



## Why Am I So Irritated At Having To Learn About Sustainability?

Sitting down to a university lecture about Regulations, Ethics & Sustainability was not something I was excited by. The previous modules had felt inspiring, but I was greeting this module with less intrigue. The reason being that in 2019 I became so obsessed with environmental activism that I started questioning everything I did as to whether it was eco-friendly enough. I experienced environmental anxiety and burnout and had to step away from the community I had been a significant part of.

For the RES project, our group chose to focus on the issue of recycling. I recycle or re-use most of the things I buy, so the issue of recycling was a topic I felt I wouldn't get overwhelmed by. I didn't want to be pulled back to the environmental hyper focus I once had.



We chose to use the Good Life Goal #12 (UN, 2022) as the starting point for our RES issue. We then focused on the individual action of recycling, which sits within point 2.

A positive aspect of the module was the enlightenment in there being sustainable marketing practitioners in the industry. There are professionals in the field whom want to make space for sustainable products and services so I wouldn't be alone in refusing to promote plastic tat! There is also a recognition that eco-friendly choices have to be available to those across all budgets (Engen and DiPiazza, 2005), supporting our target market of students on a low income.

The client for this recycling project was DMU's student union and there was scope for the assignment to make a positive change in their business. During a meeting it transpired they didn't have recycling bins in the student areas, but had them in their offices. According to Peterson and Lunde (2005) correct infrastructure is necessary to support the realisation of sustainability goals. This led us to create a petition to request the implementation of recycling bins in the student areas (change.org, 2024).

Within our secondary data research, we found the majority of students at DMU were Gen Z (De Montfort SU, 2023) and this age group are more aware of the importance of sustainability (Forbes, 2021). However, students in hall accommodations recycled far less than people in other abodes (National Union of Students, 2013), which led us to our big idea.

'To educate and inspire students about recycling their rubbish and implementing this into their everyday lives – at home, in halls and on campus.'

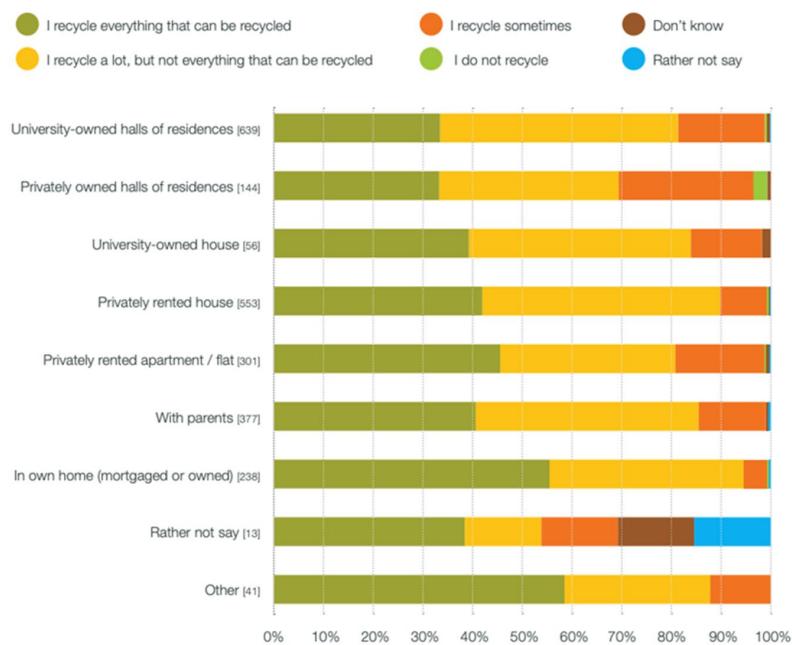


Figure 1. Graph to show the recycling behaviours of students depending where they live, source: National Union of Students (2013)

Our IMC plan (Kotler, 2003) helped us to understand the situation we were a part of and the stakeholders affected by our decisions. We analysed how to create a relevant message about recycling and where to share it so that it met our target market through the channels they used. Our live event also met the target market in their own physical environment, allowing them to find us easily (Ottman, 2011).

Advertising & Marketing Communication Degree Student Event : Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 10.30 am - 1.30 pm on the Terrace of De Montfort University's Campus Centre

As part of the last module for the first years in our undergraduate degree for Advertising & Marketing Communication, students are producing a mini event in groups that encourage the day-to-day incorporation of the UN's sustainable development goals.

This group has chosen goal number 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production.

The group's aims for the event are;

1) To educate students on how to recycle their refuse properly.

- Research has indicated that students living in halls and student housing are not recycling as much as other people, with one of the main reasons for this being that they just don't know what to do.

2) To have students of DMU support the petition for more recycling bins to be available within the university, to suit the refuse requirements of the students on campus.

