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## GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD INDUSTRY

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Kadir Gokoglan<sup>1</sup>, Musebbih Elaldi<sup>2</sup>, Huseyin Sevim<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dicle University, Diyarbakir Vocational School of Social Sciences, Diyarbakir, Turkiye.

[kadir.gokoglan@dicle.edu.tr](mailto:kadir.gokoglan@dicle.edu.tr), ORCID: 0000-0001-6397-8477

<sup>2</sup>Science Expert, Diyarbakir, Turkiye.

[musebbihelaldi@gmail.com](mailto:musebbihelaldi@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0002-2565-0988

<sup>3</sup>Dicle University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Business Administration, Diyarbakir, Turkiye.

[huseyinsevim355@gmail.com](mailto:huseyinsevim355@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0002-2565-0988

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose-** This article has been carried out to determine the situation of green supply chain practices, which are of great importance worldwide, in Turkiye/Diyarbakir province food companies. Supply chain management starts with the procurement of raw materials. After the supply, the product is processed and delivered to customers through the distribution channel. After the consumption stage, the supply chain management process is completed with the return of the product that has completed its life cycle to the enterprise. The main objective of supply chain management is to make the best use of the factors in use. These factors are listed as technology, process management, personnel management, and performance measurement after completing the management process. With these parameters, it is aimed to be prepared for the expected changes in the market in supply chain management and to determine strategies against possible changes.

**Methodology-** The survey method was used to obtain the study data. The questionnaire form, which was created following the scope of the study, was applied to the determined companies face-to-face and via email. In analysing the data obtained, the study data were analysed by frequency analysis through statistical programs. The results were presented in tables and interpreted.

**Findings-** The survey data created within the scope of the study were analysed using statistical programmes. The data obtained were analysed by taking into account the strategic position and market share of Diyarbakir province in Turkiye.

**Conclusion-** As a result of the research, it was determined that food companies operating in Diyarbakir province are aware of green supply chain management. In addition, it was determined that they pay attention to the use of environmentally friendly and recyclable products or activities from the raw material procurement stage to the production stage. In addition, it has been determined that they are sensitive to production, supply and distribution activities by international standards.

**Keywords:** Green supply chain, food industry sector, supply chain, green supply chain management

**JEL Codes:** Q50, Q56, G34

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Utilizing the latest technological services to maintain supply chain management in the food industry can increase the company's confidence in its products and production. In addition, under the umbrella of supply chain management is the protection or minimization of risk from inefficient logistics. This process will affect the profitability of the company. Therefore, an effective supply chain management process can also help to give new efficient ideas to deal with problems arising from logistics or any problem related to the management of the product assembly. It is one of the important procedures that directly affect the economy (Saleem and Sezen, 2022).

In the food sector, which plays an important role in maintaining our lives, it is an important issue to ensure the production of foodstuffs under reliable conditions. In this respect, the food supply chain can be evaluated in two stages: from the processing of food products to the processing process, and from processing to consumption. The relationship of food businesses with their suppliers is a situation that provides advantages in financial and non-financial issues in the first stage (Acar, 2014).

With the development of environmental awareness, customers and governments exert environmental pressure on food businesses and suppliers, encouraging businesses to be sensitive to environmental issues. In recent years, food businesses have been adopting more "green" practices and have started to develop strategies to effectively achieve and improve their competitiveness in the international arena. In this context, green supply chain management is a modern management style

that integrates environmental protection ideas. In this framework, food businesses, governments, customers, and suppliers should share information and cooperate to prevent environmental problems and solve existing environmental problems.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Özkaya and Kazançoğlu (2020), in their study, define green supply chain management and state what factors drive the green supply chain. In their study, they used qualitative research methods and interview techniques. Akben (2021) states in his study that production activities should become more environmentally friendly with the awareness of consumers on environmental issues and the change in purchasing behaviour of consumers, where natural resources are at the point of depletion. He states that with the green supply chain, businesses will strive to create an environmentalist image as well as fulfil their social responsibility duty by minimising the damage they cause to the environment.

Despoudi, (2020), Climate change leads to changes in policies and regulations for the green approach. Supply chain management increases the need for a green approach. To achieve this, companies need to adopt a sustainable development plan by focusing on green activities such as energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as changes in their basic organisation. Food companies need to incorporate environmental thinking into their core strategy and extend it to the green supply chain. Trivellas et al. (2020), in their study, state that they focus on working on green supply chain management related to environmental activities in which companies create their supply chain against increasing environmental factors. The special requirements identified in food logistics go beyond product quality by improving the transport and storage conditions of perishable goods and go beyond environmental and sustainable. It states that it requires the creation of green logistics management by demanding the spread of areas.

Safarli and Avunduk (2023), in their study, state that the natural environment is damaged due to reasons such as lack of environmental awareness, industrialization, and excessive waste. They state that these damages can be overcome by minimising the waste of natural resources and sustainable businesses in environmental control and green supply chain practices. Görgülü et al. (2023), in their study, state that the green supply chain is an important paradigm for companies, that it will minimise the cost concept, and that a green and sustainable environment will be created by selecting the appropriate facility area.

Sayın and Köse (2019), In the study, it was tried to analyse the effect of green supply chain practices on business performance and competitiveness, which indirectly affects all sectors, although it is generally seen in the production sector, where companies and producers have developed the green supply chain to be beneficial to nature and human beings. Soyer and Türkay (2020) stated in their study that with the rapid development of technology, the opportunity to offer more varieties and quantities of products to the market has increased. However, it is stated that a new decision model should be developed for green supply selection, where consumers prefer more environmentally friendly products and green supply choices come to the fore. Özdemir and Arslan (2020) stated that the transition to production with the Industrial Revolution led to the formation of some environmental problems as well as the diversity of the goods produced. Businesses have had to struggle with the increase in the competitive environment. With the increase in environmental awareness, businesses have turned to green practices to produce environmentally sensitive goods and services. In his study, concepts such as the effects of green supply chains on business performance were mentioned.

Gilanlı (2018), Supply chains are one of the most important elements of sustainable practices in enterprises. With the development of environmental awareness, businesses have to be sensitive to the environment. He states that the concept of green management has become important with the formation of deterioration in environmental valuations. Koska et al. (2016), Nowadays, businesses should focus on environmental issues, evaluate the negative effects of businesses on the environment with green thinking, and start environmental activities by adapting the green concept to the supply chain. In their study, they tried to emphasise the importance of the green supply chain by determining the obstacles in front of green supply chain management. Gedik (2021) states in his study that supply chain management is extremely critical in the global business environment. Sustainability and business activities are the most important factors in supply chain management. It states that supply chain management is the management of supply chain operations, resources, and information to maximise social welfare and supply chain profitability while minimising impacts.

Gökoçlan and Atalan (2022), In their study, they found that rapidly developing technology requires a more comprehensive and efficient structure in the supply chain. With the application of blockchain technology to the supply chain structure, it is thought to have a more efficient structure in terms of both time and cost. The gains to be obtained with the supply chain technology applied in the food sector have been investigated to determine whether these gains can be positive in terms of time and space costs. Ala et al. (2015), in their study, analyze the ordering, transport, storage, and distribution aspects of the food sector from a green perspective, arguing that supply chain management affects the eco-efficiency and profitability of many products. Environmental advantages for companies include energy savings and cost reduction; economic reasons; fuel efficiency; and resource savings.

Miranda et al. (2017), found in their study that food production causes great damage to the environment and that supply chain network design will provide an important perspective on this issue in terms of strategic decision-making. With the

addition of the term green to supply chain activities, it is aimed at including environmentally sensitive thinking in the supply chain. Beske et al. (2014), in their study, state that in the food industry, customers have high expectations about food safety, and there is a demand for foods produced in a sustainable environment. It states that a sustainable environment will be created with a green supply chain. Mastos and Gotzamani (2022) say that developments in the green supply chain have paved the way for the reshaping of the sector by changing the environmental, social, and economic balance. Environmental purchasing and the use of sustainable packaging will contribute positively to the sustainability of the supply chain. Integrating supply chain methods for sustainability performance in the food sector leads to increased economic and social performance. Sharma et al. (2017) reveal that the importance of the green supply chain in protecting and sustaining the environment in the food sector is at the forefront. Many countries and companies have started to realise the importance of a green supply chain. It is stated that the implementation of green supply chain management will increase the performance and reliability of companies.

### **3. Conceptual Framework**

#### **3.1. Supply Chain**

Customers or end users buy products from retailers and wholesalers. They may also buy from a shop that is both a wholesaler and a retailer. Wholesalers or retailers source and buy products from distributors or manufacturers to sell them. Distributors are transporters. Manufacturers buy raw materials or semi-finished products from suppliers and then add value to them to sell to customers (Çeke, 2022).

It is seen that companies with a global presence are struggling to improve the supply chain to create sustainable environmental, social, and economic results related to the supply chain. Sustainable improvements by companies will pave the way for positive results in the supply chain (Koberg and Longoni, 2019).

