

**ENHANCE
LIVELIHOODS**

**IMPROVE
HEALTH &
WELL BEING**

**REDUCE
ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT**

Executive Summary

Unilever: Driving Sustainable Success

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Unilever's adherence to them are evaluated in this study. It also assesses stakeholder disagreements and makes recommendations for how to enhance relations. The study also examines Unilever's sustainable marketing approaches, identifies areas for improvement, and offers helpful recommendations.

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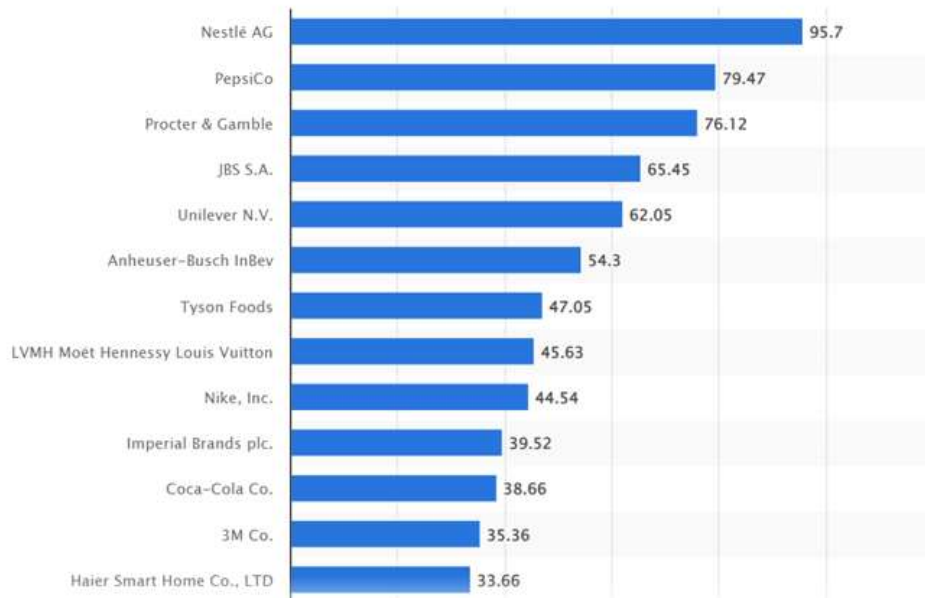
1.Introduction

Unilever is one of the biggest consumer products firms in the world with its headquarter in London, the United Kingdom (Statista, 2023a).

It was founded more than a century ago. There are 127,000 people working for them worldwide. The firm has representation in more than 190 countries for more than 400 brands. The business has a worldwide mission and a global reach (Unilever, 2023a).

It is a part of the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry, which includes items that are regularly used, bought, and replaced. Among Unilever's many goods are food and drink, cleaning supplies, and items for personal care. Dove, Lifebuoy, Knorr, Lipton, Axe, and Hellmann's are just a few of its well-known trademarks.

Other significant competitors to Unilever in the FMCG business include Procter & Gamble, Nestlé, The Coca-Cola Company, and PepsiCo. Additionally, these businesses create a wide range of consumer items and hold established market positions (Comparably, 2023). With net sales of over 62.05 billion dollars in 2021, Unilever was listed as the fifth-largest consumer products firm globally (Statista, 2023b).



Global net sales of the leading 50 FMCG companies 2021 (Statista, 2023b)

The emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility that Unilever places on its brands gives it a distinct competitive edge (Joanne Lawrence, Andreas Rasche & Kevina Kenny , 2018).

To make sustainable living ubiquitous' is our mission statement. Unilever as a firm want to be a purpose-led, future-fit organization (Unilever, 2023b).



The Unilever Compass for Sustainable Growth (Unilever, 2023c)

1.2 UNILEVERS SUSTAINABLE LIVING PLAN

It has three main goals and at Unilever it has always believed that the only viable business model for Unilever is one that benefits our stakeholders and society as a whole (Unilever, 2023b).



