SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CORPORATE IDENTITY OF MAKEEN ENERGY

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Abstract

Sustainability is a constantly evolving concept that plays an increasingly central role in shaping how businesses present themselves to stakeholders. As sustainability becomes a key expectation from both the public and regulators, businesses across industries are integrating it into their corporate identity (CI) as both a strategic value and communicative tool. This integration, however, becomes complex in industries that rely on or support fossil fuels, such as the petroleum sector. MAKEEN Energy (ME), an international engineering company working with LPG, LNG, and LBG solutions and circular technologies, presents an interesting case for studying how sustainability is communicated within an industry that is not traditionally thought of as sustainable. MAKEEN Energy has expanded their business areas in this time period and has grown as a company.

This research investigates how discourses of sustainability are integrated into the corporate identity of ME and how these discourses have changed in the years 2018 to 2023 in response to external pressures and shifting societal expectations. Using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), a detailed analysis was conducted on ME's corporate brochures over this six-year period. These corporate brochures were selected based on keywords related to sustainability and features of sustainability. The study focuses on the evolution of sustainability related language, imagery, and values in the company's corporate storytelling and overall corporate identity.

Findings show that sustainability is a central and consistent theme throughout the materials, integrated into ME's corporate purpose, values, and self-positioning as a responsible innovator. Over time, however, the explicit use of the term "sustainability" and associated imagery became less prominent, replaced by an emphasis on features such as innovation and circularity. These were particularly linked to new business areas such as Plastcon and DecomBlades. MAKEEN Energy's more traditional business areas, including LPG solutions, were consistently represented as transitional fuels that help "bridge gaps in the global energy supply."

This study contributes to understanding how sustainability is discursively constructed in corporate identity. It highlights the strategic balancing act organisations face when aligning identity with societal expectations. Future research can build on this work by exploring discourse across other actors in the energy industry and examining how sustainability continues to be reshaped in business communication.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

The world is changing rapidly as our awareness of environmental and other societal issues becomes ever-more present in everything we do. One of the key concepts related to preserving our environment and maintaining our way of life is sustainability. Sustainability is heavily ingrained in the language and messages of our daily lives. We find it everywhere, in the grocery store, on social media, and in global politics. It is used in many different contexts, and its meaning has evolved and changed for political, societal, and business purposes. There is no overarching consensus on the definition of sustainability (Wasieleski & Weber, 2020, p. 13).

Sustainability has become a guiding principle for businesses across industries on a global scale (Anitha, 2023, p. 19). As expectations for sustainable products and business practices grow, many organisations are adapting to sustainable values and frameworks to appeal to stakeholders and meet expectations. Governments set expectations for sustainability that guide and sometimes legally require businesses to report on efforts to ensure sustainability in their business practices (Wasieleski & Weber, 2020). Businesses today are expected to consider social expectations such as sustainability in addition to fulfilling their main purpose of profit and responsibility to stakeholders (Károly, 2011). To successfully meet these expectations, businesses must strategically consider how their business effects the environment, establish clear objectives, and plan action to address sustainability (Anitha, 2023, p. 20).

Sustainable business practices can help businesses secure a competitive advantage over competitors while not embracing sustainable initiatives can potentially alienate customers (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100). However, organisations must also ensure that communication on sustainability is sincere and accurate while balancing societal expectations. Honest and transparent communication concerning sustainability is essential for businesses.

Communication of sustainable business practices is strategic and is a consideration that goes towards shaping the identity of an organisation. Corporate Identity (CI), simply put,

refers to the identity of an organisation. It is a concept that has risen in prominence in the last few decades in various fields of research (Pérez & del Bosque, 2014, p. 1). With modern technology and apparent collapse of space and time in communication, international businesses must account for wider audiences across more platforms of communication, cultures, industries, and geographical locations when communicating their identity. An essential aspect of corporate identity is maintaining consistency and to do this, businesses must consider the various audiences, expectations and platforms where they communicate (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 5). Corporate organisations benefit from aligning their identity with changing societal expectations from stakeholders, the integration of sustainability is relevant for all businesses and provides strategic value regardless of industry or product (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 105).

Discourse in simple terms refers to language in use and through the analysis of discourse, one can gain insight into social realities reflected by discourse but also how it shapes social realities to influence others (Gauthier, 2017). Discourse analysis is valuable way to gain insight into how sustainability is integrated and shaped in the corporate identity of an organisation. Discourse considers the context of language and external factors that both influence language but are also in turn influenced by language. Discourse is powerful in shaping and reflecting social realities and as such is important to study and understand (Wodak, 2011). In this research we will consider the social realities that influence the integration of sustainability into corporate identity reflecting societal norms and pressures to integrate sustainability but also the potential difficulties and strategic considerations that may influence how this term is addressed in corporate identity.

This project will specifically focus on an organisation that works in fossil-fuel related energy, MAKEEN Energy. MAKEEN Energy is an international engineering company who primarily on offers engineering solutions for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). The company has undergone many changes in the last years and has expanded to provide solutions for liquefied natural gas (LNG) and liquefied biogas (LBG) as well as a new business segment EnviroTech that includes projects involving circular technologies (see Appendix H1). This project will explore the discourses of "sustainability" and how they are integrated into the corporate identity of this business in the energy industry. By focusing on this company, the research will explore how this company as one of many organisations that is still working with fossil fuels, constructs its identity in relation to the concept of sustainability. The

industry norms and the global energy landscape are constantly changing and by understanding how the discourse of organisations adapts to these circumstances, we can gain insight into the discourses of sustainability in this industry.

This research is important as businesses' contributions to the discourses of sustainability and energy have the power to shape and influence the public discourses surrounding sustainability (Tregigda, Kearins, & Milne, 2013, p. 104). With changing expectations and differing definitions of what it means to be sustainable, it is important to understand how certain industries frame this concept. By exploring this research, we can further conceptualise how sustainability is communicated in organisations where core operations do not involve renewable technologies.

1.1 Problem Formulation

Problem Formulation: How are the discourses of sustainability integrated in the corporate identity of the international organisation MAKEEN Energy? How have these discourses changed alongside external pressures concerning sustainability?

This problem formulation will be addressed utilising discourse historical approach to analyse communicative materials from MAKEEN Energy to understand and contextualise the integration of the term and sentiments associated with sustainability into the corporate identity. This will provide insight into how this has changed over time and highlight difficulties or considerations of societal pressures regarding the adoption of sustainable business practices. An examination of corporate identity can also highlight the strategic choices of organisation in representing identity and the difficulties in ensuring that this communication takes into consideration the complexities of communicating the identity of a large international company who has experienced change to an accordingly wide and diverse international industry and audience.

Throughout this research the company of MAKEEN Energy may be abbreviated to ME. The theoretical framework of Corporate Identity will also be abbreviated to CI. The Discourse-Historical Approach will be abbreviated to the DHA.

2 Literature Review

With the many changes the world has undergone in recent decades, it is no surprise that the playing rules have significantly changed for businesses. The way that businesses operate in today's globalised world is markedly different than it was just 30 years ago (Wasieleski & Weber, 2020, p. 13). Increasingly, businesses are expected to and pressured to conform to political and societal expectations regarding how they conduct their operations (Wasieleski & Weber, 2020, p. 13). Simultaneously, corporate reputations of businesses have never been more visible and vulnerable. In a technologically advanced world, businesses maintain an extensive online presence, enabling any consumer or potential partner to access their websites, social media platforms, and other digital content to evaluate corporate reputation (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p. 1).

In this globalised world, where the impacts of climate change are felt in all corners of the world, businesses are also expected to take a clear stance and take actions to mitigate their environmental and social impact (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p.1).

This literature review focuses on literature that responds to the societal pressures and changes outlined above, with particular attention to research that explores how businesses communicate their efforts to be socially responsible and sustainable through discourse analysis. Specifically, it will highlight literature that employs the Discourse-Historical Approach to analyse corporate communication on discourses related to sustainable concerns.

2.1 Concepts & Trends in Sustainability

In recent decades where the world has faced more environmental and societal challenges, sustainability has become a guiding principle for businesses and organisations across various industries (Anitha, 2023, p. 19). There is rising awareness from consumers and a demand for products and services that align with sustainability principles. To address this, many organisations are prioritising sustainability (Anitha, 2023, p. 20). To successfully meet these expectations businesses, must strategically consider how their business effects the environment, establish clear objectives, and plan action that updates the corporate

representation of business (Anitha, 2023, p. 20). The research field for the concept of sustainability is expansive and changing as it has gained attention as a focal point for individuals and organisations.

A study from Anitha (2023) explores the imperatives behind organisations strategically oriented their models and strategies towards sustainability. There are two sides to this, adopting sustainability as part of compliance and to demonstrate proactive engagement with responsible business practices. This research outlines some of the challenges and strategic trends that influence the imperatives behind embracing and championing sustainability (Anitha, 2023, p. 21).

The concept of sustainable development is a constantly evolving theory inspired by growing recognition of environmental issues in political discussions (Anitha, 2023, p. 21). As such there are various definitions of sustainability. There are several global organisations that have created definitions, frameworks, and specialised teams to work with sustainability.

The United Nations has defined macro-level sustainability through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A significant and widely acknowledged definition of sustainability is also based on Elkington's triple bottom line dimensions of people, planet, and profit. These dimensions address the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability (Anitha, 2023, p. 23). These three dimensions are central to the variety of sustainability definitions (Anitha, 2023, p. 23). These dimensions are often referred to as the three pillars or legs of sustainability.

The study from Anitha (2023) identified several trends in sustainability including that interest in sustainability from management and scholars has grown in the last two decades. Several trends within sustainability were identified including renewable energy and clean technologies. This has become a distinguishing feature of sustainability as business incorporate such solutions into operations to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and reduce their carbon footprint (Anitha, 2023, p. 29).

Another feature of sustainability is the circular economy and waste reduction as regenerative approaches to the utilisation of resources (Anitha, 2023, p. 30). Another feature of sustainability is ensuring ethical supply chains and fair trade within business practices. To

accommodate this, businesses are emphasising transparency (Anitha, 2023, p. 31). A fourth feature of sustainability is technology and data-driven solutions that can drive transformation in sustainability practices (Anitha, 2023, p. 31).

The integration and acknowledgement of these trends in business practices represents a shift to a more sustainable and responsible business future. Businesses who acknowledge and embrace these expectations can position themselves as leaders in working towards a more balanced and sustainable global ecosystem (Anitha, 2023, p. 31). There are several future trends within sustainability for businesses including sustainability as a stakeholder value referring to its expansion from more than just a risk management tactic to a value for all stakeholders. There are several benefits of sustainability for businesses including securing a stronger brand reputation, employee commitment, customer loyalty, and investor trust (Anitha, 2023, p. 32).

Another rising trend within the research field of sustainability is the concept of "greenwashing truthers" and the concept of "greenhushing" as the work of Gatti, Conti, & Seele (2025) labels these emerging concepts. Sustainability has been prominent for years as a way to attract consumers who have an interest in products that are better for people and planet (Steele, Gatti, & Conti, 2025, p. 151). However, as EU legislation makes greenwashing and the use of misleading terminology a legal issue, the representation of sustainable efforts for organisations becomes more complex and potentially treacherous.

Greenwashing refers to misrepresenting or overrepresenting the efforts of a business or a product as sustainable. Accusations of greenwashing whether true or false can have detrimental effects on a business. Some years ago, the bluntness of green advertisements was commonplace whereas communications today in 2023 are more nuanced and sophisticated employing communication strategies to represent sustainability (Steele, Gatti, & Conti, 2025, p. 149).

This research of Steele, Gatti, & Conti focuses on the rising behaviour of attacking companies regardless of the validity of their green claims. They identify this at the behaviour of what they label "green truthers". To avoid claims of greenwashing some companies have moved to other end of the spectrum and have begun hedging and under-communicating engagement in sustainability in a trend known as "greenhushing" (Steele, Gatti, & Conti, 2025, p. 150). Ultimately, organisations have to navigate the expectations of consumers and

the emerging trends within sustainable communications as well as emerging legal requirements.

My research will address the integration of sustainability into the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy including how certain trends have been adopted by the company and expressed in corporate communication from the company. Several of the features of sustainability outlined above will inform the collection of data as well as the discursive analysis. These features include the concepts of people, planet, and profit as well as the concept of a footprint to denote impact on the environment are relevant concepts that may be influence the representation of sustainability in CI. The difficulties in communicating sustainability and the concepts of greenwashing and greenhushing may also influence this and will be discussed in relation to wider societal influences as part of analysis utilising the Discourse-Historical Approach.

2.2 Discursive Construction of Sustainability in Corporate Reporting

This section reviews literature that examines how sustainability is discursively constructed in corporate reporting. Corporate reporting is a strong platform for researching the sustainability efforts of organisations as this is the objective of these documents. The selected studies draw on discursive and interpretive methodologies to analyse corporate sustainability reports and managerial discourse and offer insight into both the construction of sustainability in business communication.

Tregidga, Kearins, and Milne (2013) examined organisational representations of sustainable development in 197 publicly available corporate reports. They focused on reports from organisations that were members of the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development. A Foucauldian and Habermasian approach was applied to analyse how language constructs the "meaning" of sustainability and sustainable development in these corporate reports (Tregigda, Kearins, & Milne, 2013, p. 103). Rather than treating sustainability as a fixed truth, the authors argue that its meaning is produced and regulated within a broader discursive system that produces, regulates, and circulates statements that are shaped by power relations and institutional interests (Tregigda, Kearins, & Milne, 2013, p. 103).

This research posits that the basic premises of sustainable development can have potential effects on growth or wealth distribution for organisations who are successful in representing themselves as sustainable (Tregigda, Kearins, & Milne, 2013, p. 120). In the sustainable development area, there are those who can be successful and obtain the dominant discursive formation of the concept while there are those who are unsuccessful (Tregigda, Kearins, & Milne, 2013, p. 120). The context and industry in which organisations are located influences what is said about sustainability and what is not said. This research recognises that the public discourses of organisations can have a transformative effect on the concept of sustainable development and that representing it in a particular way reflects wider social and political struggles to define sustainable development (Tregigda, Kearins, & Milne, 2013).

Their analysis identified six recurring themes that are used in the organisational constitution of sustainable development in corporate reporting. These themes reveal how organisations seek to position themselves as legitimate and forward-thinking actors without taking deeper actions to achieve sustainable development. This research explores the discourses of sustainable development in organisational discourse but does not seek to prove any representations as right or wrong but to understand the underlying power dynamics and the different ways in which sustainable development is constructed (Tregigda, Kearins, & Milne, 2013, p. 104).