Supply chain management is a comprehensive management problem that establishes a dynamic cooperative relationship between suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, and end users, involving information flow, capital flow, logistics, and labour flow. There are several problems with current supply chain management. First, supply chain information can be isolated within an organisation, leading to information silos. Upstream and downstream businesses expand knowledge, causing a whiplash effect (Lim et al., 2021).

The supply chain is a network of producers and distributors who supply raw materials, transform the raw materials into semi-finished and finished products, and deliver the finished products to end users. From another perspective, a supply chain is defined as a cluster of business partners, such as suppliers, logistics service providers, manufacturers, distributors, and retailers, through which materials, products, and information flow. A typical supply chain consists of a network in which suppliers, manufacturers, warehouses, distributors, and retailers are integrated and coordinated to transform parts, raw materials, and subassemblies into final goods and deliver them to the final customer (Akben and Güngör, 2018).

Supply management manages the entire supply chain to minimise negative environmental, social, and economic impacts while increasing positive impacts. It ensures that the supply chain is operated in a sustainable, environmentally, and socially sound manner. The supply chain includes all activities related to the production and delivery of a product or service, from the extraction of raw materials to the disposal of the final product (Abualigah et al., 2023).

A supply chain is a process that starts with procuring raw materials and parts, converting these raw materials and parts into final products, adding value to these products, and distributing and marketing the products to retailers or customers. It can be defined as an integrated system that harmonises several different processes to facilitate the exchange of information between various business units (such as suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, third-party logistics providers and retailers) (Akşahin, 2014).

Figure 1 shows the schematic of the supply chain management study. According to Figure 1, the supply chain from the producer to the last final consumer is included. This process starts with the demand of the consumer and ends with the fulfilment of the specified demand. The supply chain starts with a solid supply base and suppliers delivering raw materials to production units and includes every activity that follows to ensure that the finished product is delivered to the end consumer. All of the various activities involved in this cyclical process are the links that make up any supply chain. Many activities, functions, and people work in synchronisation to ensure that the flow of goods and/or services to the end user is uninterrupted and carried out as efficiently as possible.

Figure 1: Schematic Representations of Supply Chain Management Study



Source: <https://blog.cedarmanagement.co.uk/supply-chain-backbone-of-any-industry/.com.tr>.

### 3.2. Green Supply Chain Management

In our age, with the importance and priority of environmental protection and sustainability of natural resources, companies need to be more sensitive to the environment in the production process and all post-production activities, starting from their relations with suppliers. The need to develop strategies related to environmental management in the supply chain has increased. Accordingly, researchers working on supply chain management have turned to issues that include environmental management in supply chains. One of these issues is green supply chain management (Elaldi, 2021:10).

With global warming, environmental measures need to be taken. Green purchasing and environmental performance provide a theoretical framework linking public and private partnerships. It is recommended that firms increase market research and stakeholder dialogue to promote environmental sustainability by giving importance to environmental practices and increasing environmental sustainability by creating green practices (Tuffour, 2023). The green procurement pearl is to reduce waste and increase operational efficiency to increase the sustainability of green purchasing. Although this practice has gained importance in recent years and attracted significant scientific interest, there is a lack of studies evaluating the field of green procurement (Rejeb, 2023).

Green supply chain management integrates environmental issues and logistics functions at every stage of an organisation's supply chain management. There are many ways to explain the basic concept of green supply chain, for example in some places it is green purchasing between buyer and seller. In other cases, the green supply chain is the endless logistics cycle of reuse and management of materials and products (Nadeem, 2018)

In recent years, protecting our living spaces has become an important issue worldwide. Due to increasing human and industrial impacts on climate, environmental issues have become more critical and inevitable. In this context, organisations need to strike a balance between environmental and business objectives. This paper is an attempt to explain the path towards this goal and includes steps to be taken by commercial organisations in the packaging industry through green production networks (Lekesiztürk, 2021).

It presents the concept of Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) as Green Supply Chain Management = Green Product Design + Green Materials Management + Green Manufacturing Process + Green Distribution and Marketing + Reverse Logistics (RL). The impact areas of the sub-headings that make up green supply chain management are briefly explained (Bedük, 2017).

Green purchasing is defined as sustainable products and services that minimise negative environmental impacts (Karakan et al., 2022). Green purchasing is an important component of green supply chain management. Firms are among the important factors in the green supply chain due to environmental practices. It tries to reveal the green impact mechanism by



emphasising the importance of areas such as green education in the green supply chain (Liu, 2020). Green production, producing minimum waste and reducing environmental pollution, remanufacturing and lean production, cleaner production, improved capacity utilisation, reducing raw material costs, gaining production efficiency and improving corporate image, increasing the number of goods delivered on time, not using hazardous or restricted materials during production, minimizing waste during production, and replacing toxic inputs with environmentally friendly ones (Tantan, 2023).

Green marketing was first discussed and defined at the seminar on 'ecological marketing' organised by the American Marketing Association in 1975. According to this definition, ecological marketing consists of studies on the positive and negative effects of marketing activities on environmental pollution, energy consumption, and the consumption of other resources. The development of green marketing is divided into three different sections. These sections are 'ecological' green marketing, 'environmentalist' green marketing, and 'sustainable' green marketing. In a narrow context, marketing that focuses on reducing dependence on certain products that are predominantly considered harmful is called ecological marketing; marketing that is a more comprehensive initiative that tries to reduce environmental damage by using green consumer demand and competitive advantage opportunities is called environmental marketing; and marketing that tries to cover all environmental costs of production and consumption to create a sustainable economy with a more radical approach to the market is called sustainable marketing (Gedik et al., 2014).

Green distribution is the realisation of the distribution activities of the products towards the customers with the least damage to the environment. In the journey of the finished products towards the customer, determining the most suitable vehicles, determining the best distribution routes, and determining the most suitable warehouse locations are the activities related to green distribution. While companies distribute products, they can use their resources or they can outsource the distribution. Distribution activities have strategic importance for companies. An effective green distribution has many advantages for both the environment and the supply chain (Yıldız and Göktepe, 2020).

Environmental cooperation with customers, similar to environmental cooperation with suppliers, refers to the efforts of businesses to improve the environmental performance of customers. Environmental cooperation with customers involves the exchange of technical information between the business and its customers, leading to transactional benefits including more innovation and better environmental performance (Güzel and Demirdögen, 2016). Green design plays a major role when it comes to manufacturing industries because it encourages supply chain members to think about the life and afterlife of a product early in the process (Nadeem, 2018). Reverse logistics is defined as "the role of logistics in product returns, resource reduction, recovery material substitution, material reuse, waste disposal and incineration, repair, and remanufacturing" (Gilanli, 2018). Internal environmental management covers the successive practices that are expected to result in the achievement of internal targets predefined by the senior managers of the organisation or mandated by legislation (Gündoğdu, 2021). China, the world's largest and fastest-growing economy, has a high ecological cost and has been identified as the country with the highest ozone-depleting substance emissions and the second highest greenhouse gas emissions. Due to these factors, GSCM initiatives are of great importance in China. As a result, green supply chain practices are frequently observed and analysed in China. It is also stated that these green supply chain activities and cooperation with customers positively affect company performance (Kutlu, 2023).

**Figure 2: Schematic Representations of Green Supply Chain Management Study**



Source: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/72772.com.tr/> / 21 February 2020

Figure 2 shows the schematic representation of the green supply chain management study. According to Figure 2, environmentally sensitive activities take place at every stage of the supply chain. The process starts with the demand of the consumer and ends with the demand of the consumer. In this process, it is seen that environmental sensitivity and recycling are at the forefront at every stage. The most obvious reason behind adopting a green strategy is to reduce the burden of a polluted environment. It is a concept that describes the relationship between supply chain operations and the natural environment.