Unilever's approach to a number of SDGs demonstrates its dedication to sustainability and social responsibility:

SDG 1: No Poverty

Through its Sustainable Living Plan, in particular, Unilever offers projects that seek to enhance livelihoods and decrease poverty. The goal of this strategy is to improve the standard of living for small-scale merchants and farmers along the value chain (Unilever, 2023d).

Successful performance

By 2020, we had made it possible for 1.83 million small retailers and 832,000 smallholder farmers to access programmes aimed at enhancing their farming practices and raising their earnings (Unilever, 2023d).

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

Sustainable agriculture and food security are important, according to Unilever. The business has dedicated to responsibly and sustainably obtaining agricultural raw materials.

Successful performance

The initiatives taken by Unilever to support sustainable agriculture help to improve food security and combat hunger. To increase its influence on attaining SDG 2, the business should keep working with stakeholders like Global Food Bank Networks and spending money on research (Unilever, 2023d; Unilever, 2023b).

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

Lifebuoy, Dove, and Knorr are just a few of the brands in Unilever's portfolio that are dedicated to enhancing health and wellbeing (Unilever, 2023d).

Successful performance

Two years earlier than expected, we reached our goal. By the end of 2020, we had reached more than 1.3 billion people, with TV advertisements reaching more than 715 million people and on-the-ground programmes reaching more than 625 million (Unilever, 2023d).

According to widely accepted dietary recommendations, 61% of our portfolio by volume will have complied with our Highest Nutritional Standards by the end of 2020 (Unilever, 2023d).

SDG 5: Gender Equality:

Within its operations and supply chain, Unilever places a great emphasis on fostering gender equality and women's empowerment. Through programmes like the Unilever Sustainable Living Young Entrepreneurs Awards, the firm attempts to increase the number of women in positions of leadership and to support female entrepreneurs (Unilever, 2023d).

Successful performance

In 2019, we achieved gender parity in our management, and in 2020, we kept the percentage of female managers at 50%. By 2020, in collaboration with others, we would have made it possible for 2.63 million women to take use of programmes designed to increase their safety, their skill set, or their chances (Unilever, 2023d)

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:

"Lifebuoy" the Unilever's product actively aims to provide access to clean water and sanitary facilities. The business seeks to solve the issue of poor sanitation and hygiene on a worldwide scale through partnerships and initiatives. Water conservation is a priority for Unilever throughout its supply chain and industrial operations (Unilever, 2023d).

Successful performance

Our water impact per user consumption remained constant from 2010 to 2020 (Unilever, 2023d).

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production:

Unilever is dedicated to encouraging ethical manufacturing and consumption methods. The business wants to encourage sustainable sourcing and lessen the impact of its products on the environment. The Sustainable Living Plan for Unilever has significant goals, such as lowering greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing waste management (Unilever, 2023d).

Successful performance

- As compared to 2010, our greenhouse gas effect per user use was down by 10% in 2020.
- Since 2010, our consumer waste impact has decreased by 34%.
- Since 2010, our water impact per user use has been constant at 0%.
- By the end of 2020, 67% of agricultural raw materials will have been obtained sustainably (Unilever, 2023d).

2. Unilever's Stakeholders

Unilever works regularly with a number of important stakeholders who are crucial to the company's operations and successes.

2.1 Consumers

The people who buy and utilize Unilever's products are its main stakeholders. From huge retailers like supermarkets, hypermarkets, and e-commerce platforms to more modest out-of-home services and others, it serves as a consumer (Unilever, 2023e).

Consumer's Interest

Customers demand items that are of the highest calibre, are secure, and adhere to environmental best practices. Additionally, they promote open information regarding sourcing, components, and environmental effect (K. Kumaravel1, 2013).

To improve relationship with customer

- Using market research, surveys, and other feedback systems to interact with customers and learn about their needs and preferences.
- Being transparent and honest about where its products are sourced from, how they are made, and how that affects the environment (Kaisa Vehmas, 2018).

