

The Unilever Webinar Series No. 1



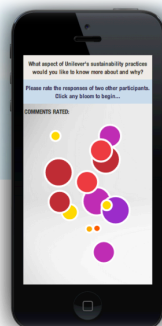
Within each of these themes, top comments are illustrated to provide a brief overview of each of theme and the most important issues to emerge from the research.

Introduction

Creating a sustainable business is becoming increasingly important for organisations in this volatile climate of global change. To put these changes into context we just need to look at some of the figures. We are expected to have over 9 billion people on the planet by 2050 as the population continues to grow at a rate of 200,000 a day. A staggering two million children die every year of preventable diseases, and shockingly one in ten of the adult population is obese while over one billion people go hungry. Huge challenges faced in this turbulent global economy, combined with devastating environmental and social challenges, demonstrate that we are living unsustainably.

With more than two billion people consuming Unilever's products worldwide every day, responsibility to sustainable practices is vital to Unilever as a company. Sustainability is at the heart of Unilever's business model, and is crucial to its consumers, customers, suppliers, employees and communities. These ongoing changes and economic, environmental and social pressures pave the way for Unilever's business strategy and business model. Their overarching vision is to double the size of the business, whilst halving their environmental footprint and increasing their positive social impact.

Such is the importance of sustainability, Unilever wanted to involve future leaders with the topic – right from the very start of their interactions with the company. The Unilever Webinar Series is a campaign developed to engage with prospective graduate candidates on issues that matter and to provide an opportunity for them to interact with leaders and with each other.

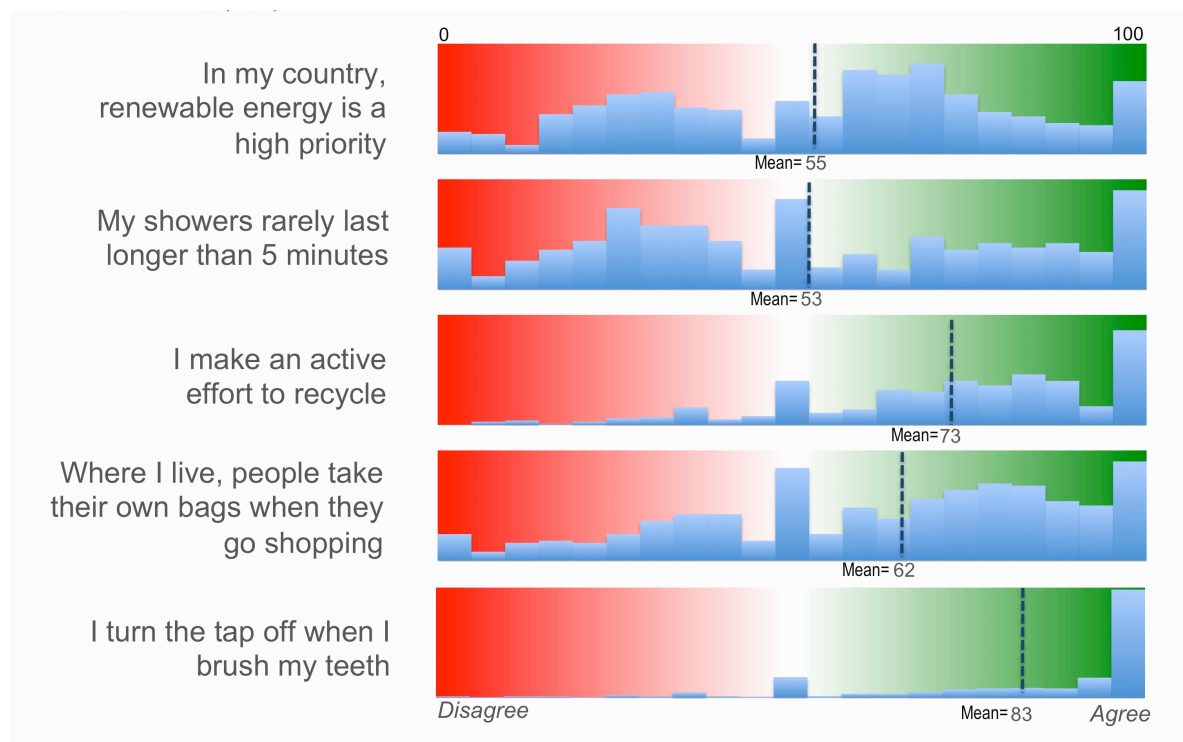


An interactive discussion was hosted to provide collective intelligence on which to develop the Webcast. Participants were asked, ***'What aspects of Unilever's sustainability practices would you like to know more about and why?'*** Participants were positioned in a data visualisation along side those with similar experiences around sustainability in their own lives.