### **3.3. Green Supply Chain in The Food Industry**

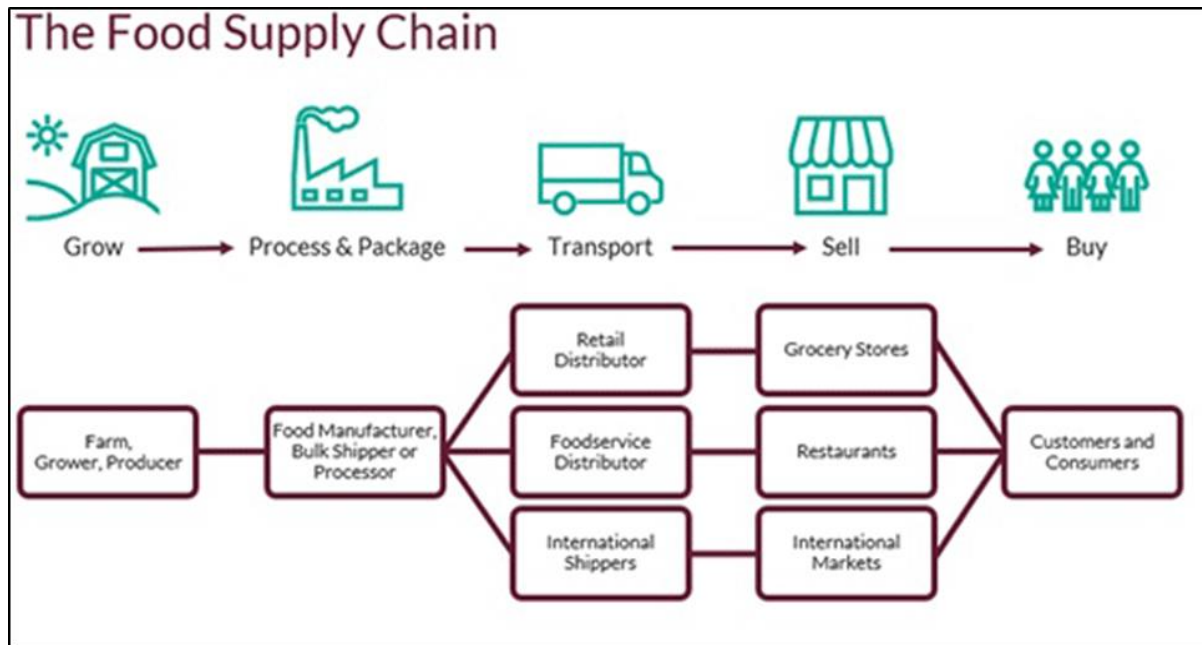
The food industry is a branch of the manufacturing industry that transforms the plant and animal raw materials obtained from agriculture into products with a long shelf life and ready for consumption by one or more processes. According to the International Food Standard Industry Classification (ISIC-3) system, the food industry covers products obtained by subjecting agricultural raw materials to one or more processes, and the food industry is divided into 8 sub-sectors: meat and meat products, milk and dairy products, aquaculture products, starch products, fruit and vegetable processing, vegetable oil and products, sugar and sugary products, and feed industry (Demir and Tuncay, 2012).

It is a whole that starts with the supply of quality and safe raw materials, the processes that food undergoes, intermediate and finished product logistics, and the data related to all activities in the process until it reaches the consumer. It aims to protect food safety and quality and is the coordination of business processes to ensure the smooth sustainability of products and information flow throughout the chain. The requirements for the proper management of the food supply chain are effective communication between stakeholders, the ability of the chain to adapt to developments in technology and standards, and effective logistics management (Keleş and Ova, 2020).

The food sector has a very important place in the manufacturing industry because it produces nutrients, one of the most basic needs of human life. The preservation of this strategic importance of the food sector in parallel with population growth depends on maintaining an adequate and healthy food supply. Food businesses, while producing products that have a direct impact on human health and performance, must also take into account that customer demands and expectations may change over time. Investments in products with a short product life curve in food businesses bring the risk of product deterioration as well as the cost of stocking every day the product cannot be sold. To compete in domestic and foreign markets and maximise their profits, enterprises operating in the food sector should focus on FTE practices. Many companies are under serious pressure in the period from receiving the order to the distribution of the goods. All channels of a broad spectrum, including the manufacturer and its suppliers, vendors, and customers, work to provide a common good, service, or piece of information that the customer wants to buy. To satisfy their customers, businesses are trying to strengthen and develop cooperation with all members of the value chain (suppliers, producers, retailers, etc.). Otherwise, it seems inevitable that the disruptions occurring in the supply chain will have a heavy cost for enterprises. For example, according to a study conducted in the US food sector, it has been determined that 30 billion dollars are lost annually due to the lack of cooperation between the members of the supply chain to the desired extent. Today, the main goal of businesses that want to achieve competitive advantage is to provide better-quality products at a lower cost, to closely follow the rapid changes in the market, and to increase business performance by creating superior customer value (Tekin and Öztürk, 2020).

In the food industry, the corporate social responsibility issues of the supply chain are faced with many risks due to the criticism of the supply chain by the public. It is necessary to utilise industry trends to develop a comprehensive framework of the supply chain in the sector (Maloni and Brown, 2006). Environmental degradation is becoming a focal point as increasing consumer demand stimulates activities in all product and service sectors. Countries increase productivity by improving environmental performance and promote environmental policies by reducing environmental pollution. With the implementation of the green supply chain, it will prepare the ground for the establishment of environmental policies by reducing pollution in the food sector (Wang et al., 2016). Creating a sustainable environment in the field of green supply chain management paves the way for research to be translated into information and related aspects of the supply chain. It contributes to the understanding of the suboptimal use of environmental information at different stages of the food supply chain. Applications in the food sector indicate how they should be positioned within the green supply chain.

Figure 3: Schematic Representations of Food Supply Chain



Source: <https://fmtmagazine.in/what-is-global-food-supply-chain/.com.tr>.

In Figure 3, supply chain management in the food sector is shown schematically. According to Figure 3, activities are carried out by taking into account the environmentally sensitive and recycling as a whole of the activities in the stage of transmission of the product from raw material to the end consumer. The medium-term future of food supply chains will be about aggregating a network of suppliers that can provide durable harvests throughout the year, with inputs distributed worldwide. The food supply chain is responsible for transporting, processing and marketing the world's food.

#### 4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

##### 4.1. Purpose and Importance of the Research

Today, environmental problems are increasing, and measures should be taken against environmental problems. The food sector is one of the leading sectors causing environmental pollution. Companies in the food sector cause serious damage to the environment during production. Firms should act more consciously towards nature; first of all, supply chain practices should be reviewed.

The supply chain method refers to the process from the beginning of production to the completion of the product cycle from an environmentalist perspective. Thanks to environmental practices, the importance of the green supply chain is increasing day by day. The supply chain method will become more meaningful when combined with green supply. The fact that production in the food sector harms the environment emphasises the importance of the green supply chain in the sector.

In the research, the importance of green supply chains in the food sector is emphasized, and it is emphasized that companies should develop and use more applications for green supply chains. It is an undeniable fact that the green supply chain will benefit the companies that produce food to the point of being more careful about the environment. Green supply chain practices aim to create a more sustainable environment by drawing attention to green purchasing, green production, green packaging, green distribution, and green logistics. It tried to determine the effect of green supply chain management practices on businesses in the food sector. This study is very important in terms of determining the effect of green supply chain activities in the food sector on food sector performance.

##### 4.2. Data Collection Method and Sample of the Research

The research is qualitative, and interviews were conducted with face-to-face and online survey methods. The purpose of choosing this method is to examine the practices of green supply chain management in the food sector in detail and to set an example for other studies on this subject.

The main mass of the research consists of companies operating in Diyarbakır province and serving in the food sector. According to the data obtained from the Diyarbakır Organized Industrial Site (OIS), it was determined that 37 companies are actively operating in the food sector. In the research, it was determined that 24 companies among 37 companies operating

in the food sector realised the green supply chain application by selecting a sample. A sample of 17 companies participating in the research was selected, and the answers of these companies were taken as the basis. Interviews with the participants were conducted between January 1 and January 19. Interviews were conducted by going to Diyarbakir OIS. The companies whose locations could not be determined were interviewed by telephone.

In the research, the participants were asked questions about the demographic characteristics of 17 companies related to the green supply chain. Questions The companies in the food sector that have studies on the green supply chain of the companies in the food sector have been selected. A questionnaire form was used in the research. There are 20 statements in the questionnaire. Firms were asked questions consisting of 20 statements. The data obtained as a result of the research were analysed with the SPSS package program, and the importance of the green supply chain in the food sector for the companies was emphasised.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

One participant from each company was interviewed, and the participants identified the company. Since they represent the participants, the word "participant" is used instead of "company" in the quotations. When writing the characteristics of the companies, Company 1 and Company 2, the characteristics of the participants, Participant 1 and Participant 2, were coded as Participant 1 and Participant 2, respectively. Findings In the table below, excerpts from the participants' statements are presented. 17 Although there were participants, in some tables, participants answered more than one question.

**Table 1: Sustainability Reports of Companies**

|            | Sustainability Report | Sector | Production Number of Employees | Environmental Protection Training | Organisation Location |
|------------|-----------------------|--------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Company 1  | None                  | Foods  | 57                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 2  | Yes                   | Foods  | 32                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 3  | Yes                   | Foods  | 45                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 4  | Yes                   | Foods  | 78                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 5  | None                  | Foods  | 36                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 6  | None                  | Foods  | 45                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 7  | None                  | Foods  | 68                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 8  | None                  | Foods  | 54                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 9  | None                  | Foods  | 42                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 10 | None                  | Foods  | 32                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 11 | Yes                   | Foods  | 42                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 12 | Yes                   | Foods  | 108                            | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 13 | Yes                   | Foods  | 43                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 14 | Yes                   | Foods  | 212                            | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 15 | Yes                   | Foods  | 148                            | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 16 | Yes                   | Foods  | 45                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |
| Company 17 | Yes                   | Foods  | 49                             | Training is provided.             | DİYARBAKIR OIS        |

Table 1 shows the sustainability reports of the companies, what they produce, the number of employees, whether environmental protection training is provided and the region of establishment. As can be seen in the table, 10 companies prepared their sustainability reports, while 7 companies stated that sustainability reports were not prepared. The companies are located in organised industrial zones. While 82.3% of the companies have between 1-100 employees and 17.7% of the companies have between 100 and 300 employees, all of the companies have declared that their employees are given environmental protection training.