Expanding upon the discussions of sustainability in corporate environments, the work of Nambiar and Chitty (2014) examined sustainable and environmental discourse in corporate environments in India. This work explored how these discourses were formed form the managerial making by analysing meaning making (Nambiar & Chitty, 2014). This research looked at the concept of corporate social responsibility in business and how this was integrated into organisational strategies to enhance value for stakeholders (Nambair & Chitty, 2014). Their work departs from the idea that sustainability is best defined through a discursive process of meaning negotiation at the individual and societal level (Nambiar & Chitty, 2014, p. 493).

Their research utilised cross-sectoral industry surveys to confirm a gap between corporate aspirations and actions in regard to sustainability and then from the tradition of hermeneutics set out to explore the meanings that managers attribute to sustainability within business discourse in India while identifying the constraints to discursive integration of broader ethical principles into corporate decision-making. This research utilised a qualitative

interpretivist content analysis of interview responses from a small sample of senior Indian executives from several different industries (Nambiar & Chitty, 2014, p. 494).

The study seeks to explore how the concept of environment and sustainability is constructed in business discourse in a fast-developing country like India which is environmentally and economically stressed (Nambiar & Chitty, 2014, p. 495). The analysis of these interviews found that discourse on sustainability and environment was "shallow" and lacking specificity (Nambiar & Chitty, 2014, p. 499). The findings of the study found that corporate managers in India do not appear to prioritise sustainability but acknowledge the importance of sustainability in global business discourse (Nambiar & Chitty, 2014, p. 509).

How does this relate to this research? It demonstrates that sustainability discourses are not fixed even in reporting that is dedicated solely to documenting and reporting sustainable development for companies or organisations. It reflects the complexity and the benefits and drawbacks for companies engaging in sustainable development through an analysis of language. From a range of different geographical locations, the reports show that corporate sustainability reporting is a topic of global interest for companies and academic research.

2.3 Organisational Identity and Industry Influence

The work of Glynn and others (2015) examined organisational identity in the face of environmental challenges. This work examined sustainability from an identity perspective that posited identity as an enduring property of organisations (Glynn et al., 2015). Their work explored the sustainability practices of two hotel chains.

This research specifically explores whether organisational identity can drive or hinder the adoption of new sustainable practices. This identity-oriented approach presumes that sustainability is a multifaceted concept that represents an enduring shift toward sustainable practices that require sustainability becomes a fundamental and indispensable part of an organisation's identity (Glynn et al., 2015).

Organisational members and external audiences, and herein organizations connect to key stakeholders and their interests. This literature is situated within the field of managerial practices and the identity-oriented perspective on sustainability (Glynn et al., 2015). In this

literature organisational identity is defined as "company's activities voluntary, demonstrating the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders (Glynn et al., 2015). Organisational sustainability is something that is expected of organisations and this research further suggests that organisational sustainability is likely to be affected by a range of factors including the level of the firm and identity, and the level of the industry and common trends within the industry (Glynn et al., 2015).

The comparison of two hotel chains found that organisations look to industry peers and like-minded organisations in making decisions for the adoption of sustainable practices (Glynn et al., 2015). Their research found that organisational sustainability is not something that occurs in vacuum but rather it is influenced by the organisational field or industry (Glynn et al., 2015, p. 165).

2.4 DHA in Sustainability and Corporate Identity Research

Building on the societal pressures outlined above and the relevance of discourse in examining how organisations and other actors respond to these pressures, the following study exemplifies the use of the Discourse-Historical Approach in the context of energy diplomacy.

Jiang and Zhang (2024) applied the Discourse-Historical Approach to examine China's diplomatic discourse on energy. Their rationale is grounded in the recognition that the global energy transition has developed into an inexorable trend, prompting them to explore what they refer to as "energy discourse" (Jiang & Zhang, 2024, p. 1). Through a self-constructed data corpus, their study strived to respond to three key questions:

- o What discourse topics have been covered in China's energy discourse in diplomatic contexts?
- o How discursive strategies are used in these topics to frame China's energy diplomacy?
- o Why are these topics and specific strategies prominent in the discursive construction of China's energy diplomacy? (p. 2)

These questions were based on the authors' underlying assumption that energy discourse plays a pivotal role in international communication (Jiang & Zhang, 2024).

This research builds on what the researchers identify as a growing tendency to study relationships between energy, discourse, and power (Jiang & Zhang, 2024). The authors utilised the Discourse-Historical Approach primarily because it is a method of discourse

analysis that can address inequality-related discourse and integrate historical context into the interpretation of textual data (Jiang & Zhang, 2024). Their findings indicate that China's energy discourse, situated within the broader framework of diplomatic communication, functions as a form of institutional discourse. The energy discourse reflects existing power relations and serves as a strategic tool to negotiate power on the international stage. Furthermore, they found that energy discourse is a contested concept within the global energy sector (Jiang & Zhang, 2024, p. 16).

One limitation of their research is that it focused exclusively on textual data, omitting other semiotic modes such as images and videos, which could also contribute to the construction of energy discourse. While the research is centred on energy diplomacy, its insights are relevant to broader studies of sustainability discourse. It highlights the evolving pressures and expectations facing various sectors as they navigate the global energy transition.

The Discourse-Historical Approach has previously been used to study corporate identity by specifically looking at CEO statements included in annual reports in the work of Zhuang and Li in their research, "A Corpus-Assisted Comparative Study of Chinese and Western CEO Statements in Annual Reports: Discourse-Historical Approach" (Zhuang & Li, 2024). This study used a comparative approach to study CEO statements from Chinese and Western pharmaceutical companies (Zhuang & Li, 2024, p. 223). The research employed the discourse historical approach and Hofsted's cultural dimensions (Zhuang & Li, 2024, p. 217).

The research found that Western and Chinese CEOs reflect different corporate identities based on cultural differences. Particularly the Chinese CEOs construct themselves as an out-group while the Western CEO letters construct themselves as an in-group (Zhuang & Li, 2024, p. 238). The analysis of the CEO letters demonstrates the importance of cultural adaptation in a globalised business world. The research also indicated the importance of the Annual Review as a crucial tool for informing and recruiting international investors (Zhuang & Li, 2024, p. 238).

The research included 30 CEO statements wherein the Western scope of the data corpus is wider as it included multiple countries which was compared with one country,

China (Zhaung & Li, 2024, p. 238). It is a limitation to examine CI only through CEO statements in an annual review.

Zhuang and Li suggest that future research could examine other corporate discourses such as corpore social responsibility in the pharma industry (Zhuang & Li, 2024, p. 238). This research also utilises the use of DHA to evaluate CI similarly to what will be done in this research project. The data corpus also includes annual reports which is also the data of this research project though the scope is different. In the work of Zhuang & Li, the focus of the research is limited to the CEO statements while in my research the focus will be expanded in the annual reviews with a focus on sustainability and corporate responsibility.

The topic of corporate sustainability was addressed utilising DHA in research from Parku and Koomson in 2023 entitled, "Corporate sustainability as a hegemonic discourse of globalization: The discourse-historical approach as a critical issues and stakeholder analysis tool" (Parku & Koomson, 2023). This research utilised DHA and a Corporate Sustainability Framework for stakeholder analysis to highlight the dialectical criticism of corporate sustainability as hegemonic discourse.

The research of Parku and Koomson similar to the research of this project focused on one company in the petroleum industry, Tullow Oil in Ghana (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 1). The research explored the corporate sustainability practices and reporting by Tullow Oil as a discourse of globalisation through an examination of discursive techniques (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 1).

The data corpus consisted of publicly available corporate sustainability reports and CSR related press releases from Tullow Oil (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 4). Close reading of these reports and discourse analysis was applied systematically to analyse the texts for patterns and links to context within which the text emanates and is used (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 4). The data corpus is limited to company in Africa with operations in Africa.

The research from Parku and Koomson finds that the sustainability discourse of Tullow oil is paradoxical, since fossil fuels are complicit in climate change and that the discourse is rooted in the "shared propriety" doctrine (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 8). The discourse shows an implicit assumption that private interest is commensurate with community interests (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 8). Besides this conclusion, there were two main findings from the research. The first finding was that Corporate Sustainability is a discursive construction of how corporate values, actions, processes, and culture interact with

issues such as sustainability, environment, etc. (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 10). The second finding was that Corporate Sustainability talk represents an attempt to shape corporate issues, behaviours, and institutional practices. This represents an attempt to constitute stakeholder views and potentially actions (Parku & Koomson, 2023, p. 10). The research from Parku & Koomson (2023) contributes to methodological and conceptual development by indicating that DHA and Corporate Sustainability Framework are useful for issues of corporate sustainability and stakeholder analyses of this.

This research of Parku and Koomson has relevance to the research of this project as well. It demonstrates the usefulness of DHA in analysing corporate communication and corporate sustainability. The findings of this research are the paradoxical nature of the discourse for a company working with petroleum, my research acknowledges this from the onset and seeks to understand this paradox in relation to a company that supports this industry however does not work directly with petroleum. The company that I focus on is international and has a wider audience however they do not release corporate sustainability reports and patterns, and context will be considered in the annual reviews from MAKEEN Energy and other brochures that reflect CI.

2.5 Relevance to this research

My research addresses sustainability and corporate identity within a large field of research that examines the ever relevant and evolving concept of sustainability in several fields of research. As the literature above explores, sustainability and its relation to business has been explored utilising discursive approaches before particularly for corporate reporting. My research differs in that it utilises DHA to approach sustainability as an aspect of the corporate identity of a singular company. It expands on research into sustainability discourse of companies with a specific focus on a company that has worked primarily in supporting a petroleum-based industry but also expanded into innovative and circular technologies.

Prior research within the fields of organisational identity and trends has demonstrated the relevance of industry and context in the formation of corporate identity. This research

expands on research on how companies who are not inherently green relate adapt to external pressures for sustainability and environmental consciousness.

3 Theory

The theories and theoretical concepts that will guide and assist in responding to the problem formulation of this research will be explained below. The ontological and epistemological stances behind them will also be discussed. The concept of corporate identity is the core focus of this research and the important features of this will be highlighted as well as the important foundational understanding of CI and the field of research that it is situated in. The Discourse-Historical Approach is relevant to this research both analytically and theoretically. The theoretical basis for this approach will be outlined as well as how this relates to corporate identity.

3.1 Corporate Identity

Organisational Communications in the modern day

Strategic and effective communication from organisations is increasingly important in response to changing societal expectations. In the 20th century businesses are expected to make efforts and take a stance for issues of public concern such as social and environmental matters (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 20). Today, in many organisations corporate communication is complicated by a wide range of products and services as well as a larger geographic range of operation (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 5). Not only does communication have to be streamlined concerning the various offerings and locations of businesses but communication must also be consistent across the various platforms that organisations can communicate to stakeholders through today (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 5). Consistent and integrated communication is essential to navigating the new global business landscape.

Key to corporate communication strategy is corporate identity (CI) (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 8). The profile of an organisation must be consistent across communication channels to both external and internal stakeholders including brochures, social media, websites, and

others. CI must be integrated consistently across all these communication channels which can complement each other if done successfully (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 20). Having a strong CI is valuable for an organisation. The formation and maintenance of CI is a complex and interactive ongoing process.

Corporate communication

Firstly, before exploring the differing conceptualisations of corporate identity, it is important to discuss the different fields in which the concept is understood and researched in scholarly literature. Currently, scholars from various fields including marketing, public relations, corporate communications, strategy, management, and organisational behaviour contribute to the body of research on corporate identity (Burghausen, 2024, p. 75). CI is a staple of corporate communication a field that departs from the perspective of the organisation as a single embodied entity when communicating with internal and external stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 5).

Corporate communication is a function practiced by communications employees and managers within organisations to communicate to internal and external stakeholders in a strategic manner (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 4). Corporate communication can be understood as a management function that coordinates the work of communication practitioners from what has previously been distinct fields of specialist communication such as media relations, public affairs, and internal communications (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 5). A definition of corporate communications that encompasses the different fields of communications in business, is "an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible" (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 5). Corporate communication is complex and within this field there are various concepts and terms for the various tools used for communicating to stakeholders. Corporate communication facilitates dialogue about the definition of an organisation's identity and articulating this identity is often done through shaping and articulating corporate identity (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 96).

Corporate Identity

This theory section will focus on the scholarly approach to CI. Within scholarly literature there are a range of different definitions of CI as well as debates over its meaning in relation to interrelated corporate level concepts such as corporate image, corporate reputation, and corporate branding (Pérez & del Bosque, 2014). This theory section on corporate identity will explore some of the different conceptualisations of CI in scholarly literature and the background behind these perspectives. Then it will explore the interrelated concepts of corporate branding, corporate image, and corporate reputation which also inform and influence corporate identity.

In organisations, corporate communications and the formation of CI, is practiced at the managerial level. The managerial approach to CI is concerned with how CI actualises and evolves and how to take advantage of this to further business interests (Burghausen, 2024, p. 75). Corporate identity within scholarly literature research focuses on understanding the concept of CI and the "(...) constitutive relevance and ontological nature of organisations as evolving and expressing identity (...)" (Burghausen, 2024, p. 75). Overall, the scholarly approach to corporate identity seeks to understand what defines the identity of organisations and how this evolves in response to external or internal factors that influence the organisation. There is no unified and agreed upon definition of CI. The understanding of the concept depends on the paradigmatic, disciplinary, and professional context in which the concept is being discussed (Burghausen, 2024, p. 75).

A holistic and multidisciplinary definition of CI defines it as the tangible and intangible characteristics and traits that are then shaped by how they are perceived and interpreted by internal and external stakeholders (Burghausen, 2024). These internal stakeholders can include an organisation's employees who play a role in communicating identity externally. These employees are also influenced by the messages sent out to external stakeholders as they will mirror those messages (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 97). External stakeholders can include customers and others outside the organisation.