2.2 Employees

The 148,000 workers of Unilever are significant stakeholders who support the business's headquarters, factories, R&D centers, and tea farms (Unilever, 2023e).

Employees Interest

They demand fair pay, comfortable working conditions, chances for professional advancement, and a supportive workplace culture that values inclusiveness, diversity, and work-life harmony.

To improve relationship with Employees

- By promoting a culture of diversity, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity, Unilever can strengthen its stakeholder connection with its workforce (zbilgin, 2007).
- Encouraging efforts for employee wellbeing and work-life balance (Smith, 2015).

2.3 Shareholders

Investors in Unilever expect a profit on their investment. They also have little interest but a lot of power on Unilever. These people provide money to the business, giving them a significant position inside it (Unilever, 2023 g). A business that depends heavily on its stockholders, whether it runs well or not. If they withdraw the money, the business will face difficulties (Unilever, 2023e).

Shareholder's Interest

The company's financial success, profitability, and long-term expansion are of importance to them. Additionally, shareholders seek out ethical business practices that reduce risks and increase value (Charl de Villiers , 2010).

To improve relationship with Shareholders

- By maintaining transparent and responsible corporate governance practices, Unilever may strengthen its stakeholder engagement with shareholders.
- By regularly and plainly communicating about financial performance, strategic objectives, and risk management (Rittenberg, 2012).
- By maintaining transparent and responsible corporate governance practices, Unilever may strengthen its stakeholder engagement with shareholders.

2.4 Suppliers

The 53,000 suppliers in 150 countries that make up the Unilever network provide raw ingredients, packaging, and other necessary inputs. To get raw materials, packaging, and other inputs, Unilever relies on its worldwide supply network (Unilever, 2023e).

Supplier's Interest

Suppliers demand honest and open business interactions, prompt payments, and enduring relationships. They also have higher expectations for ethical sourcing methods and sustainability pledges (John Ramsay a, 2009).

To improve relationship with Suppliers

- Unilever can deepen its stakeholder relationships with suppliers by encouraging fair and ethical supply chain practices.
- Collaboration with suppliers to increase sustainability standards and decrease environmental effect (Naimatullah Shah, 2020).

2.5 Governments and Regulatory Bodies

Unilever works internationally and is governed by a number of rules and regulations, all of which are used to help create laws and regulations that might have an impact on our business.

Government's Interest

Governments and regulatory organizations demand adherence to national and international standards, including those pertaining to environmental effect, labor practices, product safety, and labelling.

To improve relationship with Governments

- Keep an eye on developments and adjust: Unilever needs to keep a careful eye on any modifications to laws, regulations, or the political climate in any of its operating nations (Miller, 2005).
- Localize operations and decision-making: Unilever should modify its procedures to take into account the distinctive political, economic, and cultural situations of each nation (Elbanna, 2007).
- Increased openness and adherence to rules: Unilever should make sure that it works in accordance with all applicable rules, laws, and regulations in each nation (Ivar Kolstad, 2008).

2.6 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Activist Groups:

NGOs and activist organizations keep an eye on and promote ethical corporate conduct. NGO collaborations to create local projects that fulfil the social goals of our companies (Utting, 2007).

Non-Governments Interest

They could concentrate on certain concerns like human rights, social justice, animal welfare, or environmental sustainability. These participants have the power to affect public perception, media coverage, and consumer behavior.

To improve relationship with Governments

- By actively participating in corporate social responsibility programmes, Unilever can strengthen its stakeholder connection with NGOs.
- Collaborating with NGOs to implement sustainable projects that have a positive social and environmental effect (Utting, 2007).

3. Potential conflicts among stakeholder;

3.1 Consumer vs. Shareholder

Consumers could prioritize discounts and lower costs, whilst stockholders might prioritise maximizing profits (Queen, 2014). It can be difficult to strike a balance between these interests, but Unilever can do so by making investments in sustainable sourcing, cutting waste, and highlighting the long-term advantages of ethical business practices for both customers and shareholders.