**Table 2: Statistical Information on Companies**

| Gender                    | n         | %          | Age                            | n         | %          |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Female                    | 6         | 35         | 20 Under age                   | 8         | 47         |
| Male                      | 11        | 65         | Between 21-40 years old        | 8         | 47         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>17</b> | <b>100</b> | 41 and above age               | 1         | 6          |
| <b>Level of Education</b> | <b>n</b>  | <b>%</b>   | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>17</b> | <b>100</b> |
| Undergraduate And Before  | 5         | 29         | <b>Professional experience</b> | <b>n</b>  | <b>%</b>   |
| License                   | 10        | 59         | 1 Year And Under               | 2         | 12         |
| Postgraduate              | 2         | 12         | 2-5 Year                       | 5         | 29         |

|  |    |     |              |    |     |
|--|----|-----|--------------|----|-----|
| <b>Total</b>   | 17 | 100 | 6-10 Year    | 4  | 24  |
| <b>Do you have information about green supply chain?</b> |    |     | 11-15 Year   | 6  | 36  |
| I have information                                       | 4  | 24  | <b>Total</b> | 17 | 100 |
| I have very little knowledge                             | 8  | 48  |              |    |     |
| I have no idea.  | 3  | 18  |              |    |     |
| Never heard of it  | 2  | 12  |              |    |     |
| <b>Total</b>   | 17 | 100 |              |    |     |

Figure 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the research participants. According to Figure 2 the majority of the research participants were male. The participants are generally between the ages of 20 and 40, have a bachelor's degree, and have 2 to 5 years of professional experience. It was determined that the majority of the participants knew about the green supply chain.

**Table 3: First Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| Question  | Answers                        | Frequency | Percent    |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Why are green management practices important to you?</b> | Quality Production             | 1         | 5.8        |
|   | Awareness of Responsibility    | 7         | 41.2       |
|   | Legal Obligation               | 3         | 17.7       |
|   | Occupational Health and Safety | 4         | 23.5       |
|   | Favouring Interests            | 2         | 11.8       |
|   | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>17</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 3 shows the answers of the participants to the question, "Why are green management practices important for you?". Responsibility awareness with 41%, occupational health and safety with 23%, and legal obligation with 17% are among the answers given. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

*Apart from the documents required by our customers, there are some inspections and rules to be followed by the state. These rules are protected by legal guarantees. Our priority is to provide the conditions determined by the law and attach importance to inspections. Occupational health and safety practices have become our most important agenda item after increasing occupational accidents. The laws are very challenging for us. To cope with the laws, our company must act by the laws.*

**Table 4: Second Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| Question   | Answers            | Frequency | Percent    |
|--|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>At which stage in the supply chain process do you pay more attention to environmental protection?</b> | Green Production   | 4         | 23.5       |
|  | Green Purchasing   | 6         | 35.3       |
|  | Reverse Logistics  | 5         | 29.4       |
|  | Green Distribution | 2         | 11.8       |
|  | <b>Total</b>       | <b>17</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 4 shows the answers of the participants to the question "At which stage of the supply chain process do you give more importance to environmental protection?". According to Table 4, 35 per cent of the companies attach more importance to the environment at the purchasing stage and 29 per cent at the logistics process. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

In green supply chain management, companies take into account environmental sensitivities in all elements of the value chain, starting from the supply of raw materials and materials required for production activities to the wastes generated at the end of product use by the end consumer.

**Table 5: Third Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| Question   | Answers                | Frequency | Percent    |
|--|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>What are the factors you pay attention to in the production process for environmental protection?</b> | Raw Material Selection | 5         | 29.4       |
|  | Waste Management       | 6         | 35.3       |
|  | Energy Consumption     | 3         | 17.7       |
|  | Recycling              | 3         | 17.7       |
|  | <b>Total</b>           | <b>17</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 5 shows the factors that the participants pay attention to in the production process for environmental protection. In line with the answers, it is seen that 35% of the respondents attach importance to waste management. 29% of the respondents attach importance to raw material selection. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

Companies fulfil their obligations as a result of the obligations brought about by the changes in laws, laws and regulations aimed at protecting the environment and the heavy sanctions imposed on businesses.

**Table 6: Fourth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>  | <i>Answers</i>     | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|--|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>What are your priorities for not harming the environment in your product design?</i></b> | Cost               | 3                | 17.7           |
|  | Recycling          | 6                | 35.3           |
|  | Storage Conditions | 8                | 47.0           |
|  | Total              | 17               | 100            |

In Table 6, the priorities of the participants in order not to harm the environment in product design are revealed. Among the answers given by the participants, storage conditions ranked first with a rate of 47%, while the mode of shipment ranked second with a rate of 35%. The number of companies that shape their designs by giving importance to storage conditions is noteworthy. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

Since companies aim to minimise the negative effects of products on the environment, a design framework is created on the basis of direct product-environment relations.

**Table 7: Fifth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>                                     | <i>Answers</i>                | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>What are your waste disposal methods?</i></b> | Sending to Licenced Companies | 8                | 47.0           |
|   | Recycling                     | 7                | 41.2           |
|   | Re-acquisition                | 2                | 11.8           |
|   | Total                         | 17               | 100            |

Table 7 shows the answers given by the participants to the question "What are your waste disposal methods?". In line with the answers given by the companies, "sending wastes to licensed companies" draws attention with 47%. It is seen that the rate of companies that can apply recycling practices in their enterprises is 41%. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

Firms, waste disposal is an effective tool in the fight against environmental pollution. When implemented correctly, the waste management system contributes to environmental protection. For example: materials such as plastic, glass, metal and paper can be recycled into new products.

**Table 8: Sixth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>  | <i>Answers</i>               | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|--|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b><i>What do you pay attention to in your green purchasing process?</i></b> | Product Quality              | 2                | 11.8           |
|  | Analysis Documents           | 3                | 17.7           |
|  | Quality Certificates         | 2                | 11.8           |
|  | Sustainability of Production | 10               | 58.7           |
|  | Total                        | 17               | 100            |

Table 8 shows what the participants pay attention to in the green purchasing process. In the answers given, it is seen that the sustainability of production is given importance with a rate of 58% in the green purchasing process. 17% of the respondents make purchases based on analysis documents. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

We use products with high energy efficiency, products with low use of natural resources, products that are suitable for recycling and contain a high proportion of recycled materials. In summary, we aim to prevent environmental pollution by using products that are suitable for recycling and contain a high percentage of recycled materials.

**Table 9: Seventh Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>  | <i>Answers</i>               | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|--|------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <i>What do you pay attention to when choosing your suppliers in the context of green purchasing?</i> | Sustainability of Production | 4                | 23.5           |
|  | Product Cost                 | 4                | 23.5           |
|  | Reliability                  | 3                | 17.7           |
|  | Being a Manufacturer Company | 6                | 35.3           |
|  | Total                        | 17               | 100            |

In Table 9, it is presented what the participants pay attention to when choosing their suppliers in the context of green purchasing. It is seen that companies are looking for more than one feature in order to make green purchasing. It is important to be a producer company with a rate of 35%. Sustainability of production and product cost stand out with 23%. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

We believe that choosing the right suppliers can reduce procurement costs, increase customer satisfaction and improve competitiveness in the market. therefore, when selecting our suppliers, we emphasise wider co-operation activities such as supplier training and support so that they can develop green products and innovations.

**Table 10: Eighth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>                             | <i>Answers</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|---|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| <i>Which types of transport do you use?</i> | Land Road      | 6                | 35.3           |
|   | Sea Road       | 4                | 23.5           |
|   | Railway        | 2                | 11.8           |
|   | Airway         | 5                | 29.4           |
|   | Total          | 17               | 100            |

Table 10 shows the answers of the participants to the question "Which modes of transport do you use?". As seen in the table, the most preferred mode of transport is road with a rate of 35% and airway with a rate of 29%. In this context, the general details of the answers given by the companies to this question are as follows:

Considering the damages to the environment, the most harmless mode choice is maritime transport. However, due to our geographical location, we primarily use railway and road, followed by sea and airway.

