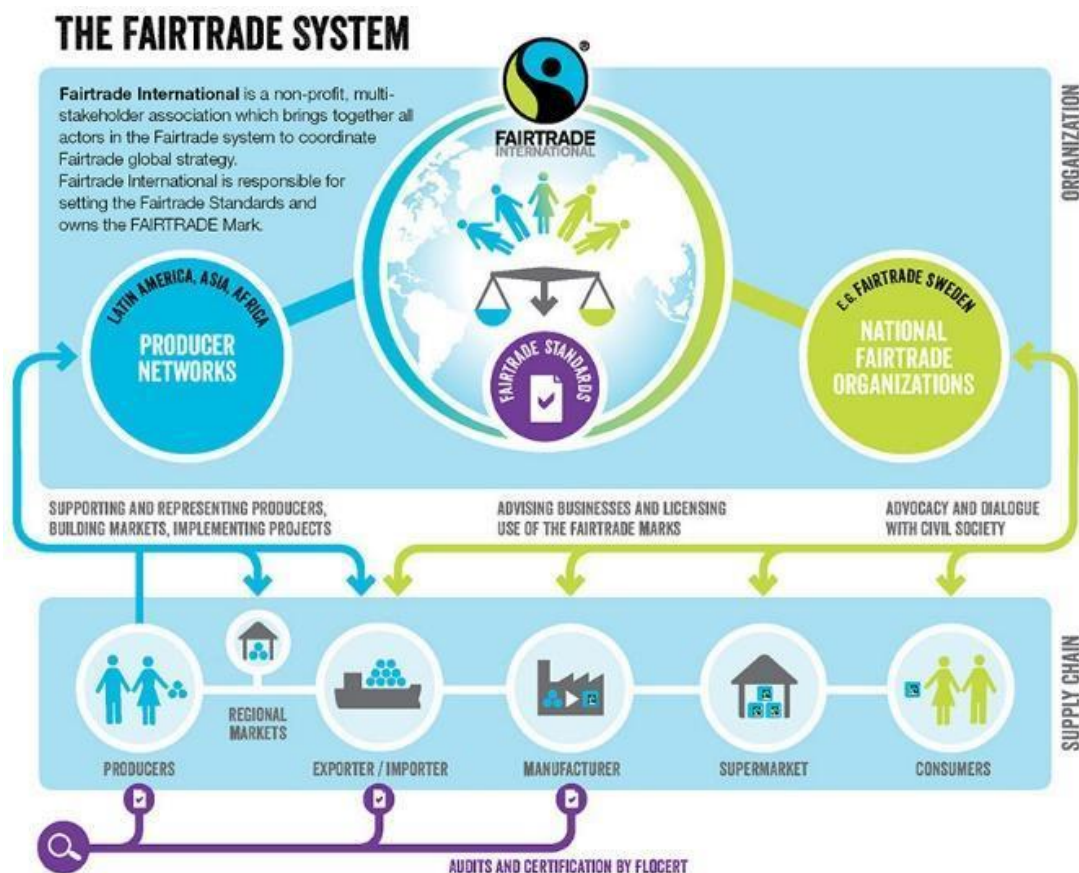
Fairtrade believes that trade can be a fundamental driver of poverty reduction and greater sustainable development, but only if it is managed for that purpose, with greater equity and transparency than is currently the norm.

Also, fairtrade believe that people can overcome disadvantage and marginalization if they are empowered to take more control over their work and their lives, if they are better organized, resourced and supported, and can secure access to mainstream markets under fair trading conditions.

We also believe that people, businesses, and civil society institutions in the developed world are supportive of trading in this way. This is particularly the case when they understand the needs of producers and the opportunities that Fairtrade offers to change and improve their situation.

All the work is driven by informed consumer choices, and the desire of business to meet the expectations of their customers, both of which provide crucial support for wider campaigning to reform international trade rules and create a fairer economic system. (Fairtrade International. (2023). *Impact Overview*. Fairtrade International. URL: <https://www.fairtrade.net/impact/overview>)

View full details [here](#)



Fairtrade International. (n.d.). Fairtrade System. Fairtrade International. URL: <https://www.fairtrade.net/about/fairtrade-system>

Trainer will show this system of fairtrade to understand their functional system at the beginning of the case study. This will assist participants to get a clear picture of this business's networks, standards, producers, target markets, target consumers and target regions. In the stage of sharing other certification or standard labelling business from participants' side, they can share their other opinions.

5.2. Annex II:

Sustainable Digital Marketing Content Creation

1. Executive Summary:

- Outline the key goal of the company.

2. Situation Analysis:

- Analysis of the competitive landscape in terms of sustainable marketing.

3. Target Audience:

- Describe the target audience's demographics, interests, and values related to sustainability.

4. Sustainable Branding:

- Create the brand's sustainable message and core values.
- Create visual elements and brand identity that reflect eco-friendliness.

5. Content Strategy:

- Identify what types of content will be created, such as blog posts, videos, infographics, etc.

6. Social Media Engagement:

- Select relevant social media platforms, content themes, and engagement tactics.

7. Partnerships and Collaborations:

- Potential eco-conscious organizations, NGOs, or charities for collaboration.
- Overview of potential initiatives or campaigns in partnership with them.

8. KPI's:

- List of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure sustainable engagement. Here is some suggestion about how you can frame successful and attainable KPIs:
 - Start with strategy.
 - Define the questions you need answers to
 - Identify your data needs.
 - Evaluate all existing data.
 - Find the right supporting data.
 - Determine the right measurement methodology and frequency.
 - Assign ownership for your KPIs.
 - Ensure KPIs are understood by people within your organization.
 - Find the best way to communicate your KPIs.
 - Review your KPIs to ensure they help improve performance.

