

## **To Fly or Not Fly?**

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### **TEACHING NOTES**

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The authors prepared this case solely as a basis for class discussion and not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management. Although based on real events and despite occasional references to actual companies, this case is fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons or entities is coincidental.

# Teaching plan

The teaching plan presents a complete guide on how to teach the given brand management case. It serves to assist the lecturer in preparing, organizing, and structuring the case in the most efficient manner. The idea is that the lecturer will be able to lead an engaging and interesting case discussion that will assist students in achieving the illustrated learning objectives. The teaching plan encompasses a case synopsis, learning objectives and overview of key learnings, including main and assisting management questions, and finally the teaching suggestions. A time and board plan are included in the teaching suggestions to further assist the lecturer.

## Case synopsis

At the end of 2018, the SAS executive team made the decision that the company will start climate compensating for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for all their EuroBonus members as of February 2019, which means 40% of their trips. However, the current society has escalated in its sustainability discussions and the airline industry overall, is one of the most criticized industries due to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions emitted through all the flights. The industry is now facing a society where “fly shame” is the newest daily word, where travelers are getting criticized on social media, and general criticism towards the airlines is common in the media. Therefore, SAS currently operates in an industry that seems to stand no chance against the society, as sustainability efforts generally tend to be criticized, due to people’s skepticism and claims that airlines will never manage to be truly sustainable. Thus, SAS has to decide whether or not they should openly communicate their newest sustainability initiative or keep quiet about it, and thereby do good in silence. SAS executive team now faces a tough decision, as both options have their advantages and disadvantages concerning the corporate reputation of SAS. Therefore, the management question is:

*Should SAS openly communicate its newest initiative to offset the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or keep quiet about it, when considering the corporate reputation of a brand that operates in a heavily criticized industry?*

## Learning objectives

The given case in brand management has several learning objectives. The case provides the opportunity to broaden the class’ knowledge concerning corporate brand identity, corporate communication, and corporate reputation. The aim with these theories is to provide an understanding of how theoretical concepts can be applied to real-life situations and thereby be used to make strategic management decisions. At large, the learnings from this case includes understanding what societal changes mean for branding, and how certain management decisions that seem obvious at first, might not be so simple after evaluating the possible implications for each alternative. The given case can also be applied to other industries that face dilemmas and societal changes, which makes it even more valuable in terms of learning outcomes.


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## Corporate brand identity

A corporate brand represents the promise between the organization and its stakeholders, where its values, culture, and personality is what makes the brand unique among the competition (Roper & Fill, 2012). However, in order to make any strategic management decision, there must be an understanding of who the brand is and what it stands for (Urde, 2019). Thus, the corporate brand identity of SAS can be used as a guide to answer the given managerial questions regarding their sustainability communication, by answering the questions such as “Who are we? Where do we come from? What do we stand for? And, what is our wanted position?” (Urde & Greyser, 2016, p.98). In this case, the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) (**Exhibit 1**) is a model used to answer these question and to define the corporate brand identity of SAS. The middle of the matrix is the brand core, which is guiding the remaining elements of the matrix to create a coherent and strong identity (Urde, 2013). At the same time, the matrix allow us to clarify the corporate identity from an internal and external perspective. The internal perspective represents the organization’s credo, while the external perspective defines all the elements related to the consumers’ perception (Greyser & Urde, 2019). This model provides a comprehensive view of the corporate identity for SAS, in order to better understand the strategic choice that is more coherent with their identity.

The completed CBIM applied to SAS is demonstrated in **Exhibit 2**. The matrix provides a better and deeper understanding who the corporate brand of SAS is. This makes it easier to understand to what extent each management option is aligned with the corporate brand identity of SAS.

