



Sustainable Fast-food

reality or utopia?

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ABSTRACT

Title: Sustainable Fast-food: reality or utopia?

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As technology evolved, society has gained deeper levels of knowledge, which influenced it to be more critical. With the aggravation of climate change, sustainability has been under the spotlight for decades, and customers are holding organizations accountable. As fast-food chains' popularity increased, so did their responsibility towards society. Sustainability can reveal itself to be rather demanding to achieve, especially for fast-food chains who heavily depend on natural and human resources and operate at a global scale. This paper is dedicated to understanding how fast-food chains are implementing sustainability measures. To explore the research question, I employed a comparative case study analysis. The results show examples of measures fast-food chains can implement. Some examples of these successful practices are: outsourcing from local producers; implementing changes at restaurants to reduce energy/resources consumption; improving worker conditions; supporting local institutions and humanitarian causes; offering plant-based products; spreading customer awareness on environmental matters; among others. However, these measures can be challenging to implement, since they require investment, clear communication, and constant monitoring. For this reason, I also present and analyse the tensions and limitations faced by the two cases.

This paper represents a valuable source for fast-food chain' owners to analyse and reflect upon already-implemented practices and potential future ones.

SUMÁRIO

Título: Fast-food Sustentável: realidade ou utopia?

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Palavras-chave: sustentabilidade, sustentabilidade ambiental, fast-food, segurança alimentar, alimentação, comida sustentável

Com o desenvolver da tecnologia, a sociedade adquiriu níveis de conhecimento mais profundos, o que a tornou mais crítica. Com o agravar das alterações climáticas, a sustentabilidade tem estado sob os holofotes por décadas, e os consumidores estão a responsabilizar as empresas. Com o aumento da popularidade das cadeias de fast-food, a sua responsabilidade perante a sociedade aumentou também. Alcançar a sustentabilidade pode revelar-se ser exigente, especialmente para as cadeias de fast-food, que dependem intensamente de recursos naturais e humanos e operam à escala global. Este estudo dedica-se à compreensão da implementação de medidas sustentáveis pelas cadeias de fast-food. Para responder à questão da investigação, recorri a um caso de estudo comparativo. Os resultados mostram exemplos de práticas que as cadeias de fast-food podem adotar. Alguns exemplos destas práticas são: outsourcing por produtores locais; implementação de mudanças nos restaurantes para reduzir o consumo de energia/recursos; melhoria das condições laborais; apoio a instituições locais e causas humanitárias; disponibilização de produtos de origem vegetal; promover a conscientização do consumidor em questões ambientais; entre outros. Contudo, implementar estas medidas pode ser desafiante, visto que requerem investimento, comunicação clara, e monitorização constante. Por este motivo, apresento a análise também as tensões e limitações impostas aos dois casos.

Este estudo representa uma fonte valiosa para donos de cadeias de fast-food para analisarem e refletirem sobre as práticas já implementadas e futuras potenciais.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Fast food is popular because it’s convenient, it’s cheap, and it tastes good. But the real cost of eating fast food never appears on the menu.”

– Eric Schlosser.¹

As decades pass and technology evolves, access to information is far more reachable and attainable (Naomi Oreskes, Erik M. Conway, 2020). Consequently, population is becoming more aware of specific environmental revolution issues (Edinburgh Sensors, 2019). This is where the term “sustainability” plays a part.

Different sectors play varied roles in sustainability by impacting the environment, either directly or indirectly, and the fast-food sector is no exception. The fast-food is responsible for serious hazards, ranging from the health sector to the economy, to the environment.

The purpose of this study is to shed some light on the apparent oxymoron there is between growing concerns for sustainability and increasing expansion of the fast-food industry. The goal is to focus on how a fast-food chain can become closer to being sustainable. Various research has been made on the sustainability topic (Kent E. Porteny, 2015). Some researchers have studied the definition of sustainability (WCED, 1987), while others have questioned its definition (Richard Heinberg, 2010). There is even research that sustains sustainability should be defined the complete opposite way (Leslie Paul Thiele, 2016). There is also research on how sustainability relates to the economy and how they affect mutually (Kent E. Porteny, 2015). Some research has focused on how different food consumptions affect the environment (Alexandre Meybeck, & Vincent Gitz, 2017), what makes a diet sustainable (FAO, 2016), and the negative impacts fast-food have on the environment (Robin B. DiPietro, Susan Gregory, 2013). There are also studies that show customers become more willing to pay if a restaurant has sustainable practices (Schubert et al., 2010), and in the specific case of fast-food customers, they are willing to pay more than traditional restaurant customers (Robin B. DiPietro, Susan Gregory, 2013). However, no research has been made on the positive and negative aspects a fast-food chain owner must consider when implementing a sustainability strategy. Moreover,

¹ Eric Schlosser (2001). *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meat*. Eric Schlosser is known for being an investigative journalist and wrote *Fast Food Nation*. Some newspapers/magazines he wrote for include *Rolling Stone*, *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*. He has been awarded several prizes, including a National Magazine Award and his book *Command and Control* was among the finalists for the Pulitzer Prize.

there is no research that clearly provides guidelines of practices fast-food chains should or should not implement to become closer to sustainability. To reduce this gap, this paper will explore the research question:

“How can fast-food chains be sustainable?”

To answer the research question, I used a qualitative method where I analysed different case studies. Interpreting further case studies seemed appropriate since the topic has growing visibility, and by focusing on specific fast-food chains, especially such popular ones, helped answering the research question since the cases can be considered representative for the industry, and aided in picturing sustainability for a specific fast-food chain.

This study provided valuable insights on fast-food chains' sustainability, in the sense that it analysed their implemented measures that were effective at improving these businesses' sustainability. Simultaneously, this research equally presents the limitations of the successful measures, allowing fast-food chains' owners to gather a deeper understanding of the implications and benefits brought by sustainability.

The structure of this thesis goes as follows. The literature review chapter presents a general overview of the literature concerning the food industry and the fast-food sector, and its relations with sustainable issues. The third chapter is the methodology chapter, presenting a justification for my methodological choices, the data collection, and latter data analysis. The fourth chapter concerns the provision of contextual elements regarding McDonald's and Starbucks for interpreting the following chapter: the findings. Following, the findings chapter's purpose is to demonstrate and justify the answer to the research question. Succeeding, the discussion chapter provides a comparison between the literature review and the findings. Lastly, in the conclusion chapter, I provide a summary of the research's findings, explain my answer to the research question, provide suggestions for future research and expose this paper's limitations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review was developed to analyse different perspectives of the topic. As previously explained, sustainability is a broad topic that has been gaining some relevance in the latest decades. Therefore, various research papers have been developed, that may include different perspectives and contradictions, presented below. The purpose of this chapter is to obtain an overall understanding of this elaborate and debatable matter from distinct perspectives.

This chapter has two main sections: (1) sustainability in the food industry, (2) the case of fast-food chains. The first section is subdivided in analysing various definitions of sustainability, and understanding what aspects of the food industry conflict with sustainability. As a final stage, some managerial solutions are presented. The second section is subdivided in an analysis of the sector of fast-food, and an analysis of some perspectives on the negative impacts fast-food chains have on the environment.

2.1. Sustainability in the food industry

a. Definition of sustainability

The term sustainability has been growing its popularity in the latest decades due to the aggravated effects of climate change. Sustainability can be considered in three main pillars – environmental, social, economic (WCED, 1987). In this literature review, I will be considering the environmental branch of sustainability and analyse the relationship between ecological sustainability and fast-food.

The biggest challenge in defining sustainability is that, because it is an ever-growing topic, many have argued it to be one of the most meaningless and overused words in the English language (Leslie Paul Thiele, 2016). Despite the relativity of the word, sustainability's importance should not go unnoticed.

The World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainability as “an economic-development activity that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987). Nonetheless, this definition can be critiqued for not mentioning the challenges of renewable resources and population growth (Richard Heinberg, 2010). Having this in mind, we can safely state that sustainability should be preventive, since it entails the act of maintaining and preserving nature, and a future-looking concept, instead of static and constant (Kent E. Porteny, 2015).

Sustainability is therefore linked to the economy: economy has been scaling exponentially, resulting in more natural resources being used to the human advantage. That is where sustainability enters and plays a role: to help humanity leverage from nature while maintaining it for future usage. (Kent E. Porteny, 2015).

On the other hand, some perspectives defend that it is more efficient to explain the term by defining what sustainability is not. Further, it is not sustainable to threaten the growth of a particular activity's environmental, social, and economic conditions (Leslie Paul Thiele, 2016). In his book, *Sustainability* (2016), Leslie Paul Thiele states that "to be sustainable is to avoid collapse".

Moreover, sustainability is not solely about the act of preserving; it more so entails the action of change. This term brings together maintenance and creativity in adapting to change. It implies sustainability is a dynamic, ever-changing activity (Leslie Paul Thiele, 2016).

b. The critics against the food industry in terms of sustainability

The food industry can represent a challenge to sustainability because it threatens the environment, making resources rarer. Moreover, about one-third of the food produced goes to waste (Alexandre Meybeck, & Vincent Gitz, 2017).

Sustainable food systems have been defined as a "food system that ensures food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition of future generations are not compromised" (HLPE, 2014). Eleven years ago, sustainable diets were defined as "diets with low environmental impacts, which contribute to food and nutrition security and healthy life for present and future generations". Sustainable diets should be preventive and considerate for the environment, while being culturally acceptable, accessible, and affordable. Furthermore, they must be nutritious, safe, and healthy. All of the mentioned should collaborate to optimize resources (FAO, 2016).

Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that one of the challenges in analysing the impacts different diets have on the environment, is that it varies according to the places of production, transformation, transportation, storage, and consumption. The biggest obstacle is the consequences of globalization, and thus, increasing imports and exports (Alexandre Meybeck, & Vincent Gitz, 2017).

The mentioned relates to the concept of corporate social responsibility: "obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions or to follow those lines of action

which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (Bowen, 1953). Corporate social responsibility can thus be divided into various categories. It is especially relevant in the food industry due to it being highly influential and dependent on the economy, the environment, and society (Edyta Gheribi, 2017).

It is rather challenging to achieve corporate social responsibility in the food industry for three reasons (Edyta Gheribi, 2017). First, this industry has a noticeable impact and depends significantly on human, physical and natural resources (Genier et al., 2009). Additionally, everyone is a customer of the food industry, which leads to a set of environmental issues being raised upon it (Maloni and Brown, 2006). Finally, food chains have a particular and layered structure, which varies from small to large organizations. Nonetheless, the most pressured chains to comply with corporate social responsibilities are the large, multinational ones since they are big players in the industry (Edyta Gheribi, 2017).

c. The managerial solutions implemented by food companies

Companies are being held responsible for their impact on the environment. Further, customers are prioritizing environmentally responsible companies and penalizing those who are not. Organizations are engaging in more eco-friendly practices, accounting for waste they produce and the quality and origin of the resources they use (Ha Minh Vu et al., 2017).

For a company to assess its environmental impact, it should measure the relationship between the ecological consequences of inputs from operations and of outputs from processes. Organizations must also consider the materials they choose according to their ecological footprint, which is helpful to measure their sustainability. Companies should also choose an energy criterion to evaluate how they affect the quantity of non-renewable resources available. Besides, companies should pay attention to how they manage their emissions, and implement changes such as waste minimization activities, recycling, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction. In addition, organizations should understand the consequences their final products/services have on the environment. Lastly, the supply networks should not be forgotten, and organizations and suppliers must comply with each other to achieve common environmental goals (Ha Minh Vu et al., 2017).

Studies show that by engaging in environmentally conscious practices, food organizations can improve their performance, increasing customer loyalty and employee satisfaction, improving competitiveness, while decreasing costs. These changes can be defined as “environmental responsible practices” (Choi et al., 2009; King & Lenox, 2001; Klassen & McLaughlin, 1999).

Nonetheless, there is still a fear that by implementing eco-friendly practices, organizations will fall in higher costs (Schubert et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2011). One factor that aids in overcoming this barrier is that when customers are aware that a specific restaurant is acting in improving its ecological footprint, they become more willing to pay (Schubert et al., 2010).

2.2. The case of the fast-food chains

a. The specificities of the fast-food chains in the food industry

Fast-food consumption has been increasing in the past decades. It has been defined as food sold by national/multinational chains who can sell to take-away or dine in (Hayley G. Janssen et al., 2017). The main factors that distinguish fast-food restaurants from the traditional ones are, as the name suggests, they have faster service, more compact menus, are usually cheaper, and customers tend to have lower expectations regarding the products and services' quality (Muller & Woods, 1994).

“The goal of fast food is to save time”

- Schlosser, 2001

This industry is the perfect solution to aid people to satisfy the need to eat fast but do not prioritize the experience (Chen-Bo Zhong, Sanford E. DeVoe, 2010). They consider several aspects when going through their decision-making process. Firstly, they decide whether they are going to eat fast food. Subsequently, suppose the consumer chose to eat fast-food, they consider factors such as location, reputation, food quality, taste, service quality, among others, to decide which restaurant to choose. Finally, the consumer needs to determine the quantity of food, which is deeply influenced by each restaurant's marketing strategy (Timothy J. Richards, Luis Padilla, 2009).

b. The critics against the fast-food chains

Fast-food chains are responsible for diverse environmental issues caused by the imprudent use of energy, non-recyclable/disposable materials and hazardous chemicals in the cleaning action of restaurants. Furthermore, the transportation processes aggravate the carbon footprint (Robin B. DiPietro, Susan Gregory, 2013).

Additionally, fast-food chains benefit from the use of plastic due to its low cost and high practicality, however it also gets negative press. As the use and manufacturing of plastic packaging have been increasing (Geyer et al., 2017), some consequences arise, such as the aggravation of global warming through the emission of greenhouse gas during its production

(Hopewell et al., 2009). Another issue with plastic food packaging is that it serves the purpose of single-use (Hopewell et al., 2009), contributing to waste disposal, and even if it gets recycled, it needs energy resources.

Additionally, all, if not all, fast-food chains sell mostly animal-sourced foods. Besides the obvious point that by selling animal-based foods, chains are complying with animal torture, some environmental issues may also be raised (Ronald J. Adams, 2008). Some of the environmental hazards industrial agriculture has are related to the pesticides, fertilizers, additives, and other chemicals used to produce livestock feed (Polly Walker, Robert S. Lawrence, 2004). Another consequence that livestock production brings to the environment is the amount of free land it takes to raise it. Not only does it occupy free land, but it also uses clean water and produces more greenhouse gas than the entire transportation industry (FAO Livestock's Long Shadow, 2006).

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter is assigned to explaining the three steps I took during this study to answer the research question: research design, data collection and data analysis.

3.1. Research design

To answer the research question “How can fast-food chains be sustainable?” I employed a qualitative research approach.