9. Budget Allocation:

- Allocation of resources for different aspects of the sustainable digital marketing strategy.

10. Timeline

- Outline of the timeline for implementing different components of the strategy.



Parse.ly. (n.d.). CMOS Guide to Content Analytics. Parse.ly. URL: <https://www.parse.ly/resource/cmos-guide-content-analytics/>

Trainer will share above attached pictures (also can share the weblink to have a broader idea) on the main screen as these questions would be used for discussion of activity.

Considerations for group task:

Participants should consider the following instructions when they work in a group. Trainer should encourage participants to include (consider) the following elements in their content ideas (example of sustainable product):

- ✓ Product Features: Highlight the unique features of the sustainable product.
- ✓ Environmental Impact: Emphasize how using the product positively impacts the environment.
- ✓ User Benefits: Showcase the benefits that customers gain from using the sustainable product.
- ✓ Call to Action: Encourage product users to act, such as making a purchase, sharing the content, or engaging in sustainable practices.

5.3. Annex III:

Product: Eco-Friendly Clothing Line Patagonia.

Note: trainers can also select another product to show an example if needed.

— SUCCESSFUL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS —
FOR SUSTAINABLE BRANDS

A GREAT MARKETING CAMPAIGN IS NECESSARY FOR A **STRONG SUSTAINABLE IMPACT**. SO IF YOU'RE A **SUSTAINABLE BRAND**, FOLLOW THESE TIPS.

- be innovative & daring
- collaborate
- give a behind-the-scenes
- be detail oriented
- create interactive experiences
- lighten the mood

FOR BEST RESULTS, A SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING CAMPAIGN SHOULD:

- 01 BE PEOPLE-CENTERED**
Pay close attention to what your audience likes online - respond and interact. People like to be heard.
- ENCOURAGE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION 02**
Make it engaging! Your audience's actions matter, as these interactions can create connections with brands.
- 03 INVOLVE CROSS-MEDIA**
Conveying a message simultaneously using different media can get more eyes on your campaign.
- BE BOLD, BUT ALSO GENUINE 04**
Keep your sustainability mission real. Show that you desire change through your passion.

MARKETERS HAVE A CRUCIAL ROLE IN GUIDING BUYERS TO MAKE MORE SUSTAINABLE CHOICES . . .

81% of people expect companies to be environmentally aware in their advertising & communications

AND REMEMBER THAT SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING SHOULD BE DONE AUTHENTICALLY, NOT DECEPTIVELY.

akepa @agencyakepa

Vyper. (n.d.). Christmas Giveaway Ideas: 23 Viral Examples [Updated for 2023]. Vyper Blog. URL: <https://vyper.ai/blog/christmas-giveaway/>

Introduce/ kick off your products or service through a social media campaign to target customers and stakeholders. To establish a successful and effective, sustainable, and digital marketing campaign, this given example will be used as a template.

Description: Discover fashion that's kind to both you and the planet. Our new clothing line, a partnership between Patagonia and Infinite Fiber Co., brings you a fresh approach to sustainability.

Sustainability Attributes: Fiber: Crafted from textile waste, fibre is soft and comfortable, just like cotton. It's a premium-quality fibre with a circular mindset.

Earth-Friendly: fibre is biodegradable and free of microplastics. Your choices matter for cleaner oceans.

Cycle of Goodness: clothes can be recycled alongside other textiles, creating a circular loop that reduces waste.

Target Audience: Individuals who prioritize sustainable fashion choices, passionate about authenticity, comfort, and the planet.

Worksheet for main activity 3 - with the steps to follow for developing the campaign (how to build a marketing campaign)


Worksheet	
Identify the product:	
Introduction of selected product:	
Description:	
Sustainability attributes:	
Eco / Environment friendly:	
Recycle/ reuse/ reduce/.....:	
Target groups:	

Participants will fill out this table as a group to define their final product with criteria, diverse attributes considering sustainability and relevant impacts.

Teams are encouraged to include the following components in their campaign:

- Eye-catching visuals that showcase the sustainable product.
- Engaging captions that highlight the product's sustainability attributes.
- Information about the positive impact of choosing eco-friendly clothing.
- Customer testimonials or stories related to the product's benefits.
- Relevant hashtags and calls to action to encourage user engagement.

5.4. Annex IV: Action Plan

PLAN 		
6 Pillars of Digital Success	Audit of current capabilities <i>Check the box for the activities you have in place.</i>	Strategic initiatives and actions <i>For the boxes that are unchecked, write your planned action in the space below</i>
1. Planning and governance	<input type="checkbox"/> Have you audited your current digital marketing activity? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a digital transformation change management plan? Do <input type="checkbox"/> you have a defined customer acquisition plan? * <input type="checkbox"/> Have you defined your online value proposition? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have prioritized investment for digital marketing activities?	
2. Goals and measurement	<input type="checkbox"/> Have you developed SMART objectives that align with your forecast commercial contribution from digital channels? <input type="checkbox"/> Have your Google Analytics goals, events and dimensions been customized? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a digital performance review dashboard in place?	
3. Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Have you reviewed your digital media effectiveness? <input type="checkbox"/> Have you assessed your internal media creation capability? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a budget for external media creation? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have an established media quality assurance process?	
4. Content	<input type="checkbox"/> Have you assessed your content marketing effectiveness and ROI? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a defined content marketing strategy?	
5. Experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Have you benchmarked your website for usability and customer journey effectiveness? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a defined plan for structured testing of your website? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a CRO/personalization plan? *	
6. Conversational messaging	<input type="checkbox"/> Have you planned your customer segmentation and targeting strategies? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a defined customer engagement plan? * <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a plan for automated response technologies? *	
* Most needed in larger businesses		

Smart Insights. (n.d.). Digital marketing plan template. URL: <https://comunicacaointegrada.com.br/static/0dc4bdef14058466923f9c64037b953d/digital-marketing-plan-template-smart-insights.pdf>

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Module 6- External Digital Communication and Greenwashing

Total duration of the module: Minimum 3.5 hours.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Understand key concepts in digital communication and audience mapping.
- Recognize elements of effective storytelling in digital communication
- Outline a simple action plan for setting a digital communication scheme.
- Recognize a case of Greenwashing communication strategy.