**Exhibit 2** The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013) applied to SAS

| Corporate Brand Identity Matrix |   |   |                                     |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| External                        | <b>Value Proposition</b><br>Offering smooth, attractively priced flights for those traveling on business and those traveling privately.                             | <b>Relationship</b><br>We Are Travelers   | <b>Positioning</b><br>We want to be the first choice and the most reliable airline for Scandinavia's frequent travelers. |
|                                 | <b>Expression</b><br>How can you change the world if you haven't seen it?   | <b>Brand Core</b><br>We make life easier by making time matter to travelers, to employees and to the planet.<br><br>Safety - Punctuality - Care | <b>Personality</b><br>We are ambitious, while being friendly and trustworthy.  |
| Internal                        | <b>Mission and Vision</b><br>Our mission is to win Scandinavia's frequent travelers.<br><br>Our vision is to make life easier for Scandinavia's frequent travelers. | <b>Culture</b><br>Scandinavian by name and nature.  | <b>Competences</b><br>Offer more destinations and departures than any other Nordic airline.                              |

When applying the model to SAS, the different element of the brand identity can be analyzed. Generally speaking, when looking at the matrix, one can see that “making life easier for frequent travelers” is a substantial part of SAS and their identity. This in turn, is reflected throughout all elements. For example, the value proposition is to offer smooth and affordable journeys, while the intended positioning is to be the first choice among customers looking for convenient traveling. Furthermore, one of SAS’ clearest clues of their identity is their relationship with their customers. This element is defined as ‘We are travelers,’ whereby SAS combines their traveling customers and their traveling personnel, and therefore identifies a strong connection between the brand and the customers. Thus, a deeper meaning of the relationship is “we travel and create the future together.” Additionally, the personality can be explained with human characteristics and are defined as friendly, caring, trustworthy, and ambitious. This is further reflected in their expression, which in this case communicates the concept of dreaming big and being future oriented, while building on emotions. Thus, one of their most known expressions are “How can you change the world if you haven’t seen it?” SAS’ culture is generally explained to be Scandinavian. This is reflected in the way they work, by taking responsibility, being open, and constantly aiming to improve. In summary, when looking at matrix, the Scandinavian customers and values are permeating SAS’ identity, as shown in the elements of competences, culture, positioning, and mission and vision. Therefore, the brand authenticity is enhanced, due to the clear Scandinavian background, which represent a culture and a place of origin (Beverland, 2005).

## **Corporate communication**

### *Stakeholders*

Roper and Fill (2012) argue that the role of corporate communications is to engage stakeholders. Therefore, it is essential to understand who the key stakeholders are in this case, and how they would be affected by each decision. Firstly, SAS’ customers are important stakeholders to keep in mind. Especially the ones who are a part of the EuroBonus loyalty program. Furthermore, it would also show their customers that SAS is prepared to go the extra mile and offer their customers an added value, which helps them make sustainable choices for their journeys. It would additionally speak to the non-EuroBonus members and possibly encourage them to join the program. On the other hand, communicating the newest initiative, may also attract negative attention among non-EuroBonus members as they are not entitled to this added value. Secondly, other airlines and the whole industry represent another key stakeholder. If SAS chooses to openly communicate their offsetting initiatives, it will give a clear statement of SAS positioning themselves as first movers and a discussion leader. This would entail setting a trend and thereby put pressure on their competitors concerning sustainability issues. Thirdly, the general public can also be considered a crucial stakeholder. This is because the carbon offsetting can also bring skepticism towards the whole airline industry, since consumers may not be fully aware of what CO<sub>2</sub> compensation is, but above all, consumers may not even be aware of the whole negative effects of the aviation emissions.

On the other hand, if SAS chooses to keep quiet about their newest initiative, it would entail refraining from openly being a discussion leader and thereby refrain from standing in the spotlight. This choice is more discrete, and therefore puts the company away from non- predictive events and feedbacks.

### *Reasons for using corporate communication*

According to Roper and Fill (2012), there are different reasons for using corporate communication. The authors divide the reasons into three strategic categories; strategic events, strategic development, and strategic maintenance (**Exhibit 3**). In this case, if SAS chooses to openly communicate their latest sustainability initiatives, it would be placed in the category of strategic development, as it entails further building on the corporate brand, developing corporate reputation, and influencing stakeholder groups by communicating its newest corporate strategy. In this case, the communication of the newest initiative would show how SAS attempts to further build on its corporate image, to become more sustainable in a society where sustainability is one of the most discussed topics, and thereby try to enhance their reputation. Furthermore, it would not only be an attempt to influence their customers, by helping them become more aware of making sustainable choices, it would also be an attempt to drive the whole industry towards a sustainable future by putting more pressure on competitors.