The core aspect of an organisation's corporate identity according to the definition above is founded on characteristics and traits, both tangible and intangible (Balmer, 2017). These traits or characteristics can refer to different forms of tangible communication in social media, brochures, policies, etc. Intangible traits can refer to aspects such as values,

reputation, and other factors. The relevance and understanding of traits and characteristics are relative to socio-historical context. They are dynamic and evolving in response to societal pressures and as the organisation changes (Pérez, 2014, p. 13). Corporate identity is a reflexive process wherein traits and characteristics are continuously co-constituted through interaction with stakeholders and their interpretations of identity (Burghausen, 2024, p. 75). Corporate identity encompasses visual communication in the form of logos, colour schemes, graphic design elements, and images which was considered the initial conceptualisation of CI. Conceptualisations have evolved since then to include strategy and communication as well as visual communication (Pérez & del Bosque, 2014, p. 15).

Corporate Identity and external influences and benefits

The corporate identity of an organisation is not shaped in a vacuum. It can be considered a dialogue that is influenced by the organisation but also in the dialogue and interpretation between stakeholders and the organisation. CI is influenced by the CI of other organisations in the same or similar industries (Pérez & del Bosque, 2014). The CI of an organisation will change in response to external influences such as historical events and fluctuations in market condition or other forces (Pérez & del Bosque, 2014, p. 5). Businesses today are affected by socio-cultural and socio-political issues more than ever before and CI serves as way to represent how businesses adapt to these pressures to stakeholders (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p. 1). Topics such as corporate social responsibility and environmental concerns are pressuring change in managerial strategies and agendas (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023). Along with external pressures to conform there are also legal and economic bases that influence CI (Burghausen, 2024, p. 75).

Central to CI is the ability to build relationships and loyalty with customers (I have more on this somewhere). Consumers are increasingly interested in the corporation behind the brand or product. Through a well-crafted CI corporations can effectively build relationships with external stakeholders and foster brand loyalty (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100). This interest is growing, especially in technological brands where the brands may stand out more based on the purpose and values of the organisation, rather than technology in a

globalised world where technological advancements are commonplace (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100).

Corporate branding, reputation, & image

In the scholarly field of corporate identity, there are several interrelated terms including corporate branding, image, and reputation (Pérez & del Bosque, 2014). Corporate identity changes over time and the influence on stakeholders and created identity over time is known as corporate reputation. Corporate image is a moment in time, snapshot of an organisation and its identity while reputation is the collation of these images over time (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). Corporate identity has also been defined as the strategic choices of organisations and the expressions of this. These related concepts are relevant to understanding the formation of corporate identity. Stakeholders can never interact with corporate identity in its entirety. Stakeholders whether external or internal will be exposed to different expressions of identity and over time build a perception of the corporate identity (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012).

This conceptualisation of CI as being created through strategic choices and expression views the formation of corporate brand as the next eventual step following the formation of a corporate identity (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). In scholarly literature on CI some suggest that corporate branding has become popular in addition to the concept of corporate identity (Cornelissen, 2023). Corporate branding highlights the importance of distinctiveness for a corporation (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 97). Customers are increasingly interested in the corporation behind the brand rather and this can be what distinguishes a company from competitors especially technological brands (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100).

In this research which will focus on a singular corporation, MAKEEN Energy, we are researching a monolithic brand, that refers to a single encompassing identity wherein everything is referred to under the same corporate name (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 97). The value of monolithic brand is affected by various factors including points of parity. Points of parity may not be unique to a brand and may be shared by some other brands however the absence of certain features could result in the discount or exclusion of a brand (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100). Points of difference also indicate the value of a monolithic brand and refer to a feature or association that consumers or other stakeholders believe they can only find with the specific brand. This endows brands with superiority over competitors. Increasingly, points of difference are based on organisational capabilities, values, or technology. There is a fine

balance between points of difference but also ensuring a certain degree of similarity to other companies and their services (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 101). If a corporation lacks a certain aspect which is common and considered standards for corporations then this is also problematic. Sustainable efforts may be such a point of parity whose inclusion or rather lack of inclusion in the CI of an organisation could be the reason for discounting it.

Taking into consideration the various aspects of CI and its relevance in decision-making in a new era of business digitalisation, the question of how corporations can address the safety, security, and satisfaction of stakeholders in the design of business models while struggling to achieve sustainable goals is relevant (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p. 1). The multidimensionality of technological advancements as well as the varying and evolving conceptualisations of sustainability make it complex for corporations to know how to direct efforts towards social development issues in the international market (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p. 2).

This research will address these complexities by examining how sustainability is integrated into the CI of MAKEEN Energy by considering various aspects of CI that were outlined above. There will be a more specific focus on how this CI may have evolved or changed over time utilising the Discourse-Historical Approach.

3.2 Discourse-Historical Approach

This research will employ the discourse-historical approach (DHA) to conduct an analysis of marketing materials from MAKEEN Energy to understand the integration of sustainability into the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy. There are a few concepts inherent to understanding the theoretical foundations of DHA that will be explored and explained in this section.

The term discourse has been used across a vast array of social sciences and has come to be a valid approach to analyse and investigate meaning making (Wodak, 2011). Discourse is socially constituted as well as socially shaped. It is constitutive as it sustains and reproduces social status quo, while it also contributes to transforming the status quo (Wodak, 2011).

In this modern era, businesses are increasingly digitalised. This means that businesses can communicate and appeal to a much broader audience which includes stakeholders across a wider geographical range, more industries, and on a wider range of digital communication platforms. Discursive research can be useful in interpreting and understanding business communication including CI in an increasingly digitalised and complex era of business communication (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p. 1).

In modern society where space and time have seemingly collapsed due to business digitalisation and a range of other global factors, the issues that face businesses are inherently more complex (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p. 1). Businesses can communicate and appeal to a much broader audience which includes stakeholders across a wider geographical range, more industries, and on a wider range of digital communication platforms. This is an opportunity but also means that the reach is longer and to understand the complexities to communicating to wider audiences and addressing complex global issues, discursive research is a useful tool (Foroudi & Cuomo, 2023, p. 1; Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 64). As a flexible theoretical and methodological framework DHA can be utilised to address a wide range of multidimensional social issues (Reisigl, 2017, p. 46). These issues are often transnational and global phenomena (Reisigl, 2017, p. 47).

DHA similar to other forms of discourse analysis within its field, starts with a topic more specifically a social problem or issue. The approach is multidisciplinary and has been used to approach a wide range of multidimensional social issues such as racism, poverty, or environmental issues to name a few examples (Wodak, 2011, p. 40). For this research DHA will be utilised to research the integration of sustainability as a social issue into the CI of MAKEEN Energy.

To better understand and situate this research, I will briefly situate the DHA within the field of discourse studies and explore theoretical foundations of the approach. There are three concepts that are indispensable in the DHA: the concepts of critique, of power, and of ideology. DHA adheres to the socio-philosophical orientation of Critical Theory outlined by Jürgen Habermas. From this perspective, in critical hermeneutics, language and language use are dependent on social and material processes which are not only linguistic in nature (Wodak, 2011, p. 626). Language is also a place wherein relations of organised powers can be legitimised and institutionalised (Wodak, 2011, p. 626). This institutionalisation can be

expressed through legitimation and is thus also ideological. Critical theory and DHA aim to make these power relations visible (Wodak, 2011, p. 626).

There are three relevant and interconnected aspects of social critique that are relevant to this the DHA. The first form of critique that the DHA seeks to explore is text or discourse immanent critique. This critique aims at uncovering inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes, and dilemmas in the internal structures of text or discourse (Wodak, 2011, p. 312).

Socio-diagnostic critique is the next form of critique in which the manifest or latent character of discursive practices is uncovered. Here contextual and background knowledge is used to situate the discursive event in a wider context and gain insight into the social and political relations, processes and circumstances that may influence the discourse. This form of critique demonstrates that the DHA is inherently interdisciplinary (Wodak, 2011, p. 312).

The last form of critique that applies to the DHA is prognostic critique. This form of critique seeks to transform and improve communication (Wodak, 2011, p. 312). The key aim of the DHA is to clarify and explain the object under investigate and clarify discourses through an examination of ideology (Wodak, 2009, p. 312). In this approach ideology is viewed as a way to maintain and establish unequal power relations.

In the DHA discourse and text are different concepts. Discourse implies patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures. Whereas a text is a specific and unique realisation of discourse such as a speech, advertisement, or any other format of text (Wodak, 2011, p. 318). Texts belong within a genre. In the DHA a genre is when language is used in connection with a particular type of social activity (Wodak, 2011, p. 319). It is important to consider how the different settings, purposes of text, or involvement in the process of creation can shape the discourse in focus and the relations between these different concepts of discourse and text.

In the DHA, the researcher outlines the contents or topics that are relevant to a particular discourse and investigates the discursive strategies that maintain this discourse. Analysis of discourse explores how constructions and narratives are linguistically achieved (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 34). The DHA draws on various linguistic techniques and social

theories and always involves some form of close textual analysis or multimodal analysis (Wodak, 2011).

As the name suggests the DHA considers historical events and context surrounding discourse is an essential aspect of the approach. DHA differs from other approaches to in this respect as it puts weight on historical subjects, change, and the echo of specific discourses (Reisigl, 2017, p. 49). However, not all analyses carried out within the framework of DHA show an evident historical orientation, the framework may instead consider social and political contexts rather than concrete historical events or developments (Reisigl, 2017, p. 44).

The approach of DHA systematically integrates background information into analysis and the interpretation of many layers of a written or spoken text. The DHA follows different integrated approaches based on the problem in question and proceeds multi-methodically based on data and background information (Wodak, 2011, p. 312; Reisigl, 2017, p. 49). In this approach emphasis is placed on discovering the context of the data and taking into account the language used in particular texts. Intertextual relationships, interdiscursivity, social variables, and institutional frames are all relevant to the context including sociopolitical and historical context (Wodak, 2011).

A systematic qualitative approach in DHA considers four layers or dimensions of context when analysing discourse (Wodak, 2011, p. 48). These four dimensions of context can be considered as micro, meso-, and macro levels of context. These four dimensions will be explained further in the methodology section. In this research the dimensions will be applied to the data in a cohesive manner but will not be followed or divided rigorously.

The first layer of context considers the immediate language internal co-text and co-discourse regarding thematic and syntactic coherences, lexical solidarities, collocations, connotations, implications, presuppositions and local interactive process (Reisigl, 2017, p. 53).

The second dimension of context in DHA considers the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between texts, utterances, genres, and discourses (Reisigl, 2017, p. 53). Intertextuality is the examination of how one text draws upon or references elements of other texts (Wodak, 2009, p. 319). This can refer to words, phrases, arguments, topics, or larger elements that are incorporated within texts repetitively (Wodak, 2011, p. 630). The interdiscursivity of a text is concerned with the particular combination of discourses and

genres and how this links the text to other intertextually related texts (Wodak, 2011, p. 630). Recontextualization is a salient linguistic process within DHA that is concretely manifested in intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Wodak, 2011, p. 629). Recontextualization is textually realised through the mixing of 'new' recontextualised elements and 'old' elements, such as particular words, expressions, arguments, topoi, rhetorical devices, discourses, genres, and more (Wodak, 2011, p. 630).

The third layer of context in DHA considers the social factors and institutional frames of a specific context that influence discourse (Reisigl, 2017, p. 53). Within this layer consideration is given to the elements such as degree of formality, place, time, occasion, audience, interactive roles, political and ideological orientation, as well as profession and other forms of identity (Reisigl, 2017, p. 53).

The fourth and last dimension of context that is explored in the DHA, is the broader sociopolitical and historical context. This occurs on the meso- and macro-level and at this point, fields of action and the history of the discursive event as well as discourse topics are analysed (Reisigl, 2017, p. 53).

This analysis will be informed through the theoretical lens of CI, which can shed light on the motives and complications that influence the discourse. The actions related to sustainability and the enaction of the concept in organisations is developed and maintained by actors and enacted through their interactions. Discursive analysis of how sustainability is integrated in corporate identity has the potential to provide insight into sustainable business practices. DHA will allow for the analysis of how sustainability, herein environmental concerns, an international societal issue, is integrated into the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy. DHA can explore the relationship between social and political contexts and how these developments are reflected in the identity of the organisation over time.

Business digitalisation and the rapid nature communication in the modern day is part of the reason for why this problem formulation seeks to examine the CI of MAKEEN Energy over time in the context of social changes. This is also why the DHA is used to address and systematically understand changes and uncover potentially inconsistencies.

3.3 Ontology and Epistemology

This research adopts the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), drawing on the concept of Corporate Identity (CI) and its associated features. This methodological choice reflects an effort to align and reconcile the research's ontological and epistemological foundations.

DHA, like other forms of discourse analysis, is situated within the social constructionist tradition. In this view, discourse is not merely reflective but constitutive of social reality and it actively constructs and sustains it through recurring social practices (Gauthier, 2017, p. 144). Social constructionism emphasizes the mutual shaping of discourse and social reality. This ontological position aligns with both DHA and the concept of corporate identity, which similarly assumes that identity is not static but formed through ongoing social interaction. CI aligns with a moderate social constructivist stance: it is continuously negotiated and reshaped by stakeholders' interpretations of corporate communications. At the same time, corporations influence social reality through the narratives they disseminate and are reciprocally shaped by the socio-cultural and political contexts in which they operate (Heide, 2024).

The epistemological stance of this research is interpretivism. The data is not passively observed but actively interpreted by the researcher. DHA embodies this interpretive stance while also incorporating elements of weak realism, acknowledging that although knowledge is socially constructed, it is nonetheless constrained by material and institutional conditions. When applied to the study of corporate identity, DHA offers a critical lens, recognizing that identity-related discourse is embedded in broader socio-political and historical contexts.

3.4 How theories will be used

The Discourse-Historical Approach is a discursive approach that puts weight into the analysis of how wider sociopolitical and historical context and developments influences and shapes discourse. The use of this discursive analysis approach pairs well with the examination of corporate identity. Corporate identity is a concept in organisations which is also influenced by the broader sociopolitical and historical context in which the industry is situated. As such DHA provides a valuable analytical tool and theoretical framework to examine how aspects of sustainability are integrated into CI.

4   Methodology

4.1   How I will apply DHA

The DHA is a flexible approach that can be adapted to best respond uniquely to research questions (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 93). In this research the DHA guides the analysis with the introduction of various discursive strategies and contexts that are relevant to conducting the DHA thoroughly. Some of these strategies, discursive tools, and contexts will be explored below. To apply DHA to the study the integration of sustainability in the corporate identity of ME, corporate materials of ME were explored to find documents that were representative of ME's identity over time and that pertained to the representation of the company as a whole. These documents were selected based on keywords related to sustainability that will be explained in a later section.