Description of activities

1. Check-in 5 min

Engaging the participants and discovering their energy levels to better adapt to their needs.

Two Truths and a "Green Lie".

Participants take turns sharing two true statements about themselves related to sustainable practices in their digital communication or personal life and one fictional statement (the "green lie"). The group then tries to guess which statement is a lie. It's a fun way to get people talking about their experiences and knowledge of ecological behaviour while also creating a light and engaging atmosphere.

2. Introductory activity 20 minutes

Learn about sustainable digital communication

Start with solving the question: why do we talk about sustainable digital communication?

Then, explain better the relation between sustainable digital communication and message.

2 dimensions of digital communication: 1) sustainable communication in terms of the tools used
2) sustainable communication in terms of sending the message that your business is sustainable)

Finally, go on with the rest of the explanation mentioned in [Annex I](#).

You can use the definition in Annex I to start the discussion about sustainable digital communication, as a company interested in showing its green practices should choose sustainable ways to communicate through digital channels.

Material: [Annex I](#).

3. Main activity 1 35 Minutes

Define your audience and stakeholders

A communication campaign should start from defining the audience of the campaign itself. This exercise helps in better shaping the message to be addressed to potential clients,

Audience mapping is a fast and effective way for groups to identify and visually represent stakeholders and their relationships to each other, the campaign, project, process, or organisation. In Annex II you will find a guide that you can use to explain the concept and guide the participants in the training to create their own audience map.

Divide the participants into smaller groups, better if the groups correspond to people belonging to the same company.

Tell them to use the map in [Annex III](#) to define their audience, as defined in the Annex III under the map: Direct, Indirect, Remote, and Societal

Material:

- [Annex II](#)
- [Annex III](#)
- Digital whiteboard, post-it

4. *Main activity 2 40 minutes*

Create a profile of your target audience and get input from a real person corresponding to your target profile

Using the results of the previous activity and working with the same groups, the participants will now create a profile of their potential clients (target group).

The participants should define the characteristics of their potential clients: age, gender, interests, attitude. Once they have profiled him/her, they will simulate an interview. The interviewer and the interviewee will then shift their role, in a way that everybody can try to do the interview.

Give the participants 15 minutes for the first interview, then tell them to switch their roles.

Example of questions to ask:

1. The list of all the issues/needs the target profile faces when dealing with a product/service/... like yours.
2. The biggest issue/need is connected to a product similar to yours in terms of eco sustainability.
3. Why is it the biggest issue/need?
4. What are the consequences of the issue/need not being solved?
5. The second biggest issue/need in terms of sustainability.
6. Why is it an issue/need?
7. What are the consequences of the issue/need not being solved? What might happen if the issue is not solved.
8. What would stimulate you to promote the product among the people you know? [The question is aiming at extra efforts as a cause]
9. What do you see as a big risk factor? In terms of, for example, misunderstanding the message you are proposing, or directly connected to the product, like no one wants to buy it. Is there more than one risk factor? Can you describe it?
10. What would make the product/service/... unique (in their eyes?)

At the end of the interview the participants should have gained enough information about how to tell the story of their product, based on the need, possible risks, and the uniqueness of the product itself.

Ask them to rapidly summarize their feelings after the exercise.

5. *Main activity 3 30 minutes*

Use effective storytelling.

Participants will now analyse a case study of effective digital communication of a sustainable product, using the SUCCESS criteria.

Effective stories should be sticky:

S IMPLE

U NEXPECTED

C ONCRETE

C REDIBLE

E MOTIONAL

S USTAINABLE

S TORY

Divide the participants in 3 groups, each group will choose one of the case studies in [Annex IV](#).

Give them 10 minutes to read the text and analyse the campaign and write some notes about why the story is simple, what elements are unexpected, what is concrete, and credible, what is emotional, and finally what is the sustainable element in the story.

In the last 10 minutes, ask the groups to summarize their findings.

6. Main activity 4 40 minutes

Guide the participant to understand what Greenwashing it and how to avoid it

Identifying Greenwashing

Explain the concept of greenwashing and its negative impact on both businesses and consumers. ([Annex VI](#))

[Greenwashing](#) - “Greenwashing” is a common marketing ploy designed to make products seem more sustainable than they are. It’s essentially a way to convince customers that a company is making positive environmental choices, often through eco-conscious verbiage designed to convince shoppers that the product is more natural, wholesome, or free of toxins than competitors.

Divide the participants in three groups, provide participants with the case studies in Annex VII.

Ask learners to discuss what they observed in the greenwashing examples. What elements or claims suggest that the advertisement is not as environmentally friendly as it seems?

Instruct them to analyse the case study using [Annex VII](#), identify potential greenwashing tactics, and discuss the consequences.

Afterward, bring the groups back together to share their findings and insights.