This choice seemed appropriate because it allows me to clarify and explore the various contexts (Julian Birkinshaw et al., 2011) behind the food industry and sustainability. Qualitative research is extensively illustrative since it traces certain statements to its authors, in a specific context, at a certain point in time (Sara Rynes, & Robert P. Gephart Jr., 2004). This was essential to answer the research question as it helped in building a concrete picture of what sustainability is inside of each fast-food chain, by gathering data specific to certain restaurants, in this case, McDonald’s Portugal, and Starbucks.

As demonstrated in the literature review, although sustainability has been studied countless times, the relationship between it and the fast-food industry is overlooked due to it being an apparent paradox. Thus, exploring this theme through qualitative research allows me to elaborate on theory and intersect existing studies (Melissa E. Graebner et al., 2012).

For data collection and respective analysis, I studied two cases: McDonald’s Portugal and Starbucks. This choice seemed adequate to answer the research question since McDonald’s is the largest, most popular fast-food chain in the world (Forbes Magazine, 2014). McDonald’s is thus a representative case to illustrate the remaining chains. As McDonald’s is a powerful and dominant agent in the industry, their actions can set an example for the remaining players.

Having this said, I sent an e-mail to McDonald’s Portugal asking to interview them, to ask them about their current and future sustainability practices, along with challenges and opportunities in this field. As I was unable to get a detailed reply from McDonald’s Portugal, I based my case analysis on secondary data.

Further, I contacted the group Ibersol, a group in the Iberian Peninsula that holds the remaining popular fast-food chains in Portugal. Unfortunately, I could not get an answer back from them. I also attempted to contact fast-food chains such as Starbucks, Wok to Walk, and H3 and was also unable to get a reply.

Consequently, I built a second case on Starbucks, based on secondary data provided on their international website. Starbucks was an appropriate representative case because they operate globally, such as McDonald's. Although their products differ, Starbucks also fits in the concept of fast-food since they offer a quicker service than usual, and products are ready for customers to take away and consume on the go.

It is important to note that I chose the two mentioned cases to highlight the main similarities in the sustainability practices implemented by them, even though they offer such distinct products.

3.2. Data collection

For data collection, I resorted mainly to secondary data. I conducted a semi-structured interview with McDonald's Portugal through e-mail, where I explained I was developing a thesis regarding sustainability in the food industry, and they replied asking for the interview questions so they could send them to the appropriate department. One week later, their team sent me a document with the answers. However, these were generic and all information they provided is also available on their website. For that reason, I decided to mainly sustain my data from secondary sources (See table 1, 2, & 3 in the appendix).

Secondary data was collected through archival data about McDonald's, available in their both official international and Portuguese website (See table 1 in the appendix). Furthermore, I collected secondary data from sources external to McDonald's, not only to avoid falling in any bias, but because McDonald's Portugal does not offer enough information concerning the tensions, challenges, and trade-offs of adopting a more sustainable strategy. The external sources I resorted to were mainly from journals' articles, reports, articles, dissertations, website posts and interviews, and considered mainly McDonald's international (See table 1 in the appendix). Nonetheless, as McDonald's Portugal is a sub-corporation from McDonald's, I was able to apply some of the international information to this specific case.

I developed my second case based on secondary data also (See table 2 in the appendix). This data was collected from Starbucks Organization's official website, where I collected information regarding their sustainability-driven actions. In parallel to the data collection on the first case, I also collected secondary data from external resources to Starbucks, to be able to understand the reality of their sustainability measures and the consequent challenges and tensions, in a deeper, more critical manner. The main external sources I used to collect data were newspapers' articles, website posts, studies and reports.

Since McDonald's and Starbucks are such popular organizations that have been operating for as long as anyone can remember, it was important for me to limit the amount of information collected, to ensure its relevancy. As a result, the data I studied is within a specific time frame. In both cases, I considered a time frame from 1999 to present day.

3.3. Data analysis

In the process of data analysis, I resorted to a coding process. This consisted of selecting certain sections that share a meaning in the data I collected, and label them with a code. Following, I established a connection between the codes created, and aggregate them in more generic concepts, so that I could form a steady line of thought. This coding process enabled me to organize, understand and interpret the data.

During the coding process, I focused first on the McDonald's Portugal case. I resorted to the archival data available on their website, and information from external sources, and established common general concepts between them. Based on this, I was able to determine the first codes, that included "economic sustainability", "promoting diversity and equality", "embracing social causes", "managing waste", among others. From these codes, I was able to label and organize the data. This process yielded in 53 empirical themes, 25 conceptual categories, and 9 aggregate dimensions (see table 4 in the appendix). The conceptual categories and respective quotations can be found in table 5 in the appendix.

For the Starbucks case, I followed the same approach as McDonald's. The coding process resulted in 92 empirical themes, 21 conceptual categories, and 8 aggregate dimensions (see table 6 in the appendix). The conceptual categories and respective quotations are illustrated in table 7 in the appendix.

4. EMPIRICAL SETTING

This empirical setting chapter provides environmental elements to help understand the findings and their meaning. There are two main sections to be considered. The first presents the McDonald's case, starting with a historical background explaining how it was founded and developed. Subsequently, McDonald's business model is explained, and how it expanded to become the most popular fast-food chain in the world. In the second main section, I present the Starbucks case, providing an explanation of the organizations' history, including how it was founded and its expansion.

4.1. Presentation of McDonald's

McDonald's is an American organization founded by two brothers, Richard and Maurice McDonald (Andrew F. Smith). The first restaurant was inaugurated in 1940 in San Bernardino, California. Eight years later, they created a new concept of fast-food, through which they prepared hamburgers and french fries in an assembly line, called the "Speedee Service System." This system was the prototype for the current model of fast-food chains (Alex Leon Lichtenberg, 2012). This optimized assembly line allowed them to offer a quick, consistent, and affordable service (Andrew F. Smith, 2012).

In 1953, the McDonald brothers started franchising the business. The subsequent year they signed a settlement with Ray Kroc to expand the franchise across the country. In 1955, Kroc created McDonald's System, Inc., and three years later, he ran 34 restaurants. In 1961, he purchased the ownership for the exclusive rights to McDonald's name and business system (Andrew F. Smith, 2012) for \$2.7 million (Alex Leon Lichtenberg, 2012). In the beginning of the '60s, the popular golden arches logo was presented to the public (Alex Leon Lichtenberg, 2012), and from 1960 to 1973, McDonald's restaurants' number increased by about 2.750 (Eric Schlosser, 2001). McDonald's expansion did not settle for the United States of America solely; it currently counts over 39.000 restaurants worldwide (Hilary Russ, 2021). In fact, McDonald's is estimated to open five restaurants daily, four of which are in countries outside the United States (Eric Schlosser, 2001).

The leading competitor in the fast-food industry is McDonald's, as it was characterized as being the most recognized brand worldwide (Eric Schlosser, 2001). McDonald's serves more than 46 million people every day, which is equivalent to Spain's population. Some of McDonald's competitors are Taco Bell, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Domino's Pizza, and Subway (Alex Leon Lichtenberg, 2012).

The main factor responsible for a fast-food chain's success is entering the market with an original concept. In the case of McDonald's, one of the factors for its success is consistency, meaning that their main product, the "Big Mac", is the same across countries. Besides brand recognition, McDonald's also profits from its cleanliness. This aspect is present in every McDonald's part, from the restaurant itself and the parking lot to the kitchen, bathroom, and even the uniforms. Ray Kroc even created the motto "quality, service, cleanliness, and value" (Alex Leon Lichtenberg, 2012).

Additionally, McDonald's is also a specialist in marketing, in such a way that it succeeds in every country it decides to expand to, although they may face various cultures, races, and religions. McDonald's never seems to miss new trends and opportunities for marketing. The most popular choices to spread their marketing campaigns are billboards, sponsorships, and media. When advertising, their primary focus is not the product itself but the entire customer's experience at a McDonald's restaurant. Unlike its competitors, McDonald's does not only sell products, but it also offers family values and experiences (Caputo, 1998).

4.2. Presentation of Starbucks

Although Starbucks can seem more of a cafe than a fast-food chain at first sight, it is indeed a fast-food chain since it consists of ordering a product and getting it at the counter to go, it includes fast service and also has pre-prepared food items. The first store was in Seattle in 1971, and it sold natural roasted coffee beans, spices, and tea from diverse regions of the globe, to restaurants and bars. The name "Starbucks" was created to allude to a character from the popular novel *Moby Dick* (Herman Melville, 1851) and the narrative regarding the nautical travels made by coffee merchants. Additionally, the sea also played a role in inspiring the creation of the logo: a Greek mythology's twin-tailed siren. Around 1980, Howard Schultz got familiar with Starbucks and decided to join the company. In 1983, Schultz went on a trip to Milan, which influenced him to incorporate the concept of the Italian coffee lifestyle in Starbucks. After successfully trying the idea, Howard Schultz founded his company, *Il Giornale*, in 1985, where he sold coffee and coffee drinks made from Starbucks' beans.

Two years later, Schultz's company bought Starbucks and changed the name to Starbucks Corporation, and its brown image turned into the characteristic green we still recognize. Starbucks expanded to Chicago and Vancouver in Canada in the same year, completing 17 open stores. The first expansion overseas occurred in 1996 in Japan, and two years later, Starbucks made its first appearance in Europe. In 1998, they expanded their business into grocery stores

across the United States and launched their website. Starbucks has grown exponentially and now serves millions of consumers every day, in over 30.000 stores in 83 markets.

Regarding the stock market, Starbucks entered it on June 26th, 1992, for a price of \$17 per share and finished the same day at \$21.50 per share. In 2002, Starbucks implemented wi-fi in their facilities, and the total amount of stores open was 5.886. One year later, Starbucks Corporation acquired Seattle Coffee Company, and in 2005 it acquired Ethos Water. In 2008, Howard Schultz took the lead as chief executive officer and acquired Coffee Equipment Company and the respective Clover brewing system. In the same year, Starbucks started its journey online by creating an online community called My Starbucks Idea and joining Twitter and Facebook.

Additionally, Starbucks also opened its first store in Portugal in 2008. The organization started offering a customer's loyalty program and launched an iPhone app with mobile payment in the subsequent year. In 2017, Howard Schultz took a position as executive chairman, and Kevin Johnson replaced him as chief executive officer. One year later, Starbucks established a partnership with Nestlé, Global Coffee Alliance, and Howard Schultz retired. In the beginning of April of 2022, Schultz returned to the company as chief executive officer.

Starbucks' mission is "to inspire and nurture the human spirit - one person, one cup, and one neighbourhood at a time." Starbucks is now focused on offering products for in-store consumption, on-the-go, and even at home. Starbucks offers freshly brewed coffee, mixed coffee drinks, teas, frappuccino drinks, and refreshers. They also offer pastries, sandwiches, protein bars, salads, oatmeal, yogurt, among other snacks. In addition, Starbucks sells coffee beans, ground coffee, coffee pods, and ready-to-drink beverages.

5. FINDINGS

In the findings chapter, I answer the research question: “How can fast-food chains be sustainable?”. To answer this, I studied the case of McDonald’s Portugal, which is representative of the remaining fast-food chains since it is the most popular fast-food chain in the world. Further, I explored the Starbucks case, which is also a representative case since it is the biggest fast-food chain after McDonald’s (QSR, 2021).

The first findings chapter is divided into two main chapters: McDonald’s Portugal and Starbucks. Each chapter is further structured in four main categories, where I analysed each pillar of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental, and the limitations present in each organizations’ sustainability strategy. The overall purpose of the main chapters is to explore the studied organizations’ implemented measures and future goals on different levels of sustainability.

5.1. McDonald’s Portugal

In the case of McDonald’s Portugal, their website has a complete section called “Social Responsibility,” dedicated to clarifying their positioning regarding their food, people, communities, and the planet. All information presented that does not refer the source, was obtained by data available on McDonald’s Portugal website and their *30th Anniversary Report* (2021).

5.1.1. Economic sustainability

5.1.1.1. Supporting local economy

McDonald’s has established several goals and practices with the intent of providing an economically sustainable environment where they operate. For starters, 40% of McDonald’s Portugal suppliers are local. Additionally, there is the employee training program, which prepares workers for a career inside McDonald’s corporation or outside. Currently, 90% of managers started as regular employees at a McDonald’s restaurant, and 50% started their careers in their restaurants. Moreover, 50% of employees are under the age of 25, and approximately 900 are students. In 2020, McDonald’s Portugal invested in a program that awards 200 scholarships per year.

5.1.2. Social sustainability

5.1.2.1. Promoting diversity and equality

McDonald's Portugal claims to focus on providing inclusive working environments where employees feel comfortable, respected, and safe. They state that diversity and equity are organization's priorities. Gender equality is the company's primary focus, illustrated by McDonald's Portugal management teams composed of 56% women and 44% men. The organization is also committed to effectively employing people with special necessities. They established a partnership with Casa Pia de Lisboa resource center, to enable the recruitment of deaf/hard-of-hearing people.

5.1.2.2. Ensuring food security

McDonald's Portugal claims their primary focus to be food quality and safety. The food safety patterns followed by every single restaurant, their suppliers and distributors, respect the system HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point). This embodies the recognition of crucial control spots in the various stages of building a customer's order. These points are analyzed and come together to ensure food security. In this aspect, McDonald's Portugal restaurants have been certified since 2008. The restaurants are also verified by an external entity that comes unannounced to control food safety. Additionally, they have implemented an employee training system to educate on how to handle products according to good hygiene practices and cleaning of the establishments, equipment, and appliances.

McDonald's Portugal also implemented changes to better the nutritious value of their meals, such as the salt reduction by 50% in french fries, 20% in soups, and 10% in specific products such as the "Big Mac" and the "Cheeseburger". Additionally, all restaurants are using 100% vegetable oil.

5.1.2.3. Improving work conditions

Concerning their people, McDonald's Portugal focuses on employee training and career opportunities. Their goal is to promote their employees' competencies development. Some examples of their practices are flexible working hours, a good work environment, and continuous training consisting of more than 250.000 annual hours.

5.1.2.4. Embracing social causes

McDonald's created Ronald McDonald Housing, which offers shelter to families whose children need to reallocate themselves to get treatments. In fact, more than 377 Ronald McDonald Houses annually offer shelter to more than 3.5 million families. Furthermore, McDonald's Portugal focuses on its communities, by patronizing a local institution in the respective community of each restaurant. As a result, McDonald's Portugal currently counts with hundreds of supported institutions.

As a response to the COVID-19 situation, between March and April of 2020, McDonald's Portugal donated more than 140.000 meals to healthcare professionals. In February and March of 2021, more than 14.000 meals were donated to hospitals and other institutions such as the police and firefighters.