Research Findings

Nearly 700 participants in 18 European countries took part in the online discussion, which informed the webinar delivered by Unilever's President of Europe, Jan Zijerfeld. The spread of opinion on five positioning statements about sustainability behaviours and experiences can be seen in *Chart 1*:

Chart 1: Positioning Statements



There is a broad spread of opinion regarding the extent to which participants think that renewable energy is a high priority in their country. Likewise, the extent to which participant's showers rarely last longer than five minutes is also roughly equal. The majority of participants make an active effort to recycle themselves, yet participants' local experience of people taking their own bags when they go shopping is more mixed. Virtually all participants turn off the tap when they brush their teeth.

Having answered the discussion question, participants were able to rate other participants' responses to the discussion question (*What aspects of Unilever's sustainability practices would you like to know more about and why?*) according to how interested they would be to learn more about that aspect, and how important this was to them in considering prospective employers. This community ratings also serves as an aggregation tool, whereby a leaderboard of top comments can be revealed. The top comments as rated by participants in terms of their importance and interest are shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Top Comments



Evi
Hungary

There is a new field in Leadership theories emerging nowadays: Sustainability Leadership. The theory suggests that Leaders aiming to lead their company down the pathway to sustainability needs to have special attributes and competences. Is this really vital, according to Unilever's practice? What attributes among leaders are the most important for leading Unilever down the pathway to sustainability? What are the common, shared characteristics of Unilever's leaders could create a fundamental transformation and integrate sustainability into their core business activity?

I'd like to know how Unilever influences their customers' mindset on sustainability because engaging consumers is important.



Nkuk
UK

I am particularly interested in how Unilever intends to cascade its sustainability principles through its supply chain, particularly the Tier 2 and 3 suppliers, and those who may be operating in less-westernised business environments. And how Unilever can use its strategic position to best motivate suppliers to adopt sustainable business practices without having an adverse effect on supplier relations.



rachaeleverard
UK



stefania
Sweden

How does Unilever balance out the contradiction of being a FMCG company, which needs to push consumers to consume more in order to be financially viable but at the same time has sustainability goals/ would need to do the exact opposite i.e. stimulate consumers to buy less if 100% stringent (making sustainability a core mission)? Also bearing in mind the competitive environment which puts certain limitations/ constraints to their possible pattern of action...

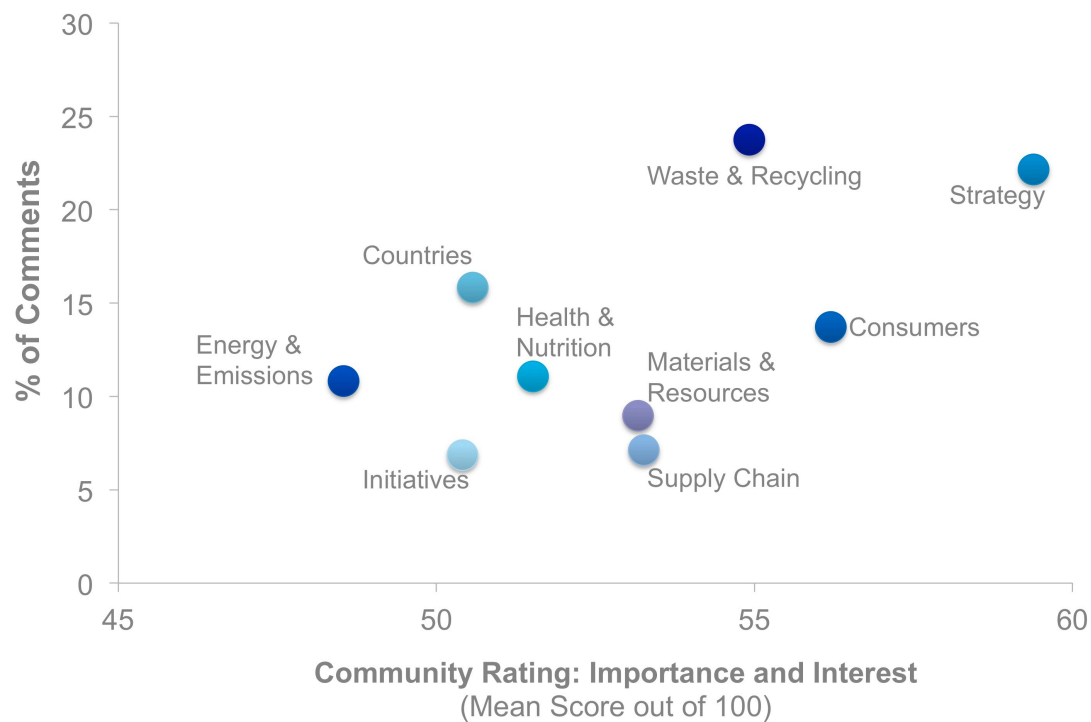
Sustainability has become a very common and popular concept nowadays. But the important thing is to not only use it as a word but act upon it - in as many areas as possible. My question would be how Unilever manages to cover as many steps in the business process as possible under the sustainable "umbrella" and which employment possibilities there are in this domain.



kf2014
Sweden

A text analysis was conducted on all the comments alongside the community ratings. From this process a number of themes emerged that revealed the areas of Unilever's sustainability practices that participants wished to know more about and were important to them when thinking about graduate employers. These are shown in *Chart 3*. The chart also plots these themes according to the percentage of people discussing them and the community rating of that theme.