Key Takeaways: Summarize the key takeaways from the activity.

Material:

- [Annex VI](#)
- [Annex VII](#)
- Miro bard

7. Introduction to digital editing tools (60 min or homework)

Start by sharing the following link with the learners:
<https://www.canva.com/designschool/courses/canva-101/?lesson=opening-canva-for-the-first-time>

This can be shared during the module, or as a preparatory activity prior to the training.

Explain to participants that the videos on the link are provided by the platform Canva, which is a user-friendly and simple online editing tool that supports different enterprises to build their marketing campaigns and communicate with consumers. By going through the videos, learners will be able to improve their digital editing skills, which are essential to build a successful and attractive digital marketing strategy.

Prepare the activity with learners:

- In groups or individually, learners will work on a post to promote their businesses using Canva. Considerations for this post should be taken from the previous activities, as well as from the learning experience of Module 5.
 - o Note: If learners have gone through the whole re:GREEN training content, the learning experience from Blocks 1 and 2 are also highly useful for these considerations. That is because through the first modules, learners will identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their circular attributes, which can all be used to improve their marketing strategy and improve their outreach.
- Ideas of posts that can be developed include: 1-image posts for different platforms; Videos for YouTube; Reels, Infographics.
- When developing their posts, they should consider:
 - o Audience
 - o Platform (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
 - Which platform is mostly used by your audience?
 - o Format (video, image, reels, etc.)
 - Which format is most attractive to your audience?
 - o Colours
 - Which colours resonate best with your product, audience, and field?
 - o Keep information short – be concise and straight to the point.
 - o Include important information
 - What are the most important features you are promoting? Make sure they are mentioned on the post!
 - Are you promoting a specific activity, event, or meeting? Include dates and details!
 - o If possible, set a question to your audience – this encourages engagement
 - o If possible, be personal! Share your own story, make reels where you talk about your product, talk directly with your audience.
 - o If possible, share ideas about how to use your products sustainably
 - Is it possible to re-use the packaging? Would you like customers to return them?
 - Can customers repair your product? How?
- Learners may work on their posts for 30 minutes, or this activity can be provided as a homework.

- After time is up, invite learners to share their posts, presenting which considerations they made and the plan they put together.
- Encourage participants to provide feedback to each other.

Material:

- Canva instruction [videos](#)

8. Action plan 20 minutes

Using maps to define action plans

Use the map in [Annex IX](#) to define your action plan to design your digital communication strategy

9. Final activity / Final debriefing 10 minutes

What's on your mind?

All the participants tell a sentence expressing what they have in mind in the exact moment

10. Sharing of resources 2 minutes

Actionable manual about communication strategies

<https://crnonline.de/result/unicorn-how-to-turn-your-ngo-into-a-brand/>

Audience mapping: <http://democrati.se/docs/Democratise.IdentifyingYourStakeholders.pdf>

11. Feedback collection 5 minutes

Introduce to participants a few questions prepared beforehand that allow them to share their experiences. Examples include:

- How did you feel during this training?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- What did you learn that was new and what did you already know?

12. Check out and closing 5 minutes

This is the last activity of the module.

Ask the participants to think of the most important thing that they are taking from this training.

Using a whiteboard, Miro board or Mentimeter, ask them to choose an emoticon or type out a word which summarizes it.

Participants are welcome to react and elaborate on their answer. After everyone has shared, share about your emoticon/word, thank the participants for joining and close the training.

Material: Suggestions: A digital whiteboard, Miro board, or Mentimeter.

6.1. Annex I

"Sustainable digital communication" refers to the practice of utilizing digital communication channels and technologies in a manner that aligns with principles of sustainability. It involves integrating environmental, social, and economic considerations into the planning, execution, and evaluation of digital communication strategies and activities. Sustainable digital communication aims to minimize negative environmental impacts, foster social responsibility, and promote long-term economic viability while effectively conveying messages and engaging with audiences through digital platforms.

Key aspects of sustainable digital communication include:

Environmental Responsibility: Sustainable digital communication strives to reduce its ecological footprint by minimizing resource consumption, energy use, carbon emissions, and electronic waste associated with digital channels. It may involve using eco-friendly data centres, optimizing energy-efficient technologies, and reducing digital clutter.

Content and Messaging: Sustainable digital communication prioritizes content that promotes sustainability, eco-conscious behaviour, and responsible consumption. It may address environmental issues, support social causes, and convey information related to sustainability initiatives.

Digital Accessibility: It ensures that digital content is accessible to a wide range of users, including those with disabilities, to promote inclusivity and social equity.

Privacy and Data Ethics: Sustainable digital communication respects user privacy and adheres to ethical data practices, safeguarding personal information and ensuring transparency in data handling.

User Engagement: Sustainable digital communication actively engages with users and stakeholders, encouraging dialogue, feedback, and participation in sustainability efforts. It may involve interactive campaigns, surveys, and forums.

Measurement and Reporting: It utilizes metrics and analytics to track the impact and effectiveness of digital communication efforts related to sustainability. This includes monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) such as engagement, reach, and behaviour change.

Digital Innovation: Sustainable digital communication embraces technological innovations that support sustainability goals, such as renewable energy-powered data centres, energy-efficient hardware, and eco-friendly software applications.

Digital Literacy: It promotes digital literacy and responsible online behaviour among employees and stakeholders, helping them make informed decisions in the digital realm.

Adherence to Regulations: Sustainable digital communication complies with relevant environmental, privacy, and data protection regulations to ensure legal and ethical practices.

Integration with Sustainability Strategy: It aligns digital communication efforts with the broader sustainability strategy of the organization, reflecting the commitment to sustainability in all digital interactions.