- There are not adequate recycling facilities within the De Montfort Student Union building in the student areas. We will work with the union and the estates team to try to bring in recycling bins that suit the refuse being deposited by the students, rather than generic recycling bins.

The class event will be run by the students, within the DMU campus centre, for around 3 hours on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May.

This group will produce educational games to involve and inform the students visiting the stall about how different refuse can be recycled. It will share facts and have multiple choice trivia questions about recycling, to impart knowledge in an enjoyable way. The goal is to empower students with the knowledge they need to feel comfortable recycling and encourage long term change in their behaviours.

Before and after the event day there will also be an online petition shared to support the addition of recycling facilities in the student campus centre. This will be shared through the group's purpose-made Instagram page, printed posters throughout the campus and digital screens within the campus centre, and possibly the university's social media. The link for the petition will be shared through QR codes on the posters and digital screens, and hyperlinks on the social media pages. The completed petition will be delivered to the necessary university departments with the support of the student union, before the end of June, with the aim of bringing in the recycling facilities by the end of 2024.

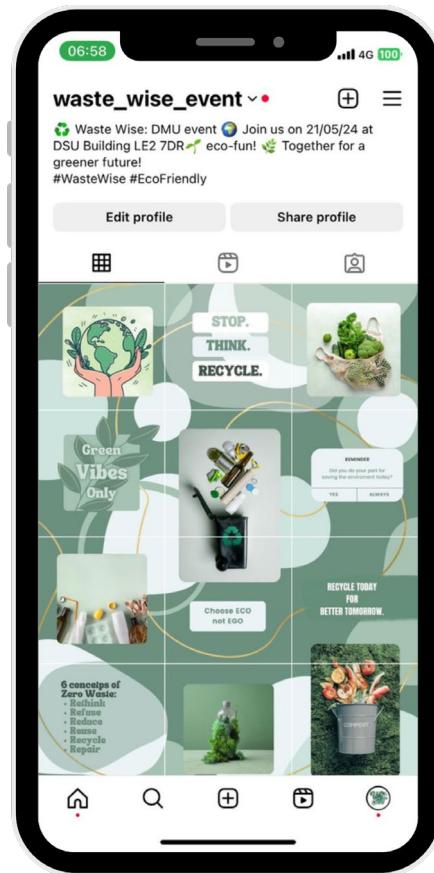
The group would like to collaborate with local sustainable businesses in the form of a sponsorship. The university's student union has a number of digital screens within the campus centre building and has allowed these to be used to advertise the sponsoring businesses, as part of the event. They would not normally allow advertising in this way. There will also be space on the printed posters for logos and QR code links to the businesses Instagram pages. The group would like to ask that in return for sharing this with the student body, they could receive vouchers/coupons for, or free samples of the businesses products, that will be shared with students after they have taken part in the educational games on the stall and added their name to the petition for the new recycling bins. The aim is to engage with 30 students on the event day, and the petition promotions will be live for 3 weeks with the aim to gather over 500 student signatures.

There is scope for this group's event to also be a part of the Fresher's Fair in September 2024.

The press release we sent to local sustainable businesses detailing our intentions and aims for the event, which connected us with three sponsors.



The live event poster which included QR code links to our petition and our sponsors Instagram pages.



Our group created an Instagram page for the event, which gathered 25 followers on the event day.



A student taking part in our quiz at our event.

Throughout the module I had trepidation about researching too deeply, in case it brought about the environmental anxiety I had suffered in 2019. But, the navigation I found through the marketing theories and industry best practise helped to prevent my brain from getting carried away. It allowed me to thoroughly analyse data and extract information to the ability I know I'm capable of. To give a deeper understanding of the way I process information; I'm autistic with ADHD and I thrive on knowing 'the rules'. Without these, my brain can feel like a runaway train. Over thinking. Excessively analysing. Having a marketing framework to guide me is invaluable.

The Experiential Marketing strategy (Schmitt, 1999) led us to realise our event would include the Strategic Experiential Modules of 'Feeling' and 'Thinking'. With 'Thinking' having the expansion of using marketing messages with positive or negative framing (Peterson and Lunde, 2016). We wanted to create an event that would cater to the rational and emotional sides of our target market. I felt we achieved this with the two games we used as educational entertainment, but next time I would like to include the use of positively framed messages to create aspirational marketing (Forbes, 2024). This is because according to SAGE (2012), "environmentally conscious behaviours are most likely to occur when consumers perceive that their actions are likely to make a difference".



Our card sorting game, which aimed to educate players on how much of their rubbish is recyclable, and where they can take it to be recycled.

I particularly enjoyed creating an immersive space within our stall, which offered a recycling hyper reality (Wohlfel and Whelan, 2006). There is definitely scope to create deeper immersion by bringing in more creative visuals to support the 2D marketing messages

through incorporating the 3D materials we're trying to get the students to recycle. This is something I'm interested by as I am a creative person.