3.2 Employee vs. Shareholder

While shareholders may place a stronger priority on cost reduction, employees may demand better pay and perks. By assuring equitable remuneration, fostering employee well-being, and including staff in decision-making processes, Unilever may enhance stakeholder relationships (Huang, 2006).

3.3 Supplier vs. Consumer

When suppliers are under pressure to produce inexpensive supplies, quality or sustainability may suffer. By working closely with suppliers, encouraging openness, and encouraging their efforts towards sustainability, Unilever can improve stakeholder relationships. (Dr. David M. Anderson, 2004).

To improve stakeholder relationships, Unilever can take several actions:

1. Communication and Transparency

Stakeholders should be informed about Unilever's sustainability activities, ethical sourcing practices, and societal effect through open communication. By doing this, you may enhance trust and align stakeholder expectations (Tomlinson, 2016).

2. Collaboration and Partnership

NGOs, governments, and local communities may work together with Unilever to solve common problems and find lasting solutions. This may entail cooperative projects, information exchange, and including stakeholders in decision-making processes (Alan Murray, 2010).

3. Responsible Sourcing and Production

NGOs, municipalities, and neighbourhood groups may collaborate with Unilever to address shared issues and develop long-term fixes. This could encompass collaborative initiatives, information sharing, and including interested parties in decision-making (Parvatiyar², 2021) (Sharma, 2010).

4. Employee Engagement and Development

Unilever should make an investment in its workers by offering decent pay, educational possibilities, and professional advancement prospects. Encouragement of employee input and their participation in decision-making procedures can increase their sense of commitment and ownership (M. Audrey Korsgaard, 2017).

By putting these tactics into practices, Unilever can improve connections with its stakeholders, resolve possible disputes, and build its reputation as a trustworthy and sustainable business.

4. Unilever's Sustainability Marketing Practices

Unilever's sustainability marketing practices using appropriate concepts and frameworks covered in the CSR module;

1. Sustainable Pricing: By selling ecologically friendly products at competitive costs, Unilever has introduced sustainable pricing practices. They have created many product lines, such as "Sustainable Living Brands," which try to address social and environmental concerns while giving customers with inexpensive solutions (Unilever, 2016f). This strategy matches with their commitment to sustainability while guaranteeing more client accessibility. **This strategy is consistent with the notion of "shared value,"** in which the corporation generates economic gain while simultaneously addressing societal and environmental problems (Michael E. Porter and, 011).

For example, in underdeveloped nations, they have introduced economical and sustainable goods such as Lifebuoy soap, addressing health and hygiene problems among low-income groups. This pricing model promotes sustainable consumption and increases access to needed supplies (Unilever, 2023d).

2. Innovation: Unilever has proved its dedication to innovation by investing in research and development for environmentally friendly goods and processes. They have aggressively attempted to lessen the environmental effect of their products by enhancing the efficiency of their production processes, generating renewable energy solutions, and inventing water-saving devices. Unilever's commitment on innovation enables them to provide sustainable alternatives that fulfil the demands of consumers (Unilever, 2023h). Unilever's emphasis on innovation is consistent with **the notion of "eco-efficiency,"** in which businesses try to reduce their environmental effect through technical breakthroughs (Pasi Heikkurinen, 2019).

Their "Dove" brand, for example, introduced refillable deodorant container to decrease plastic waste. Unilever wants to reduce environmental impact while providing value to customers by implementing circular economy ideas (Unilever, 2021i).

3. Logistics: Unilever has worked to enhance its logistics in order to minimize carbon emissions and increase overall sustainability. To decrease transportation-related environmental consequences, they have developed techniques such as route optimization, the use of alternative fuels, and engagement with suppliers. Unilever hopes to reduce its carbon footprint, increase efficiency, and improve supply chain sustainability by implementing these practices (Unilever, 2023j). This method is consistent with **the notion of "green logistics,"** which focuses on minimizing environmental impact in transportation and distribution activities (Wanyonyi, 2013). Unilever's distribution centers in the Netherlands, **for example,** employ electric cars for deliveries, lowering transportation-related emissions (Unilever, 2022k).