**Exhibit 3** Strategic categories for corporate communication (Roper and Fill, 2012, p. 214)

| Principal categories for the use of corporate communication |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Strategic events</i>                                     | <i>Examples</i>  |
| <b>Strategic events</b>                                     | To stabilize after merger and acquisition<br>Chronic underperformance<br>Change of leadership<br>Change of strategy<br>Environment or industry upheaval<br>Crisis and disaster   |
| <b>Strategic development</b>                                | To build a corporate brand<br>To develop the corporate reputation<br>To influence stakeholder groups, e.g. the public, investors, government, competitors, customers<br>To communicate corporate strategy<br>To (re)position an organization<br>To provide coordination and integration  |
| <b>Strategic maintenance</b>                                | To monitor the environment<br>To manage stakeholder perceptions, attitudes and behaviour<br>To keep stakeholders informed about and engaged with organizational activities, developments and policies<br>To engage employees to improve stakeholder interactions<br>To support products and services<br>To build and sustain relationships with key stakeholders |

## *Alignment with identity*

However, it is fundamental that a corporation's communication reflects the values and beliefs in accordance with the corporate identity, as this is central in developing and shaping the corporate image among stakeholders (Roper & Fill, 2012). With this in mind, the CBIM that was previously applied to SAS, is supportive when weighing the options that the company now is facing. Whether or not SAS chooses to openly communicate their newest initiative, it must be aligned with their identity at large.

It is also crucial to understand what type of message SAS is currently communicating to its audience. Generally, SAS is known for encouraging their travelers to discover the world, to be able to make a change. In other words, SAS wants to make the world a better place together with their travelers. Furthermore, it is essential to consider what SAS is currently communicating concerning sustainability efforts. In this case, SAS has its sustainability reports and sustainability efforts displayed on their website. However, sustainability has not been part of the advertisements, except some Facebook posts concerning, for example, their sustainability flying kit. With this in mind, SAS has not been communicating their sustainability efforts to a large extent, when not taking the corporate website with sustainability reports into consideration. At this stage, it is therefore necessary to consider what openly communicating the newest initiative would entail, but also what keeping quiet about it would mean. This makes the choice more challenging, as communicating the new initiative in one way entails communication about a subject that they have not much dealt with before. On the other hand, one might argue that it would fit their identity, as it shows their initiative about care, responsibility, making life easier for the customers by offering them an added value, and together create a better world.

## *Key message and positioning*

As Roper and Fill (2012) point out, the corporate image is shaped by the key messages that are delivered by the corporation, and the context in which the communication takes place. SAS now has to choose what image they are aiming to build. Obviously, the decision to offset for such a large portion of their customer entails that SAS has acknowledged the importance of sustainability issues. However, offsetting and openly communicating has different implications than offsetting and staying silent about it. The former is more actively seeking to show their sustainability efforts, whereas the latter is more passive. At this point, it is much about the choice of taking the position as a discussion leader of sensitive topic. What is important to remember at this stage, is the fact that the position of being a discussion leader also entails being a first mover. However, it further involves leading a discussion about a subject that has been heavily criticizing the very industry that SAS operates in. This in turn, makes the context more complex.

It is also essential to understand that the key messages of corporate communication are important in terms of positioning in the minds of the stakeholders

(Roper & Fill, 2012). According to the authors, there are different themes that work as the center of the communication (**Exhibit 4**). If SAS chooses to refrain from openly communicating, and thereby being “green in silence,” their positioning would not change much. Instead, it would stay rather stable. On the other hand, if SAS chooses to openly communicate their sustainability efforts, it would place them in the core positioning theme of ‘first strike.’ This entails that they claim to be superior and thus differentiate themselves from the competitors, by being the first and only ones to make the claim (Rupert & Fill, 2012). Even though other airlines offer the possibility to CO<sub>2</sub> compensate, they do not offer it as an added value embedded in the price, nor to the same extent. Therefore, this initiative makes SAS a first mover and leader in their industry. However, whether or not SAS chooses to openly communicate or not, does not change the fact that SAS now compensates for 40% of their trips. It is more the question of whether SAS chooses to draw much attention to it or not.