In March 2022, McDonald's as a global corporation was being pressured and criticized for still having the business open in Russia, after their invasion of Ukraine (Julia Kollwe, 2022). About a month of social pressures later, McDonald's finally announced it was selling its Russian business, as a political stand to demonstrate that the invasion was not aligned with the organization's values (Sarah Butler, 2022). The organization also promised to keep paying their 62.000 Russian employees until the business was sold, to avoid sending them to the streets (Sarah Butler, 2022). This measure made McDonald's incur in around of \$55 million costs a month (The Guardian, 2022). The business was sold to one of its franchisees, Alexander Govor (The Guardian, 2022). The businessman agreed in purchasing 850 different restaurants and operate them as a company independent to McDonald's and keep all 62.000 workers for a minimum of 2 years (The Guardian, 2022), at their current pay-rate (BBC, 2022).

5.1.3. Environmental sustainability

Concerning the planet, McDonald's Portugal positions itself as being environmentally responsible. The main criteria behind deciding what measures should be implemented were the ecological aspects, convenience, availability, and price.

5.1.3.1. Managing waste

Regarding their food packaging, McDonald's Portugal has established a goal to provide packaging that comes from 100% renewable, recycled, or certified sources by 2025. Currently, all paper and cardboard packaging is approved by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). So far, McDonald's Portugal was able to decrease by 3 tons the plastic consumption in 2019, 456 tons in 2020, and 81 tons in the first semester of 2021. Further, all plastic spoons have been

replaced with wooden ones, and McDonald's Portugal also eliminated plastic lids for ice creams. Cups and soup containers are now made of paper and have paper lids, and the kids' toys' containers are also composed of paper. In 2020, McDonald's Portugal substituted all plastic straws for paper ones. Since 2018, McDonald's has decreased by 30% plastic used in kids' toys worldwide. They further intend to reduce by 90% the quantity of fossil fuel-based plastic in toys compared to 2018. The mentioned practices are expected to reduce 500 tons of consumed plastic per year, which makes up for around 65 million plastic straws, and 90 million plastic lids.

Another goal established is packaging recycling in 100% of restaurants in Portugal until 2025. For this purpose, the organization invested in new models of recycling cans to incentive trash separation. This measure is already implemented in restaurants that opened since 2020. Further, they have implemented compressing machines that decrease 66% of plastic and paper's volume. There are 167 compressing machines installed across 82 restaurants, which compress food residues and reduce by 65% the garbage bags' consumption. Regarding food waste, in 2016, McDonald's Portugal implemented an Integrated Platform System, an ordering technology that ensures minimum food waste possible since food is only produced after being ordered. To decrease the accumulation of trash in the areas near-by the restaurants, the organization has a responsible cleaning team.

Since 2010 McDonald's Portugal has also ensured the collection of 100% of used cooking oils that are further transformed into biodiesel. McDonald's has collected 5.000 tons of oil in 10 years with this measure. Biodiesel produces up to 80% less carbon dioxide than regular diesel. Moreover, employees are trained to decrease unnecessary waste disposal.

5.1.3.2. Managing resources

All ice cream and refrigerator machines among other equipment, are maintained in an energy-saving mode when they are not being used, to decrease green-house gas emissions in restaurants. Additionally, there is a temperature automatic control system of the equipment. Further, all equipment is kept closed to avoid unnecessary heat losses. New fryers have been implemented, with a new filtering system that enables the decrease of 15% of oil consumption and 7% of energy consumption compared to previous ones. They also have installed curtains and rubbers in every door to reduce energy losses. The faucets have timers in the kitchens' washing spots to minimize water consumption, and the dish soaps used are biodegradable.

Furthermore, most restaurants are equipped with LED light bulbs, and most air conditioning systems have automatic controls, making energy consumption more efficient. Also, environment-related messages are displayed across restaurants to raise consumers' awareness for ecological issues. In the bathrooms, the faucets also have timers. Additionally, some restaurants have automatic blinds that adjust to the exterior light exposure. They are also installing photovoltaic panels in their restaurants, which allows each restaurant to produce 6.000 kWh of electric energy. Currently, 19 restaurants have these panels installed, and in 2019, McDonald's produced 60.000 kWh of energy. Further, McDonald's Portugal is also betting on electric cars' chargers to promote green mobility, and they further intend to change all company cars to electric vehicles until 2030, which is already completed by 25%.

The measures mentioned above have shown their results from 2019 to 2020, since it experienced reductions of water consumption by 20%, electricity consumption by 12%, gas consumption by 45%, and waste disposal by 62%. According to McDonald's Portugal *30th Anniversary Report* (2021), 10.7% of their waste goes to energetic valorisation and 5.9% to organic valorisation.

Lastly, McDonald's provides fish products acquired through sustainable fishing certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), and coffee grains with a responsible origin certified by the Rainforest Alliance.

5.1.3.3. Investing in future sustainability

On a global level, McDonald's is also testing the introduction of thermoplastic food trays from recycled materials in around 30 different locations in Brazil (Brian Taylor, 2021). These trays were developed in partnership with UBQ Materials, a company that reuses waste in various forms, and turns them into thermoplastic that is then converted to food trays (Brian Taylor, 2021). As of last year, this practice had already resulted in the reutilization of above 1.200 kilograms of waste, thus avoiding 14.4 tons of carbon dioxide emissions (Brian Taylor, 2021).

Concerning McDonald's global environmental sustainability, the chief sustainability officer, Jenny McColloch, stated that McDonald's benefits from its size and popularity to try various methods with producers to develop something that is sustainable and scalable (Financial Times, 2022). In her own words,

“ It's innovation in a global network and through the lens of sustainability”

Jenny McColloch

In 2020, McDonald's announced the possibility of launching new products made of fake meat, one of which would be called the "McPlant" (Anne Riley Moffat, 2020). This will have a positive impact, since livestock production makes up for, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, around 15% of population's worldwide greenhouse gas emissions per year (Adrienne Matei, 2020). A study from two years ago showed that just by replacing 25% of every American meat consumption for plant-based products, the U.S. would account for a greenhouse gas emissions' reduction of 82 million metric tons per year (Adrienne Matei, 2020).

Lastly, it is important to mention the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were established to represent various measures and practices towards solving different issues, such as climate alterations, gender inequality and poverty (Jennifer Thompson, 2019). According to the Financial Times, McDonald's has declared their intentions to comply with the SDGs, when applicable to their business.

5.1.4. Limitations

Due to the pandemic and COVID-19 situation, the efficiency of the measure to install compressing machines was not according to their expectations. Further, they incur in a work of recurring monitoring of potential aspects of their entire chain where they could improve. Additionally, McDonald's is committed to a constant assessment of practices. These can be challenging because they require a high investment, of time and money.

In the case of ecological food packaging, this practice requires the search for different suppliers and test new products and materials and respective mass production, as well as acquiring certificates for them. All the mentioned aspects are timely and costly processes.

Furthermore, as McDonald's Portugal requires a process of educating every accountable entity, including employees and suppliers, it can represent a tension due to it involving a necessity for clear communication across all channels, which requires several inputs. Similarly, it is important to note that fast-food chains follow complex business models, since it is not their responsibility to produce ingredients, but rather to use them to create a final product. Consequently, it is challenging to monitor each outsourced aspect and respective sustainability. Additionally, the mentioned sustainable measures infer an extensive alteration of the organization which is an extra challenge (Débora Alexandra Rodrigues do Marco, 2012).

Specifically concerning the food security aspect, the demand for every worker to wear disposable aprons, gloves, and hairnets, contributes to the increase of throwaway waste.

An additional tension faced by McDonald's concerns technology evolution. On one hand, it enabled easier communication and information, and faster, more efficient work processes (Cláudia Jéssica Rodrigues Oliveira et al., 2020). On the other hand, McDonald's is using this evolution to develop work methods, particularly the customers' ordering process (Akcem, B.K., 2020). One example of this step taken by the organization was the implementation of self-order kiosks (Akcem, B.K., 2020). Inevitably, they enforce the substitution of the human worker for a machine. Even though it is also true that with the implementation of new technologies new job positions arise, some also become dispensable and unavoidably, society in general is affected (Peralta-Alva, & Roitman, 2018).

As previously explained, McDonald's Portugal is improving its food packaging. Nonetheless, paper cups are not straightforwardly recyclable as their interiors contain a thin layer of plastic to avoid spillages (Financial Times, 2022). Consequently, McDonald's is investing millions of dollars into testing and adopting a substitute for their current cups at a large scale (Financial Times, 2022). The challenge relies on the need for recyclable/compostable cups, while overcoming their high monetary cost to produce at a mass-scale level (Financial Times, 2022). This is an important matter given that, according to a European Commission report issued in 2021, around 300.000.000 kilograms of cups and lids are used on a yearly basis in the European Union, and around 40.000.000 of these is later disposed (Financial Times, 2022).

McDonald's first started to suffer tensions from the public regarding its sustainability in the '80s, when activists and non-profit organizations started demanding more responsibility from them (Bob Langert, 2019). The main issues addressed were waste production, deforestations in Brazil and emissions that aggravate the rupture in the ozone layer (Bob Langert, 2019).

In a study conveyed on McDonald's Australia, the organization's restaurants showed a positive correlation with being more present in regions characterized by a lower socioeconomic status (Julia Anaf et al., 2017). This fact can be understood as taking advantage of individuals who do not have many alternatives, and resort to McDonald's as either a food or employment source. Moreover, the working conditions were described as more beneficial than several other countries where McDonald's operates, which was justified by the requirement McDonald's Australia had to respect the country's specific employment policies (Julia Anaf et al., 2017). Thus, McDonald's is not consistent with workers' conditions worldwide, since they simply implement settings that comply with the country's specific regulations. In fact, the existence of the term "McJob", comes to show that what McDonald's claims the working conditions are and

what people perceive, are opposites (Richard Gibson, 2008). According to the Urban Dictionary (amongst many other dictionaries), McJob can be defined as

“Any menial, low-paying, unskilled, dead-end job (...)”.

Urban Dictionary

Another aspect important to mention is McDonald’s employee turnover rate. This indicates the percentage of employees who exit from an organization and are replaced by other workers. McDonald’s rate was estimated to be around 44% in a year worldwide (Richard Gibson, 2008). From those 44%, around 20% were managers and 80-90% were regular workers (Richard Gibson, 2008).

In 2020, McDonald’s was sued by a group of black ex-franchisees for being pressured by the organization to abandon the business through allocating their business in areas that had no chance of surviving and denying them the same support they gave to white colleagues (Alistair Gray, 2020). McDonald’s attributed these people to operate in high-crime level regions and old restaurants that required renovations to function (Alistair Gray, 2020). These accusations were supported by the number of black-owned franchises dropping more than half since 1998 when there were 400, opposite to the general number of franchised stores which increased twice, reaching a total of 39.000 (Alistair Gray, 2020). McDonald’s denied all accusations made, claiming that although they recommended certain locations, they left the final decision to the franchisees’ responsibility (Alistair Gray, 2020).

An additional relevant limitation was the controversy started by the CtW Investment Group in 2020. The group pleaded to its investors to vote unfavorably to McDonald’s chairman, Enrique Hernandez, and the head of its compensation committee, Richard Lenny, as a consequence of the case involving Steve Easterbrook, former McDonald’s CEO (Gillian Tett et al., 2020). The CtW’s move was caused by McDonald’s decision to provide Easterbrook a golden parachute of \$44 million, when he was fired because he broke the organization’s policy against fraternization (Gillian Tett et al., 2020).

An additional tension faced by McDonald’s was the *McLibel* (1997) documentary. The documentary focuses on the revolution that occurred in the ‘80s in the U.K., by hundreds of advocates of the Greenpeace organization (Débora Alexandra Rodrigues do Marco, 2012). The activists were protesting that McDonald’s promotes the consumption of unhealthy/processed food, employees’ exploitation, and animal cruelty, among others (Débora Alexandra Rodrigues do Marco, 2012). McDonald’s accused the two protestants who had the initiative for this

movement of defamation and opened the case for legal accusations (David J. Wolfson, 1999). However, the case was closed in favour of the two activists, since the affirmations publicly stated by them were proven true (David J. Wolfson, 1999).

In fact, a popular Wall Street activist and McDonald's shareholder, has recently insisted that the organization changed the way it outsources pork meat, since some meat suppliers were creating the pregnant animals in cramped cages (Edward Helmore, 2022). McDonald's had already announced in 2012 they intended to put an end to its suppliers' caging methods and claimed this current year that they had in prospect to reach an overall percentage of 85-90% outsourced pork meat from suppliers who did not keep them in cages by the end of 2022, and this percentage was at 60% in February (Edward Helmore, 2022). McDonald's stated that in 2024, this percentage would reach 100% (BBC, 2022). The influential shareholder, Icahn, criticized the organization's attitude by stating that the caging practices should have had already been prohibited completely (Edward Helmore, 2022).

Another worth-mentioning tension was the letter published in 2018 by a body composed of 50 NGOs (Friends of the Earth, 2018). This letter was developed with the intent of criticizing the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef's (McDonald's is among the leaders) declared sustainable framework for beef meat production (Friends of the Earth, 2018). The ground justification for the letter was that they found the USRSB initiative was greenwashing and consequently taking away truly sustainable initiatives' credibility (Friends of the Earth, 2018). In this letter there is a detailed explanation of all the sustainable benefits that the USRSB framework does not consider. Moreover, the letter criticizes the framework for being too shallow and inconsiderate of demanding sustainability issues to be addressed and declares it to be an insufficient way of achieving sustainability.

As an additional tension, there is the fact that according to Bloomberg, McDonald's emissions increased by 7% in four years, producing 54 million metric tons of emissions in 2019 (Simon Edelsten, 2022). In fact, the organization purchases around 860.000.000 kilograms of beef meat per year (Tom Perkins, 2021). These purchases can be translated into the slaughtering of above 7 million animals, and 53 million metric tons of greenhouse gas (Tom Perkins, 2021). However, the criticism around stock production does not rely only on gas emissions, one adjacent issue is the natural resources used. According to the Meat Atlas developed by the Heinrich Boll Foundation, to produce one kilogram of beef, it takes around 6.5 kilograms of grain, 36 kilograms of dietary fibre and 15.500 m³ of clean water (Marc Gunther, 2014).

Furthermore, *The Fast-Food Nation* (Erich Schlosser, 2002) movie represents several critics to the risks associated with the fast-food industry (Peter Bradshaw, 2007). Even though the movie does not clearly call McDonald's out, it portrays the chain in an indirect way, as it is the case of their mentioned "The Big One", that clearly refers to McDonald's best-selling signature product: the "Big Mac" (Peter Bradshaw, 2007). In fact, when an individual consumes a Big Mac, their blood sugar levels increase exponentially, which causes the brain to produce a series of chemicals, including dopamine (Michael Specter, 2015). This substance is responsible for creating the feeling of pleasure, and then an urge to eat uncontrollably (Michael Specter, 2015). This happens due to the quantities of salt and sugar that McDonald's products have, which in high quantities can create dependency (Michael Specter, 2015).