Chart 3: What aspects of Unilever's Sustainability Practices would you like to know more about? Themes by community rating and % of comments.



This highlights three themes which resonate with students the most: waste and recycling, the overall sustainability strategy and changing consumer behaviour. Each of these are explored in more below.

Sustainability Strategy

Based on the community ratings, top comments within this theme focused on finding more about Unilever's overall strategy to sustainability and actions taken within the company. More specifically, participants were interested to learn about how success was measured when implementing sustainability strategies in terms of targets, benchmarks and KPIs.

'How does Unilever manage the potential conflict between costs for sustainability measures and profitability, is there a business case calculation for every sustainability measure? How are sustainability measures monitored in terms of KPIs?'

'How do Unilever measure whether they will hit their 2020 target to halve their environment footprint?'

In answer to these queries, Jan presented Unilever's sustainability business case for 2020. He explained how Unilever's total integrated strategy has sustainability at its heart. The strategy for 2020 is to double the size of Unilever from £40billion to £80billion whilst also decoupling this growth from the associated environmental impact. In other words, to grow Unilever but simultaneously half its environmental impact and have a positive impact on the world.

Consumers

Community ratings revealed a number of highly rated comments resonating with participants that were discussing the role of the consumer within Unilever's sustainability practices. The crux of these responses focused on finding out how consumers are encouraged to adopt more sustainable behaviours. Further to this, candidates wanted to know how Unilever understand the needs and wishes of the consumer in the first place.

'I would be interested to hear more about their attempts to shift consumer behaviour, specifically in developing countries, towards products which are more sustainable for the environment in which consumers use them.'

'The customer relationship. How they identify what the customer wants from their products and what they want from the company that provides their product in terms of corporate social responsibility. Event tactics to engage the consumer in their practices and how they get the employee team on board.'

'I'd like to know how Unilever influences their customers' mindset on sustainability because engaging consumers is important.'

In order to address these questions, Jan highlighted a number of practical changes and innovations that Unilever have made in order to encourage and supply the sustainable consumer. A case study was presented by Sustainability Director Anniek Mauser to demonstrate the practical actions Unilever are taking to change consumer behaviour.

A campaign has been launched in the Netherlands to encourage consumers to use less water. The aim is to change consumer behaviour by encouraging them to decrease their shower time by three minutes. To put this in context, reducing showers by just three minutes is the equivalent to taking 572,000 cars off the road or a household saving €165 in water bills a year. Placing their focus on looking to future changes, the campaign was targeted at primary school children. Working with their partners they provide children, via online platforms and school programmes, the tools they need to start the dialogue about water use at home. 220 schools are now signed up to the campaign which has reached 30,000 people so far.

Waste and Recycling

Many of the candidates wished to find out about Unilever's approach to dealing with waste and recycling. More specifically, questions were raised around how waste is minimised, how recycling is encouraged, how production processes are affected and what their stance is on eco-friendly products and packaging.

'There's lots of chemistry involved in the production of your offerings, including the packaging. How do ensure safe and effective disposal or recycle of any waste or bi-products? How do you ensure that the production processes and waste disposal have minimum or zero effective on the environment?'

'How does Unilever reduce packaging material used and therefore waste?'

Questions around waste provided Jan an opportunity to discuss recent design innovations that are aimed at reducing packaging. For example, new concentrated deodorant canisters. By reducing the volume space of aerosol can but not decreasing the product within it, Unilever have reduced packing by nearly half. Having just launched there are now over 1.6 million users in the UK and Ireland. Innovations not only reduce the environmental impact of Unilever's products but also make economical and business sense.

Conclusion

The business case for sustainability is not just motivating and compelling in light of its environmental and social impact, but it is effective for business too. A catalyst in this movement towards sustainable business is due to a shift in perception from the consumers that has made sustainable products more important than ever.

The research revealed a number of areas of sustainability that are important to students when thinking about graduate employers. Community ratings revealed the three areas of interest that resonated most with the candidates were strategy, consumers and waste and recycling. The webcast provided a unique opportunity for prospective graduates to gain insight into these areas specifically.