Continuous Improvement: Sustainable digital communication embraces a culture of continuous improvement, adapting to changing sustainability challenges and adopting new technologies and practices to enhance its sustainability performance.

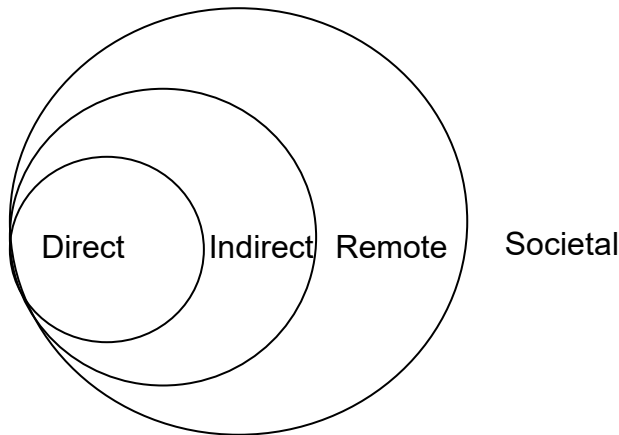
Sustainable digital communication is essential for organizations seeking to convey their commitment to sustainability, engage with eco-conscious audiences, and contribute to a more environmentally and socially responsible digital landscape. It involves a holistic approach that considers the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of digital communication practices.



6.2. Annex II



6.3. Annex III



The audience map works through a visual metaphor of concentric circles that identify our relationships at four levels, working from the centre out:

Direct

People or groups who directly interact with the organization/campaign (employees, current customers, suppliers, ...).

Indirect

People or groups who do not directly interact with the organization/campaign but exercise strong influence over (or are strongly influenced/affected by), like potential customers, family members, friends...

Remote

People or groups who remain at a distance from the organization/campaign but could be affected/influenced by the project (or vice versa, could indirectly affect/influence) like press, social media users and influencers, ...

Societal

Wider societal influences. Usually macro, they have no direct impact or influence and are themselves either not affected by or very indirectly affected by the system. This might include legislators or local authorities, quality assurance agencies or professional governing bodies and typically refers to a macro-level change or rule, law or policy that has a trickle-down impact on the organization/project/campaign.

These societal influences can often be broad categories (such as 'youth' or 'community') that you know about and want to connect with better. They will almost certainly contain more nuanced sub-categories and some of these will probably appear in the inner circles of your audience map.

6.4. Annex IV- Sustainability Marketing Campaigns – 4 Clever Examples

The Body Shop



The innovative brand partnered with TerraCycle to install product recycling bins in store locations worldwide — an ongoing program that motivates customers to return their empties in exchange for a redeemable discount voucher.

Clever!

FYI: This puts The Body Shop in the spotlight as an active promoter of the circular economy.

The strategy behind it all?

The Body Shop uses various marketing strategies (as do most brands) but customer marketing is the driving force behind creating awareness. It's about maximizing strong customer relationships and community surrounding a brand. This form of marketing improves customer's experiences, strengthening the brand's retention and growth. Meaning, people will likely do the marketing for the company if they love the brand.

To make customers connect with The Body Shop more, the company listened to the needs of its customers. They asked how they can recycle their empties and The Body Shop offered the perfect solution. In turn, customers feel satisfied they can still support a brand they like while being just as supportive to the environment.

And despite recycling not being the solution to the plastic problem, it's nevertheless a positive step and hopefully it'll help The Body Shop transition into using 100% post-consumer recycled plastic only.

Why did it work?

Due to the volatile nature of the modern market, many businesses can testify that attracting new customers is like tracing the last haunts of the slender-billed curlew (an endangered bird no longer frequenting the Danube delta) — it can be a costly, time-consuming, and disappointing exercise.

Retaining customers is cheaper than discovering new ones. Plus, brands that use customer marketing can often expect consistent and predictable income. The aim is to turn existing customers into advocates.

Customer marketing works for The Body Shop because the majority of its customers prefer supporting brands that take social and environmental issues seriously. More people want to participate in the effort to make the planet less trashy and they will likely make waves about it online.

Despite The Body Shop's large-scale success, it continues to focus on the human aspect of its customer relationship journey to establish confidence. After all, trust in a brand is what makes people feel empowered to share their stories.

2. Feeding bees in autumn

Brand: A1 Telekom

Campaign: Urban Bee Oasis

Marketing strategy: Traditional and social media marketing

A1 Telekom Slovenia created quite a buzz with its one-week Urban Bee Oasis Campaign.

In the build-up to World Bee Day in 2018, the campaign aimed to draw attention to the impact of global warming on flowering time in urban landscapes. This has a ripple effect as the depletion of food supplies dwindling in late summer causes bees to starve.

And when the bees go hungry, people go hungry.

The strategy behind it all?

To raise awareness and help city-dwelling bees, A1 Telekom produced an urban garden in the heart of Slovenia. The telecommunications company combined out-of-home (OOH) advertising, a traditional marketing strategy, with social media marketing to build hype.

Over the course of a week, 3,500 honeybee plants were grown, and visitors were encouraged to adopt one of 12 plants to create their own bee forage oasis at home. As a result of the collective effort, bees could survive through autumn.

This sustainable marketing campaign resonated on social media with a reach of over 350,000 users. The digital marketing efforts created 3,500 interactions and received 88,330 video views. This success is proof that a brand in any sector can effectively drive powerful audience engagement when it spreads a sustainable message.

Why did it work?