An additional limitation regarding McDonald's social sustainability, was the documentary *Super Size Me* (Morgan Spurlock, 2003). The documentary explored the physical effects of the consumption of fast-food in large quantities (John Stossel, 2006). Throughout the documentary, it is shown to the watchers' eyes the health risks associated with fast-food consumption, including heart diseases, type 2 diabetes, and various types of cancer (Débora Alexandra Rodrigues do Marco, 2012). The results after 30 days were: the protagonist gained 11 kilograms of total body weight, suffered a liver injury, increased his cholesterol levels, and doubled his risk of developing coronary diseases (John Stossel, 2006). He further testified that throughout this journey, he experienced higher levels of fatigue, humour alterations, decrease in libido and higher urge to consume fast-food (John Stossel, 2006).

Lastly, concerning one of the mentioned practices on McDonald's Portugal's social sustainability, refrigerating food is not a completely secure method (Khogilavaanni A/P Pathmanathan et al., 2019). Diseases such as salmonella and neurological infections are caused by microbes which can develop in refrigerated food product (Khogilavaanni A/P Pathmanathan et al., 2019).

5.2. Starbucks

Starbucks is aware of the importance of acting towards sustainability. Resultingly, they have implemented and continue to evaluate specific sustainability measures focused on tackling five main areas: people, planet, coffee, tea, and cocoa. All information presented that does not refer the source, was obtained by data available on Starbucks' website and available company reports.

5.2.1. Economic sustainability

5.2.1.1. Supporting local economy

Starbucks has measures and goals that aim to assist in the economy of their communities. In 1998, Starbucks launched Urban Coffee Opportunities, a concept for creating economic growth in underserved areas. The following 12 years, they opened a total of 100 stores. In March 2016, Starbucks launched their first community store in Jamaica, and in Queens, New York, and set the goal of opening a minimum of 15 stores. The purpose behind such stores was to create job opportunities while including local women and minorities, and partnering with local non-profit organizations to train youth members. One year later, Starbucks reached the goal of employing 10.000 youth members and increased the goal to 100.000. In May 2020, Starbucks reached the opening of their 16th community store in in-need neighbourhoods.

Another relevant aspect on Starbucks' economic sustainability is its coffee. Understanding that coffee is the primary product Starbucks offers, it becomes relevant to consider its sustainability, given that their coffee purchases make up around 3% of the world's coffee. They currently rely on over 400.000 farmers from 30 different countries.

5.2.2. Social sustainability

5.2.2.1. Promoting diversity and equality

In 1996, Starbucks developed its mission to "Embrace diversity as an essential component in the way we do business." Accordingly, age is also a diversity component that Starbucks aims to embrace. In June 2015, the organization set the goal of employing a minimum of 10.000 younger people until 2018. Starbucks also set the goal of providing public information about diversity among employees.

In 2020, Starbucks set the goal to connect with corporations in the Board Diversity Action Alliance, whose purpose is to represent racial and ethnic diversity in directors' corporate boards. Starbucks also aimed to create an Inclusion and Diversity Executive Council to track inclusion and variety along with the organization.

In March 2021, Starbucks issued their third civil rights assessment and kept 100% pay equity among different genders who have similar tasks. In the same year, the organization hired more than 25.000 military spouses and wants to increase this number by 5.000 every year. Additionally, the organization established the objective to employ 10.000 refugees worldwide in 2022 and to reach 100 community stores in 2025.

5.2.2.2. Respecting producers' rights

All Starbucks' coffee purchases are made according to the Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices. These practices were established considering farms' economic, social, and environmental impacts, with the intent of attaining sustainable coffee production processes without forgetting to prioritize farmers' and employees' well-being and respective families and communities.

Not only does Starbucks cover their main product's social sustainability, they also cover tea production. Starbucks established the goal to qualify 250.000 women and young girls in the coffee/tea-producing communities until 2025. For this purpose, they donated to corporations dedicated to giving women in tea-producing communities economic and leadership opportunities, education, safe homes, freshwater, and hygiene conditions. Further, Starbucks donated to Mercy Corps' Community Health and Advancement Initiative (CHAI) Project, with the intent of supplying training, health services, and water access to over 100.000 people from 39 communities in India and Guatemala. Similar to coffee, all cocoa purchases are made according to the COCOA practices. Their purpose is to analyse the processes of cocoa production and implement adequate measures at the producers' and purchasers' levels. Further, Starbucks announced that it is donating 100 million coffee trees until 2025, with the intent of supporting farmers and respective communities. Further, The Starbucks Foundation donated over \$25 million to programs that support coffee and tea-producing communities.

5.2.2.3. Improving work conditions

One of Starbucks' main accomplishments was supplying full health benefits to qualified employees, both full and part-time workers, since 1988.

Furthermore, every organization employee in the U.S. can receive 100% college tuition through Arizona State University's online program, which includes more than 100 college programs to choose from. Having this mentioned, Starbucks set the goal for 25.000 employees to finish their graduation until 2025.

Recently, Starbucks has announced its intentions to pay for travels its employees make, if they want to voluntarily terminate their pregnancies and are not able to do so at their locations, as abortion is illegal in some American states (Kate Gibson, 2022).

5.2.2.4. Embracing social causes

Starbucks donated to support Australian communities due to the wildfires, the communities from the Beirut port explosion, and American wildfires and hurricanes.

In May 2020, Starbucks promoted conversations concerning the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor to raise awareness on the Black Lives Matter Movement. Although they were publicly supporting the BLM Movement, Starbucks started by forbidding baristas of wearing apparel with the movement's phrase, to avoid potential riots or fights from opposers (Jordan Valinsky, 2020). Nonetheless, the organization later allowed employees to show their personal support to the initiative and even sent 200.000 BLM allusive t-shirts to workers (Jordan Valinsky, 2020). Similarly, Starbucks has participated in various initiatives to show support to the LGBTQ+ community and has distributed accessories and pieces of clothing for baristas to wear and show their support (Brianna Sacks, & Albert Samaha, 2020).

In the same year, Starbucks announced a goal of creating a mentoring program establishing a bridge between Black and Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC) partners and senior investors, and betting on partnerships with companies whose purpose is exploring the BIPOC strength. Starbucks also set the goal to invest \$5 million of their foundation to create a project to support non-profit organizations that focus on BIPOC youth.

In 2020, Starbucks announced a donation of \$1.5 million from The Starbucks Foundation to Neighbourhood Grants, with a special focus on non-profit organizations that consider local impact. The mentioned grants aim to support corporations whose top positions and primary focus are black communities. The initiative donated over \$5 million to over 2.500 corporations in 2019. In 2020, over 400 organizations received a grant to support communities struggling with the Covid-19 consequences. May 2020 was marked by the donation of \$1 million from The Starbucks Foundation to Neighbourhood Grants.

Starbucks also established the goal of donating \$100 million to hunger relief programs over the upcoming ten years, and in 2020, they were able to donate \$47.6 million. Further, they donated 36.8 million meals through FoodShare. This program saves food from above 6.200 U.S. stores from waste and gifts it to food banks. Currently, 100% of stores in the United States have this program. In August 2020, Starbucks donated \$1 million to develop mobile pantry programs to 13 food banks. In 2020 Starbucks also established a partnership with World Wildlife Fund and started using their "Water Risk" tool to identify locations with less access to clean water.

Comparable to McDonald's, the coffee chain announced they were interrupting their operations in Russia in the beginning of March of the current year, as a result of their invasion of Ukraine (Starbucks Corporation, 2022). After almost 3 months, the company finally announced it is

leaving the Russian market, closing 130 stores, and committing to keep paying all 2.000 employees for six months (Amelia Lucas, 2022).

5.2.3. Environmental sustainability

5.2.3.1. Managing waste

Starbucks was the first in their industry to offer paper cups with recycled fibre in 2006. The organization has established three main goals to accomplish until 2030. Firstly, to decrease their carbon emissions by 50% through saving more than what they emit. Secondly, they intend to reduce the waste that goes to landfills by 50% through switching materials used. Lastly, they also plan to decrease by 50% their water consumption.

Some measures being implemented are developing more plant-based items and replacing disposable with reusable packaging. The organization is also in the process of duplicating the reusable packaging used between 2016 and 2022. Starbucks is also working on using recycled materials to compose 20% of their hot cups and produce 100% degradable and recyclable hot cups until 2022. Likewise, the organization intended to eliminate 100% of plastic straws by the end of 2021.

Another relevant milestone achieved in 2020 was that 1.3% of sales in Canada, Japan, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and the United States were in reusable packaging. To boost this change in other markets, Starbucks assessed introducing a fee of disposable cups in the United Kingdom and Germany. In the U.K., Starbucks also introduced the “Circular Cup”, consisting of a reusable cup made from around six disposable cups. Starbucks also added five markets to the list of 13 that had recyclable hot cups. In 2020, some Canada stores started having in-store recycling, and 10% of hot cups are now made of recycled fibre. In 2020 Starbucks entered the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s New Plastics Economy Global Commitment and established the following targets to meet until 2025: to implement initiatives to decrease plastic packaging; to substitute disposable for reusable packaging; to all packaging made of plastic to be 100% reusable, recycled or degradable; for all plastic packaging to have 5-10% recycled materials. In 2020 the organizations started substituting lids with ones that do not require straws.

5.2.3.2. Managing resources

Some of Starbucks’ accomplished goals from 2019 to 2020 were the decrease of 11% of carbon, 4% of water consumption, and 12% of waste produced. Starbucks also implemented a prototype of coffee processing and wet mills to lower their water consumption by 80%, and adopted new agronomy measures to decrease the environment impact.

2020 was also relevant for Starbucks' sustainability since they started offering oat milk, an alternative to dairy milk, in Canada, China, and the United States. They also launched the "Impossible Breakfast" in the U.S., a meatless alternative to their breakfast sandwich.

In the same year, the organization implemented 23 community solar projects to provide solar energy to more than 24,000 houses, small and non-profit organizations, churches, colleges, and stores. In Washington, they launched a wind project that provides around 140 of their stores with renewable energy. Another victory in 2020 was that they redirected from waste channels 44.1 million pounds of food and 83.9 million pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Starbucks established the goal of implementing 100% renewable energy in process operations worldwide until the end of 2020, which was already completed in the United States, Canada, and Europe; however, they encountered some challenges in applying this to China and Japan. Starbucks also set the goal to launch 10,000 stores in their Greener Stores Framework worldwide until 2025, and in 2020 the number of greener stores triplicated, achieving a total amount of 2,317 stores in the United States and Canada. Additionally, they set the objective of incentivizing 10,000 partners towards being more sustainable until the end of 2020. By this time, over 28,000 international partners adhered to Starbucks' Greener Apron sustainability training program.

As previously explained, Starbucks outsources all its coffee according with the C.A.F.E. practices, being able to guarantee the coffee is produced under specific sustainable methods, focusing on avoiding unnecessary water consumption and preserving the wildlife of coffee-producing areas. In 1999, Starbucks established a partnership with Conservation International to incentive coffee-producing measures that are sustainable. Two years later, the organization implemented ethical coffee-sourcing regulations with Conservation International. Since 2015, Starbucks has been offering 99% ethically produced coffee. Moreover, in 2020, 99.7% of third-party sourced tea was from Rainforest Alliance certified farms. Further, all of their cocoa production is sourced from UTZ-certified farmers and/or Rainforest Alliance Certified farms.

Furthermore, in 2020 Starbucks took part in the "Transform to Net Zero" project to incentivize a net-zero global economy until 2050. They intend to accomplish this by helping develop and deliver research and providing guides to assist organizations in reaching net-zero emissions.

5.2.4. Limitations

Starbucks self-promotes as being inclusive and embracive. In fact, the organization has stated that the customer experience is for everyone, regardless of politics and economics (Rudolf P.

Gaudio, 2003). However, Starbucks' clientele is mainly white, female, young and middle-class (Rudolf P. Gaudio, 2003). One factor that could have an influence on this matter is the prices practiced by the chain (Rudolf P. Gaudio, 2003). As a result, Starbucks is often perceived as targeting customers belonging in the middle and upper class (Lilah Butler, 2018). An additional study states that Starbucks has two main groups of customer targets: students from 18-22 years old and business customers (Chau Nguyen, 2020).

In 2018, a Starbucks' store manager called the authorities on two black men, accusing them of trespassing (Damien Gayle, 2018). This arrest created controversy, since the two men were simply waiting for a friend to arrive, and were even denied access to the toilets, while moments before an individual had been granted access to them without placing an order as well (Damien Gayle, 2018). An additional witness declared that she had been in the establishment for hours and had not purchased anything either (Damien Gayle, 2018). Later, Starbucks announced the store manager responsible had been dismissed (Damien Gayle, 2018). One month later, the company decided to close around 8.000 of its restaurants in the U.S. and dedicated the day to train their 175.000 employees on racial discrimination affairs (Adam Gabbatt, 2018). Nonetheless, this measure was criticized by involved employees of colour, who claimed the training was not handled correctly and felt uncomfortable there (Jessica Booth, 2021).

Furthermore, Starbucks' practice to open stores in lower-class neighbourhoods also presents a tension, since by being a giant and popular chain, entering a smaller neighbourhood presents a threat to local cafés, and many are forced to close (Oliver Burkeman, & Emma Brockes, 1999). An independent café in Chicago named Scenes Coffee House, whose owner asked in 1997 for a new lease to his landlord and got refused (Oliver Burkeman, & Emma Brockes, 1999). Later, the owner realised Starbucks was planning to rent a property in the same complex and Scenes was unable to keep up, declaring bankruptcy (Oliver Burkeman, & Emma Brockes, 1999). Another café owner in London called Pickles Coffee Shop has also claimed that Starbucks' presence has impacted his business in a negative way (Oliver Burkeman, & Emma Brockes, 1999).

Despite Starbucks' measure to associate with Arizona State University's online program, having a college degree is not a guarantee for better employment in the U.S. (Jana Kasperkevic, 2014). In 2013, over 250.000 college-degreed individuals were employed at minimum-wage works, which represented 70% throughout the previous decade (Jana Kasperkevic, 2014).

With the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 some Starbucks' employees claimed the restaurants were understaffed, and consequently they were suffering from higher intensity of work (Michael Sainato, 2021). Furthermore, workers complained about customers' behaviours, who were more aggressive and disruptive (Michael Sainato, 2021). Starbucks, however, did not compensate its employees, who felt they were receiving too little for such demanding levels of work (Michael Sainato, 2021). For the record, Starbucks' workers are among the lowest paid and have less benefits across the entire corporate America (Robert Reich, 2021). In response to the COVID-19 situation and consequent CDC regulations, Starbucks was able to allow vaccinated customers not to wear a mask (Michael Sainato, 2021). This led to some workers feeling unsafe and uncomfortable, as they do not have a way to distinguish who is and who is not vaccinated (Michael Sainato, 2021).