**Exhibit 4** Core positioning themes (Roper and Fill, 2012, p. 253)

| Core positioning themes |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Core positioning theme  | Explanation  |
| <b>Functional</b>       | Functional positioning uses rational information and should be based on a claim not yet used by competitors. This strategy is founded on being superior about its products, customers served, achievements or contribution to society or the industry. This is informational content claimed through the use of justified information.                                 |
| <b>Expressive</b>       | This form of positioning attempts to differentiate the organization through the use of symbols and values. By repeated use of the symbols that represent a particular set of values, the organisation can become associated with those values. This is transformational content claimed through association.   |
| <b>Emotional</b>        | positioning through an emotional theme aims to draw stakeholders to an organisation by provoking positive responses and involvement. This is emotional content claimed through involvement and affiliation.  |
| <b>General</b>          | This positioning strategy can be made by any organisation in an industry and attempts to raise overall industry demand rather than set out a point of differentiation or superiority. often used by organisations who have a substantial market share. This is informational content claimed through an industry- wide issue without reference to industry leadership. |
| <b>First strike</b>     | This positioning is similar to the generic strategy but under this strategy the organisation claims superiority, and hence differentiation, on the basis of being the first and only organisation to make the claim. This is informational content claimed through an industry-wide issue with reference to industry leadership.                                       |

## Corporate reputation

It is extremely crucial to understand how each alternative affects the corporate reputation of SAS. This is because reputation is a crucial aspect of every company, as “the company’s value as a long-term investment is often, in itself, a marker of its reputation” (Roper & Fill, 2012, p. 9). This is the case of many companies with good reputation that have a much higher financial value than others, despite the same sales volume (Roper & Fill, 2012). The authors point out the importance of building up a good reputation, however, they also emphasize how crucial it is to maintain it.

For this case, it is necessary to understand that reputation can be divided into different levels. Roper and Fill (2012) distinguish between the reputation of a product or service class and the reputation of the whole industry. When considering SAS, the whole industry that it operates in, has been facing heavy criticism due to sustainability issues caused by the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This has led to the overall reputation of the airline industry to suffer, as people generally have become more aware of the environmental impact of flying. With this in mind, it is essential to understand that open communication about the newest initiative to offset the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, would imply putting pressure on the whole industry. Furthermore, it would also imply more focus on the airline industry at large, as an airline deliberately would choose to start a discussion concerning sustainability. This might seem both risky and smart at the same time.

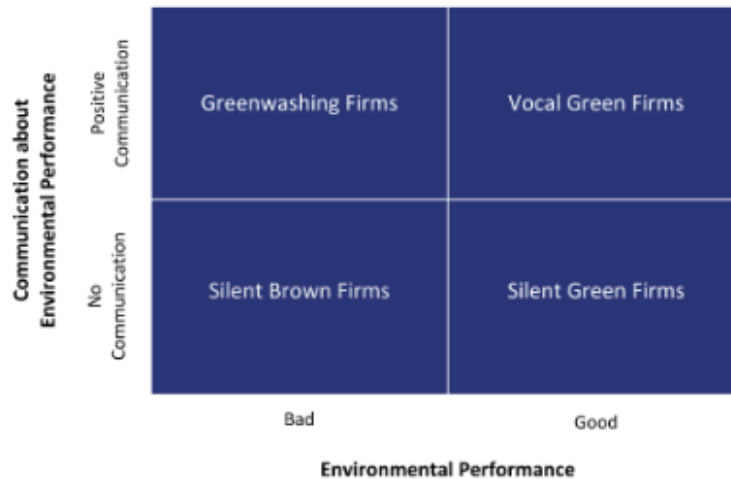
However, since the management decision concerns sustainability issues, it represents a sensitive topic that might have different implications. When considering SAS’ options, the different alternatives for the CO<sub>2</sub> offset can either enhance or damage their reputation. On one hand, if SAS chooses to communicate the offsets, it could improve their reputation and position them as being an airline working for a more sustainable future. This would place SAS as a vocal green company (**Exhibit 5**). On the other hand, openly communicating the newest initiatives might place SAS in the category of greenwashing companies. To specify, “greenwashing is the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p.66), and is unfortunately often the case in today’s society. Furthermore, many companies are being accused of greenwashing simply due to consumers’ overall skepticism towards companies’ efforts concerning sustainability, even though it might not be the case (Pomeroy & Johnson, 2009). However, it is important to understand that simply being perceived as participating in greenwashing is enough to damage the corporate image and overall reputation.