**Table 11: The Ninth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>   | <i>Answers</i>                       | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <i>How do you deal with packaging in order not to harm the environment?</i> | Suitable for Environmental Awareness | 3                | 17.7           |
|   | Recyclable Packaging                 | 5                | 29.4           |
|   | Compliant with the Law               | 5                | 29.4           |
|   | Emphasis on Quality                  | 4                | 23.5           |
|   | Total                                | 17               | 100            |

Table 11 shows the answers of the participants to the question "How do you behave in terms of packaging in order not to harm the environment?". Recycling and legal obligation were the highest responses with a rate of 29%. In general, companies that try to make a difference with biodegradable (self-destructing without harming nature) bags by packaging with recyclable bags come to the fore. Companies are coping by using the green packaging system. We do not have any difficulty in coping with the fact that the packaging activity is recyclable, reusable, biodegradable in a way that causes minimal or no harm to nature.

Companies are coping by using the green packaging system. We do not have any difficulty in coping with the fact that the packaging activity is recyclable, reusable, biodegradable in a way that causes minimal or no harm to nature.

**Table 12: Tenth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>                 | <i>Answers</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| <i>Do you do eco-labelling?</i> | Yes            | 11               | 64.7           |
|                                 | No             | 6                | 35.3           |
|                                 | Total          | 17               | 100            |

|                                     |                                |    |      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----|------|
| <b>Why do you do eco-labelling?</b> | For Environmental Awareness    | 1  | 9.1  |
|                                     | Creating Customer Awareness    | 4  | 36.4 |
|                                     | European Standards Requirement | 5  | 45.4 |
|                                     | For Competition Purposes       | 1  | 9.1  |
|                                     | Total                          | 11 | 100  |

Table 12 shows the answers of the participants to the question "Do you use eco labelling?". While 65% of the participants stated that their companies use eco labelling, 35% stated that they do not. When the companies that said yes with 65% are examined, the answers for customer awareness and compliance with European standards come to the fore. Companies are coping by using the green packaging system. We do not have any difficulty in coping with the fact that the packaging activity is recyclable, reusable, biodegradable in a way that causes minimal or no harm to nature.

Companies, eco-labelling system, eco-labelling, which enables businesses to make environmentally sensitive improvements in their production processes in order to protect their market share, contributes to the efficient use of resources and prevention of pollution, so we do eco-labelling.

**Table 13: How Many Years the Companies Have Been Labelling**

| <b>Firms</b>     | <b>How long has it been?</b> | <b>Firms</b>      | <b>How long has it been?</b> |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Company 1</b> | 15 years                     | <b>Company 10</b> | 9 years                      |
| <b>Company 2</b> | 8 years                      | <b>Company 11</b> | 4 years                      |
| <b>Company 3</b> | -                            | <b>Company 12</b> | 2 years                      |
| <b>Company 4</b> | 3 years                      | <b>Company 13</b> | -                            |
| <b>Company 5</b> | 4 years                      | <b>Company 14</b> | -                            |
| <b>Company 6</b> | 18 years                     | <b>Company 15</b> | 2 years                      |
| <b>Company 7</b> | 6 years                      | <b>Company 16</b> | 10 years                     |
| <b>Company 8</b> | 8 years                      | <b>Company 17</b> | 21 yeras                     |
| <b>Company 9</b> | -                            |                   |                              |

Table 13 shows the number of years the companies have been eco-labelling. As seen in the table, it is noteworthy that three companies, namely Company 1, Company 6 and Company 17, have been eco-labelling for more than 15 years.

**Table 14: Eleventh Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <b>Question</b>  | <b>Answers</b>                  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>How do you inform your customers about the green procurement process?</b> | Telephone Information           | 20               | 31.2           |
|  | Face-to-face Information        | 16               | 25             |
|  | Information by Labelling Method | 6                | 9.4            |
|  | Information by Catalogue Method | 12               | 18.8           |
|  | Notification via E-mail         | 10               | 15.6           |
|  | Total                           | 64               | 100            |

In Table 14, it is presented how the participants inform their customers about the green procurement process. In this process, 31% of the participants answered that they inform their customers by telephone and 25% answered that they inform them face-to-face. Companies are coping by using the green packaging system. We do not have any difficulty in coping with the fact that the packaging activity is recyclable, reusable, biodegradable in a way that causes minimal or no harm to nature.

We explain to our customers our efforts to prevent environmental problems caused by the danger of depletion and pollution of natural resources and our efforts to ensure sustainable development without excessive and wasteful consumption of resources by minimising energy use in order to transfer the rights to use natural resources to future generations.

**Table 15: Twelfth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <b>Question</b>  | <b>Answers</b>                      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Do you have reverse logistics applications? If yes, why do you do it?</b> | None                                | 7                | 41.2           |
|  | Recycling                           | 9                | 52.9           |
|  | Compensation for Production Defects | 1                | 5.9            |
|  | Total                               | 17               | 100            |



Table 15 shows the answers of the participants to the question “Do you have reverse logistics practices? If yes, why do you do it?” question. 7 participants stated that they do not use reverse logistics practices. When the answers given are analysed, it is seen that 52% of the answers are recycling and 6% of the answers are selling to other customers after the production errors are compensated. Companies are coping by using the green packaging system. We do not have any difficulty in coping with the fact that the packaging activity is recyclable, reusable, biodegradable in a way that causes minimal or no harm to nature.

Firms, we have reverse logistics application. We pay full attention to product return management or salvage management, which enables the reshaping of the life cycle of second-hand products and gives economic and environmental importance to industrial products at the end of their life cycle, and since it is easier to repair an existing product than to manufacture a product, we pay full attention to product return management or salvage management.

**Table 16: Thirteenth Question and Participants' Answers to this Question**

| <i>Question</i>   | <i>Answers</i>       | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|---|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <i>What are the obstacles you face in green supply chain practices?</i> | Audit                | 6                | 35.3           |
|   | Failure to Recycle   | 2                | 11.8           |
|   | High Cost Purchasing | 8                | 47.0           |
|   | Limited Supplier     | 1                | 2.9            |
|   | Total                | 17               | 100            |

Table 16 shows the answers of the participants to the question “What are the obstacles you face in green supply chain practices?”. Among the answers given, high-cost purchasing attracts attention with 47%, while audit comes second with 35%. The inability to recycle ranks third with 12%. Companies are coping by using the green packaging system. We do not have any difficulty in coping with the fact that the packaging activity is recyclable, reusable, biodegradable in a way that causes minimal or no harm to nature.

Companies are under pressure from high-cost purchasing, limited suppliers and audits. The fact that the sector we are in is subjected to these practices is among the obstacles that force us.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In recent years, the increase in environmental problems, inadequate waste storage areas, and lack of experience in this field have increased interest in the green supply chain.

The negative impact on the environment has mobilised the public sector and non-governmental organisations. Thus, the period of developing processes to reduce the damage to the environment through global cooperation and control mechanisms has started. This process has brought Green Supply Chain Management, which is characterised as an environmentalist approach, to the agenda. As a result of the analysis of the study data obtained, the following information was obtained:

It has been determined that environmental protection training is given to all of the companies participating in the study. This result shows that the firms exhibit an environmentally sensitive approach. In addition, it has been determined that the majority of the companies have sustainability reports.

It has been stated that the majority of the companies participating in the study carry out green management practices due to their sense of responsibility. However, it is possible to mention that there is a significant share in occupational health and safety. Generally, companies pay attention to using a green supply chain in their purchasing processes. In addition, it has been determined that companies are aware of waste management for environmental protection. It has been determined that storage conditions are important at the stage of designing products in order not to harm the environment. It is generally stated that companies recycle their waste through licensed companies.

Firms pay attention to the sustainability of production in the green purchasing process. It has been determined that they pay attention to the fact that the supplier is a manufacturer company when purchasing raw materials. It is also stated that the cost and reliability of raw materials are also important issues. It has been determined that companies mainly prefer land routes when purchasing raw materials or in the shipment of products. Firms pay attention to compliance with the laws and recyclable materials in the packaging of their products. This situation shows that the companies are aware of environmental awareness. It has been determined that the majority of companies make and prefer eco-packaging, both to ensure compliance with the specified standards and to create customer awareness.

It has been determined that the companies participating in the research provide necessary information to their customers by using the green procurement process via telephone or face-to-face methods. It has been determined that half of the participating companies use reverse logistics applications and generally prevent or minimise the victimisation of customers

by receiving returns. It has been determined that companies generally have problems with high-cost purchasing in green supply chain practices.

It has been determined that the companies operating in the province of Diyarbakır are adequately informed about green supply. However, it is important to spread this awareness throughout the city and even the country through relevant units, universities, or working groups. Since it is a known fact that the widespread use of green practices can be a solution to the economic problems experienced both in the country and around the world, it is a conscientious responsibility for companies to give due importance to these issues.

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## EXPLORING THE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF E-COMMERCE COMPANIES THROUGH A DIGITAL MARKETING AND LOGISTICS CONTEXT

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Lázaro Florido-Benítez

University of Málaga, Department of Economics and Business Administration, 29016 Málaga, Spain.

[fb@uma.es](mailto:fb@uma.es), ORCID: 0000-0003-3360-6423

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - The main objective of this research is to analyze e-commerce companies in a digital marketing and logistics context to better understand the future of e-commerce companies.