Later in 2021, as employees were becoming increasingly discouraged by working conditions at Starbucks corporation, workers at an outlet in New York became the company's first workplace to turn into a union (Robert Reich, 2021). This union formation allows workers to fight on working conditions as a group (Nina Lakhani, 2022).

A not-so-positive outcome occurred this year in February, when seven Starbucks employees from Tennessee who were planning a union were dismissed (Nina Lakhani, 2022). As of this year, around 250 locations have signed petitions in favour of union formations (Michael Sainato, 2022). Furthermore, more than 20 union leaders were fired, and Starbucks has published a new set of benefits for all workers, except those working at unionized restaurants (Michael Sainato, 2022). For these increased benefits, Starbucks C.E.O., Howard Schultz, made an investment of \$200 million for more worker trainings and pay (CBS News, 2022). In the beginning of May 2022, the number of unionized Starbucks' stores achieved the 50th store, and more than 200 other stores are waiting to be accepted (Dave Jamieson, 2022).

Additionally, Starbucks accused one of its supervisors, Meseret Kumulchew, of fabricating false records of water and fridge's temperatures (Matthew Weaver, 2016). However, the organization lost the case, since Kumulchew had been diagnosed with dyslexia, and misread the numbers (Matthew Weaver, 2016). After the fact, Starbucks declared they were teaming up with the British Dyslexia Association to further understand how they could improve and help other in-need employees (Matthew Weaver, 2016).

In 2017, a news report was published, explaining that for a regular Starbucks employee, the paid maternity leave was 6 weeks for mothers and 0 for fathers (or adoptive parents), while for

corporate workers was 16 weeks for mothers, and 12 for fathers (biological or adoptive) (Molly Redden, 2017). As a response, Starbucks claimed their parental leave was “one of the best” in the retail sector (Molly Redden, 2017).

A year later, a Starbucks employee won a legal accusation for not receiving 13 hours of extra work (Associated Press in San Francisco, 2018). Douglas Troester was asking to be paid for the routine tasks outside of his working hours, including closing the store, activating the alarm, which altogether took an extra 4-10 minutes daily (Associated Press in San Francisco, 2018). The employee ended up receiving \$103 for a total of 13 hours (Associated Press in San Francisco, 2018).

An additional tension faced by Starbucks arose when an investigation in 2020 concluded that there were children younger than 13 working at some of the Guatemala farms (Jamie Doward, 2020). According to the investigation, these children were working an estimate of 8 hours daily, 6 days per week, and receiving less than £5 daily (Jamie Doward, 2020). Starbucks responded declaring they were investigating the situation and confirmed that they did not outsource any products from the mentioned farms in the latest harvest season (Jamie Doward, 2020).

In the same year, Starbucks corporation was accused by a transgender employee for discrimination (Maria Cramer, 2021). The victim, Jay Kelly, reported his supervisors and managers had discriminatory behaviours towards him, such as insisting on writing his birth-name – Jessica – in the schedules, looking fixedly at his beard, and making facial expressions when he talked that suggested disgust and aversion (Maria Cramer, 2021).

Considering Starbucks’ economic sustainability, the organization has implemented measures to help the economies where they operate. This may seem as a meritorious consideration from Starbucks. However, studies show that Starbucks belongs to a sector that thrives when the economy is favourable (Rodrigo Martínez Puente, 2017). This can be justified by Starbucks selling a product that is not a necessity at a high price (Rodrigo Martínez Puente, 2017). In this case, consumer demand depends on personal income levels, general employment, and consumer confidence (The Street Ratings, 2016).

In 2012, a report from Reuters exposed that Starbucks stores in the U.K. were generating sales while reporting zero taxes legally (Katherine Campbell, & Duane Helleloid, 2016). Among the critics raised, was the negative impact that avoiding taxes caused on social services in the United Kingdom, since there were declared billions of pounds in Starbucks sales, and they had paid almost no income taxes since starting its business there in 1998 (Katherine Campbell, &

Duane Helleloid, 2016). Although the organization's officials had declared the U.K. operations were successful to investors, to the tax authorities they were reporting net losses and only reported one taxable profit, in 14 years of operations (Katherine Campbell, & Duane Helleloid, 2016). This was possible through a practice called "transfer pricing", which consists of an organization having several smaller businesses spread across countries and declaring the income in the locations that have more favourable tax policies (Katherine Campbell, & Duane Helleloid, 2016). In Starbucks case, the coffee was acquired from a Swiss Starbucks trading corporation they selected this trading company as the legal address, thus paying taxes at a rate of 5%, instead of the 24% practiced in the U.K. (Katherine Campbell, & Duane Helleloid, 2016). In the following year, corporation's sales fell from £413 million to £399 million in the U.K. (Shannon Bond, & Duncan Robinson, 2014). Facing the public controversy, their managing director declared the organization was committed to pay a relevant quantity of tax in the upcoming year, in spite of whether the company was profitable or not (BBC News, 2012). This reaction measure was expected to increase their tax payments to the U.K. government by £10 million (Chris Isidore, 2012).

An additional tension occurred when the Organic Consumers Association criticized the coffee chain for offering milk from mistreated cows (Gözde Özdemir Uçgun, & Ece Konaklioglu, 2016). Resultingly, Starbucks added the option of organic milk for an extra fee (Gözde Özdemir Uçgun, & Ece Konaklioglu, 2016).

In 2015, Starbucks was involved in a controversy result of the European Food Organization document stating there were samples of elephant faeces found in Starbucks' products (Gözde Özdemir Uçgun, & Ece Konaklioglu, 2016). The company's official members never confirmed this situation, however, several news reported that some Starbucks' managers had confessed the claims were true and justified them with the need to assign the sour taste to their coffee, and later apologized to their consumers (Gözde Özdemir Uçgun, & Ece Konaklioglu, 2016).

Concerning Starbucks' measure to replace plastic straws for straw-less lids, the lids would be composed by plastic. According to the Reason Foundation, their production would require more plastic than the previous (Arwa Mahdawi, 2018).

Lastly, an investigation was conducted in 2021 in Wuxi, China, and discovered two stores were employing expired ingredients (Global Times, 2021). A further investigation was conducted and found 15 food-security related violations, including workers not wearing hair nets and incomplete disinfection data (Reuters, 2021). An additional investigation found 18 restaurants

in Suzhou, China, that were also violating food security policies (Global Times, 2021). Starbucks China came forward and apologized, promising the further reinforcement of food security measures (Global Times, 2021).

6. DISCUSSION

Research has been developed on sustainability and defined it as having three main pillars – environmental, social, economic (WCED, 1987). This is consistent with how McDonald's and Starbucks have been implementing on their sustainability journey, since the results of this paper show measures have been implemented on all pillars. Furthermore, studies say sustainability should be dynamic and preventive, rather than constant and static (Kent E. Porteny, 2015). This is also aligned with both chains' sustainability strategies, since both have been setting future goals and working towards meeting them.

As Bob Langert explained in his book *The Battle To Do Good: Inside McDonald's Sustainability Journey* (2019), fast-food chains have been pressured by the public to improve their sustainability practices. In fact, several studies were made to undercover the impacts fast-food chains have on the environment (Robin B. DiPietro, Susan Gregory, 2013). According to Geyer et al. (2017), plastic food packaging has been increasing, which brings negative consequences to the environment (Hopewell et al., 2009). However, according to McDonald's Portugal 30th Anniversary Report (2021), the chain has been able to decrease by 3 tons their plastic consumption in 2019, 456 tons in the following year, and 81 tons in the first half of 2021.

An additional aspect worth mentioning is that Robin B. DiPietro and Susan Gregory (2013) have stated that fast-food chains incur in an "incautious use of energy". However, results of this research show that McDonald's Portugal implemented measures in the production processes that led decreases in one year of 20% of water consumption, 12% of electricity consumption, 45% of gas consumptions, and 62% of waste disposal. Furthermore, in the McDonald's Portugal 30th Anniversary Report (2021), it is mentioned that 10.7% of their waste is used on energetic valorisation, and 5.9% on organic valorisation.

A study by Ha Minh Vu et al. (2012) has stated that customers are preferring organizations that are environmentally sustainable and punishing the ones who are not. This is sustained by the results of this paper concerning the social pressures McDonald's and Starbucks have been experiencing. Some examples of this are the *McLibel* (1997) documentary and the critics around Starbucks using milk from mistreated cows (Gözde Özdemir Uçgun, & Ece Konaklioglu, 2016). However, one result that contrasts with Ha Minh Vu et al. (2012) study, is that although they have been targeted with endless critics, McDonald's and Starbucks are still market leaders (QSR, 2021).

In result of this dissertation, fast-food chain owners can contemplate and reconsider their sustainability measures. The purpose is to follow the measures that are more generally adopted and that were successful and find solutions to those that did not work and learn from them. In an overview, some of the measures were successful, could and should be adopted by every fast-food chain. Nonetheless, there are some practices that did not work as expected and should be improved. However, some sustainability measures are expensive and time-consuming, so it is expectable that not every fast-food business has the same resources as McDonald's and Starbucks. Despite this, all business can put in the effort and try to adapt the measures that better fit their business models and consider their sustainability on three pillars: economic, social, and environmental.

7. CONCLUSION

Several entities have developed studies and research on different aspects of sustainability. Some have analyzed the effects the food industry and the fast-food sector have on health, the economy and environment. Despite several published articles by, for instance, The Guardian and the Financial Times, exposing some flaws in fast-food chains' sustainability plans, there was no research that clearly combined the positive and the negative aspects of implementing sustainability measures on the fast-food sector, and proposed solutions. Having this mentioned, this paper was developed with the intent of answering the research question: "How can fast-food chains be sustainable?"

The findings of this paper show that fast-food chains are working on improving their sustainability in the three pillars: economic, social, and environmental. The findings further present various measures companies implemented to follow a more sustainable path, and the goals they have set for the future, thus upholding the primary sustainability characteristic: it must be dynamic and forward-looking. Moreover, the results showed evidence of the limitations and challenges on the studied fast-food chains' sustainability strategies, and the reason why the concept of a sustainable fast-food is such an oxymoron. These tensions are appropriate to this study so fast-food owners can learn from previous mistakes and avoid incurring in practices that can, for instance, be viewed as "green-washing".

Among all the practices found in the findings chapter, some of them could be adopted by other fast-food chains' owners, to improve their economic sustainability. Some of these include operating at a more local level and outsourcing from local producers; supporting local communities through charity and other initiatives; offering career-growth opportunities and allowing employees to evolve through the hierarchy established. Regarding social sustainability, some of the practices that aid in improving it are supporting workers' needs and expectations, supporting social causes, and ensuring ethically sourced products. Finally, some examples of what fast-food chains could do to improve its environmental sustainability is implementing changes on the restaurants and production stages to optimize resources used, incentivizing the consumption of plant-based products, and spreading awareness among customers so they become environmentally conscious. Thus, fast-food chains could indeed be sustainable to a large extent. However, some of the referred practices can constitute a big investment for the company, both in money and time aspects. Additionally, further research needs to be done to find a solution for the issue of food packaging being a scalable source of waste disposal. Moreover, fast-food chains need to develop more plant-based products and

work on shaping customers' preferences accordingly. Furthermore, fast-food chain owners should investigate how customers' expectations on sustainability affect their purchasing intentions.

Lastly, it is important to note this research incurs in some limitations. The first limitation is derived from the fact that this study followed a qualitative research method, thus it was challenging to validate, assess and summarize all the findings. Additionally, it would have been valuable to interview some of these chains' managers, to better understand what their plans are to overcome some of the mentioned limitations, and their next steps to achieve sustainability. Moreover, interviewing customers and employees could also bring more depth to this research, providing insights of their personal experiences with the organizations.

8. APPENDIX

8.1. Table 1: Case Data Table – McDonald’s Portugal

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Article	McLibel	David J. Wolfson	Michigan State University	1999	External
Journal’s Article	‘Super Size Me’ Carries Weight With Critics	John Stossel	ABC News	2006	External
Blog Post	Fast Food Nation	Peter Bradshaw	The Guardian	2007	External
Journal’s Article	Pride to Join ‘McJob’ Menu at McDonald’s	Richard Gibson	The Wall Street Journal	2008	External
Dissertation	As Funções da Responsabilidade Social no Marketing Social de Hoje. O Caso de Estudo McDonald’s Portugal	Débora Alexandra Rodrigues do Marco	Universidade Católica Portuguesa	2012	External
Journal’s Article	Why McDonald’s should focus on less beef and higher wages	Marc Gunther	The Guardian	2014	External
Journal’s Article	Freedom From Fries – Can fast food be good for you?	Michael Specter	The New Yorker	2015	External
Website Post	Environmental Policy	McDonald’s Portugal	McDonald’s Portugal	2016	Internal
Interview	One year later: McDonald’s supply chain, sustainability chief Francesca DeBiase	Bob Langert	GreenBiz	2016	External
Article	Assessing the health impact of transnational corporations: a case study on McDonald’s Australia	Julia Anaf, Frances E. Baum, Matt Fisher, Elizabeth Harris, & Sharon Friel	Flinders University, University of New South Wales, & The Australian National University	2017	External
Article	Leading NGOs expose greenwashing by U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, demand real sustainability plan	Friends of the Earth	Friends of the Earth	2018	External

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Letter	Letter to Stakeholders of the US Roundtable on Sustainable Beef	50 NGOs	50 NGOs	2018	External
Article	Health Threats by McDonald's	Khogilavaanni A/P Pathmanathan, Daisy Mui Hung Kee, Sivaneswaran A/L T. Pandiyan, Jeyvendranathan A/L Yuganathan, Priya Nanthini A/P Sivakumaran, & Yousef Talal Alrashed	Universiti Sains Malaysia, & College of Business Administration, Kuwait	2019	External
Book	THE BATTLE TO DO GOOD – Inside McDonald's Sustainability Journey	Bob Langert	McDonald's	2019	External
Newspaper Article	McDonald's paper straws cannot be recycled	BBC News	BBC News	2019	External
Newspaper Article	Why more asset managers are taking cues from UN sustainability goals	Jennifer Thompson	Financial Times	2019	External
Newspaper Article	Disney's pay furore; Robeco warns of green risk in tech; JPM, McDonald's face ESG fight	Gillian Tett, Billy Nauman, Kristen Talman, & Eileen Rodriguez	Financial Times	2020	External