Although, there is also the option of not communicating the sustainability efforts. In this case, SAS would place themselves as a silent green company (**Exhibit 5**), also called a “greenhushing” strategy. This would entail being a good actor in silence. However, the efforts to further build on the corporate reputation might be questioned in this case, as it might entail less media coverage and attention in general. Although, there is always the possibility to build a positive reputation through, for example, media coverage that portrays SAS as a true sustainability actor. This in turn, might decrease the possibility of being perceived as greenwashing to a large extent. However, it is essential to understand that becoming a discussion leader concerning



sustainability is in itself a positive thing, but it can also attracts the attentions from other stakeholders. This means that the position of the company may become more risky in case of a future mistake or scandal, because communicating sustainability implies a strong coherence for the future path.

**Exhibit 5** Categorization of corporates based on environmental performance and communication (Delmas & Burbano, 2011)



At large, it is all about the choices. Does SAS want to take the step as a first mover and thereby lead the discussion about a sensitive topic concerning a criticized industry? Or should SAS do good in silence and minimize the risk of consumers perceiving them as greenwashing? Based on these possible outcomes, it is important to make the correct decision as it can have a large positive or negative effect on SAS reputation. It is also necessary to think of the advantages and disadvantages of each option considering the short and long term reputation. For example, some management decisions might hurt the company in the short term, but be beneficial in the long run, or the other way around (Lavery, 2004). Therefore, it is essential to weigh the options with both short and long term implications in mind.

Furthermore, a brand’s current reputation can also be helpful when evaluating the options. As per Roper and Fill (2012), if a customer on one occasion has a poor experience with a brand that he or she perceives to have a good reputation, the customer tends to average out the negative aspect, rather than aggregate it. The reputation can be evaluated by using Urde and Greyser (2016) Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (**Exhibit 6**), which is an extension of the CBIM. In this case, if SAS has an overall good reputation among their customers, the negative aspect of climate compensating might be overlooked by them. However, if SAS has a poor reputation, bringing up a sensitive topic in a criticized industry can be extremely harmful.

## Overview of key learnings

The learnings revolve around how a corporate brand should act in relation to societal change and an ongoing discussion regarding a sensitive topic. This is done by balancing the risks and opportunities of being a first-mover. The key learnings are presented below (Table 1) with the help of Bloom’s Taxonomy:

**Table 1** Key learning objectives

| Key learning objectives | General learning  | In this case  |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Remembering</b>      | <i>...how important it is for corporate brands to take societal changes into consideration in their branding strategy</i> | <i>...that sustainability issues today are one of the most important aspects to consider from a branding perspective, if you ought to stand a chance on the competitive market and please the customers</i>       |
| <b>Understanding</b>    | <i>...the implications of different communication strategies for the corporate reputation</i>                             | <i>...the advantages and disadvantages of openly communicating sustainability efforts as a company belonging to a criticized industry from a sustainability perspective</i>                                       |
| <b>Applying</b>         | <i>...corporate brand management concepts to guide the decisions about a brand’s future actions</i>                       | <i>...the CBIM to understand the brand behind SAS, and thereby evaluate what type of communication is best suited for the good of the reputation</i>  |
| <b>Evaluating</b>       | <i>...the risks and opportunities of certain actions when acknowledging corporate reputation</i>                          | <i>...the risks and opportunities of being a first mover and discussion leader concerning sustainability issues, for a brand belonging to a criticized industry due to its negative impact on the environment</i> |
| <b>Creating</b>         | <i>...a strategic plan to build a favorable reputation for the corporate brand</i>  | <i>...a strong corporate brand with a favorable reputation, due to its sustainability efforts and ability to respond to the market</i>  |

## Discussion questions

In order to achieve a successful and engaging discussion with the purpose of reaching the learning objectives, it is recommended that the lecturer uses the given questions when presenting the case. This will be helpful in driving an interesting discussion in class. The aim with the assisting questions is to support and guiding the students in answering the main question. The given order of the assisting question is a only a proposal, and can therefore be used in another order, depending on the flow of discussion in class.