4. Communication & Message Strategies: Unilever has successfully communicated to stakeholders its sustainability efforts and progress. To communicate with customers, investors, and the general public, the firm uses a variety of channels, including its website, social media platforms, and yearly sustainability reports.

Unilever's marketing efforts frequently emphasize the company's dedication to sustainability, promoting businesses that support environmental and social concerns (Unilever, 2023l). This approach is consistent with **the notion of "stakeholder engagement,"** which emphasizes the necessity of incorporating key stakeholders in sustainability decision-making processes (Domenico Dentoni, 2012). Unilever hopes to favorably impact customer behavior by creating awareness and giving information about sustainable practices (Unilever, 2023m). These messaging tactics are consistent **with the notion of "behavioral change communication,"** which tries to motivate people to adopt healthy habits and lifestyles (Dutta, 2020).

Unilever, for example, expresses its goal using phrases such as **"Making Sustainable Living Commonplace"** and "Purpose-led, Future-fit" (Unilever, 2023n).

For example, The **"Real Beauty"** campaign from Dove promotes diversity and body positivity. These communication tactics aid in the development of trust, awareness, and brand loyalty among environmentally conscious consumers (Siddique, 2018).

Critiques of Unilever's Sustainability Performance

While Unilever has made tremendous strides in incorporating sustainability into its marketing practices, there are a few areas where it might improve:

- 1. Transparency and Accountability:** While Unilever has made tremendous strides in incorporating sustainability into its marketing practices, the company may improve transparency by releasing more thorough information about its sustainability practices, goals, and progress. Increasing openness would assist stakeholders, such as consumers and investors, in evaluating the company's performance and holding it responsible for its sustainability promises (Unilever, 2019o; Brito, 2016).
- 2. Supply Chain Traceability:** Unilever should prioritize strengthening supply chain transparency, particularly in terms of responsible raw material procurement. Improved traceability would protect the company's supply chain from unethical practices including deforestation, human rights violations, and unsustainable sourcing. Unilever should work with its suppliers to develop effective traceability systems and conduct proactive due diligence.
- 3. Circular Economy:** While Unilever has taken initiatives to decrease packaging waste, there is still room for the company to embrace a circular economy strategy. The corporation might invest in R&D to produce more sustainable packaging materials, as well as investigate techniques to promote the recycling or reuse of its goods' packaging (Kashmanian, 2017).
- 4. Stakeholder Engagement:** Unilever's stakeholder engagement activities should be improved by actively incorporating customers, local communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their sustainability projects. The firm may gather useful insights, resolve problems, and increase the credibility of its sustainability claims by soliciting advice from stakeholders (Unilever, 2023e).

Suggestions for Improvements:

- 1. Collaboration:** To develop collective sustainability activities, Unilever should enhance relationships with other industry players, NGOs, and governments. Forming alliances to address similar sustainability concerns, exchanging best practices, and collaboratively lobbying for legislative frameworks that encourage sustainability might all be part of this.

2. **Innovation Investments:** Unilever should continue to invest in long-term innovation to create new products, technologies, and processes. Allocating money to R&D can result in more innovative ideas that decrease environmental consequences and address important sustainability concerns.
3. **Supply Chain Engagement:** Unilever should engage suppliers in sustainability programmes and activities on a proactive basis. This might involve offering training, incentives, and assistance to suppliers in order to help them improve their sustainable practices. It is critical for Unilever's overall sustainability performance to build a resilient and sustainable supply chain environment.
4. **Consumer Education:** Unilever should engage suppliers in sustainability programmes and activities on a proactive basis. This might involve offering training, incentives, and assistance to suppliers in order to help them improve their sustainable practices. It is critical for Unilever's overall sustainability performance to build a resilient and sustainable supply chain environment.

Conclusions

Unilever can continue to improve its sustainability performance and create new industry norms by implementing the proposed changes and expanding their efforts in cooperation, innovation, supply chain participation, and consumer education.

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