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Article	Solutions for the impact of technology in the services sector: The case of McDonald's	Cláudia Jéssica Rodrigues Oliveira, Margarida Fernandes Lopes, Raquel Arêde Rodrigues Calisto, Sofia Ferreira Seco, Cicero Eduardo Walter, & Manuel Au-Yong-Oliveira	Aveiro University, GOVCOPP, & Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Piauí, Brazil	2020	External
Article	Improving order processes with information technology: McDonald's case	Bahadir K. Akcam	Western New England University	2020	External
Newspaper Article	McDonald's accused of discriminating against black franchisees	Alistair Gray	Financial Times	2020	External
Newspaper Article	McDonald's develops its own faux meat in blow to Beyond	Anne Riley Moffat	Bloomberg	2020	External
Newspaper	Laugh if you want, but the 'McPlant' burger is a step to a greener world	Adrienne Matei	The Guardian	2020	External
Company Report	30 th Anniversary Report: McDonald's Portugal	McDonald's Portugal	McDonald's Portugal	2021	Internal
Website Post	Packaging and Residues Reduction	McDonald's Portugal	McDonald's Portugal	2021	Internal
Website Post	Recycling and Circular Economy	McDonald's Portugal	McDonald's Portugal	2021	Internal
Website Post	Emissions' Reduction	McDonald's Portugal	McDonald's Portugal	2021	Internal
Newspaper Article	McDonald's pledges to offer more sustainable Happy Meal toys worldwide by the end of 2025	Amelia Lucas	Consumer News and Business Channel	2021	External

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Newspaper Article	McDonald's says nearly all its paper packaging from sustainable fiber	Hilary Russ	Reuters	2021	External
Newspaper Article	Brazilian McDonald's franchise tests recycled-content product	Brian Taylor	Recycling today	2021	External
Newspaper Article	Business schools urged to integrate ESG topics in core courses	Sarah Murray	Financial Times	2021	External
Newspaper Article	Hold the beef: McDonald's avoids the bold step it must take to cut emissions	Tom Perkins	The Guardian	2021	External
Website Post	Our History	McDonald's	McDonald's	2022	Internal
Newspaper Article	Carl Icahn pressuring McDonald's to improve welfare of pigs raised for meat	Edward Helmore	The Guardian	2022	External
Newspaper Article	McDonald's pig policy fight escalates with board nominations	BBC	BBC	2022	External
Newspaper Article	McDonald's and Starbucks pour millions into eco-friendly cup hunt	Financial Times	Financial Times	2022	External
Newspaper Article	Ask the awkward questions about green investing	Simon Edelsten	Financial Times	2022	External
Newspaper Article	Pressure grows on McDonald's and Coca-Cola to suspend Russia operations	Julia Kollwe	The Guardian	2022	External
Newspaper Article	McDonald's to sell its business in Russia after 30 years	Sarah Butler	The Guardian	2022	External
Newspaper Article	Govor agrees to buy all McDonald's in Russia and rebrand them	Guardian staff and agencies	The Guardian	2022	External
Newspaper Article	Russian McDonald's buyer to rebrand restaurants	BBC News	BBC	2022	External

8.2. Table 2: Case Data Table – Starbucks

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Report	Trouble brewing	Oliver Burkeman, & Emma Brockes	World Trade Organisation	1999	External
Article	Coffeetalk: Starbucks and the commercialization of casual conversation	Rudolf P. Gaudio	Cambridge University Press	2003	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks agrees to pay more corporation tax	BBC News	BBC	2012	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks to pay more U.K. taxes	Chris Isidore	CNN	2012	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks UK sales fall for the first time after tax furore	Shannon Bond, & Duncan Robinson	Financial Times	2014	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks offers college tuition but graduates might still be baristas	Jana Kasperkovic	The Guardian	2014	External
Article	An Evaluation of a Business Chain in an Emerging Economy: a Case Study of Starbucks - Turkey	Gözde Özdemir Uçgun, & Ece Konaklioglu	Gazi University	2016	External
Case Study	Starbucks: Social responsibility and tax avoidance	Katherine Campbell, & Duane Helleloid	University of North Dakota	2016	External

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Newspaper Article	Dyslexic employee wins discrimination case against Starbucks	Matthew Weaver	The Guardian	2016	External
Dissertation	Starbucks Corporation Valuation	Rodrigo Martínez Puente	Universidad de San Andrés	2017	External
Newspaper Article	At Starbucks, your maternity leave depends on whether you're a barista or a boss	Molly Redden	The Guardian	2017	External
Article	Coffee's Dark Secrets: Linguistic Variation in Starbucks and Dunkin Donuts	Lilah Butler	Boston College	2018	External
Newspaper Article	Arrest of two black men at Starbucks for 'trespassing' sparks protests	Damien Gayle	The Guardian	2018	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks worker wins lawsuit over 13 hours of off-the-clock pay	Associated Press in San Francisco	The Guardian	2018	External
Company Report	Global Social Impact Report	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2018	Internal
Newspaper Article	Starbucks closes more than 8,000 US cafes for racial bias training	Adam Gabbatt	The Guardian	2018	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks is banning straws – but is it really a big win for the environment?	Arwa Mahdawi	The Guardian	2018	External

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Company Report	Global Social Impact Report	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2019	Internal
Newspaper Article	Starbucks reverses its stance and will now let baristas wear 'Black Lives Matter' apparel	Jordan Valinsky	CNN	2020	External
Company Report	Company Profile	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2020	Internal
Company Report	Timeline	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2020	Internal
Company Report	Global Environmental & Social Impact Report	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2020	Internal
Company Report	Global Environmental & Social Impact Report: supporting documents & data tables	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2020	Internal
Dissertation	Sustainability Marketing Concept – Case: Starbucks	Chau Nguyen	Centria University of Applied Sciences	2020	External
Newspaper Article	Children as young as eight picked coffee beans on farms supplying Starbucks	Jamie Doward	The Guardian	2020	External

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Newspaper Article	Starbucks Won't Let Employees Wear Gear That Supports Black Lives Matter Because It Is Political Or Could Incite Violence	Brianna Sacks, & Albert Samaha	BuzzFeed News	2020	External
Website Post	Our Company	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2021	Internal
Website Post	Starbucks Archive	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2021	Internal
Website Post	Careers	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2021	Internal
Website Post	Social Impact - People	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2021	Internal
Website Post	Social Impact - Planet	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2021	Internal
Newspaper Article	'Coffee-making robots': Starbucks staff face intense work and customer abuse	Michael Sainato	The Guardian	2021	External
Newspaper Article	This victory of Starbucks employees in Buffalo will reverberate across America	Robert Reich	The Guardian	2021	External
Newspaper Article	The Biggest Scandals To Ever Hit Starbucks	Jessica Booth	mashed	2021	External

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication	Source Origin
Newspaper Article	Starbucks apologizes after latest food safety scandal	Global Times	Global Times	2021	External
Newspaper Article	Baristas at Starbucks Accuse Service Company of Abuse and Pay Gaps	Maria Cramer	The New York Times	2021	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks apologizes for selling expired food in Chinese stores	Reuters	CNN	2021	External
Company Announcement	Update to Starbucks partners on our business in Russia	Starbucks Corporation	Starbucks Corporation	2022	Internal
Newspaper Article	Starbucks will exit Russia after 15 years, closing 130 licensed cafes	Amelia Lucas	CNBC	2022	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks fires workers involved in union push as US movement gains momentum	Nina Lakhani	The Guardian	2022	External
Newspaper Article	Revealed: Starbucks fired over 20 US union leaders in recent months	Michael Sainato	The Guardian	2022	External
Newspaper Article	MasterCard, Starbucks and PayPal to cover abortion travel for workers	Kate Gibson	CBS News	2022	External
Newspaper Article	As more stores unionize, Starbucks vows to boost worker pay	Money Watch	CBS News	2022	External
Newspaper Article	Starbucks Workers Have Unionized More Than 50 Stores In The U.S.	Dave Jamieson	HuffPost	2022	External

8.3. Table 3: Secondary Data Table

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication
Report	Our Common Future	World Commission on Environment and Development	United Nations	1987
Book	Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meat	Eric Schlosser	-	2001
Newspaper Article	Qualitative Research and the Academy of Management Journal	Sara Rynes, & Robert P. Gephart Jr.	Tippie College of Business, & University of Alberta	2004
Newspaper Article	American Meat: A Threat to Your Health and to the Environment	Polly Walker, & Robert S. Lawrence	Yale Law School	2004
Article	Fast Food and Animal Rights: An Examination and Assessment of the Industry's Response to Social Pressure	Ronald J. Adams	Coggin College of Business, The University of North Florida	2008
Article	Promotion and Fast Food Demand	Timothy J. Richards, & Luis Padilla	Arizona State University	2009
Book Excerpt	The Post Carbon Reader: Managing the 21st Century's Sustainability Crises	Richard Heinberg	Post Carbon Institute	2010
Article	You Are How You Eat: Fast Food and Impatience	Chen-Bo Zhong, & Sanford E. DeVoe	University of Toronto, & UCLA Anderson School of Management	2010

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication
Article	Environmental Impacts of Cultured Meat Production	Hanna L. Tuomisto, & M. Joost Teixeira de Mattos	University of Oxford, & University of Amsterdam	2011
Newspaper Article	From a distance and generalizable to up close and grounded: Reclaiming a place for qualitative methods in international business research	Julian Birkinshaw, Mary Yoko Brannen, & Rosalie L. Tung	London Business School, Copenhagen Business School, & Simon Fraser University	2011
Newspaper Article	Climate change and sustainable food production	Pete Smith, & Peter J. Gregory	University of Reading	2012
Newspaper Article	Qualitative data: Cooking without a recipe	Melissa E. Graebner, Jeffrey A. Martin, & Philip T. Roundy	University of Texas, & University of Alabama	2012
Book	Fast Food and Junk Food: An Encyclopedia of What We Love to Eat	Andrew F. Smith	New School University in New York	2012
Article	A Historical Review of Five of the Top Fast Food Restaurant Chains to Determine the Secrets of Their Success	Alex Leon Lichtenberg	Claremont McKenna College	2012
Newspaper Article	A Comparative Study of Customer Perceptions Regarding Green Restaurant Practices: Fast Food vs. Upscale Casual	Robin B. DiPietro, & Susan Gregory	University of South Carolina, & Eastern Michigan University	2013
Website Post	Top 10 Global Fast-Food Chains	Forbes	Forbes	2014

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication
Book	Sustainability	Kent E. Portney	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	2015
Book	Sustainability	Leslie Paul Thiele	University of Florida	2016
Newspaper Article	Sustainable diets within sustainable food systems	Alexandre Meybeck, & Vincent Gitz	Center for International Forestry Research	2017
Article	Measuring business sustainability in food service operations: a case study in the fast food industry	Ha Minh Vu, Hing Kai Chan, Ming K. Lim, & Anthony S.F. Chiu	Multiple universities	2017
Journal's Article	Determinants of takeaway and fast food consumption: a narrative review	Hayley G. Janssen, Ian G. Davies, Lucinda D. Richardson, & Leonard Stevenson	School of Sport Studies, Leisure and Nutrition, Liverpool John Moores University	2017
Journal's Article	The Activities of Foodservice Companies in the Area of Corporate Social Responsibility - on the example of international fast food chain	Edyta Gheribi	University of Lodz	2017
Journal's Article	The Impact of Technology on the Environment and How Environmental Technology Could Save Our Planet	Edinburgh Sensors	Edinburgh Sensors	2019

Type of Data	Title of the Document	Author	Name of Organization	Date of Publication
Journal's Article	Unlimited Information Is Transforming Society	Naomi Oreskes, & Erik M. Conway	Harvard University, & California Institute of Technology	2020
Website Post	The 3 Pillars of Corporate Sustainability	Andrew Beattie	Investopedia	2021
Book	The Routledge Handbook of Vegan Studies	Laura Wright	Taylor & Francis Group	2021
Article	The QSR 50: The Fast-Food Industry's Leading Annual Report	Danny Klein	QSR Magazine	2021
Website Post	Eric Schlosser: About The Author	Penguin Random House	Penguin Random House	2022

8.4. Table 4: Coding scheme for McDonald's case

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of local suppliers (40%) 	Local suppliers	Supporting local economy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in employee training Implement measures to support higher education among employees 	Employment opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure gender equality in management positions 	Gender equality	Promoting diversity and equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a partnership with Casa Pia de Lisboa resource center, to enable the recruitment of deaf/hard-of-hearing people 	Employment opportunities for people with disabilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure compliance with standards related to food safety Reduce salt in several products and use only vegetable oil 	Good practices in the conservation and preparation of products	Ensuring food security

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide specific training to employees to meet best practices in handling regarding food products 	Specific training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote flexible work • Ensure continuous training of employees 	Flexibility and employee well-being	Improving work conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Ronald McDonald Housing programme • Support local social institutions 	Social responsibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate food to support healthcare professionals during COVID-19 lockdowns • Negotiating employees' conditions after the decision to close the business in Russia, regarding invasion of Ukraine 	Social response in emergency situations	Embracing social causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established a goal to provide packaging from 100% renewable, recycled, or certified sources by 2025 • All paper and cardboard packaging is approved by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) 	Use of renewable sources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease by 3 tons the plastic consumption in 2019, 456 tons in 2020, and 81 tons in the first semester of 2021 in Portugal • Decrease by 30% the plastic used in kids' toys, worldwide • All the implemented practices are expected to reduce 500 tons of consumed plastic per year, which makes up for around 65 million plastic straws, and 90 million plastic lids 	Reduce plastic consumption	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invested in new models of recycling cans • implemented an Integrated Platform System, an ordering technology that ensures minimum food waste • Collection of 100% of used cooking oils 		Managing waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of compressing machines that decrease plastic and paper's volume • Implement cleaning teams in restaurants' to avoid trash accumulation 	Reduce and sorting waste	

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain equipment in energy save mode • Installed new fryers with new filtering system that enables the decrease of 15% of oil consumption and 7% of energy consumption • Installed curtains and rubbers in every door to reduce energy losses • Equipped several restaurants with LED light bulbs • Air conditioning systems have automatic controls • Reduce electricity consumption by 12% 	Save energy	Managing resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installed faucets with timers in bathrooms and kitchens' washing spots • Reduce water consumption by 20% 	Save water	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing photovoltaic panels in their restaurants which allows each restaurant to produce 6.000 kWh of electric energy • Reduce gas consumption by 45% 	Renewable energy sources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intend to change all company cars to electric vehicles until 2030, which is already completed by 25% 	Reduce CO ₂ emissions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fish products are acquired through sustainable fishing certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) • Coffee grains with a responsible origin certified by the Rainforest Alliance 	Ethical sourcing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using of thermoplastic in Brazil 	Reutilization of waste	Investing in future sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating the possibility of launching new products made of fake meat 	Reduce CO ₂ emissions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing compressing machines not accordingly with the planned, due to COVID-19 situation 	COVID-19	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining ecological food packaging from suppliers increase operational costs • Monitor outsourced suppliers regarding sustainability is challenging • Implement sustainable practices with all suppliers requires constant communication and monitoring 	Requisition of resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees work rights are not consistent worldwide • High turnover rate (estimated to be 44% in a year worldwide) 	Employees rights and benefits	