Traditional marketing often compliments digital marketing in that people are more likely to notice or click on an online ad after seeing an OOH advertisement. In this case, the OOH ads (the bee gardens) created a lasting impact on locals and the physical exposure supported the company's social media marketing efforts.

But Slovenia is not a random location of choice.

Not only is Slovenia one of the first EU countries to prohibit the use of pesticides specifically harmful to bees, but it's also known as a nation of beekeepers. Yes, honey and hives are practically a religion in one of the world's most environmentally friendly nations.

It is therefore not surprising that A1 Telekom's Urban Garden Oasis Campaign was the bee's knees.

3. The disappearance of the crocodile

Brand: Lacoste

Campaign: Save Our Species Campaign

Marketing strategy: Cause marketing

The global apparel brand, Lacoste, made a snappy decision to support species conservation action worldwide. In a three-year collaboration with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Save Our Species initiative, the brand launched limited-edition polo shirts. The company's winning idea was to boldly replace its iconic crocodile embroidered logo with 10 threatened species and match the number of shirts with the number of individuals left in the wild.



The strategy behind it all?

This clever sustainability marketing example is known as cause marketing, which is a pivotal part of brand strategy nowadays.

Not only did the initiative position Lacoste as an active participant in wildlife conservation, but the campaign also won two golds in the Clio Fashion & Beauty awards — in Partnerships & Collaborations and Public Relations.

Why did it work?

Seeing as the crocodile is one of the top famous logos in the world, it acted as a megaphone to draw public attention to the campaign.

Considering how difficult it can be to survive the scrutiny of customers and the fact that the renowned brand removed its logo entirely (even temporarily), showed Lacoste's level of dedication to raise awareness.

The company's strong commitment is exactly why the idea won.

Even though the number of polos for each species were different, all the shirts sold out in 24 hours with a 76% increase in new clients, 600k shares, and 1.2 million impressions on social media. What's more, the IUCN gained 4 times more donations, traffic to [saveourspecies.org](https://www.saveourspecies.org) increased by 200%, and newsletter subscriptions increased by 300% during the operations.

But never mind the overnight sell out, this brilliant sustainable marketing campaign was in the media across the globe — even in countries where the shirts were not available for purchase.

Now, that's a happy ending.

Well, almost. There is an edgier epilogue. Despite the clear commitment shown towards specific conversation in this campaign, Lacoste is classified as having one of the lowest scores on Good on You — the world's leading app for fashion brand sustainability ratings.

4. Plastic fishing

Brand: Corona

Campaign: Plastic Fishing Tournament

Marketing strategy: BTL + cause marketing

Some people raised doubts about Corona's ability to perform when the last pandemic went global three years ago. In spite of the name association, Corona managed to keep the number one position as the world's most valuable beer label in 2020, showing the power of brand resiliency. Shortly after, they used this very same power for good.

Known for its long-standing stance against plastic pollution, Corona launched the Plastic Fishing Tournament as an international campaign to strengthen its commitment to the environment. The beer brand sponsored the event, which rewarded anglers for fishing plastic waste out of the sea.

Catch plastic, make money, and clean up the ocean.

Within several hours, 80 fishermen removed over 3 tons of plastic from the Pacific Ocean.

The strategy behind it all?

To create this successful event, a combination of below-the-line (BTL) and cause marketing strategies were used to drive awareness and brand consistency.

Together with creative agency We Believers, Corona held the competition as part of an initiative to clean up and save the world's oceans.

In the summer of 2021, the pilot took place in Mazatlán, Mexico. Although the top winner was paid 14,800 pesos (the equivalent of one month's wages), no one went home e

In the summer of 2021, the pilot took place in Mazatlán, Mexico. Although the top winner was paid 14,800 pesos (the equivalent of one month's wages), no one went home empty-handed. Corona connected participants with the country's largest recycling company México Recicla to compensate everyone with higher-than-average rates – compared to fishing – for their hauls. Fishermen were also given vouchers for fishing supplies and cleaning tools made from recycled materials. Post-event, México Recicla was in charge of upcycling the recycled plastic into tools for fishermen.

Since then, Corona has brought the Plastic Fishing Tournament to South Africa, with rollouts in the works for even more countries.

The campaign has won numerous awards, including three Grand Clios and Cannes Lions Creative Marketer of the Year 2022.

Why did it work?

Events – a type of BTL marketing – are a great way to generate PR buzz, establish presence, and connect with specific audiences. But they can often appear as one-time stunts and mean little in the long run if they don't support something greater.

Prior to 2021, Corona had already spent years on its mission to end marine plastic pollution. A month before the tournament, Corona became the first company in the beverage industry to achieve a net-zero plastic footprint. At the same time, they started the Protect Our Beaches initiative with non-profit organization Oceanic Global.

As part of their overall marketing strategy, Corona has long used beach imagery in campaigns. That in mind, it only makes sense that they continue to focus on environmentalism to further promote the brand.

This goes to show that while sustainability marketing can have a great impact, we should also consider a brand's overall actions (and intentions) before choosing to support solely based on a campaign. If we don't, we could fall victim to greenwashing.

6.5. Annex V- SUCCESS

Storytelling is a fundamental strategy to stick with new potential clients. A sticky story should follow the SUCCESS criteria:

Effective stories should be sticky:

S IMPL E

U NEXPECTED

C ONCRETE

C REDIBLE

E MOTIONAL

S USTAINABLE

S TORY

6.6. Annex VI- Greenwashing

What Is Greenwashing?

Greenwashing is the process of conveying a false impression or misleading information about how a company's products are environmentally sound. Greenwashing involves making an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly or have a greater positive environmental impact than they actually do.