Our event stall outside of the DMU Student Union

Iso-Ahola's Motivations Model (Thanabordeekij, 2018) showed us that our student target market are seeking personal and inter-personal rewards. We identified we needed to create an interactive aesthetic experience where the students could learn. However, I think there is real scope to further explore what we could offer students through this model to elevate their enjoyment at our event.

Our SMART objectives created a model for what we wanted out of the campaign and live event. I used the 'Big Idea' objectives to guide my analysis of who I could contact within the student union and the university, to improve my situational analysis within our IMC. Through this exploration, I created a business connection within the Estates team that has the potential to enhance our campaign.

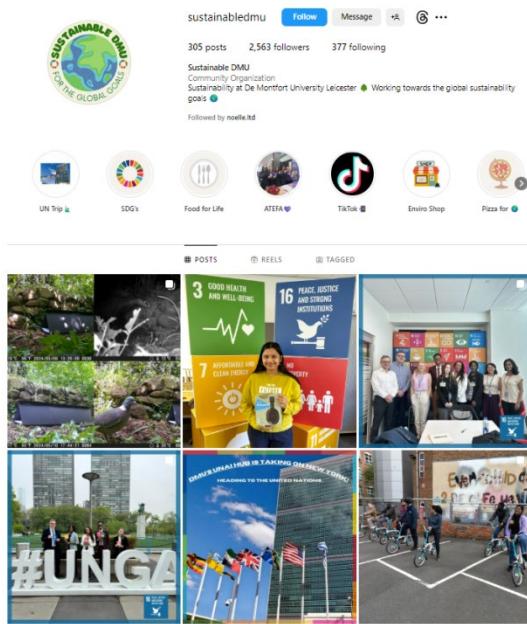


Our SMART objectives for the overall campaign and the live event, which included KPIs

The area we didn't deliver on was the Google form. Unfortunately, I wasn't aware that the team didn't know how to create one, and by the point I realised, it was too late. This has highlighted the need to check the teams' technical abilities, before implementing tasks. However, it didn't hinder the data collecting for the event, as a team member produced a paper version instead.

We didn't hit our target of getting 25 people to engage with the stall, but it was a quiet day around the student union building with a low footfall for everyone carrying out the event. We had around 10 people take part in one or both of the games and the people who did engage were mostly interested by the information we were sharing. Only one seemed uninterested, which is to be expected.

Using the Gibbs Model of Reflection (1988), I established that a pre-event customer touch-point improvement would be to market through the Instagram of DMU Sustainability (2024), instead of creating a social media page ourselves. This would enable collaboration with an existing team, who already interact with our target market.



DMU Sustainability's Instagram page (2024)

Moving the focus from our campaign to the DSU's business, there are exciting prospects in the areas of brand activism and partnerships, which would strengthen their CSR agenda (De Montfort SU, n.d.). To support our team's big idea 'To educate and inspire students about recycling their rubbish and implementing this into their everyday lives – at home, in halls and on campus', they could replicate Innocent Drinks' recycling awareness campaign (Innocent Drinks, 2023). This could be within the DMU campus or through a partnership with Leicester City Council to jointly improve recycling awareness in both communities, which affect the stakeholders of both organisations (SAGE, 2012).



Innocent Drink's Out Of Home billboard promotions (Innocent Drinks, 2023)

For more excitement and brand awareness, they could use ambient or stealth marketing to create a hyper reality (Wohlfeil and Whelan, 2006) for viewers of the message, similar to how we designed our event. By using sustainable 3D visuals or optical illusions, we could create something really exciting. Examples of prospective angles are shown below from Creative Guerrilla Marketing (2010).



Dublin City Council promoting their message to put chewing gum in the bin (Creative Guerrilla Marketing, 2010)

## A carpet or a hidden hoard of dust and mites?



Panasonic promoting their vacuum cleaner through optical illusion marketing (Creative Guerrilla Marketing, 2010)



Promotional message about the dangers of plastic waste by the advocacy group Plastic Pollution Coalition  
(Creative Guerrilla Marketing, 2010)

I chose to study marketing because of the data analysis component suiting my autistic brain and the creative component suiting my ADHD brain, and this project has allowed both to work thoroughly. With the creative aspect I have found it harder to implement my ideas for this project because of the lack of time and budget. I would enjoy having the opportunity to do expand on this though, as I can see great potential.

After my initial concern that I would have to make a choice between either skimming the module content or immersing myself to the point of another environmental based anxiety, it turned out I didn't need to do either. I have realised that through using the guidance of the theories and industry best practices, along with the Good Life Goals (UN, 2022), there is a happy medium where I can achieve my true potential.

This lesson I will use going forwards – it doesn't need to be all or nothing.

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