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declared sustainable for beef meat production by using S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef's • The framework was considered being too shallow and inconsiderate • They still have suppliers that do not comply with the announced measure to not have animals in cages 	Greenwashing	Limitations (cont.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing around 860.000.000 kilograms of beef meat per year • Increased emissions by 7% in four years, • Producing 54 million metric tons of emissions in 2019 	Environmental issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption of their products immediately increase blood sugar levels and causes the brain to produce dopamine associated with pleasure • Consumption of their products on regular bases increase also increase weight and cholesterol levels associated with the development of coronary diseases 	Health issues	

8.5. Table 5: McDonald's case - conceptual categories and respective quotations

Conceptual Category	Empirical Themes - Findings
Local suppliers	"40% of McDonald's Portugal suppliers are local"
Employment opportunities	"Employee training program, which prepares workers for a career inside McDonald's corporation or outside"
	"90% of managers started as regular employees at a McDonald's restaurant, and 50% started their careers in their restaurants"
	"50% of employees are under the age of 25"
	"Approximately 900 of the McDonalds's Portugal employees are students and in 2020, the company invested in a program that awarded 200 scholarships per year."
Gender equality	"McDonald's Portugal management teams are composed of 56% women and 44% men."
Employment opportunities for people with disabilities	McDonald's "established a partnership with Casa Pia de Lisboa resource center, to enable the recruitment of deaf/hard-of-hearing people."
Good practices in the	"The food safety patterns followed by every single McDonald's restaurant, their suppliers, and distributors, are consistent with the

Conceptual Category	Empirical Themes - Findings
conservation and preparation of products	system HACCP” and “McDonald’s Portugal restaurants have been certified since 2008”
	“All restaurants in Portugal are using 100% vegetable oil”
	“McDonald’s Portugal implemented changes (...), such as the salt reduction by 50% in french fries, 20% in soups, and 10% in specific products such as the “Big Mac” and the “Cheeseburger””
	“The restaurants are also verified by an external entity that comes unannounced to control food safety”
Specific training	“McDonald’s Portugal have implemented an employee training system to educate employees in how to handle products, according to good hygiene practices and cleaning of the establishments, equipment, and appliances”
Flexibility and employee well-being	“McDonald has the goal is to promote their employees’ competencies development. Some examples of their practices to ensure their employees’ well-being are flexible working hours, a good work environment, and continuous training, consisting of more than 250.000 annual hours”
Social responsibility	“McDonald’s created Ronald McDonald Housing, which offers shelter to families whose children need to reallocate themselves to get treatments. In fact, more than 377 Ronald McDonald Houses annually offer shelter to more than 3.5 million families”
	“McDonald’s Portugal (...) patronizes a local institution in the respective community. As a result, McDonald’s Portugal currently counts with hundreds of supported institutions”
Social response in emergency situations	“As a response to the COVID-19 situation, between March and April of 2020, McDonald’s Portugal donated more than 140.000 meals to healthcare professionals. In February and March of 2021, more than 14.000 meals were donated to hospitals and other institutions such as the police and firefighters.”
	“In March 2022, McDonald’s as a global corporation was being pressured and criticized for still having the business open in Russia, after their invasion of Ukraine (...) The business was sold to one of its franchisees, Alexander Govor (...) that agreed in purchasing 850 different restaurants and operate them as a company independent to McDonald’s and keep all 62.000 workers for a minimum of 2 years (The Guardian, 2022), at their current pay-rate.”
Use of renewable sources	“McDonald’s Portugal has established a goal to provide packaging that comes from 100% renewable, recycled, or certified sources by 2025.”
	“All paper and cardboard packaging is approved by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).”
Reduce plastic consumption	“McDonald’s Portugal was able to decrease by 3 tons the plastic consumption in 2019, 456 tons in 2020, and 81 tons in the first semester of 2021.”

Conceptual Category	Empirical Themes - Findings
	<p>“Since 2018, McDonald’s has decreased by 30% the plastic used in kids’ toys worldwide.”</p> <p>“In 2020, McDonald’s Portugal substituted all plastic straws for paper ones, (...) all plastic spoons have been replaced with wooden ones, (...) eliminated plastic lids for ice creams, cups and soup containers are now made of paper and also have paper lids, and the kids’ toys’ containers are also composed of paper.”</p> <p>“The mentioned practices are expected to reduce 500 tons of consumed plastic per year, which makes up for around 65 million plastic straws, and 90 million plastic lids.”</p> <p>“They further intend to reduce by 90% the quantity of fossil fuel-based plastic in toys compared to 2018.”</p>
Reduce and sorting waste	<p>“The organization invested in new models of recycling cans to incentive trash separation. This measure is already implemented in restaurants that opened since 2020.”</p> <p>“McDonald’s Portugal implemented an Integrated Platform System, an ordering technology that ensures minimum food waste possible since food is only produced after being ordered”</p> <p>“Since 2010 McDonald’s Portugal has also ensured the collection of 100% of used cooking oils that are further transformed into biodiesel. McDonald’s has collected 5.000 tons of oil in 10 years with this measure.”</p> <p>“(…) they have implemented compressing machines that decrease 66% of plastic and paper’s volume.”</p> <p>“There are 167 compressing machines installed across 82 restaurants, which compress food residues and reduce by 65% the garbage bags’ consumption.”</p> <p>“To decrease the accumulation of trash in the areas near-by the restaurants, the organization has a responsible cleaning team”</p> <p>“Environment-related messages are displayed across restaurants to raise consumers’ awareness for ecological issues”</p>
Save energy	<p>“Equipment is maintained in an energy-saving mode”</p> <p>“Temperature automatic control system of the equipment (...) all equipment is kept closed to avoid unnecessary heat losses.”</p> <p>“New fryers (...) with new filtering system that enables the decrease of 15% of oil consumption and 7% of energy consumption”</p> <p>“Installed curtains and rubbers in every door to reduce energy losses”</p> <p>“Most restaurants are equipped with LED light bulbs”</p> <p>“Most air conditioning systems have automatic controls”</p> <p>“Some restaurants have automatic blinds that adjust to the exterior light exposure”</p>

Conceptual Category	Empirical Themes - Findings
	“(…) from 2019 to 2020, (…) it experienced reductions of water consumption by 20%, electricity consumption by 12%, gas consumption by 45%, and waste disposal by 62%. (...), 10.7% of their waste goes to energetic valorisation and 5.9% to organic valorisation
Save water	“Kitchens’ washing spots have faucets with timers (…) and dish soaps are biodegradable”
	“Bathroom faucets have timers”
	“(…) from 2019 to 2020, (…) it experienced reductions of water consumption by 20%, electricity consumption by 12%, gas consumption by 45%, and waste disposal by 62%. (...), 10.7% of their waste goes to energetic valorisation and 5.9% to organic valorisation
Renewable energy sources	“(…) installing photovoltaic panels in their restaurants, which allows each restaurant to produce 6.000 kWh of electric energy. Currently, 19 restaurants have these panels installed, and in 2019, McDonald’s produced 60.000 kWh of energy”
	“(…) from 2019 to 2020, (…) it experienced reductions of water consumption by 20%, electricity consumption by 12%, gas consumption by 45%, and waste disposal by 62%. (...), 10.7% of their waste goes to energetic valorisation and 5.9% to organic valorisation
Reduce CO2 emissions	“(…) intend to change all company cars to electric vehicles until 2030, which is already completed by 25%
Ethical sourcing	McDonald’s provides fish products acquired through sustainable fishing certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
	Coffee grains with a responsible origin certified by the Rainforest Alliance
Reutilization of waste	“(…) McDonald’s is also testing the introduction of thermoplastic food trays from recycled materials in around 30 different locations in Brazil (…) resulted in the reutilization of above 1.200 kilograms of waste, thus avoiding 14.4 tons of carbon dioxide emissions”
Reduce CO2 emissions	“(…) McDonald’s announced the possibility of launching (…) the “McPlant”.
COVID-19	“Due to the pandemic and COVID-19 situation, the efficiency of the measure to install compressing machines was not according to their expectations”
Requisition of resources	“Constant monitoring of practices (…) can be challenging (...)”
	“(…) ecological food packaging requires the search for different suppliers (…) as well as acquiring certificates for them. All the mentioned aspects are timely and costly processes”
	“(…) it is challenging to monitor each outsourced aspect and respective sustainability”
	“(…) measures infer an extensive alteration of the organization”

Conceptual Category	Empirical Themes - Findings
	“(…) process of educating every accountable entity (…) requires several inputs”
Employees rights and benefits	“McDonald’s is not consistent with workers’ conditions worldwide, since they simply implement settings that comply with the country’s specific regulations”
	“McDonald’s employee turnover rate was estimated to be around 44% in a year worldwide, (…) around 20% were managers and 80-90% were regular workers”
	“(…) self-order kiosks (…) enforce the substitution of the human worker”
	“McDonald’s was sued by a group of black ex-franchisees for being pressured by the organization to abandon the business (…) These accusations were supported by the number of black-owned franchises dropping more than half since 1998 when there were 400, opposite to the general number of franchised stores which increased twice, reaching a total of 39.000”
Greenwashing	“McDonald’s (…) announced in 2012 they intended to put an end to its suppliers’ caging methods (…) this current year they had in prospect to reach an overall percentage of 85-90% outsourced pork meat from suppliers who did not keep them in cages by the end of 2022, and this percentage was at 60% in February (…) McDonald’s stated that in 2024, this percentage would reach 100%”
	“The activists were protesting that McDonald’s promotes the consumption of unhealthy/processed food, employees’ exploitation, and animal cruelty, among others (…) the affirmations publicly stated by them were proven true”
	“This letter was (…) criticizing the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef’s (McDonald’s is among the leaders) declared sustainable framework for beef meat production (Friends of the Earth, 2018). (…) they found the USRSB initiative was greenwashing and consequently taking away truly sustainable initiatives’ credibility (…) the letter criticizes the framework for being too shallow and inconsiderate of demanding sustainability issues to be addressed and declares it to be an insufficient way of achieving sustainability”
Environmental issues	“(…) McDonald’s emissions increased by 7% in four years, producing 54 million metric tons of emissions in 2019 (…) the organization purchases around 860.000.000 kilograms of beef meat per year”
	“(…) demand for every worker to wear disposable aprons, gloves, and hairnets, contributes to the increase of throwaway waste”
	“(…) paper cups are not straightforwardly recyclable”

Conceptual Category	Empirical Themes - Findings
Health issues	“(…) <i>The Fast-Food Nation</i> (Erich Schlosser, 2002) movie represents several critics to the risks associated with the fast-food industry (…) when an individual consumes a Big Mac, their blood sugar levels increase exponentially, which causes the brain to produce a series of chemicals, including dopamine (Michael Specter, 2015). This substance is responsible for creating the feeling of pleasure, and then an urge to eat uncontrollably”
	“The documentary explored the physical effects of the consumption of fast-food in large quantities (…) The results after 30 days were: the protagonist gained 11 kilograms of total body weight, suffered a liver injury, increased his cholesterol levels, and doubled his risk of developing coronary diseases (…) he experienced higher levels of fatigue, humour alterations, decrease in libido and higher urge to consume fast-food”
	“(…) refrigerating food is not a completely secure method”

8.6. Table 6: Coding scheme for Starbucks case

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Urban Coffee Opportunities • Launch first community store • Reach 16th community store 	Communities' economic growth	Supporting local economy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ 10.000 youth members • Increase goal to employ 100.000 youth members • Rely on over 400.000 farmers 	Employment opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ 10.000 young people • Provide public information about employee diversity • Participate in the Board Diversity Action Alliance • Create an Inclusion and Diversity Executive Council 	Steps to achieve diversity	Promoting diversity and equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kept 100% equity between genders • Hired more than 25.000 military spouses • Goal to employ 10.000 refugees in 2022, and to complete 100 community stores in 2025 	Examples of diversity achieved	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee purchases made according to C.A.F.E. practices • Cocoa purchase made according to COCOA practices 	Ethical sourcing	Respecting producers' rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal to qualify 250.000 women from coffee/tea communities 	Empowerment of producers	

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donated to corporations focused on coffee/tea communities' empowerment • Donated to CHAI Project 		Respecting producers' rights (cont.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal to donate 100 million coffee trees until 2025 • Donated to programs that support coffee/tea communities 	Donations to producers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply full health benefits to qualified employees since 1988 • Intention to support financially employees' desired abortions 	Health benefits	Improving work conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% college tuition with Arizona State University online program • Goal for 25,000 employees to finish their degree until 2025 	Professional benefits	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote conversations about the BLM Movement • Incentive employees to show their personal support to the BLM Movement • Incentive employees to show their personal support to the LGBTQ+ community • Support ex-employees in Russia 	Public support of causes	Embracing social causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate to communities in crisis (Australia, Beirut, U.S.A.) • Create mentoring program for BIPOC partners and senior investors • Invest \$5million to support BIPOC youth • Donate to Neighborhood Grants • Donate to hunger relief programs • Donate meals • Partner with WWF to implement "Water risk tool" 	Financial support of causes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First in industry to offer paper cups with recycled fibre in 2006 • 1.3% of sales in selected countries were in reusable packaging • Five markets added to the list of 13 with recyclable hot cups • Canada stores started to have in-store recycling • 10% of hot cups are made of recycled fiber 	Waste reduction accomplishments	Managing waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal to decrease carbon emissions, waste that goes to landfills, and water consumption 	Waste reduction promises	Managing waste (cont.)

