BRANDING A SUSTAINABLE WASTE COMPANY AS A FACILITATOR OF A SMART REGION

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Background

A sustainable waste company can have a proactive role in the transition towards circularity. Formal networks are important for this transition. To become a member of these networks a company has to be visible for other actors. Currently this visibility is lacking. Sustainable waste companies match well with the smart region concept and could use their facilitating role within such an initiative to improve visibility, receive acknowledgement and create formal networks.

Objective

This research explored how a sustainable waste company can brand itself as a facilitator of a smart region. This research proposes that a sustainable waste company uses their membership and the themes of the smart region concept as symbols in their corporate branding strategy with an accent on the facilitating role and the geographical aspects. This was based upon theory and results obtained from eight interviews.

Introduction

The aim of this qualitative research is to fill the gap in the existing literature and identify how sustainable waste companies, that can be a facilitator of a smart region, can brand themselves using their membership of a smart region initiative and the role they have within it, to become more visible for actors outside their network, receive more acknowledgement, and eventually create formal networks to foster the transition towards circularity.

Therefore, this research aims to answer the question: "How can a sustainable waste company brand itself as a facilitator of a smart region?". After examining relevant literature and creating a theoretical framework, an analysis of multiple interviews, based on the methodology will provide an answer to the research question.

Methods

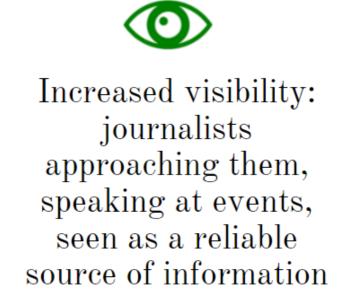
To answer this study's research question, a qualitative approach was chosen, conducting a multiple case study, using semi-structured interviews to collect data on how collaborative initiatives, that contain elements similar to a smart region, brand themselves and how organizations, that are a member of such an initiative use the initiative and their role within it in their branding strategy. Four people, that have a responsibility regarding the communication strategy, of a collaborative initiative and four people, that have a responsibility for marketing and communications, of an organization that is a member of an initiative were interviewed.



Results Corporate Branding

- Main corporate branding type: an umbrella brand of the organization with symbols and activities 'hanging on it'.
- The importance of mutual promotion between the initiative, its members and the organization.
- First membership of the initiative is mentioned, then the role of the organization to promote its image, the initiative gives messages extra weight and increases possible collaborations.







Benefits of being a member of a collaborative initiative

Results Branding an initiative similar to a smart region

- Main focus on the themes the initiative covers and the geographical area used as an accent in the branding strategy.
- An impact measurement to show what has been accomplished. For example, with the Theory of Change.
- Inclusion of independent third parties and governmental parties to support the claims of the initiative.



Figure 1. Suggested Corporate Branding Strategy. Using the initiative in the corporate branding strategy in which the company is the umbrella brand. Suggestion is based on the literature and the obtained results of this research.

Conclusions

- First use membership of the initiative as a symbol in the branding strategy and make the facilitating role an accent of it.
- Further research (1): define a smart region and look specifically into their branding processes and those of its members. A comparative literature study is suggested to propose a standardized definition of the concept.
- Further research (2): look specifically into sustainable waste companies that operate within smart regions, their role and the branding strategy via a single case study.