In addition, greenwashing may occur when a company attempts to emphasize sustainable aspects of a product to overshadow the company's involvement in environmentally damaging practices. Performed through the use of environmental imagery, misleading labels, and hiding trade-offs, greenwashing is a play on the term "whitewashing," which means using false information to intentionally hide wrongdoing, error, or an unpleasant situation in an attempt to make it seem less bad than it is.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Greenwashing is an attempt to capitalize on the growing demand for environmentally sound products.

Greenwashing can convey a false impression that a company or its products are environmentally conscious or friendly.

Critics have accused some companies of greenwashing to capitalize on the socially responsible or environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing movement.

Genuinely green products or businesses back up their claims with facts and details.

How Greenwashing Works

Also known as "green sheen," greenwashing is an attempt to capitalize on the growing demand for environmentally sound products, whether that means they are more natural, healthier, free of chemicals, recyclable, or less wasteful of natural resources.

The term originated in the 1960s, when the hotel industry devised one of the most blatant examples of greenwashing. They placed notices in hotel rooms asking guests to reuse their towels to save the environment. The hotels enjoyed the benefit of lower laundry costs.

More recently, some of the world's biggest carbon emitters, such as conventional energy companies, have attempted to rebrand themselves as champions of the environment. Products are greenwashed through a process of renaming, rebranding, or repackaging them. Greenwashed products might convey the idea that they're more natural, wholesome, or free of chemicals than competing brands.

Companies have engaged in greenwashing via press releases and commercials touting their clean energy or pollution reduction efforts. In reality, the company may not be making a meaningful commitment to green initiatives. In short, companies that make unsubstantiated claims that their products are environmentally safe or provide some green benefits are involved in greenwashing.

6.7. Annex VII- Cases of Greenwashing

Volkswagen

In 2015, Volkswagen was found to have cheated emission tests by making its diesel cars appear far less polluting than they are. The car manufacturer admitted to installing 'defeat devices' in a variety of vehicles. This software was able to detect when an emission test was being conducted and adapt the car's performance to lower emission levels. Consequently, this led to several lawsuits and fines totalling billions of dollars.

All of this happened as the company promoted environmentally friendly and low-emission features of its cars, like inserting a nitrogen oxide trap in the engine and a strengthened particulate filter, in its marketing campaigns. In reality, The US Environmental Protection Agency discovered that 482,000 VW diesel cars engines were emitting nitrogen oxide pollutants up to 40 times above the US limit.

McDonald's

In 2019, the fast-food chain started an initiative to reduce the usage of single-use plastics in its restaurants. The main objective was to completely replace all plastic straws in its UK restaurants with recyclable paper alternatives. By presenting themselves as a big contributor to reducing plastic waste and by promoting sustainable alternatives, McDonald's advertisement was a resounding success.

Nevertheless, the company's new paper straws, which have replaced the previous plastic ones, are still not recyclable. McDonald's manufacturers and environmental experts have raised numerous questions about sustainability. Notwithstanding the negative public response to it, McDonald's is still running the campaign.

The company is said to be examining further options, such as swapping straws for beaker lids – although it's hard not to point out that beaker lids are also, however, made of plastic.

Nespresso

The largest coffee pod producer, Nespresso, hasn't been totally transparent when it comes to the topic of recycling. Even though the company reassured the public that its single-use coffee pods are ecologically friendly and made exclusively of recyclable materials, the reality is slightly different.

There is some truth in the sense that the pods can theoretically be recycled. However, specialized machinery is needed in order to properly process them – which traditional recycling plants don't have access to.

While Nespresso started its own recycling program to aid this issue, other coffee brands like Keurig have instead changed the wording of its marketing in order not to imply that the pods are completely recyclable.

H&M

Although they may only make up a small amount of their total company, fast fashion businesses have a tendency to actively publicize their green activities.

For instance, in 2012 H&M released its own line of eco-friendly clothing under the name “Conscious Collection”. The company claimed that it utilized recycled polyester and organic cotton. However, critics argue the line is a marketing gimmick to make it appear more environmentally concerned.

“Explore our assortment of sustainable fashion items that help you both look and feel good,” reads the mission statement for H&M’s conscious brand. Nevertheless, marketing buzzwords like “green,” “sustainable,” or “environmentally friendly” lack a universal meaning.

H&M was especially criticized by the Norwegian Customer Authority for false advertising in their new “environmentally friendly” collection. The Authority said, “the information regarding sustainability was not sufficient, especially given that the Conscious Collection is advertised as a collection with environmental benefits.”

Zara

Another fashion brand accused of greenwashing is Zara. In 2022, the brand introduced a limited-edition line of “sustainable clothing” made from polyester generated from captured carbon emissions. However, the brand has been criticized as it still promotes the concept of over-production and over-buying, which critics say cancels out these efforts.

Furthermore, Zara stated plans to start a pre-owned project to launch before the end of 2022. Alice Murphy, a journalist for The Independent, was one of the opponents, arguing that the fast-fashion sector should prioritise waste reduction before any second-hand clothes initiatives.

Even though the company said it is planning to slow down production, critics feel Zara is still not doing enough to address its current business model and the consequent heavy carbon footprint caused by its supply chains.

The brand is also under fire for failing to offer an exhaustive list of manufacturers and for not disclosing the audit results, which raises concerns about transparency.

Zara does have environmental ambitions, such as wanting to run all internal operations on renewable energy by 2030 and “move towards a circular economy model to extend the life cycle of the merchandise”. The company has also stated its goal to use only recyclable polyester and sustainable cotton by 2040, as well as to cut and offset all emissions.