**Methodology** - This manuscript has included updated literature and real examples to explore the new challenges facing e-commerce firms in marketing, logistics, and sustainability terms.

**Findings**- The results reveal that Amazon, JD.com, and Alibaba companies with their autonomous distribution have a huge competitive advantage against their main competitors because they do not depend on external logistics companies, their parcel shipments are more personalized, and they reduce time and costs in their processes. Nevertheless, when e-commerce companies depend on external distribution, the quality of their parcel shipment services is highly dependent on logistics firms' ability to provide excellent service to their consumers. Sometimes, consumers' satisfaction is related to parcel shipments by logistics companies, which may be affected by poor services or even parcels arriving too late, and possibly customers will be dissatisfied.

**Conclusion**- In the light of the information obtained because of the research, the sustainable future of e-commerce companies will lie in their efficiency and efficacy management, the sustainability of the environment, logistics services, technological innovations, and marketing strategies to increase sales conversion and cover new consumers' needs.

**Keywords:** E-commerce companies, digital marketing, logistics companies, autonomous and external distribution, sustainable e-commerce

**JEL Codes:** L20, L80, L90, M30

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The distribution of products sold by e-commerce firms requires digital marketing and logistics activities to reach the level of service that customers expect to receive. E-commerce companies such as Amazon, Zara, AliExpress, eBay, Walmart, Alibaba, or JD.com have totally changed the logistics and marketing industries. One proof of this is that most e-commerce firms launch great promotion campaigns several weeks before Black Friday to encourage users to buy more products and services, which are always supported by air and ground logistics companies. Indeed, some e-commerce firms promote 'free shipping' as a marketing strategy to increase online sales. These shipping costs are often shared by logistics providers (World Economic Forum, 2018). In 2022, US Black Friday online retail sales reached \$17.2 billion, up 10.2% compared with 2021 (Rodríguez, 2023). This figure demonstrates the importance of Black Friday marketing strategies, and their impact on consumers, and the income generated by companies. Logistics firms provide value-added solutions for transport, fulfillment, and returns for business-to-consumer (B2C), consumer-to-consumer (C2C), and business-to-business (B2B) deliveries. For instance, JD.com has its own logistics network in China, and this covers 99% of China's population, which enables it to deliver over 90% of its orders the same or next day (Oláh et al., 2019).

Today, customers demand green and sustainable e-commerce shopping to reduce emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> (World Forum Economic, 2020), and e-commerce and logistics companies are implementing sustainable solutions to reduce global warming and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Sakar, 2023) (e.g., electric vehicles, pickup points for parcels, optimizing air and ground routes, delivery before or after working hours, using recyclable plastic pallets, and returnable transport containers, amongst many others). Nevertheless, the reality is totally different due to the increase in the number of online shoppers and retailers in 2022 (Eurostat, 2023; Lin et al.,

2023). Arnold et al. (2018) note that B2C represents 61% of e-commerce shipments, and this situation is provoking more air pollution because of delivery vehicles and the use of non-sustainable packaging.

Instead, China is the world's largest e-commerce market, and this country is trying to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions because Chinese consumers prefer online shopping to physical stores (Liang et al., 2021). Possibly, the sustainable future of e-commerce companies will lie in their efficiency and efficacy management, supported by logistics services (Nitsche and Straube, 2023), technological innovations (Adenigbo et al., 2023), and marketing strategies to increase sales conversion and cover new consumers' needs (Rosário and Raimundo, 2021; Ponzoa and Erdmann, 2021). For this reason, researchers and e-commerce companies must be aware of the increasing importance of understanding online consumer behavior within a marketing, logistical, quality, sustainable, and environmental sphere. Necula (2023) suggests that recognizing e-commerce firms' multidimensionality and consumer behavior in online transactions will help both marketers and companies design better marketing strategies to improve return on investment (ROI) and operational costs. The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked strong competition in the e-commerce market, and this new commercial scenario has boosted the competitiveness of e-commerce companies by providing logistics services (Kim et al., 2021a). This fierce competition between e-commerce platforms has led to new marketing strategies to distinguish oneself from the rest (Chen and Zhang, 2015) and increase impulsive purchases (Chen et al., 2022)

Most studies on e-commerce companies mainly focus on consumer behavior (Florida-Benítez, 2016; Fedushko and Ustyianovych, 2022; Modi and Singh, 2023), digital marketing (Ponzoa and Erdmann, 2021; Tolstoy et al., 2022), social media (Lv et al., 2020; Lin and Wang, 2023), logistics (Junior et al., 2020; Dobroselskyi et al., 2021; Florida-Benítez, 2023a), sustainability (Amornkitvikai et al., 2022; Haryanti and Subriadi, 2022), and prices (Hasiloglu and Kaya, 2021; Riquelme and Román, 2023), but there are a limited number of studies that address e-commerce companies and their connection with marketing strategies and distribution activities through logistics firms. The e-commerce industry is highly dependent on marketing activities and logistics services to provide excellent service to its consumers. The importance of logistics and digital marketing activities in the e-commerce sector requires greater implications for organizations and researchers to improve e-commerce companies' performance (Mangiaracina et al., 2015; Goldman et al., 2021). Moving from these considerations and gaps, the main goal of this research is to analyze e-commerce companies in a digital marketing and logistics context to better understand the future of e-commerce companies. Digital sales experienced a 25.7% surge in 2020, and 95% of orders will be done online in 2025 (IATA, 2022). The convenience of users' purchasing online, learning costs, and the incentive for firms to capitalize on investments in sales and distribution channels are helping to increase the number of companies on the Internet (OECD, 2022).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELEVANCE DATA FOR ANALYSING**

### **2.1. The Current State and Evolution of the E-Commerce Industry**

E-commerce is the practice of buying and selling goods or services using the Internet by users through their mobile devices or PCs (Eurostat, 2023). Although e-commerce includes other activities such as marketing strategies, promotion campaigns, brand recognition and positioning, information exchange, and trade negotiations between operators (Tofan and Bostan, 2022). During the pandemic crisis, consumers used the Internet to buy products and services to limit their physical interactions with other people (OECD, 2022).

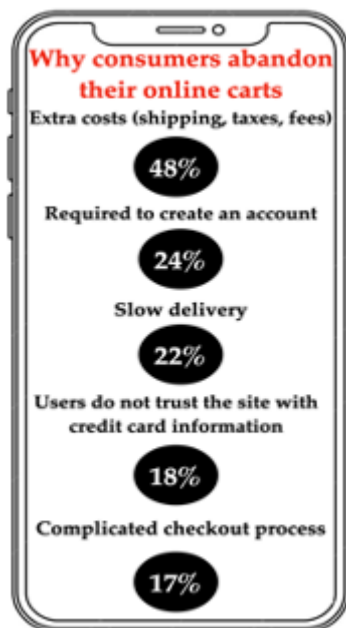
Nevertheless, with the inception of artificial intelligence (AI) in the e-commerce industry, e-commerce companies have been able to increase business efficiency and reach out to more customers effectively because AI provides personalized experiences tailored to the needs and interests of every customer (Moore, 2022). Barrera and Carrión (2014) argue that e-commerce companies are more accessible, functional, and convenient than traditional shopping because they do not have restrictions on time (working 24/7) or space; that is, consumers can buy products and services through their smartphones from the comfort of their homes. Moreover, one of e-commerce companies' largest fortresses for users is that they can immediately compare the attributes, features, and prices of different products through their smartphones (Camilleri, 2022), and this ubiquitous information is impossible to have in physical shops in terms of space-time.

Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will need to pursue new opportunities in the electronic commerce sector to ensure their long-term survival (Tolstoy et al., 2021). According to the Global Digital Overview (2022) reported that global revenues associated with online purchases of consumer goods such as groceries, fashion, electronics, and other household items reaching \$3,85 trillion in 2021, 18% more than in 2020. Digital users are more connected to business than ever before, and they expect more responsive, sustainable, contents, products, and services from e-commerce companies they buy from. Recent studies reveal that consumers' perceptions about the negative effects of transportation can influence their motivations for help environment (Nogueira et al., 2021), or when users search for a specific product, they can sort the results based on the eco-friendliness rating (Islam et al., 2023). From 2010 to 2022, consumers between 25 and 34 years old represented the highest share of online buyers by 87% to buy goods or services online; this means an increase of 24% in 2022 in comparison with the year 2012.

The second position is occupied by users between 35-44 years old, and 83% of this group bought goods and services online in 2022, showing an increase of 24% compared with 2012. Nonetheless, the largest rise was recorded by the proportion of online buyers aged 16-24, from 53 % in 2012 to 81 % in 2022, an increase of 28%. Regarding the group of online shoppers aged 45-54, they were very close to the EU total population average over the last 10 years, while the figure of the 55-74 age group was below the EU average (Eurostat, 2023). A study carried out by D'Adamo et al. (2021) argue that the main challenge for e-commerce is to include cybersecurity and sustainability in its operational activities. Today, there are not 100% safe spaces due to the fact that the fact that e-commerce companies are continuously exposed to possible cyberattacks and vulnerabilities (Florida-Benítez, 2021a, 2024a). Apparently, on the basis of the data shown previously, the e-commerce sector is in good health, and it presents a promising future.