Within the DHA, the genre is corporate communication and the discourse that is of interest is sustainability (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 93). This goes to data collection. In this research the annual reviews from MAKEEN Energy were selected as well as other brochures from ME based on including documents that related to corporate identity meaning that technical documents or knowledge-based brochures were excluded as they were deemed less relevant to gaining insight into the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy as a whole.

Features of corporate identity will be utilised as explanatory theoretical aspects to assist in responding to the problem formulation (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 93). These theoretical aspects from CI can be referred to as linguistic categories within DHA. These linguistic categories should subsequently be applied sequentially to the text while also applying theoretical approaches to the research to interpret meaning and respond to the research questions (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 93).

While consistently returning to research questions and to the problem under investigation, extensive and in-depth interpretation will be conducted (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 94). The mediation between social context and text can never be implemented in full

and thus a gap exists which hermeneutics and interpretory devices attempts to address this gap (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 93).

The steps outlined above should be conducted reflexively, by going back and forth between the various steps, theories and analysis as the practice of analysis. These steps serve as a framework for guiding the analysis of corporate communication from ME to research CI.

The DHA proposes four levels of context that should be applied to research (Reisigl, 2017). The elements from these four levels of context will be applied to the analysis of sustainability in the CI of MAKEEN Energy. These dimensions of context will be applied coherently and fluidly as the contexts sometimes occur simultaneously or are interrelated. For instance, the immediate language is often repeated intertextually and so the analysis will incorporate the dimensions that are described below based on the topics of analysis. These four dimensions of context will be explained below.

The four levels of context that will be applied in this research are as follows:

1. The immediate, language internal co-text and co-discourse regards thematic and syntactic coherences, lexical solidarities, collocations, connotations, implications, presuppositions and local interactive processes.

2. The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses (e.g., with respect to discourse representation, allusions, evocations) is a further contextual research dimension.

3. Social factors and institutional frames of a specific context of situation include: degree of formality, place, time, occasion, addressees, interactive and political roles, political and ideological orientation, gender, age, profession, level of education, ethnic, regional, national, religious identities, etc.

4. On a meso- and macro-level, the broader sociopolitical and historical context is integrated into the analysis. At this point, fields of action and the history of the discursive event as well as of discourse topics are looked at. Particular deference is given to the fourth dimension which is the most illuminating aspect within the DHA (Reisigl, 2017, p. 53).

In my analysis, the four levels of context will be utilised as guiding questions and considerations in the analysis of the corporate brochures. The structure of the analysis will be grouped by features of CI and within these sections the levels of context applied above will

assist in gaining insight into the broader context of discourse topics and how these topics influence each other across texts and in relation to wider external influences.

Immediate text will be analysed to assess conflicts, contradictions, and inconsistencies internally in text and discourse-internal structures (Reisigl, 2017). These can be explored by assessing cohesion, presuppositions, and turn-taking structures (Reisigl, 2017).

Within the first two dimensions there are five guiding questions about discursive strategies that can be utilised to guide the analysis. Discursive strategies are employed to maintain the discourses (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 34). The examination of discursive strategies is an important part of the DHA. The work of Reisigl & Wodak proposed a set of five guiding questions to uncover discursive strategies used in text. These questions can be applied within the different four levels of context particularly the first two (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52).

> The first question explores the discursive strategy of nomination and questions "How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically in the discourse in question?" (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52).

Via nominations strategies categorisation devices can construct in and out groups or some other form of group. This can be achieved discursively through making references by tropes. Tropes can be metaphors, euphemisms, binary opposition, metonymy, and other grammatic devices that frame positions or construct groups (Wodak & Reisigl, 2015, p. 585).

> The second question focuses on the discursive strategy of predication and asks "what characteristics or qualities are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions mentioned in the discourse? What arguments are employed in discourse?" (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52).

Through this question, we can determine how actors, objects, or phenomena are positively or negatively positioned.

> The third question states "What arguments are employed in discourse" (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52). This examines the discursive strategy of argumentation. Argumentation theory is often used in DHA to explore the identification, reconstruction, and evaluation of arguments. It demonstrates how arguments are employed by certain groups or in certain contexts to justify

or legitimise a certain perspective (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 8). A concept that is relevant to argumentation is topoi. Topoi are an aspect of argumentation that refers to persuasive strategies or rules which connect an argument to a claim or conclusion (Wodak, 2011, p. 50).

The fourth question addresses the discursive strategy of perspectivation. This asks, "from what perspective are these nominations, attributions, arguments, expressed?" (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52). Through this question it is possible to position the writer's point of view and measure the expression of involvement or distance from the writer.

The last question that is recommended in DHA is "Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified or mitigated?" (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52). This question focuses on the discursive strategies of mitigation and intensification. The purpose of this strategy is to modify the illocutionary force (emphasis, forcefulness) of utterances of epistemic (certainty) or deontic (obligation or duty) status (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52).

The second dimension of context in DHA focuses on intertextual and interdiscursive relationships. Intertextuality is the examination of how one text draws upon or references elements of other texts (Wodak, 2009, p. 319). This can refer to words, phrases, arguments, topics, or larger elements that are incorporated within texts repetitively (Wodak, 2011, p. 630). The interdiscursivity of a text is concerned with the particular combination of discourses and genres and how this links the text to other intertextually related texts (Wodak, 2011, p. 630). Recontextualization is a salient linguistic process within DHA that is concretely manifested in intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Wodak, 2011, p. 629). Recontextualization is textually realised through the mixing of 'new' recontextualised elements and 'old' elements, such as particular words, expressions, arguments, topoi, rhetorical devices, discourses, genres, and more (Wodak, 2011, p. 630).

For the third level of context which examines institutional and situational context, the questions from two to four can guide analysis of discursive strategies are used and what these accomplish. In this dimension the audience and the social position of the speaker or other variables such as societal expectations or cultural norms that shape or influence the discourse will be considered. The organisation that produced the text and how this context influences what the text can communicate versus what cannot be communicated due to the institutional frame will be analysed. This also allows for interpretation of why certain discursive strategies were used (Reisigl, 2017, p. 52).

The last level of context considers the wider sociopolitical and historical context of the texts (Reigisl, 2017, p. 53). Through this the discourse under the scope of analysis will be situated in wider historical discourses of the organisation that can clarify the use of certain metaphors or justifications. This context will consider the changes or evolution of texts, and it how may have been influenced by previous conceptualisations. Recontextualization which is demonstrated through intertextuality and interdiscursivity is particularly relevant within this dimension (Reigisl, 2017, p. 53).

The four levels of context will not be rigidly applied to the research but will be applied to various topics in a coherent manner that explores how these contexts relate to each other. The historical aspect of context and changes over time will be applied to different topics continuously.

4.2 Multimodal discourse analysis

 The DHA draws on various linguistic techniques and social theories and always involves some form of close textual analysis which can include verbal and visual text (Wodak, 2011, p. 40). Within the data corpus for this research images will be analysed alongside language. So here will describe some of the analytical tools that are relevant for multimodal analysis.

The Discourse-Historical Approach draws upon various linguistic techniques to conduct some form of close textual or multimodal analysis (Wodak, 2011, p. 40). Multimodality refers to different semiotic modes being combined and integrated in an instance of discourse. This can include images, illustration, layout, colour, and other semiotic expressions of discourse (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 447). Communication increasingly occurring online, the form of densely worded communication is changing to utilise typography, colour, layout, and images are used to convey information (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 450). The language of visual grammar can be analysed to understand narrative (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 451). Discursive strategies can be realised and utilised in images.

Presuppositions within images also reflects and constructs certain discursive meanings (Wodak, 2011, p. 51). Visual grammar can also include integrated words, images, and graphic elements into images (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 452). Genre is an important

concept within multimodal discourse analysis. In multimodality genre can be modelled as a sequence of stages with specific communicative functions. In a particular order these stages can realise the communicative function of a genre (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 454). These stages can be visual or verbal, or both (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 454).

The structure of a text may be realised multimodally, wherein the structure of the text is realised visually (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 456). Genres within multimodal communication are templates for communicative action or linear processes unfolding over time (van Leeuwen, 2015, p. 457). Images can show metaphorical, metonymic, and pragmatic devices. The images and graphics used within the marketing materials are also an important tool for connecting and understanding the wider socio-political and historical metaphors that may influence the data corpus. The images and graphics that are used with certain discursive strategies and other elements of discourse are important to understanding the discursive effect of language and the overall interpretation by the viewer. In the case of this research the corporate materials that are analysed feature many images and graphics that support the verbal texts throughout the document. These semiotic modes can complement each other to emphasise meanings and employ discursive strategies that shape the representation of the CI of ME.

4.3 Data Collection

To address the problem formulation and gain understanding of how sustainability is integrated in the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy over time, there were several relevant considerations for collecting data. The first was that it must be communication from MAKEEN Energy that reflects its identity and is publicly available to stakeholders.

The problem formulation also seeks to explore how discourse regarding sustainability has changed over time. In data collection this was also considered. To explore how communication has changed, data was selected that reflected corporate identity over the course of several years. To do this systematically and to ensure that data was reflective of something in the past, static data was selected. This refers to brochures which were published and remained unchanged as opposed to a website which is consistently updated.

I also had to ensure that the data included discourse surrounding sustainability. To do this, I identified certain keywords. These initial keywords included words or phrases related

to the concept of sustainability such as environment, environmentally friendly, responsibility, people and planet, and the future.

To satisfy these criteria and best respond to the problem formulation, the annual review brochures from MAKEEN Energy were selected as part of the data corpus. These brochures were an in-depth exploration of MAKEEN Energy, and its business areas provided on an annual basis. Thus, these brochures can provide insight into corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy over time.

The data corpus was limited to a scope from 2018 to 2023. MAKEEN Energy is an organisation made up of several business areas that previously existed as different companies. These companies and business areas were united and rebranded under the name MAKEEN Energy in 2018. Therefore, the data corpus was limited to these years.

In addition to the annual reviews, other brochures from this time frame were chosen as part of the data corpus including those that were focused specifically on sustainability. These other brochures include a corporate profile from 2019, and a brochure titled *Our Energy Approach*. These brochures were available on the MAKEEN Energy website.

These annual review brochures ranged from 60 to 80 pages including images and text; so, to limit the data corpus to focus specifically on the problem formulation, the data was limited to certain pages and sections that included keywords relevant to understanding the problem formulation. The brochures in their entirety are available upon request.

These keywords were selected by the researcher through exploration of the data corpus to identify terms that are used in relation to sustainable discourses or climate awareness. These key terms initially included:

- Environment
- Environmentally friendly
- Social
- Responsible
- People and Planet
- Future
- Circular

- Clean

To gain a broader understanding of how these messages are discursively constructed images that accompany these terms are also included in analysis to determine their impact on the discursive construction or message (Baker & Ellece, p. 195). The images were limited to those that accompanied the keywords or showed the keywords. Such as for instance, images or graphics which show a planet.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

The information obtained for the data corpus consisted of publicly available information from the internet and information that was once public but has since become unavailable. The data corpus includes annual review brochures from 2018 to 2023; some are still available online while others were obtained from MAKEEN Energy files. This information was obtained through collaboration with MAKEEN Energy. All the documents that are included in the data corpus are meant for external and internal audiences. It is relevant to mention that these documents were not intended for academic scrutiny. They are a useful representation of corporate identity and relevant to responding to the problem formulation that guides this research.

In any form of discursive analysis, the active interpretation of the data can be influenced by the researchers own bias and perspective. To limit this, I will practice reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the critical examination of the researcher's own biases that may influence the results of research. To combat this, I will document the processes through which I reached conclusions as well as the choices made throughout the research including the data collection process and others that impact the conclusions reached through my research.

4.5 Limitations

The data corpus is limited to marketing materials from a specific time span of 10 years. Future marketing materials may change or influence the conclusions from the analysis of this research. The organisation will continue to release new corporate communications materials that influence their corporate identity. These marketing materials will likely reflect changes in how the company represents itself, but it will likely also reflect any potential changes in the

business operations of the company such as new business areas or ventures within the company.

An external factor outside of the data corpus is the concept of sustainability and how conceptualisations of this may change over time. This could also influence the validity of these findings in the future. Additionally, the legislative requirements of organisations from authorities and governments on sustainable efforts, mainly ESG, will likely also influence changes in CI and how organisations address sustainability.

Sustainability is a topic that is at the forefront of many current political, economic, and social issues and as such the expectations for sustainability are constantly evolving (Wasieleski & Weber, 2020, p. 13). The regulations and incentives that companies are expected to follow change, and the corporate identity of the company will likely adapt to this as well. However, by exploring the problem formulation that guides this research we can gain insight into some of these changes over time to shed light on how companies have adapted their corporate identity and communication to integrate sustainability. This would allow for the exploration of how this is integrated into identity and what challenges there may be in constructing a narrative that involves sustainability in an industry which is not necessarily sustainable. Here I am referring specifically to MAKEEN Energy as an organisation that works with fossil fuels.

This research studies a specific aspect of corporate identity, mainly the integration of sustainability. It is important to note that it is not possible to fully separate this from the overall CI of MAKEEN Energy. The analytical approach of this research takes this into account. Particularly, the DHA which considers various contextual factors including the CI of MAKEEN Energy as whole to interrogate and understand sustainable discourse from MAKEEN Energy.

5 Analysis

5.1 Background on MAKEEN Energy

MAKEEN Energy is a leader in the LPG industry for gas solutions and gas equipment (Appendix F5). The experience of the company goes back decades as MAKEEN Energy today is comprised of what was several individual companies (see Appendix A6). The company has grown significantly in the last decade and spans the globe with approximately 4,000 employees (see Appendix H1). The headquarters of MAKEEN Energy is located in Randers, Denmark (see Appendix H2).

ME has four business areas including Gas Solutions, Gas Equipment, Customer Support, and EnviroTech (see Appendix H4). Of these four business areas, their history and expertise in Gas Solutions is the most extensive

The Gas Solutions division provides solutions for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders including filling, handling, maintenance, and equipment for a range of differently sized businesses across the world (see Appendix H5). ME also provides bunkering solutions for cryogenic gasses such as liquefied biogas (LBG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG) (see Appendix H1). These are gasses that produce less CO_2 than LPG. The expertise MAKEEN Energy has from its LPG business is what benefits it greatly in the expansion into LNG and LBG. MAKEEN Energy has a business segment called Gas Equipment which has grown significantly in the last decade in revenue and size (see Appendix H3).