## Main question

Should SAS openly communicate its newest initiative to offset the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or keep quiet about it, when considering the corporate reputation of the brand that operates in a heavily criticized industry?

## Assisting questions

- Who are the key stakeholders in this case?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of actively communicating the initiative?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of keeping quiet about the initiative?
- Which option is more aligned with the corporate identity of SAS?
- What is the current reputation of SAS and how is that relevant in this case?
- What are the possible implications for SAS' reputation with each alternative?
- In what way can each option enhance/damage SAS' reputation?
- Which option is better in the short term?
- Which option is better in the long term?

## Teaching suggestions

The following section provides the lecturer with suggestions of techniques to improve the teaching process. The purpose is to support the lecturer in the planning process of the process, as well as to propose teaching approaches that interactive and inspiring. Thus, support in creating an engaging and educative discussion of the case.

### Pre-presentation and introduction phase

Before the presentation, it is recommended that the tasks and responsibilities are divided if there are more than one lecturer/presenter. For example, one or two (if possible) can take the role of the moderators, whereas someone else writes down the main points discussed by the class on the whiteboard. Furthermore, one of the presenters is recommended to keep track of time. If there is only one lecturer presenting, the person shall manage these tasks alone.

Prior to the official beginning of the presentation, it is recommended that the presenter asks the audience to prepare name tags, which will be helpful during the case, to address the audience by name and create a more personal environment for the discussion. Another advantage of this will be for the presenter to effectively address the audience.

Before presenting the background of the case, it is recommended to start with a small attention grabber by asking the audience to raise their hands if they have traveled with SAS. If not many raise their hand, the presenter can ask who is familiar

with SAS. Furthermore, this will help catching the audience's attention, but also provide an overview of how well the audience knows the brand in the given case. This can be further helpful for the remaining parts of the presentation.

During the introduction to the case, it is important to provide students with the essential information, which is a part of the case background. It is advisable to make sure all students understand what climate compensating entails for airlines, but also where the current society places an airline like SAS. Furthermore, it is necessary for the lecturer to clarify what a difficult situation SAS is in today, with sustainability issues covering large parts of the society, while simultaneously belonging to an industry that many see to be doomed in terms of sustainability matters.

Furthermore, the use of a PowerPoint presentation is to be recommended in this case. This will support the lecturer in catching the students' attention, and simultaneously providing them with a clear structure. By providing the class with visuals, it will be easier to set the scene that displays the dramatic situation of the current society, where sustainability issues are constantly on the agenda, and the airline industry is continuously receiving criticism. This can be done by, for example, showing images of the Instagram account criticizing influencers, newspaper clips, graphs of the air travels emissions, and so forth. Before entering the discussion phase it is recommended to make sure the audience is following, and ask if any questions have emerged about the case so far.

## **Discussion phase**

It is recommended that this phase starts by asking the students to take the role as the executive team members at SAS. The role of the lecturer is to guide the students throughout the discussion, without influencing their opinions. Therefore, it is essential that the lecturer maintains a neutral role in the discussion and rather facilitates it. Additionally, it is suggested to write down the main question on the whiteboard, or keep it visible on the PowerPoint presentation to constantly remind the students of their task.

Throughout the discussion phase, it is advisable for the lecturer to ask the assisting questions, in order to facilitate the discussion and learning objectives. Furthermore, the board is of great help for summarizing the opinions of the students. This will provide the class with a continuous overview of the main arguments for each management options. This in turn, will later support the class in making the final decision. The suggested board plan is further described later on, where it is suggested to evaluate the two options, considering both the short- and long-term.

When the discussion has come to an end and the alternatives are evaluated it is important to come to a final decision for SAS. This can be done by having a vote through asking the audience to raise their hand for the option they want SAS to choose. Additionally, the presenter should before the vote together with the audience reflect and summarize the key argument for each alternative to get a more precise vote result.

Thus, the executives vote is essential and a democratic procedure to come to a final decision.

At large, it is important that the lecturer ensures that all students who have something to say has the chance to say it, but also encourages others. It might be limited due to time, but a decent balance between all students is to be aimed for. This enables to have a diverse and rich discussion with different perspectives of the case problem.