Sometimes, e-commerce companies and their staff should know what will deter rather than attract customers. According to Forbes Advisor (2023) reported that 48% of consumers abandon their online carts because companies implement extra costs such as shipping, taxes, and fees (see Figure 1), followed by the requirement to create an account (24%), slow delivery (22%), users not trusting the site with credit card information (18%), and complicated checkout process (17%). Wang et al. (2022) note that lengthy registration forms, technical glitches, complicated payment methods, slow loading of web pages, and complex transaction processes increase consumers' frustration when they buy services and products on e-commerce firms' websites. From the consumer's point of view, customers buy on a company's e-commerce websites to acquire desired items, to have more information on an item (e.g., lower prices or discounts), and take advantage of a price promotion such as free shipping (Close et al., 2010).

**Figure 1: The Main Reasons Why Consumers Abandon Their Online Carts**



Source: Author's own elaboration from Forbes Advisor (2023).

## 2.2. Digital Marketing and E-Commerce: A Symbiotic Relationship

Digital marketing for e-commerce companies includes the 4Ps (product, price, promotion, and place) of the marketing mix (McCarthy, 1960): first, a product or service that solves a consumer's need; second, the monetary value of the product. Third, how your product is presented and promoted to the public; and fourth and last, the place where the product is being marketed and distributed. Selling is an effort taken to move a product, where the price is an element in digital marketing that determines profitability and the product's value (Kotler, 2011; Florida-Benítez, 2022a). The online sales of products and services by e-commerce firms are more complex than those in physical stores due to new consumer demands and the multidisciplinary nature of the e-commerce industry. For example, e-commerce companies need to develop pricing strategies and monitor sales every week to compete against their main competitors in the local and international markets. Hence, e-commerce firms design and

develop their products and services by examining the market, monitoring what consumers demand, and very importantly, determining what similar products and services are being sold by their main competitors.

Another important element is price. Pricing strategies are widely used in the e-commerce sector to attract new customers and sell more goods and services to their existing customers. Hillen and Fedoseeva (2021) revealed that Amazon implemented a new way of dynamic pricing into Amazon Fresh's online channels to stimulate its sales in food retailing. In the tourism and air transport industries, online travel agencies (OTAs), hotels, and commercial airlines such as Expedia, Booking.com, Meliá Hotels, and Ryanair use price discrimination strategies through official websites and apps to maximize their benefits. The concept of price discrimination means providing different prices for the same products or services to target consumers with different levels of affordability and demand intensity (Chen et al., 2023).

Digital marketing is a tool in which firms and customers use the Internet to create value and products as well as interchange them (Wang, 2024; Florido-Benítez, 2024b). Digital technologies and big data are crucial elements of digital marketing to customize users' products and services. An e-commerce company can be favored by customer segmentation in a bid to tailor customized products and services to consumers and position the company at digital channels such as Apple, Nike, UPS, or Walgreens.com. One of the important tasks facing the future of e-commerce is to innovate the logistics service model and use the power of big data to comprehensively improve the level of e-commerce logistics services (Velentza and Metaxas, 2023).

In addition, digital marketing provides different tools to promote and communicate companies' products and services, such as websites, social media, apps, online advertising, search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), or even Google Analytics to monitor the ROI of companies. When companies use a variety of digital channels, is known as an omnichannel tool, to improve their sales and position their brand image. The implementation of marketing strategies through digital channels enhances the flow of new customers and increases revenues (Kaur et al., 2022), as well as e-commerce firms' productivity. Kapoor and Kapoor (2021) note that the success of online promotion campaigns depends on the marketing strategies and targets chosen by companies. For instance, when some airports, such as Singapore Changi (Singapore), Seoul Incheon (South Korea), and Doha Hamad (Qatar) airports win the Skytrax's prizes, they promote and advertise these awards through their official websites and apps to attract air cargo carriers, logistics companies, and position the airport's brand image around the world (Florido-Benitez, 2016, 2022b). The brand image is a powerful tool used by famous companies such as Ferrari, Chanel, Apple, and Gucci, amongst many others. to be distinguishable from their competitors.

Florido-Benítez (2022a) defines "HuMobAp" as those people that move according to their needs and incentives that firms' apps provide them (Human-Mobile-App) such as Amazon, Shein, FedEx, DHL, Uber, Google, and Booking.com, amongst many others. The use of digital technology in the e-commerce and logistics sectors allows firms to ensure strategic competitive advantages and increase their efficiency and productivity (Bekmurzaev et al., 2020). Figure 2 displays some examples of Thanksgiving and Black Friday promotion campaigns by e-commerce companies to stimulate their sales and increase their revenues. Ponzoa and Erdmann (2021) suggest that Amazon has the best knowledge in of digital marketing techniques to attract customers, and this know-how gives Amazon an important competitive edge in a sector as competitive as the e-commerce industry. Today, it would be unthinkable to design and promote these marketing campaigns without air and ground logistics companies. The immediacy of communications and package shipments makes it possible for managers to take better decisions be more productive, increase revenues, and improve consumers' experiences.

Digital marketing and e-commerce are inherently interconnected, forming a symbiotic relationship that drives the success of online businesses. This relationship is pivotal for reaching consumers, enhancing the user experience, and ultimately driving sales. In fact, effective marketing strategies can drive sales, but efficient logistics services are crucial to ensuring that customers receive their orders on time and in good condition. For example, marketing data can inform the logistics department about demand patterns, while logistics data can inform the marketing department about delivery capabilities and timelines. FedEx and UPS have integrated digital tools for shipment tracking and customer engagement, enhancing the logistics experience.



Figure 2: Thanksgiving and Black Friday Promotion Campaigns by E-Commerce Companies



Source: Author's own elaboration from Medialte (2013), Amazon (2023), Qu   (2023), Cision PR Newswire (2023), Booking.com (2022), and Bejar (2023).

### 2.3. The Relevance of Distribution to E-Commerce Companies

Logistics plays a very important role in the distribution of companies' products and services because an on-time delivery improves customers' loyalty (Otim and Grover, 2006). The quality of customer service levels by companies is associated with the appropriately performed delivery of products and services (Suliga, 2018), including logistics and marketing activities, which average customers' experience and satisfaction (Gajewska et al., 2020). The distribution of goods by e-commerce firms is part of the 4Ps of digital marketing, and therefore, companies and logistics services relationships and interests must be as stable, efficient, and productive as possible. The top three factors that identify logistics firms' quality are: on-time delivery, total support of customers' needs, and error-free transactions (Vasi   et al., 2021). For this reason, most logistics companies (e.g., DHL, DPD, FedEx, and UPS) and some e-commerce companies like Amazon and Shein show the parcel tracking and real-time product visibility. On the contrary, home delivery services, which are usually the preferred option by online consumers, are causing environmental issues (e.g., global warming, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, delivery vehicles generating noise, among others) in Paris, Berlin, Cologne, and London cities (Allen et al., 2018). Milewski and Milewska (2021) found that distribution with the use of parcel lockers can help reduce the consumption of fuel even by 74–87% per parcel, or 36% per m<sup>3</sup> in Poland.

Logistics service is one of the most expensive operations for e-commerce companies. Under this circumstance, the distribution of products and services by logistics companies will face new opportunities and operational challenges in the next five years. Proof of this is the Amazon e-commerce company that is investing in decentralized warehouses to establish next day delivery or even the same day. This is because the "last mile", which is the final delivery step to the consumer, is gaining importance due to the rising share of online retail (Hausmann et al., 2014). If e-commerce and logistics companies do not satisfy the expectations of customers, their place will be taken by other companies that understand their immediate needs. Consumers evaluate e-commerce and logistics companies' service quality, such as on-time delivery, portfolio of services, the cost of services, payment method, and the applied technological solutions (Florida-Ben  tez, 2023b). The environmental impact can be reduced through efficient supply and delivery activities for consumers (D'Adamo et al., 2021).