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal to duplicate reusable packaging between 2016 and 2022 • Goal of hot cups having 20% recycled materials • Goal of producing 100% degradable and recyclable hot cups until 2022 • Goal to eliminate 100% plastic straws by the end of 2021 • Assess introduction of fee for disposable cups in Germany and U.K. • Introduction of the ‘circular cup’ in the U.K. • Participate in the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s New Plastics Economy Global Commitment 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease of carbon, water consumption and waste produced from 2019 to 2020 • Implementation of prototype of coffee processing and wet mills • Adoption of new agronomy measures • Offer oat milk as alternative • Launch the “Impossible Breakfast” • Implement community solar projects • Launch wind project • Redirected 44.1 million pounds of food and 83.9 million pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent from waste channels • Coffee is produced under sustainable measures • Established partnership with Conservation International in 1999 • Implementation of ethical coffee-sourcing regulations in 2001 • 99% ethically produced coffee since 2015 • 99.7% of tea was from Rainforest Alliance certified farms in 2020 • All cocoa production sourced from UTZ-certified farmers/Rainforest Alliance certified farms 	<p>Resource management accomplishments</p>	<p>Managing resources</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal to implement 100% renewable energy in process operations until 2020 • Goal to launch 10.000 stores in Greener Stores Framework until 2025 • Greener stores triplicated in 2020, reaching a total of 2.317 • Goal to incentive 10.000 partners to be more sustainable • More than 28.000 partners take part in the Starbucks’ Greener Apron program • Participate in the “Transform to Net Zero” 	<p>Resource management promises</p>	

Empirical Themes	Conceptual Categories	Aggregate Dimensions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clientele is mainly white, female, young, and middle-class • Two groups of customers: students and business customers • Accused two black men of trespassing • Training program on racial discrimination affairs poorly managed 	Customer segregation	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering small neighborhoods threatens local cafés • Help economies with second intentions 	Economic threats	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a college degree does not ensure a better future • Understaffed restaurants after pandemic • Aggressive/impatient customers after pandemic • Allow vaccinated customers to not wear a mask, causing discomfort for employees • First workers' union created in New York • Seven employees planning a union dismissed • More than 20 union leaders were dismissed • Benefits exclusive for workers not in unions • Employee won accusation against Starbucks for not paying him 13 hours of accumulated extra work 	Inefficient working conditions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuse one supervisor diagnosed with dyslexia of fabricating false documents • Inequity for parental leaves • Transgender employee accused managers of discrimination 	Employee segregation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation discovered children under the age of 13 working for some Guatemala farms • Reuters exposed Starbucks U.K. for avoiding tax costs • Organic Consumers Association criticized Starbucks for offering milk from mistreated cows • European Food Organization issued a document stating there were samples of elephant faeces in Starbucks' products • Investigation exposed various restaurants for breaking food security policies in China 	Unethical behaviours	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lids that do not require a plastic straw contain more plastic than the old lids and the straw together 	Greenwashing	

8.7. Table 7: Starbucks case - conceptual categories and respective quotations

Conceptual categories	Empirical Themes - Findings
Communities' economic growth	"In 1998, Starbucks launched Urban Coffee Opportunities, a concept for creating economic growth in underserved areas. The following 12 years, they opened a total of 100 stores"
	"In March 2016, Starbucks launched their first community store in Jamaica, and in Queens, New York, and set the goal of opening a minimum of 15 stores"
	"In May 2020, Starbucks reached the opening of their 16th community store"
Employment opportunities	"(...) Starbucks reached the goal of employing 10.000 youth members and increased the goal to 100.000"
	"(...) Starbucks coffee purchases make up around 3% of the world's coffee. They currently rely on over 400.000 farmers from 30 different countries"
Steps to achieve diversity	"In June 2015, the organization set the goal of employing a minimum of 10.000 younger people until 2018"
	"Starbucks set the goal of providing public information about diversity among employees"
	"In 2020, Starbucks set the goal to connect with corporations in the Board Diversity Action Alliance, whose purpose is to represent racial and ethnic diversity in directors' corporate boards."
	"Starbucks also aimed to create an Inclusion and Diversity Executive Council to track inclusion and variety along with the organization"
Examples of diversity achieved	"In March 2021, Starbucks (...) kept 100% pay equity among different genders who have similar tasks. In the same year, the organization hired more than 25.000 military spouses and wants to increase this number by 5.000 every year"
	"(...) the organization established the objective to employ 10.000 refugees worldwide in 2022 and to reach 100 community stores in 2025"
Ethical sourcing	"All Starbucks' coffee purchases are made according to the Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices"
	"(...) all cocoa purchases are made according to the COCOA practices"
Empowerment of producers	"Starbucks established the goal to qualify 250.000 women and young girls in the coffee/tea-producing communities until 2025"
	"(...) they donated to corporations dedicated to giving women in tea-producing communities economic and leadership opportunities, education, safe homes, freshwater, and hygiene conditions. "
	"Starbucks donated to Mercy Corps' Community Health and Advancement Initiative (CHAI) Project, with the intent of supplying training, health services, and water access to over 100.000 people from 39 communities in India and Guatemala"
Donations to producers	"Starbucks (...) is donating 100 million coffee trees until 2025, with the intent of supporting farmers and respective communities"

Conceptual categories	Empirical Themes - Findings
	“The Starbucks Foundation donated over \$25 million to programs that support coffee and tea-producing communities”
Health benefits	“(…) Starbucks (…) supplying full health benefits to qualified employees, both full and part-time workers, since 1988”
	“(…) Starbucks has announced its intentions to pay for travels its employees make, if they want to voluntarily terminate their pregnancies and are not able to do so at their locations, as abortion is illegal in some American states (Kate Gibson, 2022)”
Professional benefits	“(…) every organization employee in the U.S. can receive 100% college tuition through Arizona State University’s online program (…) Starbucks set the goal for 25.000 employees to finish their graduation until 2025”
Public support of causes	“In May 2020, Starbucks promoted conversations concerning the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor to raise awareness on the Black Lives Matter Movement”
	“(…) later allowed employees to show their personal support to the initiative and even sent 200.000 BLM allusive t-shirts to workers (Jordan Valinsky, 2020)”
	“(…) Starbucks has participated in various initiatives to show support to the LGBTQ+ community and has distributed accessories and pieces of clothing for baristas to wear and show their support”
	“(…) announced it is leaving the Russian market, closing 130 stores, and committing to keep paying all 2.000 employees for six months (Amelia Lucas, 2022)”
Financial support of causes	“Starbucks donated to support Australian communities due to the wildfires, the communities from the Beirut port explosion, and American wildfires and hurricanes”
	“(…) Starbucks announced a goal of creating a mentoring program establishing a bridge between Black and Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC) partners and senior investors, and betting on partnerships with companies whose purpose is exploring the BIPOC strength. Starbucks also set the goal to invest \$5million of their foundation to create a project to support non-profit organizations that focus on BIPOC youth”
	“In 2020, Starbucks announced a donation of \$1.5 million from The Starbucks Foundation to Neighbourhood Grants (…) The initiative donated over \$5 million to over 2.500 corporations in 2019. In 2020, over 400 organizations received a grant to support communities struggling with the Covid-19 consequences. May 2020 was marked by the donation of \$1 million from The Starbucks Foundation to Neighbourhood Grants”

Conceptual categories	Empirical Themes - Findings
	<p>“Starbucks also established the goal of donating \$100 million to hunger relief programs over the upcoming ten years, and in 2020, they were able to donate \$47.6 million”</p> <p>“(…) they donated 36.8 million meals through FoodShare (…) Currently, 100% of stores in the United States have this program (…) Starbucks donated \$1 million to develop mobile pantry programs to 13 food banks”</p> <p>“In 2020 Starbucks also established a partnership with World Wildlife Fund and started using their “Water Risk” tool to identify locations with less access to clean water.”</p>
Waste reduction accomplishments	<p>“Starbucks was the first in their industry to offer paper cups with recycled fibre in 2006.”</p> <p>“(…) in 2020, 1.3% of sales in Canada, Japan, Europe, Middle East, Africa, and the United States were in reusable packaging”</p> <p>Starbucks also added five markets to the list of 13 that had recyclable hot cups. In 2020, some Canada stores started having in-store recycling, and 10% of hot cups are now made of recycled fibre”</p>
Waste reduction promises	<p>“The organization has established three main goals to accomplish until 2030. (….) decrease their carbon emissions by 50% (….) reduce the waste that goes to landfills by 50% (..) decrease by 50% their water consumption”</p> <p>“The organization is also in the process of duplicating the reusable packaging used between 2016 and 2022. Starbucks is also working on using recycled materials to compose 20% of their hot cups and produce 100% degradable and recyclable hot cups until 2022. Likewise, the organization intended to eliminate 100% of plastic straws by the end of 2021”</p> <p>“Starbucks assessed introducing a fee of disposable cups in the United Kingdom and Germany. In the U.K., Starbucks also introduced the “Circular Cup”, consisting of a reusable cup made from around six disposable cups”</p> <p>“Starbucks entered the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s New Plastics Economy Global Commitment”</p>
Resource management accomplishments	<p>“(…) Starbucks’ accomplished goals from 2019 to 2020 were the decrease of 11% of carbon, 4% of water consumption, and 12% of waste produced. Starbucks also implemented a prototype of coffee processing and wet mills to lower their water consumption by 80%, and adopted new agronomy measures to decrease the environment impact”</p> <p>“(…) they started offering oat milk, an alternative to dairy milk, in Canada, China, and the United States. They also launched the “Impossible Breakfast” in the U.S., a meatless alternative to their breakfast sandwich”</p>

Conceptual categories	Empirical Themes - Findings
Resource management accomplishments (cont)	<p>“(…) implemented 23 community solar projects to provide solar energy to more than 24.000 houses, small and non-profit organizations, churches, colleges, and stores. In Washington, they launched a wind project that provides around 140 of their stores with renewable energy. Another victory in 2020 was that they redirected from waste channels 44.1 million pounds of food and 83.9 million pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent”</p>
	<p>“(…) coffee is produced under specific sustainable methods, focusing on avoiding unnecessary water consumption and preserving the wildlife of coffee-producing areas. In 1999, Starbucks established a partnership with Conservation International to incentive coffee-producing measures that are sustainable. Two years later, the organization implemented ethical coffee-sourcing regulations with Conservation International. Since 2015, Starbucks has been offering 99% ethically produced coffee. Moreover, in 2020, 99.7% of third-party sourced tea was from Rainforest Alliance certified farms. Further, all of their cocoa production is sourced from UTZ-certified farmers and/or Rainforest Alliance Certified farms”</p>
Resource management promises	<p>“Starbucks established the goal of implementing 100% renewable energy in process operations worldwide until the end of 2020, which was already completed in the United States, Canada, and Europe”</p>
	<p>“Starbucks also set the goal to launch 10.000 stores in their Greener Stores Framework worldwide until 2025, and in 2020 the number of greener stores triplicated, achieving a total amount of 2.317 stores in the United States and Canada”</p>
	<p>“(…) set the objective of incentivizing 10.000 partners towards being more sustainable until the end of 2020. By this time, over 28.000 international partners adhered to Starbucks’ Greener Apron sustainability training program”</p>
	<p>“In 2020 Starbucks took part in the “Transform to Net Zero” project to incentivize a net-zero global economy until 2050”</p>
Customer segregation	<p>“(…) Starbucks’ clientele is mainly white, female, young and middle-class (Rudolf P. Gaudio, 2003)”</p>
	<p>“(…) Starbucks has two main groups of customer targets: students from 18-22 years old and business customers (Chau Nguyen, 2020)”</p>
	<p>“In 2018, a Starbucks’ store manager called the authorities on two black men, accusing them of trespassing (Damien Gayle, 2018). This arrest created controversy, since the two men were simply waiting for a friend to arrive, and were even denied access to the toilets, while moments before an individual had been granted access to them without placing an order as well (Damien Gayle, 2018)”</p>

Conceptual categories	Empirical Themes - Findings
Customer segregation (cont)	<p>“One month later, the company decided to close around 8.000 of its restaurants in the U.S. and dedicated the day to train their 175.000 employees on racial discrimination affairs (Adam Gabbatt, 2018). Nonetheless, this measure was criticized by involved employees of colour, who claimed the training was not handled correctly and felt uncomfortable there (Jessica Booth, 2021)”</p>
Economic threats	<p>“(…) entering a smaller neighbourhood presents a threat to local cafés, and many are forced to close (Oliver Burkeman, & Emma Brockes, 1999)”</p>
	<p>“Considering Starbucks’ economic sustainability, the organization has implemented measures to help the economies where they operate. This may seem as a meritorious consideration from Starbucks. However, studies show that Starbucks belongs to a sector that thrives when the economy is favourable (Rodrigo Martínez Puente, 2017)”</p>
Inefficient working conditions	<p>“(…) having a college degree is not a guarantee for better employment in the U.S. (Jana Kasperkevic, 2014). In 2013, over 250.000 college-degreed individuals were employed at minimum-wage works, which represented 70% throughout the previous decade (Jana Kasperkevic, 2014)”</p>
	<p>“(…) in 2021 some Starbucks’ employees claimed the restaurants were understaffed, and consequently they were suffering from higher intensity of work (Michael Sainato, 2021). Furthermore, workers complained about customers’ behaviours, who were more aggressive and disruptive (Michael Sainato, 2021). Starbucks, however, did not compensate its employees, who felt they were receiving too little for such demanding levels of work (Michael Sainato, 2021)”</p>
	<p>“(…) Starbucks was able to allow vaccinated customers not to wear a mask (Michael Sainato, 2021). This led to some workers feeling unsafe and uncomfortable, as they do not have a way to distinguish who is and who is not vaccinated (Michael Sainato, 2021)”</p>
	<p>“(…) workers at an outlet in New York became the company’s first workplace to turn into a union (Robert Reich, 2021). This union formation allows workers to fight on working conditions as a group (Nina Lakhani, 2022)”</p>
	<p>“(…) seven Starbucks employees from Tennessee who were planning a union were dismissed”</p>
	<p>“(…) more than 20 union leaders were fired, and Starbucks has published a new set of benefits for all workers, except those working at unionized restaurants (Michael Sainato, 2022)”</p>

Conceptual categories	Empirical Themes - Findings
Inefficient working conditions (cont)	“(…) a Starbucks employee won a legal accusation for not receiving 13 hours of extra work (Associated Press in San Francisco, 2018). Douglas Troester was asking to be paid for the routine tasks outside of his working hours”
Employee segregation	“Additionally, Starbucks accused one of its supervisors, Meseret Kumulchew, of fabricating false records of water and fridge’s temperatures (Matthew Weaver, 2016). However, the organization lost the case, since Kumulchew had been diagnosed with dyslexia”
	“(…) for a regular Starbucks employee, the paid maternity leave was 6 weeks for mothers and 0 for fathers (or adoptive parents), while for corporate workers was 16 weeks for mothers, and 12 for fathers (biological or adoptive)”
	“Starbucks corporation was accused by a transgender employee for discrimination (Maria Cramer, 2021)”
Unethical behaviours	“(…) an investigation in 2020 concluded that there were children younger than 13 working at some of the Guatemala farms (Jamie Doward, 2020). According to the investigation, these children were working an estimate of 8 hours daily, 6 days per week, and receiving less than £5 daily (Jamie Doward, 2020)”
	“In 2012, a report from Reuters exposed that Starbucks stores in the U.K. were generating sales while reporting zero taxes legally (Katherine Campbell, & Duane Helleloid, 2016)”
	“(…) the Organic Consumers Association criticized the coffee chain for offering milk from mistreated cows (Gözde Özdemir Uçgun, & Ece Konaklioglu, 2016)”
	“In 2015, Starbucks was involved in a controversy result of the European Food Organization document stating there were samples of elephant faeces found in Starbucks’ products”
	“(…) discovered two stores were employing expired ingredients (Global Times, 2021). A further investigation was conducted and found 15 food-security related violations (...) found 18 restaurants in Suzhou, China, that were also violating food security policies (Global Times, 2021)”
Greenwashing	“Concerning Starbucks’ measure to replace plastic straws for straw-less lids, the lids would be composed by plastic. According to the Reason Foundation, their production would require more plastic than the previous (Arwa Mahdawi, 2018)”

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