A business segment of MAKEEN Energy that explores innovative and circular technologies is called EnviroTech (see Appendix F3). In EnviroTech, they have developed plastic conversion technology Plastcon with the first and only planet located in Randers Denmark (see Appendix H2). This division is notably very different from its other business areas as it does not focus on the main area of expertise gas solutions and gas equipment. The EnviroTech division has also collaborated in a project to recycle decommissioned wind turbine blades called DecomBlades. This project began in 2021 (see Appendix F3).

As a corporation in the 21st century and as an organisation with headquarters in Europe, it is important to situate MAKEEN Energy within the varying expectations and conceptualisations of corporate sustainability frameworks that influence the corporation whether these be legal or societal commitments. Therefore, here a brief exploration of

different frameworks will be explored including the UN Global Compact, Sustainable Ocean Principles, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

5.2 Sustainability Commitments of MAKEEN Energy

In the context of the EU, there is legislation that requires companies of a certain size and profitability to report on risks and opportunities arising from social and environmental issues as well as how business activities impact people and the environment. This reporting is required within the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). This aims to help investors, civil society, organisations consumers, and other stakeholders to evaluate the sustainability performance of a company (Johnson, 2025). The European Union however recently delayed the introduction of legislation that would require companies to transpose the more detailed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) into national legislation in what is called the 'stop-the-clock' directive. This legislation would have implemented legislative changes to the required content and scope of EU sustainability reporting. This change means that rules won't apply into 2028 for companies (Johnson, 2025).

To date, MAKEEN Energy has embraced the corporate responsibility guidelines provided by the United Nations (UN) Global Compact. MAKEEN Energy signed and joined the initiative in 2018 (see Appendix C2). The UN Global Compact is a multi-year strategy that introduced ten principles for businesses to follow to drive and awareness and action in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNGC website). There are 17 SDGs that encourage companies do business responsibly. To advance this agenda there are ten principles provided by the UN Global compact that can be incorporated into the strategies and operations of business. The UN Global Compact was introduced in 2015, and the SDGs went into effect in January 2016 (United Nations Global Compact, 2017).

MAKEEN Energy is also a signatory of the United Nations Sustainable Ocean Principles as of 2019 (see Appendix D5). They also began working with the Sustainable Development Goals with a specific focus on goals 8, 9, 12, and 17 (see Appendix D7).

The UN Global Compact not only introduces ten principles but also provides universal language for corporate responsibility (United Nations Global Compact, 2017, p. 14). The 2017 report published on the UN Global Compact introduces several concepts and corporate responsibility that likely influenced the language of MAKEEN Energy after they signed in 2018 as a signatory. The 2017 report is entitled "Making Global Goals Local Business". The report outlines the ten principles as well as six megatrends that drive what they label the "new era of business". These megatrends are interconnected and are defined as driving change and opening horizons for change (United Nations Global Compact, 2017, p. 6).

Of the six trends, three are most relevant to the analysis of the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy in relation to corporate responsibility and sustainability. The first megatrend is "planet under pressure". This trend focuses on the negative effect of human activity that is resulting in climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, ocean acidification, soil degradation, and pollution (United Nations Global Compact, 2017, p. 6). The second megatrend of relevance is "Energy transition" meaning the changes in regulations, dramatic reductions in renewable energy costs and concerns about how energy security will impact energy markets (United Nations Global Compact, 2017, p. 6). The third trend is "Resources from abundance to limits" which describes that the world has entered a period of intensified resource stress and that the essentials for human life are under pressure (United Nations Global Compact, 2017, p. 6).

Companies of all sizes globally can transform their business models to serve societal needs while tapping into new markets. For MAKEEN Energy, their efforts in this are explained by their business areas and in marketing materials. The company serves the energy sector and provides engineering expertise and solutions for liquefied petroleum gas, an essential fuel source in some areas of the world where access to others is limited (see Appendix G3). MAKEEN Energy has also explored new circular business opportunities with projects such as DecomBlades and Plastcon (see Appendix H9; H10).

The 2017 UN report outlines the crucial role of technology and innovation along with the notion that to make a lasting impact on sustainability, fundamental responsibilities in areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption is required (United Nations Global Compact, 2017, p. 11).

Another report on the UN Global Compact was published in 2019. This report provided further action-oriented tools and platforms to accelerate and integrate SDGs into business as well as success stories from companies around the world (United Nations Global Compact, 2019). The signing of the UN Global Compact was likely very influential to the sustainability discourse and corporate responsibility discourse of MAKEEN Energy from the time of their signing in 2018. The analysis will explore and consider the language in context and over time by considering external factors such as the UN Global Compact and other sustainability frameworks that guide businesses. These reports from the UN Global Compact promote the integration and embedding of principles into corporate culture as a way to inspire and advocate for responsible business practices within their sphere of influence to peers, employees, partners, consumers, and the public at large (United Nations Global Compact, 2019, p. 13). In this research this relates to the concept of corporate identity and the viewpoint of this research that discourse is socially constitutive and reconstructs the status quo simultaneously (Wodak, 2011). These factors will be very relevant to examining the socio-political and cultural as well as historical context of the discourse from MAKEEN Energy.

5.3   This analysis

To explore the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy, the DHA will be applied to marketing materials across several years from 2018 to 2023 to assess various variables that are central to corporate identity and the formation of such. The historical aspect of this approach will be especially relevant for assessing the corporate reputation of MAKEEN Energy which is formed over time. Harmonious and consistent integration of corporate identity across time and communication channels is a requirement for a successful corporate identity however a strong corporate identity also needs to change and adapt in response to changing socio-historical and socio-political pressures and external pressure from stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100). The DHA will be effective in helping to understand how MAKEEN Energy may have responded to such pressures especially those regarding sustainability and corporate

responsibility as is the focus of this research. The analysis will go through different aspects of ME CI based on concepts that are relevant to Corporate Identity.

5.4   Corporate Purpose

Corporate identity is formed and expressed by the corporation however it is also influenced by external pressures (Burghausen, 2024, p. 75). The most consistent expression of corporate identity is their corporate purpose and accompanied storytelling which is a heading and a text consisting of four paragraphs that is featured at the beginning of each of the marketing materials included in this data corpus (see Appendix A3; B3; C5; D2; E2; F1; G2; H1). The corporate storytelling is mostly consistent across the time period from 2018 to 2023 however there are variations which will be explored in the following section.

The corporate storytelling includes keywords such as responsible, sustainable, and people and planet. Firstly, the immediate text and co-text of the passages will be explored starting with the corporate purpose which is used in the corporate storytelling as a heading and is also present elsewhere throughout the data corpus. The corporate storytelling and purpose establish corporate responsibility and sustainability as central aspects of the identity of MAKEEN Energy through immediate text and co-text and interdiscursivity.

The corporate purpose of MAKEEN Energy is "Responsible energy solutions for people and planet" (see Appendix A3). The strategy of nomination is used here to position MAKEEN Energy as a responsible and moral actor who provides solutions that are good for the environment and humanity. The *Corporate Profile* introduces the purpose with the co-text of "This is MAKEEN Energy" and in the following line "Responsible energy solutions for people and planet" (see Appendix A3).

The co-text further supports the positive implication of "responsibility" and the message that MAKEEN Energy is a responsible actor with the phrase "for people and planet". The phrase "people and planet" is an example of alliteration and implies the interdependence of "people" and "planet". The lexical choice of "people" and "planet" implies a responsibility for all people on the planet, essentially humanity as a whole. The use of the conjunction "and" between these two words is a case of association and aggregation which equates the wellbeing of these two concepts as equally important and interconnected.

The phrase "people and planet" is also an example of alliteration as both words connected a conjunction start with the same consonant, this makes the phrase more rhetorically impactful and memorable. This is valuable for a corporate purpose, which should be memorable and impactful.

The purpose's reference to energy solutions, by itself this is vague and unspecific. The kind of energy solutions is unclear, what aspect of energy solutions it refers to is also unclear. Is it referring to the energy itself, technological solutions for energy, energy production or another aspect.

The corporate purpose is used across marketing materials, interdiscursively this makes it a strong expression of the corporate identity for MAKEEN Energy due to its consistency across marketing materials (see Appendix A3; B3; C5; D2; E2; F1; G2; H1).

Intertextually, the phrase is not just present at the start of each corporate storytelling, but this purpose has also been used in other places within the brochures. For instance, the *Corporate Profile* and *Our Energy Approach* brochures featured the purpose on the title pages of each brochure (see Appendix A1; B1). The phrase is also used within the articles throughout the materials.

The purpose is used when introducing the UN Global Compact in the *2018 Annual Review*. It explicitly defines the phrase as the corporate purpose of MAKEEN Energy; "Everything we do is based on our purpose: Responsible energy solutions for people and planet" (see Appendix C10). This is reiterated in the *Annual Review 2019*; "Our purpose is responsible energy solutions for people and planet" (see Appendix D7). By calling it a purpose it demonstrates that Responsible energy solutions for people and planet is the core objective of MAKEEN Energy.

On the following page of the *Annual Review 2019*, a graphic illustration of how many employees are working at MAKEEN Energy at the time includes the purpose again when it states, "approx. 1,100 individuals work passionately with responsible energy solutions for people and planet as of December 2019" (see Appendix D8). The purpose is in green text differing from the preceding text that is white and "approx." that is brown. The use of the word "passionately" is an example of an intensification strategy which through this word

strengthens the meaning of the action. It is also an emotionally laden word which makes the action of organisation, and its employees seem more personal.

The phrase is again used in connection with corporate responsibility commitments on page 25 of the *Annual Review 2019* when introducing the Sustainable Development Goals (see Appendix D14). It states "It is our purpose to deliver responsible energy solutions for people and planet. At the very heart of this you'll find responsibility." (see Appendix D15). The use of the phrase in relation to corporate responsibility commitments again in addition to the UN Global Compact demonstrates that the expression of MAKEEN Energy as a responsible corporation is central to the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy.

Corporate Identity is shaped by both tangible and intangible traits. The corporate purpose of MAKEEN Energy and how it is represents is primarily an intangible trait when introduced on its own. The statement of "responsibility" is difficult to measure and the statement of "for people and planet" is vague and all-encompassing something that is simply not possible. Overall, the corporate purpose is intangible in itself and vague. Further exploration of the corporate storytelling that accompanies the statement will be explored below.

The co-text that follows the corporate purpose of "Responsible energy solutions for people and planet", typically consists of a standardised corporate storytelling section. This corporate storytelling is repeatedly used across corporate brochures from 2018 to 2023 to construct and reinforce the CI of ME.

The first paragraph of the corporate storytelling features many of the keywords that were identified for this research including sustainability, responsibility, and people and planet. In the *2018 Annual Review* the first paragraph of the storytelling is found on a page with the small heading of Our energy approach:

> As a global, market-leading corporation in the energy industry, MAKEEN Energy is determined to play an active role in the sustainable transformation of the energy market. This is why our objective is to develop responsible energy solutions that make a difference to people and planet. We do this by enabling our partners to embrace the energy market of tomorrow, by bridging gaps between present and future energy supply and by empowering our people to innovate. (see Appendix C5).

Through the discursive strategy of nomination, ME consistently represents itself as a "global, market-leading corporation in the energy industry, (...)", invoking presupposition of authority

and leadership. It positions itself not only as a leader in the energy industry but also positions itself as a leader in the global sense. There are subtle differences in framing between the 2018 and 2019 versions of the storytelling.

The 2019 storytelling is as follows with differences from the 2018 version is shown below:

> MAKEEN Energy is a global, market-leading corporation in the energy industry. We are determined to play an active role in the sustainable transformation of the energy market, and this is why we develop responsible energy solutions that make a difference for people and planet. We do this by enabling our partners to embrace the energy market of tomorrow, by bridging gaps between present and future energy supply and by empowering our people to innovate. (see Appendix D3).

The 2018 phrasing, "As a global, market-leading corporation (...)", uses a presuppositional structure that positions the company within an already accepted identity (see Appendix C5). By contrast, the 2019 version, "MAKEEN Energy is a global, market-leading corporation (...)", makes the nomination more explicit and declarative. (see Appendix D3).

The discursive strategy nomination also represents ME as an active actor in sustainable transformation of the energy market. The 2018 states that developing responsible energy solutions is the "objective" while the 2019 version states that "this is why we develop responsible energy solutions" (see Appendix C5; D3). The word objective implies a goal or something that is aimed at and not yet achieved. The rephrasing in the 2019 version is active in the wording as it states, "this is why" (see Appendix D3).

The corporate storytelling employs predication strategies to ascribe positive values to ME, such as responsibility, innovation, and sustainability. The first paragraph of the storytelling used across brochures and annual reviews contains several lexical terms aligned with sustainability discourse including "sustainable transformation", "responsible energy solutions" and "people and planet" (see Appendix C5: D3). This language frames ME as a legitimate and ethical actor through argumentation that link responsible innovation to broader societal and environmental consciousness.

Subsequent versions of the corporate storytelling retain the same first paragraph as that in the *Annual Review 2019* excluding the version in the *2023 Annual Review*. The Annual Review from 2023 has a noticeable omission as it leaves out the word sustainable unlike the other narratives. The annual review from 2019 is as follows;

> MAKEEN Energy is a global, market-leading corporation in the energy industry. We are determined to play an active role in the sustainable transformation of the energy market, and this is why we develop responsible energy solutions that make a difference to people and planet. (see Appendix D3)

While the annual review from 2023 is as follows:

> MAKEEN Energy is a global, market-leading corporation in the energy industry. We are determined to play an active role in the transformation of the energy market, and this is why we develop responsible energy solutions that make a difference to people and planet (see Appendix H1).

The key difference between these two excerpts of text is the exclusion of "sustainable" as an adjective to describe the transformation of the energy market. This corporate storytelling is key to the corporate identity and the exclusion of this important concept represents a shift and a challenge to the consistency of corporate identity representing a discursive de-emphasis on sustainability.

The self-positioning of ME as a leader and active participant in the transformation of the energy market through nomination is complicated by the co-text of the following paragraph of the corporate storytelling. The second paragraph of the corporate storytelling narrows its focus to the customers of MAKEEN Energy by introducing the business areas of ME.