## **Concluding phase**

It is advisable that the lecturer is prepared to step in and prepare the class to end the discussion, if time is to be limited. When the discussion phase has come to an end, the lecturer shall present the management decision to the class. This should be followed by asking the students of their opinion and discuss the management decision. Once the class has evaluated the actual management decision, it is time for the lecturer to express gratitude towards the class and thank them for their effort and engagement. However, it is also important for the presenter to make the audience reflect on what they have learned based on the case. One suggestion is to ask the class about the key learnings from the case and write them down on the board.

## **Board plan**

When allowing the class to evaluate which management option to choose, a proposed board plan is helpful to assist the students in that process. The suggested board plan consists of two main questions, whereby students can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both. It is recommended that the lecturer allows the students to vote and thereby collectively agree on which management decision should be taken. The board plan is shown in **Table 2** and can also be used in the PowerPoint Presentation. The responses in the board plan are only suggestions and therefore not limited to these. Furthermore, there are no right or wrong answers, only different perspectives and evaluations of the situation.

**Table 2** Proposed board plan

|                   | Why communicate?   | Why not communicate?   |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <i>Short-term</i> | Possibility to be a first mover and discussion leader.   | Avoid being perceived as greenwashing.   |
|                   | Chance to gain more EuroBonus members.   | Avoid being accused of only offsetting for members.  |
|                   | Motivate/put pressure on other airlines, which in turn can enhance the overall reputation of the overall industry. | Avoid being under the spotlight for evaluating the environmental impact of airlines in general.  |
| <i>Long-term</i>  | Strategic move to build a sustainable/green image and reputation.  | A greenhushing strategy can be perceived as more credible and sincere, and define SAS as a company “doing good from their heart”, if e.g. a third party would communicate SAS’ offsetting, rather than SAS communicating themselves. |

## Time plan

A proposed time plan is included to support the lecturer in planning the presentation of the case. It provides the lecturer with recommendations for how much time is needed for each part, and therefore assists the lecturer by ensuring all material will be covered. The proposed time plan is shown in **Table 3** and covers approximately 45 minutes in total. The case can be presented within a shorter time frame, although it is to be recommended that class reads the background of the case in advance in that case.

**Table 3** Proposed time plan for teaching the case

| Setting the Scene                      | Management Question and Discussion phase  | Actual Management Decision                 | Evaluation and Reflection   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Background of SAS and societal change. | Presenting the case and stating the main question<br>Leading the case discussion. | Presenting SAS actual management decision. | Evaluation of management decision, summary and reflection of key learnings. |
| 15 min                                 | 15 min  | 5 min                                      | 10 min  |

## Epilogue

The key learnings of this case are to understand how societal changes can affect branding, and how different management decision concerning corporate communication can have different implications on corporate reputation. The given case also highlights the importance of knowing your corporate brand identity in order to make any type of management decision, as it is vital that corporate actions are aligned with the corporate identity to achieve the best possible outcome in terms of reputation. Furthermore, societal changes are a part of an ongoing progress and represents a vital part of branding today. The case represents an example of how brands must take certain actions in order to adapt to the society at large, and how important it is to do that. However, it is essential to understand that a good reputation is very valuable from a corporate perspective. Therefore, the management decision must be chosen according to its possibilities to either maintain or enhance the corporate reputation.

Due to the depth and details of this case, it is suitable for teaching important aspects of corporate brand management, including concepts such as corporate identity, corporate communication, and corporate reputation. The given concepts can be emphasized according to one's own wishes depending on time. At large, the case serves as a tool to achieve interesting and engaging discussions and analysis in class.

## Reflection

The written case is a part of the master program course in Corporate Brand Management and Reputation (course code: BUSN35) at Lund University. The business case about SAS was put together by a group of three students with inspiration from the Professor Mats Urde. The case is built on real-life managerial problems for SAS business, especially focusing on societal change.