Annex VIII - How to spot greenwashing: The 5 signs of corporate greenwash

SIGN #1: VAGUE TERMS AND SLOGANS

Sustainable, eco-friendly, natural, and green – these are common terms used in marketing to appeal to the eco-conscious consumer. But what do they mean?

The unsubstantiated overuse of these terms has meant they’ve become increasingly vague and interchangeable; this phenomenon is known as term dilution.

Let’s take the term *sustainable* as an example to explain. All of a sudden sustainability is about climate change, ending poverty, and gender equality. Can companies that employ strategies focusing on just one or two of these areas market themselves as *sustainable*?

Sustainability means taking only what you need and leaving systems capable of continued existence. Reducing plastic use in the name of sustainability does not equate to being sustainable.

Natural is another vague term that's become essentially meaningless. There are natural ingredients that are bad for us and our environment. For instance, the pesticide arsenic is natural but you wouldn't want it in your coffee. By sticking "*natural*" to food packaging, the agricultural industry could hide these sinister practices.

Don't be fooled by companies saying the right thing. Look for the evidence to support their claim and question what these vague terms *actually* mean for each brand

SIGN #2: USING NATURAL IMAGERY

Just as companies can easily *say* the right thing, they can also easily *show* you the right thing. Trees, butterflies, bunnies, blue skies, and a farmer's tractor – these are seductive images used to portray an eco-friendly business. Another common deceitful trick is using earth colours, such as blues, greens, and browns.

Like with the use of vague terms and slogans, you need to look for evidence. Does the imagery used help businesses communicate their sustainable initiatives, or is it just surface-level aesthetics?

SIGN #3: A LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND PROOF

Check the label, product description, or website for information about the brand's environmental impact and what initiatives they're involved in. A company that's genuinely working hard to minimize its environmental impact will tell you. If there's no disclosed information or a lack of information, steer clear of that brand.

You also need to look for proof. Sustainability certification schemes are there to provide third-party assurance that a company's green claims are true.

SIGN #4: IRRELEVANCE AND SIMPLICITY

Not all environmental claims are relevant. A good example is CFC-free *products*. CFCs have been banned for over 30 years, but you still see products advertising themselves as CFC-free. This may seem harmless, but it creates the impression that the product is better for the environment than a competitor, when in fact, they are the same. Here the green claims made are irrelevant.

On this note, companies can get tunnel vision targeting one environmental problem without seeing the big picture and over-simplifying what it means to be sustainable.

Let's come back to the example just mentioned. Great, our product is CFC-free, but what about how it's made, packaged, and transported? How much waste does the company produce? What about the other chemicals used in production?

Sustainability is complex and businesses cannot solve this by focusing on a single initiative. Companies need to take a holistic approach to the problem of unsustainability. Organizations need to consider their constituent parts, how these interrelate over time, and how they interact with other systems and our environment.

SIGN #5: A LACK OF MODESTY

As mentioned, the problem of unsustainability is complex, and solutions require a system-thinking approach. True business sustainability is a problem that hasn't been solved yet, as we explain.

Coming back to the rules of sustainability, sustainability means *taking only what you need and leaving systems capable of continued existence*.

Let's consider the outdoor clothing brand Patagonia as an example. Patagonia is considered worthy of its sustainable reputation, winning the 2019 UN Champions of the Earth award, and operating as a certified B-Corp. Yet, even Patagonia hasn't solved the problem of unsustainability in business.

According to Paul Hawkin, author of Ecology of Commerce, despite their commendable efforts, Patagonia does not leave environmental systems capable of continued existence. As Hawkins states, if every company operated as Patagonia does, we'd still be experiencing the environmental issues we have today. Modestly, Patagonia highlights the imperfections in their drive to become truly sustainable.

@agencyakepa

How to Spot green washing

There are a few common tricks that you can watch out for to make it easy to spot greenwashing and dubious sustainability claims:

VAGUE 'GREEN-SOUNDING' LANGUAGE:
Look out for words that sound good at first but have no concrete meaning legally, like 'farm fresh' or 'conscious'.

IRRELEVANT CLAIMS:
Making a big noise about one tiny green attribute on an otherwise totally anti-green product.

BADLY THOUGHT-OUT BIG GESTURES:
A classic one when an idea has come from a marketing team instead of experts.

! MISLEADING NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES

REBRANDING TO INCLUDE 'natural' PACKAGING
Products that change their look to apply the veneer of sustainability, but without actually changing anything.

MAKING THE PRODUCT PACKAGING GREEN

At its core,
greenwashing is all about misdirection.

SO WHAT SHOULD WE BE LOOKING OUT FOR TO KNOW IF A BRAND IS FOR REAL

Accountability
Ironically, truly sustainable brands are transparent about how they're affecting the environment.

Accreditation
Don't just take brands' words for it. Look for companies that are audited or accredited by third parties.

Clear labeling
Sustainable products should include simple language labels about exactly what's in a product.

Traceability
Some forward-thinking brands have been helping buyers track their products' sustainability using helpful tech.

6.8. Annex IX- Action plan map:

Topic (Please describe the topic you're addressing. Think about what is needed to translate the topic in your everyday work.)					
Goal (Be sure to write "SMART" goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-sensitive.)					Timeline/Dur ation
Action Steps (What will you do?)	Target audience (Who will benefit?)	Timeline (By when?)	Resources (list financial, human, organizational resources or materials needed) A. Resources available B. Resources needed	Knowledge (What more do I need to know? Where could I find the information?)	Potential Barriers (What are the potential challenges you face? How will you overcome them?)
Step 1:					
Step 2:					

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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