> Our portfolio includes equipment, customer support, spare parts, facility management, engineering and project management for everything from liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) filling facilities and liquefied natural gas/biogas (LNG/LBG) bunkering solutions to power plants and facilities that convert plastic waste into a resource. We take pride in having co-responsibility for our customers' success – not only for short-term business results, but also for long-term business transformation. (see Appendix C5).

The first paragraph of the storytelling emphasises responsibility and sustainability, while the subsequent paragraph introduces liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), a fossil fuel, as one of their

core business areas. This juxtaposition weakens the coherence of the message and invites critical reflection on the positioning of the company. Furthermore, the second paragraph specifies that ME is a supplier to those who provide energy, demonstrating a perspectivisation strategy that shifts agency and responsibility away from ME.

The discursive strategy of predication frames the relationship between customers and MAKEEN Energy. It creates a shared relationship between the two through the use of the pronoun "our" and creates cohesion within the company by representing all employees within ME as one entity or group. MAKEEN Energy also repeatedly constructs itself as essential to the success of their customers and intensifies this by indicating that they can provide "more" than short-term results but "long-term business transformation". By indicating that ME has "co-responsibility" for the success of customers, it indicates that shared and joint relationship that requires responsibility from both parties.

There are changes made to the second paragraph of the corporate storytelling throughout the years. The most notable change occurs in the *2023 Annual Review.* The paragraph above is taken from the *2018 Annual Review.* There are changes to the second paragraph in the *2023 Annual Review* that include additional information about the Plastcon solution that replaces what text comes after bunkering solutions in the 2018 version:

> Additionally, we supply customers around the world with high-quality gas components and equipment from expert manufacturers. With our extensive knowledge with innovative technologies, we develop chemical recycling plants where pyrolysis technology transforms plastic waste to oil for new plastic production – creating a circular lifecycle of plastic waste. (see Appendix H1).

This marks the first inclusion of circularity in the corporate storytelling. The discursive strategy of predication assigns qualities of knowledge and expertise to ME as it states, "With our extensive knowledge" (see Appendix H1). It also positions the solutions at ME as innovative and circular (see Appendix H1). This change to the third paragraph encompasses more detailed information about the Plastcon technology of ME.

The third paragraph of the MAKEEN Energy corporate storytelling is subject to change throughout the years as this paragraph includes information regarding the number of

employees and offices around the world. However, the last two sentences of the paragraph remain consistent across brochures from 2018 to 2023 (see Appendix A4; B3; C5; D3; E2; F1; G2). The following is an excerpt from the *2021 Annual Review*:

> We employ and empower approx. 2,500 people across 6 continents and operate in over 140 countries. Our global reach, local presence and decades of experience ensure that we can deliver complete solutions at a level unmatched in our industry. *As we say - wherever you are, we are.* (see Appendix F1).

The numbers that are included here change over the years, as MAKEEN Energy employee numbers grow. The growth over time does demonstrate and legitimise the statements of growth from MAKEEN Energy and strengthen its position through the statements that it makes through the strategy of self-legitimisation. The messages from ME are strengthened by apparent success demonstrated by a growing workforce.

The phrase "wherever you are, we are" is a slogan-like expression and functions as a nomination strategy, which establishes ME as a global presence that is prepared to serve its customers who are addressed by the pronoun "you" (see Appendix F1). It suggests proximity and accessibility in a way that addresses and appeals to stakeholders. The references to "decades of experience" and "global reach continue" this legitimising strategy, positioning the company as a reliable authority. The consistent ending of the paragraph reflects the strategic identity construction of the corporate identity which is maintained alongside growth and the expansion of business offerings.

The corporate purpose and corporate storytelling are consistent self-expressions of CI across the time period of 2018 to 2023. Sustainability and discourses relating to sustainability such as responsibility and innovation are a core focus of this storytelling and the consistent presence of this storytelling demonstrates that sustainability is a central aspect of CI for ME. The recurrence of discursive strategies and phrases from this storytelling is present intertextually throughout the data corpus. The next section will explore how ME uses values to legitimise sustainability-related action and how certain qualities are attributed to the company in relation to sustainability.

5.5 Sustainability for a better tomorrow

A strong CI anticipates and responds to changing societal pressures and needs. The concern for the future as a result of the global climate crisis is influencing all corporations as

stakeholders want companies to consider business impacts on the environment and be responsible for their actions across all activities. Key to this interest from consumers is the concern for "tomorrow". MAKEEN Energy addresses this concern and attempts to position itself as an influential and positive actor through the discursive strategy of argumentation and the topos of a better tomorrow. In this case, it is that sustainability and actions towards this will lead to a better tomorrow. Examples of this strategy and the topos of a better tomorrow will be analysed below.

The topos of a better tomorrow wherein sustainability is the assumed solution needed to reach this conclusion is outlined in the *Annual Review 2019* as the brochure explains the Sustainable Development Goals (see Appendix D14). It states, "The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all." (see Appendix D14). This language connects to the wider discourse of the SDGs which influences and shapes the language relating sustainability throughout the corporate brochures of ME. This topos positions the innovative work of ME as integral to achieving a better future, an argument that mirrors dominant sustainability narratives where technological and corporate innovation is a key driver of positive global change.

As the corporate storytelling also mentions part of the purpose of ME is "(...) enabling our partners to embrace the energy market of tomorrow" (see Appendix C5). This is reiterated throughout the marketing materials including as a heading in *Our Energy Approach.* The lexical choice of "embrace" in the phrases indicates something positive as the word has a positive connotation usually used to refer to enthusiastically accept something. From this we can infer that the "energy market of tomorrow" is something positive as well.

An alternative formulation but similar statement is included as a heading in the *2022 Annual Review* with the following statement: "We enable our partners in over 140 countries to embrace the energy market of tomorrow" (see Appendix G12). The variation that includes the number of countries that ME operates in serves to expand the global reach of ME and frame it as a global actor.

In the *2018 Annual Review* MAKEEN Energy again employs the topos of a better future to justify ME as a responsible actor that is playing an essential role in a global issue.

Alongside other graphics on a page about "Developments in the world of energy" states "Responsible and future-proof energy solutions are more important than ever" (see Appendix C11). Other graphics on the page include information on the growth of LPG markets in certain parts of the world, plastic waste recycling as a growing priority, and the need for shipowners to lower emissions (see Appendix C11).

In the *Annual Review 2019* the CEO letter includes a headline that reads "Groundwork for a bright future" (Appendix D6). This utilises the discursive strategy of perspectivisation to strengthen the message and it also uses the strategy of argumentation again to indicate that a central aspect of the identity of ME is responsibility for ensuring a better future.

A later article outlines that 2019 is the start of what ME calls its "sustainability journey" (see Appendix D20). This metaphor of sustainability being a journey or also direction continues throughout the brochures. For instance, in the *2020 Annual Review*, this discourse continues with a title "Introducing new technologies to lead the energy industry in a more sustainable direction" (see Appendix E12). Here the topos of better tomorrow and the central role of ME in providing innovative technologies continues.

The presence of this topos of a better future continues later on in other brochures such as *Our Energy Approach* where it states, "At MAKEEN Energy, we are actively pushing our industry in a direction that will make gas a valuable and sustainable source of energy for future generations." (see Appendix B9). Here the promise of sustainability for future generations is emphasised as part of the purpose of ME. Another important feature of the better future which ME promises in this instance is that gas will be a "valuable and sustainable source of energy". This is unspecific as it does not specify what kind of gas and is problematic as gas is not generally considered a sustainable source of energy.

Other references to a better future often are employed in relation to the business areas of ME that provide gas and filling solutions for cryogenic gasses. In the *2023 Annual Review* articles concerning liquefied biogas utilise the topos of a better future again to imply that ME is a responsible actor by contributing and taking responsibility for this better future.

For instance, ME states that is "Fuelling the future with liquefied biogas" (see Appendix H7). This directly links ME to a better future and in consideration of co-text which states "This expansion ensures the availability of cleaner, reliable fuelling solutions, setting

the stage for a more sustainable future in transportation – and the Cryo team is ready to take on the challenge" (see Appendix H8).

Taken into context both of these statements from ME are included in an article about the capabilities of the Cryo team in working with LBG and LNG. The article outlines wider socio-political pressures that influence the growth of this in the industry. The article clarifies that "Recent forecasts from the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICTT) and DNV GL signal a burgeoning demand for LNG." (see Appendix H8). This further situates MAKEEN Energy as responsible actor responding to a growing future need on a global scale. The use of the strategy of argumentation and the topos of a better tomorrow makes the actions and solutions seem more influential than they are by situating the efforts of ME as a greater part of a whole as part of a global energy transition. Essentially this topos of a better tomorrow is referred to throughout the materials and is introduced in the corporate storytelling when it outlines the "sustainable transformation of the energy market" herein positioning "sustainable transformation" as something positive that will be better for future. Further references to a brighter future or fuelling the future all rely on the concept that there is a current issue that needs resolving in order to reach this better and more sustainable future. Through argumentation ME positions itself as vital to this transition and to solving these problems to reach this future.

5.6 Organisational Commitments

MAKEEN Energy has committed to several sustainable initiatives that influence sustainability in the CI of ME. In terms of the historical development of MAKEEN Energy as a corporation there are several significant milestones that are influential to the formation of CI. For instance, in January 2018 MAKEEN Energy committed to the UN Global Compact (see Appendix C10). By doing this, they have agreed to adhere to the principles outlined in the UN Global Compact for businesses on their journey towards sustainability. References to this dedication are continuously referred to throughout the period from 2018 to 2022 though it is absent in the *2023 Annual Review*.

The year of 2019 coincides with the reveal of their plastic conversion solution, Plastcon (see Appendix D6). In 2019 MAKEEN Energy also signed the United Nations Sustainable Ocean Principles (see Appendix D6). Additionally, MAKEEN Energy also began working with the Sustainable Development Goals specifically goals 8, 9, 12, and 17 (see Appendix D7). The participation of ME in the sustainable develop goals is outlined in an article titled "A global organisation taking responsibility for the global goals" (see Appendix D14). Already in the title the discursive strategy of nomination is employed to represent ME as a "responsible" and "global organisation". The article outlines that the purpose of ME is "to deliver responsible energy solutions for people and planet. At the very heart of this, you find responsibility." (see Appendix D14). Again, the values of ME particularly responsibility for humanity and the planet as a whole is presented through nomination. The metaphor of "at the very heart" symbolises that this is a core and vital aspect of the purpose of ME.

The 2019 CEO letter explicitly mentions sustainability efforts from ME when it outlines that "And we were among the very first companies to sign the United Nations Sustainable Ocean Principles". Here the discursive strategy of predication positively positions ME as a leader in sustainable initiatives as "one of the very first companies" to sign. The adverb "very" intensifies and emphasises that ME is a leader in sustainable initiatives though in this particular instance, the only effort that has been taken so far is signing on. The following sentence states "These, and many more, are the things I will remember 2019 for." The use of "I" further illustrates that these statements come from the CEO providing a face and name to the language intensifying the personal aspect and making it easier for the reader to connect with the messages.

ME contextualises its engagement with sustainability by referencing its adoption of the SDGs by the United Nations in 2015, and that ME joined these efforts in 2019. ME employs figurative language to refer to the governments, organisations, and individuals dedicated to the initiative as a "flock", and positions itself as a part of this "flock" (see Appendix D14). A flock typically refers to a group of animals or birds. By using another environmental metaphor to frame the activities of ME, it frames ME as an environmentally conscious actor who is part of a wider movement. The unity that is presented is an important element of representing ME as a responsible and sustainable actor. This also functions through the discursive strategies of intensification and mitigation. It intensifies ME's self-

represented commitment to sustainability, while simultaneously mitigating individual responsibility by presenting ME as one among many actors working towards a common goal.

The strategy of mitigation continues in this article in 2019 as ME outlines "As an organisation, it is difficult to work dedicatedly with all the 17 SDGs, and that is why we started out by deciding on 4 specific goals to focus on" (see Appendix D14). Here ME directly implies that achieving sustainability through the SDGs is difficult which in effect sets up and mitigates expectations of ME.

In 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, ME continues to highlight their role as supporting the UN Global Compact (see Appendix E6; Appendix F12; Appendix G4) however the Sustainable Ocean Principles and Sustainable Development Goals are mentioned only in 2019 and 2022 (see Appendix D14; G4).

5.7 Values and Principles

Values are an important intangible aspect of CI. The right values can enable a corporation to stand out from competitors while the absence of certain values or initiatives such as sustainability could lead to being excluded by consumers (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100). While the aspect of values is intangible in the sense that it cannot be directly measured or commodified such as tangible aspects of business offerings, it can be expressed as a core part of CI. MAKEEN Energy does this throughout its marketing materials with what is directly expressed as their corporate values and values that are represented as core aspects of identity throughout the brochures.

Values are guiding principles that shape how a company operates and guides them in their business. This section will now explore though DHA how values are redefined or shaped to include or reference sustainability. MAKEEN Energy often highlights values that are integrated into the daily operations and practices of the company.

Sustainability and the co-discourse of innovation is consistently integrated as an aspect of the internal culture and day-to-day practices of MAKEEN Energy. MAKEEN Energy consistently represents itself as an innovative actor and highlights the importance of values for its global operations.

The discursive strategy of predication contributes innovation as a core value of the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy alongside the discursive strategy of argumentation which through the topos of urgency constructs the innovation of MAKEEN Energy as a solution to pressing global issues regarding climate change.

The following statement is featured in the *Our Energy Approach* brochure *"Global energy supply is in a period of fundamental change. Our energy consumption clearly needs to be transformed and find more sustainable and responsible sources."* (see Appendix B5). The use of the pronoun "our" in the sentence to refer to "energy consumption" builds a sense of shared responsibility with the world as a whole. This is indicated by the preceding sentence which states "Global energy supply is in a period of fundamental change." (see Appendix B5). From this we can infer from context that "Our energy consumption" refers to global energy supply and consumption. The pronoun "our" constructs internal cohesion and nominates MAKEEN Energy as an actor taking responsibility for a global issue and solution.

The statement constructs this as a shared immediate urgent issue that requires a solution. This is the example of the topos of urgency. The lexical choice of "clearly needs" emphasises urgency as the adverb "clearly" enhances the use "needs" a verb that already by itself describes something that is an essential necessity. It demonstrates that immediate action is required. The solution is represented as "more sustainable and responsible sources". In the immediate context this seems to refer to energy sources as this is what is discussed in the beginning of the sentence and sentence immediately before. This is an example of the discursive strategy of intensification. The conjunction "and" between the two adjectives, sustainable and responsible is significant as it situates these two adjectives as connected. These two adjectives are both positive and both refer to taking control over one's actions.