The process consisted of weekly meetings organized by the group members in order to ensure an ongoing working process, with the overall goal to create an inspiring case that engages the class in a fruitful way. Although, the process entailed some challenges at times, with going back and forth on deciding on the final management question and formulation of the actual case. This was of essence, as the purpose was to create a case that has the best outcome for the whole class. The case represents an interesting case to work on, as it surrounds an important topic in today's society that has largely been covering the media, classrooms, and even discussions among friends and family. It is safe to say that the topic concerning sustainability is one of the most heavily discussed subjects and thereby hard to avoid. Furthermore, what was intriguing was the fact that it might seem as a simple case at first, but when digging deeper into it, it represents a case that entails weighing the implications of two completely different alternatives, with very different possible outcomes. The interest in sustainability matters in the group, was also an advantage when building up this case.

One of the highlights throughout the process was the possibility to take part in an interesting discussion with the head of media relations, Freja Annamatz, at SAS in Sweden. This provided us with extremely useful inputs that supported our understanding of why SAS did what they did. These inputs were thereby used in the case, to provide the class with more knowledge concerning the reasoning behind SAS' newest initiative. This was highly valuable as this information would not have been possible to obtain simply from reading online.

At large, it was an interesting case to work on as it represents branding decisions in the context of societal change. At the very beginning, we were heading towards a crisis management case, but are very pleased with the fact that we finally chose this case instead. We believe it was a joyful way to dig deeper into brand management decisions and their possible implications. Furthermore, we believe it will be valuable to the whole class, as all brands at some point have to deal with societal changes and evaluate what it means for branding at large. Therefore, it represents a case with learning outcomes applicable to other cases as well. Lastly, we hope this case will be helpful in teaching others about societal change and its implications for corporations, even though this case occurred very recently, and the final result are rather unclear and still an ongoing process. Therefore, we understand that new information and implications could appear in the future, after this case was written.

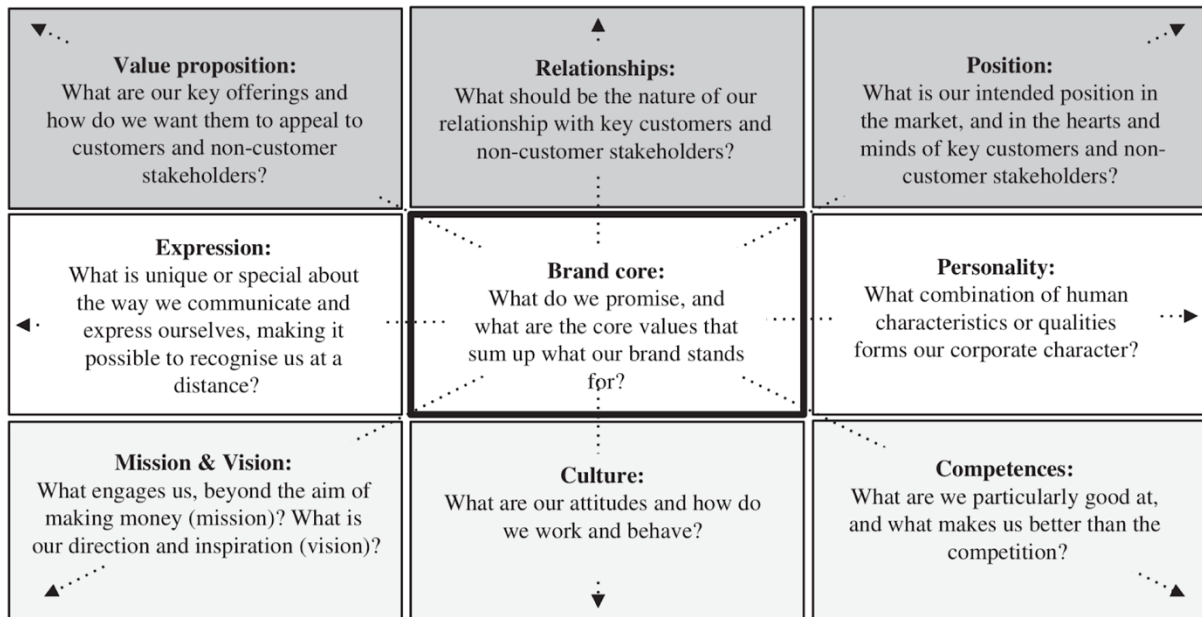


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# Appendix

**Exhibit 1** Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016)



**Exhibit 6** The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (CBIRM)(Urde & Greyser, 2016)