The *Our Energy Approach* brochure establishes an interdiscursive connection between innovation and sustainability in a page that highlights the role of employees and importance of innovation (see Appendix B11). This page under the section employees is titled "Empowering our people to innovate" (see Appendix B11). The preceding co-text on this page outlines the importance of values throughout the global operations of MAKEEN Energy and ends with the following text

Not only does this give us contented and committed employees, many of whom have been with us for decades – it also means we successfully integrate their experiences,

insights and ideas into the creation of smarter and more sustainable solutions for the future (see Appendix B11).

Herein considering the co-text in the title regarding innovation and the highlighting of the importance of values, the preceding text demonstrates that innovation is a value of the company that is related to sustainability and environmental consciousness.

The strategy of intensification indicated in the immediate language that highlights urgency is also evident later in the *Our Energy Approach* brochure. This further presents MAKEEN Energy as the solution to these shared global challenges. It reads, "To rise to this challenge, everybody involved in global energy supply needs to take action and actively develop solutions that are both innovative and responsible." (see Appendix B5). The *Our Energy Approach* brochure was published in 2023 (see Appendix B12). Previous brochures utilise the same or similar notions emphasising the necessity of urgent action and positions the innovation of MAKEEN Energy as a solution to these pressing problems.

The *Annual Review 2019* employs overarching of environmental and meteorological metaphors as a common theme throughout the brochure to mitigate the negative events in 2019 that influenced the business. The subtitle featured on the front page of the *Annual Review 2019* under the main title of "Annual Review 2019" is "When drops of rain provide energy for people and planet" (see Appendix D1). The background photo featured on the cover shows green leaves with drops of water on them (see Appendix D1). This first environmental metaphor demonstrates a positive association between ME and its action and the natural environment by using the environmental metaphor of "drops of rain" and it is misleading in that the "energy solutions" that ME works with includes LPG, cryogenic gases, and plastic recycling in 2019 (see Appendix D5). These solutions do not have anything to do with the natural environmental of rain providing energy as the subtitle for the *Annual Review 2019* implies.

The 2nd and 3rd pages of the Annual Review continue with the imagery of rain with close up images of a leaf with drops of water on it (see Appendix D2; D3). The 4th page showing the table of contents continues with this metaphor in text form as a short paragraph before the table of contents itself:

> 2019 was, to some degree, a rainier year than most for MAKEEN Energy. However, rays of light always filter through the clouds eventually to signal brighter times. And rain is far from the only thing that we can use to describe the year. In this annual review, we have gathered stories and facts about 12 months that, among other things, saw new business, products and responsible energy solutions brought to life. (see Appendix D4).

The use of environmental metaphors in this instance is hopeful and positive and through the discursive strategy of mitigation it allows ME to project an image of control while limiting the negative effect of what they established as "a rainier year than most". The use of environmental metaphors lessens the effect of the negative associations.

The environmental metaphors continue in the CEO letter with the heading "When rainclouds gather, it's good to have an umbrella" (see Appendix D5). Intertextually this follows with more references to environmental metaphors throughout the CEO letter. The first paragraph intertwines environmental metaphors throughout to outline ME in the year of 2019.

> If booming business is akin to sunshine, the sky in 2019 was unfortunately dotted with clouds for MAKEEN Energy. The market was in a state of anticipation, and some investments were pushed back. Our organisation is well-prepared for rainy years, however, with a structure that acts as a cozy umbrella in gray periods. And the year still brought many new and promising initiatives that will keep our business sunny for years to come. (see Appendix D5)

The preceding paragraph is rife in environmental figurative language that follows the discursive strategy of mitigation to minimise the negative events in 2019 and imply control using the optimistic metaphors such as "cozy umbrella" and "promising initiatives that will keep our business sunny for years to come".

The discursive strategy of perspectivation is also present here as this comes from a CEO letter. A common inclusion in corporate documents such as an annual report or review, the voice that is speaking directly to stakeholders or audiences here is that of the CEO. The environmental metaphors are common to various types of discourse, however taken into context with the type of green imagery that ME often used, this is consistent with discourse that frames ME as an environmentally conscious actor.

The discursive of strategies of predication and argumentation position the innovative values of MAKEEN Energy as a solution to global issues in the *Annual Review 2019* as well. This is when the Plastcon project is introduced in the CEO letter and later an article within the annual review expands on the project entitled "Plastcon turns plastic waste into useful resources" (see Appendix D9). This not only strengthens an intangible aspect of CI by constructing themselves as a moral actor but also provides a tangible aspect of CI, this being a concrete technical solution to an ongoing real-world problem.

The article utilises the strategy of predication to position ME's Plastcon project as a solution to pressing global issue in the following paragraph:

A hot topic in environmental debates is plastic. A hot solution, in our opinion, is Plastcon. With this system, we have developed a responsible answer to the growing plastic waste problem by turning the materials we no longer need into useful resources. And tests in 2019 have only confirmed Plastcon's potentials and possibilities. (see Appendix D9).

The use of the metaphor and repetitive phrasing of hot topic and hot solution creates linguistic coherence in positing Plastcon as a vital solution. The use of "hot" as a predicate indicates something that is urgent and trendy. The phrasing "in our opinion" is an instance of mitigation and also perspectivation as it demonstrates that this opinion is limited to ME. The text once again highlights that MAKEEN Energy is an innovative actor whose solution is new by using the predicate of "hot". As this is the first year that outlines the Plastcon project it is not unexpected that the article should focus on "potentials and possibilities" rather than results. Future references to the Plastcon project continue to highlight the innovative importance of the project as a solution to global issues.

The strategy of predication and the use of metaphors to frame ME positively in relation to sustainability is also present in the *2022 Annual Review.* On a page featuring a quote about the EnviroTech division and progress with the Plastcon and Decomblades projects, the headline reads "A leap towards a more sustainable future" (see Appendix G11). Here the metaphor of describing innovation and movement towards a "more sustainable future" with the verb "leap" indicates a sudden and significant step towards something. In the

quote following the heading other metaphors are used to emphasise progress with the EnviroTech projects of EnviroTech and DecomBlades.

The discursive strategy of predication is used to attribute positive attributes to the progress of Plastcon is presented in the following sentence, "2022 has been the busiest year for EnviroTech so far. Plastcon really started to kick-off, and it has become even more clear that our solution is going to be a game changer within plastic conversion and recycling." (see Appendix G11). In this text, the metaphors "kick-off" and "game changer", both sports metaphors, positively frame the progress described as significant, proactive progress and notable achievement.

In the following line predication is again used to positively frame the progress of the DecomBlades project in 2022,

> The same goes for the DecomBlades project, where 2022 has been the year where we 'cracked the nut', and successfully separated fibre from the wind turbine blades, ensuring us a spot for the future of recycling of wind turbine blades. (see Appendix G11).

Here the figure of speech "cracked the nut" is used as a metaphor to positively describe success in the project. The use of these metaphors connects to the wider discourse of innovation that is ascribed the CI of ME throughout the corporate brochures.

Additionally, since the statement including the quotes comes from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of MAKEEN Energy, the discursive strategy of perspectivisation is employed (see Appendix G11). As the statement comes from a named employee in a leadership position, the message gains credibility and authority, to further reinforce the CI of ME as an innovative actor.

The use of metaphors, often environmental metaphors is employed in various discursive strategies to positively position the CI of ME. The use of metaphors and other forms of figurative language in corporate language serves to lighten the tone and provide more emotionally laden language to persuade the reader.

The exploration of alternative fuelling solutions as opposed to LPG as a sustainable attribute is represented as central to the CI of ME. The corporation includes updates on the necessity of alternative fuels and the role of ME in developing innovative solutions for these fuels. ME highlights its expertise within LPG as an important factor that allows them to innovate and develop solutions for LNG and LBG.

For instance, the corporate storytelling includes innovation as a central value of and objective of MAKEEN Energy. This is also expanded upon in the Corporate Profile from 2020, where it states on page about the organisation as a whole, "What this means is that we can incorporate new perspectives and approaches and maintain a high degree of innovation." (see Appendix A6). The co-text that precedes this sentence concerns the synergy and cooperation across ME business areas that enables the maintenance of a high degree of innovation. This is an example of intensification as the use of "high degree" indicates an advanced level of innovation that surpasses the norm. Again, employees are integrated into the values. Employees are central to the enactment of corporate values thus it is crucial to include their role and part in these values as an aspect of CI.

There is an issue in that while these innovative projects do enable ME to call themselves sustainable in relation to his sense however the main business areas of MAKEEN Energy involve fossil fuels. This contradiction is also present in the corporate storytelling that is often present in MAKEEN Energy brochures. There are changes in the language that is used to describe these innovative projects. It's notable that earlier brochures used the word sustainable more frequently.

While later brochures including the *2023 Annual Review* refrains from using the word sustainable in the corporate storytelling that is included in nearly all every corporate brochure from 2018 to 2023.

Looking at the historical context and the changes involving these innovative projects. The language and CI have changed. The strong emphasis that ME puts on forming its identity as a responsible and sustainable corporation and the impact of its business areas is lessened in later publications. The earlier editions essentially most publications before 2023 used green imagery more often and also emphasised the sustainable commitments of ME to a greater extent. It is also a notable omission that the 2023 does not mention the commitments to the UN Global Commitment, SDG's or the Sustainable Ocean Principles.

The *2023 Annual Review* differs in both content related to the keywords and images. This marks a shift from content earlier in this time period though *Our Energy Approach* also published in 2023 remains consistent with many of the same messages relating to the

keywords that reflect sustainable and responsible intentions as a core part of the identity and operations of MAKEEN Energy.

One of the key difficulties in representing MAKEEN Energy as a "sustainable" actor is its main business area that focuses on LPG which is a petroleum-based energy source. The *2023 Annual Review* includes an article which through mitigation as well as perspectivisation addresses this inherent aspect of their business that makes it difficult to represent themselves as sustainable as petroleum-based fuels are not green. ME addresses this and through a discursive strategy of blank it contextualises LPG as a fuel that in some places in the world is cleaner than alternatives (see Appendix H6). The article uses the discursive strategy of perspectivation with the inclusion of quotes from sales managers responsible for Africa about this topic.

The article highlights several features of LPG that mitigate the negative aspects of this fuel source in the context of other energy sources with a specific focus on Africa. It outlines that "Many parts of sub-Saharan Africa lack a sufficient power grid to bring electricity to all households – nor is there a gas grid to distribute natural gas for cooking and heating. And this is why so many Africans rely on LPG as their primary source of energy." (see Appendix H6). Through its comparison to other less efficient and safe energy sources such as burning wood LPG is positioned as the safest resource that is available to some. This reflects the strategy of mitigation wherein the petroleum-based business sector is minimised and the negative impact mitigated while documents throughout highlight responsibility and sustainability in relation to innovative projects such as Plastcon and DecomBlades and business areas that provide solutions for liquefied biogas. The 2023 Annual Review highlights a different concept related to sustainability that being circularity. This is the focus of articles on DecomBlades and Plastcon in 2023 while sustainability is not mentioned (see Appendix H9; H11).

5.8 Visual Sustainability

Corporate Identity is composed of expressed statements of identity and also graphics, colour schemes, and images (Pérez & del Bosque, 2014, p. 15). Across the time frame from 2018 to 2023, the images and graphics utilised throughout this time period are consistent in content as well as colour schemes. The images and graphics that accompany text often serve as a form

of context that supports the discursive strategies and themes that are present throughout the materials that represent sustainability and environmental consciousness.

Similar or identical images recur throughout the marketing materials, paired with consistent verbal communication. Through nomination, the images construct the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy as sustainable and environmentally conscious. For instance, the cover page of the 2020 *Corporate Profile* features the corporate purpose "Responsible energy solutions for people and planet" on a full-page background image (see Appendix A1; A16). The image depicts a reflective globe resting on green moss and foliage, illuminated by sunlight. Positioned in the bottom right corner, the globe reflects the surrounding treetops and forest landscape.

The reflective globe metaphorically conveys the interconnectedness of the planet's health and local environments. This visually reinforces MAKEEN Energy's role as a responsible global actor and its stated commitment to "people and planet". The use of reflection visually demonstrates the interconnectedness of human and environmental well-being (see Appendix A1).

A similar image appears on the second page of the *Corporate Profile.* This image shows a transparent globe placed on moss, set against a blurred green background (see Appendix A2). This image is also used on the cover of the *Our Energy Approach* brochure, alongside the corporate purpose and the image reappears again on the fourth page of the brochure (see Appendix B1; B4).

The same visual is featured in the *2018 Annual Review,* accompanied by the phrase "A market-leading corporation in the energy industry" (see Appendix C4). In this instance, the image spans a double-paged spread, with sunlight illuminating the globe and forest floor. The sunlight in the image contributes to an optimistic tone, as sunlight often symbolises hope and renewal. The healthy foliage constructs MAKEEN Energy as a positive actor for the environment. However, when paired with the title, a contradiction emerges. While the natural imagery and refer to "energy" may suggest alignment with renewable sources, the term "energy industry" is ambiguous, it can imply sustainability, but more often refers to conventional fossil fuel production. This is an example of argumentation strategy wherein the

topos of vagueness allows the company to appear responsible in the "energy industry" by pairing the vagueness of energy industry with a hopeful and green image to make MAKEEN Energy appear environmentally conscious while avoiding direct reference to its business areas which includes LPG.

The use of forests, foliage, and images of the planet continues in the marketing materials as other forms of discursive strategies construct the CI of MAKEEN Energy through images.

The phrase "Bridging gaps in the global energy supply" appears throughout the marketing materials, including as a standalone title in the *Our Energy Approach* brochure (see Appendix B8). On the corresponding page, the background image features a long bridge, stretching across a lush and green natural landscape into the distance. The image shows two people walking along the bridge in the distance. The visual metaphor reinforces the textual message as a form of argumentation that justifies and supports the company's role in "bridging gaps in the global energy supply" as an important actor in the global energy sector. The topos of usefulness and responsibility is present here as it justifies that there is a gap that must be addressed and MAKEEN Energy positions itself as the responsible actor that can solve this issue.

The visual metaphor of bridging gaps is also present elsewhere in the marketing materials on the cover of the *2020 Annual Review*. The cover includes the MAKEEN Energy logo in the top left corner. Then below this at the bottom of the page the title *Annual Review 2020* appears with the subtitle in a smaller text size below showing "Bridging gaps in global energy supply" (see Appendix E1). The image that covers the cover page shows the Penang Bridge in Malaysia. This bridge crosses a body of water and is lit by streetlights as it appears to be either dawn or dusk. The image further cements the role of MAKEEN Energy as a responsible and useful actor. The visual metaphor of bridge supports that MAKEEN Energy is essential as bridges are necessary for reaching or going further on a journey. This image in particular also supports the topos of responsibility and usefulness as the bridge is lit up and this light guides those on a journey.

This journey and objective of bridging gaps is also formulated on a page of the *Annual Review 2020* with the title "Introducing new technologies to lead the energy industry a more sustainable direction". Direction and leading further fit into the narrative of

MAKEEN Energy guiding the energy transformation and being a leader in sustainable efforts.

The topos of responsibility and usefulness that positions MAKEEN Energy as a leader is present on page 36 of the *2020 Annual Review*. This page again shows an image of a bridge. This time the phrase "Bridging gaps in global energy supply" is not included however the text still employs the discursive strategy of argumentation to position MAKEEN Energy as responsible. The page shows the title "Giving back in a difficult year" accompanied by a text that reads "Responsibility is part of our DNA, and this goes beyond the energy solutions we deliver. Here are some stories of how we gave a helping hand to those around us in 2020." (see Appendix E11).

The text here "responsibility is in our DNA" emphasises that responsibility is a core value of MAKEEN Energy through the discursive strategy of predication. The text states, "goes beyond the energy solution we deliver", the word delivers is also metaphorically visualised by the bridge as a bridge delivers to somewhere in literal terms. The bridge in this image is a suspended bridge which looks to allow travellers to cross some sort of valley or gully in a forest. Above the title of "Giving back (...) there is a small text that reads "A HELPING HAND". This is a figurative phrase that denotes the physical act of helping someone and also refers to forms of abstract aid that is common to charitable discourse. This fits well with the page which introduces MAKEEN Energy as responsible and introduces stories of MAKEEN Energy has given a "(...) a helping hand (...)" (see Appendix E11).

The visual and verbal metaphor of MAKEEN Energy being on a journey is present throughout the marketing materials and is also present in the images that utilise the metaphor of bridging. The bridges and roads represent vital points and avenues taken in a journey to get somewhere.

Throughout the marketing materials another image is repeated throughout also featuring the globe indicating responsibility and care for the planet and its people as a whole. This is demonstrated in images that show hands cupping the planet. The *2021 Annual Review* shows two adult hands cupping a globe with the hands of a child in a position below and opposite the hands of the adult. The hands of the child are also in a cupping position but are

empty. This image suggests that the adult is handing the globe over to the child who will receive it. The background of the image is green and bright but blurred with no identifying features.

The Annual Review from 2021 shows a slightly different image with the slogan, this image shows two adult hands cupping a globe with the hands of a child in a position below and opposite the hands of the adult. The hands of the child are also in a cupping position but are empty. This image suggests that the adult is handing the globe over to the child who will receive it. The background of the image is green and bright but blurred with no identifying features. This image also demonstrates and visually represents responsibility and the discourse of sustainability wherein the generational responsibility of adults to care for the planet for future generations is commonly employed.

"Global reach, local presence" is also shown through images. The image that is shown behind the corporate storytelling in the *2021 Annual Review* emulates this statement (see Appendix F1). It shows sets of hands holding up a globe. The support with which they hold up the globe suggests care and the local presence aspect of the statement as the fingertips lightly touch various spots on the globe as opposed to clasping the globe, where the whole surface of the hand would be in contact with the globe. The gentle way in which the hands hold up the globe also emulate the responsibility for "people and planet" that is expressed in the corporate purpose of "Responsible energy solutions for people and planet" (see Appendix F1).

The statement represents MAKEEN Energy as part of a greater whole and movement. This is supported by the images that are used with the corporate purpose. The use of a globe represents solidarity and togetherness. The positioning of the globe as only a small feature in a large photo suggests the frangibility of the world and minimises the immensity of the world seemingly making humanity and the globe smaller and more together. This togetherness was implied in the phrase people and planet and is further implied when they state that they will play a role. This represents MAKEEN Energy as part of an ongoing movement situating them as a "player" in the energy industry. This connects to the earlier expressed statements from ME that situate themselves as part of the flock working with sustainable initiatives ultimately situating them as one actor out of many.

The green foliage and forest images are metaphors for vibrancy and health. The images often include rain drops another vital part of life. The imagery of the *2022 Annual*

Review included green imagery that supported the expressed communication of ME being on a journey, more specifically a purposeful journey as the title of the Annual Review denotes "Moving forward with purpose" (see Appendix G1). The cover of this annual review includes sustainable imagery in the form of footprints across the page.

Footprints are often used in sustainable discourse as metaphor to denote the impact that a person or organisation has on the environment. The footprints move across the page indicating movement towards something as they all go in the same direction (see Appendix G1). The footprints are shown going across what happens to be the aerial view of a dense forest. The footprints are filled with blue sky (see Appendix G1). Footprints are an important metaphor in environmental and sustainable discourse. Sustainability is an abstract concept whereas a footprint is a visible and physical indication of an impact. The concept of a carbon footprint is an important symbol for sustainability.

This annual review emphasises that MAKEEN Energy is on a journey. The text including journey is likely inspired by the wider discourse that is utilised in the UN Global Compact. As a member, ME likely models its language regarding corporate responsibility around this. By using this theme of a journey, it is also an example of the discursive strategy of mitigation, it allows ME to represent themselves as active in moving towards a more sustainable future while also indicating that nothing has been completed yet. This allows them to represent themselves positively while undercutting any criticism of how far they have come as they state that the journey is not complete.

This language as mentioned previously is likely inspired by the UN Global Compact. One could consider whether the language within the UN Global Compact also employs these discursive strategies to encourage businesses to commit to the Compact while limiting the expectations for what the companies can do.

Visually there are several interrelating narratives presented through the visual and textual elements throughout the marketing materials. The metaphor of MAKEEN Energy being on a journey and bridging gaps are consistently represented visually. The discursive strategies of argumentation and predication position MAKEEN Energy as a positive force for change leading to a better and more sustainable future. The visuals support the discursive

strategies that are represented in the verbal language and in many instances go further in representing ME as a sustainable and green actor through this is not the main business area of ME. These visuals are however very different in the *2023 Annual Review* which refrains from using the same images that visualise globes, natural environments, and other images commonly associated with environmental consciousness.

5.9 Developments over time

Between 2018 and 2023, MAKEEN Energy's corporate identity increasingly integrated sustainability into its corporate purpose and storytelling. Across this period, the corporate brochures reflected subtle yet meaningful shifts in the representation of sustainability.

In earlier brochures, sustainability was explicitly referenced through terms such as the UN Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, by 2023, these concrete references had been reduced. The word "sustainability" appeared less frequently and was notably replaced by the term "responsible" in the corporate storytelling section, which otherwise remained largely unchanged in content (see Appendix H2).

Additionally, the 2023 storytelling placed greater emphasis on Plastcon and its circular recycling benefits. Circularity and innovation were highlighted as defining features of MAKEEN Energy's value proposition, reinforcing the company's positioning as a leader in sustainable transformation. These themes were communicated through both verbal and visual strategies.

Imagery in previous brochures regularly featured symbolic motifs associated with sustainability, such as green colours, globes, footprints, and bridges. However, in 2023, the Annual Review adopted a different visual style that omitted many of these recurring images. The familiar visuals supporting the slogan "bridging gaps in the global energy supply" were no longer present.

Other notable changes in 2023 include the absence of references to sustainability frameworks such as the UN Global Compact or the SDGs. Instead, the Annual Review focused on promoting the innovation and circularity of EnviroTech projects like Plastcon and DecomBlades. Metaphors were used to frame these initiatives as successful progress. The review also included a feature article discussing the safety, efficiency, and necessity of LPG

in specific regions, particularly in parts of Africa where alternative energy sources are less safe or less reliable (see Appendix H6).

While earlier brochures tended to introduce MAKEEN Energy with dedication to sustainability in the corporate storytelling, the 2023 edition highlighted the company's technical expertise and experience first. Even so, the principle of responsibility continued to play a central role, demonstrating that the discursive focus may have shifted rather than been removed.

6   Discussion

The analysis demonstrated that MAKEEN Energy integrates corporate sustainability and responsibility as a core aspect of its identity. This integration is not only consistent across the time period studied but also as central to the company's corporate storytelling and corporate purpose, as represented throughout the corporate storytelling and consistently recontextualised in the brochures. The corporate brochures serve as a central and expansive platform for introducing both internal and external stakeholders to the business. They convey both tangible aspects—such as business areas, project cases, and technical offerings—and intangible aspects like corporate values and identity.

Corporate identity is formed and communicated at the managerial level, and the integration of sustainable and responsible discourses is reflected in marketing materials produced at this level (Cornelissen, 2023). For example, CEO letters regularly include references to sustainability, indicating that responsible business intentions are embedded in leadership communication.

However, the analysis reveals a gradual reduction in the scope and frequency of sustainability messaging across the years. While MAKEEN Energy consistently presents itself as committed to sustainable and responsible initiatives, the extent to which these initiatives are detailed or followed up on becomes more limited over time. This pattern may reflect a broader discursive shift in response to changes in regulatory and public discourse.

In 2023, European legislation began to address as a potential legal issue, which may have encouraged companies such as MAKEEN Energy to take a more cautious approach to sustainability communication (Johnson, 2025). This could explain the reduction in direct references to commitments like the UN Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite the omission of these affiliations in the 2023 brochure, MAKEEN Energy remains listed as a participant in the UN Global Compact, raising questions about the strategic decision to withhold this information. This may be an example of greenhushing, where companies deliberately downplay or omit sustainability claims to avoid reputational risks (Steele, Gatti, and Conti, 2025, p. 150).

Rather than signalling a retreat from sustainability, this shift may indicate a repositioning. MAKEEN Energy continues to emphasize innovation, responsibility, and circularity which are core features of sustainability, especially through its EnviroTech initiatives like Plastcon and DecomBlades (Anitha, 2019, p. 29-31). These projects are presented as responses to urgent global challenges such as plastic waste and energy transitions, allowing the company to maintain its relevance and demonstrate its value in sustainable transformation trends.

There is also an inherent tension in the company's portrayal of itself as a sustainable actor, given its primary focus on gas and filling solutions. However, MAKEEN Energy does not produce these fuels but provides infrastructure and technology that improve the safety, efficiency, and environmental footprint of their use. This framing supports its position as a facilitator of progress rather than a direct contributor to fossil fuel dependency.

A central component of the company's identity is its extensive engineering expertise, developed over decades. This expertise underpins its ability to deliver solutions that align with sustainability goals. If this technical competence is a defining feature of the corporate identity, it may be strategically advantageous to foreground it before emphasizing sustainability. This ordering could help reinforce credibility and avoid overpromising in an area where business limitations are acknowledged.

Overall, MAKEEN Energy's discourse reflects the broader trends in corporate sustainability communication. The company aligns itself with prevailing narratives of innovation, responsibility, and leadership, even as it adapts its language and focus in response to external influences. The ongoing evolution of MAKEEN Energy's sustainability discourse

reflects its efforts to maintain a coherent and adaptable corporate identity within a shifting sociopolitical environment.

7 Conclusion

Sustainability is a constantly evolving concept that is increasingly adopted by businesses as both a practice and as an important value for the corporate identity. As stakeholders increasingly seek insight into the values and distinct traits of businesses, sustainability has become not only a valuable opportunity to attract interest but also a necessity for staying competitive and meeting evolving expectations (Cornelissen, 2023, p. 100). The integration of sustainability into the corporate identity of a business can be a powerful way to achieve long-term success and create a lasting reputation that is attractive to a range of stakeholders. This poses a difficulty for businesses in industries where the products and services are not necessarily sustainable such as the petroleum industry. More than ever, businesses are able to communicate to stakeholders via a range of multi-media communication channels including websites, social media, and brochures. Businesses are able to continuously shape and adapt their corporate identity to changing trends and expectations.

These are some of the factors that complicate the integration of sustainability and features of sustainability into the corporate identity of MAKEEN Energy. As a company that supports the energy industry particularly LPG, LBG, and LNG filling and bunkering solutions as well as equipment and customer support needs, their business areas are not inherently sustainable. MAKEEN Energy has adapted however and expanded to new business areas that provide circular and innovative technologies. A strong corporate identity is valuable for an organisation and with the complicating factors outlined above this led to the following problem formulation:

How are the discourses of sustainability integrated in the corporate identity of the international organisation MAKEEN Energy? How have these discourses changed alongside external pressures concerning sustainability?

Research of corporate brochures from the years 2018 to 2023 found that themes of sustainability were present and consistent throughout. Sustainability was heavily ingrained in the corporate identity of ME in features such as the corporate purpose, storytelling, values, visuals, and positioning of ME as a leader in innovation and sustainable commitments.

Over time the emphasis on sustainability and specifically the use of the word sustainability decreased as well as the images that showed common symbols of sustainability such as a globe, footprints, and green nature environments. Features of sustainability such as innovation and circularity were featured heavily throughout the brochures also in 2023. These was emphasis throughout the documents however these features mainly applied to the new business areas of MAKEEN Energy involving the Plastcon and DecomBlades projects.

MAKEEN Energy also positively positions its less "sustainable" business areas including solutions and equipment for liquefied petroleum gas by representing them as placeholders for future solutions with the slogan of "bridging gaps in the global energy supply".

Ultimately, the corporate identity of ME is overall consistent in its representation of values related to sustainability and responsibility which is useful in establishing a consistent corporate reputation. As an engineering company, it has a strong emphasis on values and intangible aspects of CI that appeals to stakeholders who want more than just information on business offerings but the culture and people that make up the company.

This research contributes to the field of research on the discourse of sustainability within corporate identity. Future research could expand on corporate identity in the energy industry to examine how sustainability has changed over time and is discursively represented today. The concept of sustainability and the way in which businesses incorporate sustainability as a guiding principle is continuously evolving and is influenced by external pressures and expectations. The field of research involving corporate communications, managerial research, and sustainability is business will continue to evolve, and future research can utilise discourse to examine the underlying meanings in how these changes are represented.

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