We would like to highlight that there are two types of e-commerce companies in terms of distribution and logistics systems:

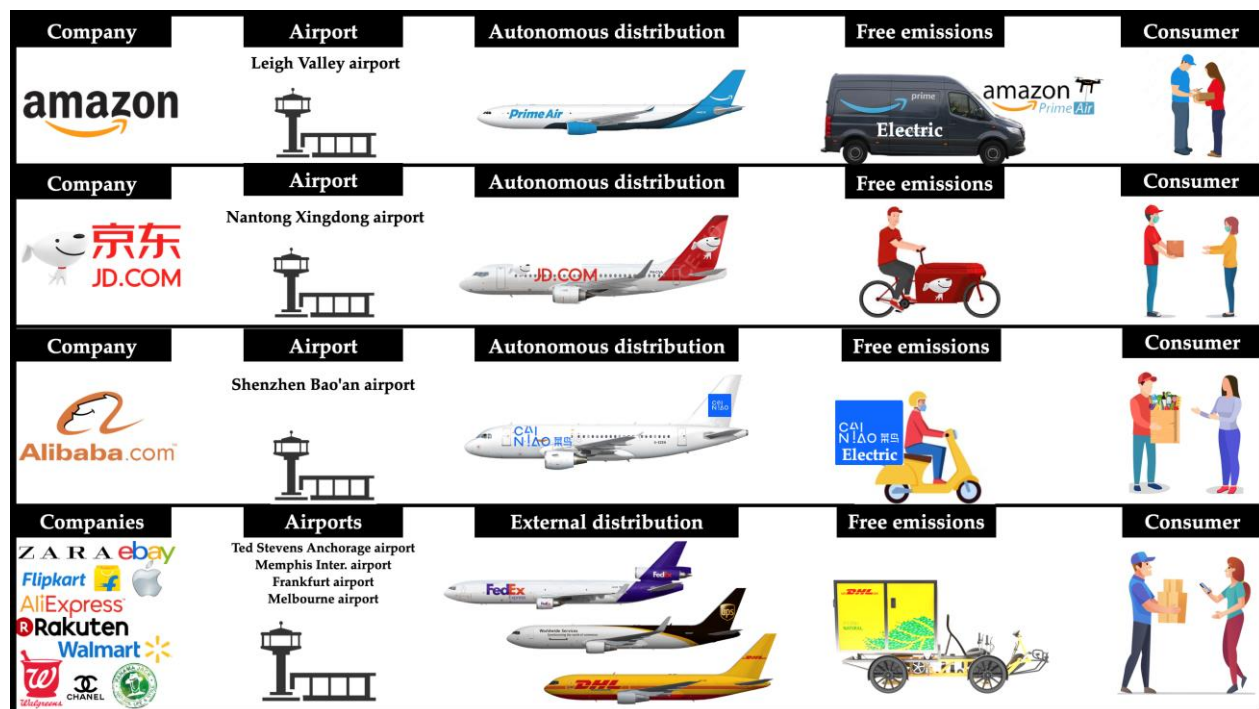
1. Autonomous distribution of parcel shipments: the company manages and distributes its own parcel shipments with its own infrastructure and means of transport, such as warehouses, cargo aircraft, ships, trucks, and staff, among others, to provide effective and efficient management of package shipments to its customers. For example, air transport is

accessible across most of the world and is ideal for shipments that need to be moved quickly across the globe. Nowadays, Amazon is the most representative example of autonomous distribution. Amazon squeezes costs by focusing on high-density markets and dotting urban markets with delivery stations, which allows it to reduce its reliance on other shipping companies (Greene, 2020). The key is managing the costs of the most expensive part of a parcel's trip to customers, the so-called "last mile." Even so, Amazon works with FedEx, UPS, and DHL companies to guarantee its shipping services from any point in the world. Recently, China's Alibaba, Suning.com, and JD.com companies have been operating in this territory with their own logistics network; in the case of Alibaba, this operates through its logistics subsidiary Cainiao.

- External distribution of parcel shipments are those companies that require external logistics services to distribute their products and services (understood as parcel shipments) to their customers. For instance, eBay, Walmart, Philips, Zara, Apple, Rakuten, and Walgreens companies' products are distributed by FedEx, UPS, and DHL logistics firms. However, this type of distribution shows some weaknesses, first, a bad service provided by the logistics company can increase e-commerce firms' costs and reduce their efficacy (Kim et al., 2021b), and second, costumers' satisfaction directly depends on logistic company services and not on the e-commerce company (Florida-Benítez, 2023a). In other words, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of logistics companies has a great influence on consumers' satisfaction, as do e-commerce companies. The success of e-commerce companies is linked to the distribution of products and services and logistics firms, with the aim of promoting online purchases and customer satisfaction (Qin et al., 2020). As stated by Xiao et al. (2021) thanks to e-commerce services, logistics facilities and courier companies have proliferated in the major metropolitan areas around the world.

Figure 3 shows autonomous and external distribution by e-commerce companies and how parcels are sent to consumers by different deliveries with emissions-free vehicles. DHL, Hermes, and TNT logistic companies integrate cargo cycles into their supply chains. Cargo cycles, known as bike couriers, are a zero-emission alternative to light goods vehicles in city centers (Schliwa et al., 2015). Bike couriers also suffer less from road congestion problems than van or truck transport, and these are used to deliver letters, little packages, contracts, etc. In the case of zero emission electric freight vehicles (e.g., trucks, vans, or motorcycles) they are considered one of the best vehicles to reduce the negative impacts of transport in cities while maintaining an efficient urban freight transport system, such as in Amsterdam, New York, London, Tokyo, Oslo, Seoul, California, and Berlin amongst many others (Lal et al., 2023).

Figure 3: Autonomous and External Distribution by E-Commerce Companies



Meanwhile, the sustainable future of e-commerce and logistics companies requires replacing conventional fossil fuel-driven vehicles with zero-emission vehicles to achieve environmental targets. For instance, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are considered an excellent tool to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> footprints in the logistics industry (Bukhari et al., 2023), but there are some problems concerning this type of electric transport due to a lower electricity demand when delivering food and packages to clients (Kwasiborska et al., 2023), as well as to consider complex urban scenarios, adverse weather conditions, flight time and distance limitations, and customer identification (Troudi et al., 2018). Conversely, air cargo carriers are the ones that pollute the most, air freight leaves the most significant carbon footprint for large items compared to ocean freight. Flights emit 500 grams of carbon dioxide per metric ton of cargo per kilometer of transportation. However, ships emit only between 10 and 40 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometer (Kilgore, 2023). The carbon footprint of airplanes is 20 to 30 times greater than that of ships (Kilgore, 2023). Numerous options to decarbonize (known as decarbonization) and develop zero-emission aircraft and ships are available for the logistics industry, but none of them is emerging as a specific trend by now (Wang et al., 2023). Baxter (2022) notes that Cargolux Airlines uses Jet A1, which is the most important energy source for aircraft, while for its ground-based facilities, truck and van vehicles use electricity sources.

#### **2.4. The Relevance of Airports and Air Freight Carriers Linked to the Future of Companies' Product and Service Distribution**

Airports are the most strategically important transport infrastructure for air freight carriers and e-commerce companies because the location of warehouses and logistics firms needs to be as close as possible for airports to cost savings, time savings, and higher efficiency (Florida-Benitez, 2022c). Airports boost the establishment of logistics, technological, e-commerce, and tourism companies in cities (Florida-Benitez, 2022d). For this reason, warehouses, logistics companies, and air freight carriers are localized near airports and high air connections to reduce costs (Florida-Benitez, 2021b), or vice versa, the airport's success is influenced by airlines and connectivity with other places. In 2019, nearly 61 million tons of goods were shipped by air, and since 2014, air cargo has grown faster than world trade (IATA, 2020). Sixty-one percent of companies localized around the Munich airport (Germany) used this airport to ship cargo, of which 33% stated that air freight was their primary means of transport (Boloukian and Siegmann, 2016). In 2022, European online buyers reached 75%, and this increased by 20% over the last 10 years (Eurostat, 2023).

Most logistics companies are localized around the Zhengzhou Xingzheng airport in China because they distribute products and services in the wholesale electronic and clothing market, among others, and these industrial chains are in the city of Zhengzhou (Zhao and Miao, 2023). While the Zhengzhou airport has seen an increase in its operations and incomes thanks to Foxconn, this company is the manufacturer of Apple's iPhones, and it is localized in Zhengzhou (International Airport Review, 2018). In the case of JD.com, the e-commerce company has an extensive network of over 1,000 air transportation routes, covering more than 100 airports worldwide, and its JD Logistics and JD Logistics airlines subsidiaries transport JD.com's parcels across the globe (Wang, 2023a). The main JD.com's base airport is Nantong Xingdong airport. Furthermore, Cainiao company, the logistics arm of Alibaba e-commerce firm, has announced its partnership with Shenzhen airport (China) to establish an air cargo center, with plans to launch new international cargo routes (Wang, 2023b).

Economies of scale, airports' locations, and changes in sourcing and distribution strategies drive disruptions in the retail sector (Rodrigue, 2020), but it was Amazon that marked the starting point of the emerging logistics of the e-commerce industry. Amazon Air has a total of 97 planes, and they fly services to 64 different destinations to deliver over 2 million packages across the globe (Forbes, 2023). The growth of Amazon Air is a benchmark of the retailer's push to expand its presence in the overnight and two-day home delivery markets (Schwieterman and Walls, 2020). Amazon Air grew from 7.5% to 14.6% of FedEx's capacity and from 11.2% to 20% of UPS's capacity (Schwieterman and Craig, 2023). The importance of airports for e-commerce companies is essential for their logistics activities. Indeed, the Lehigh Valley (ABE) airport is the Amazon Air operational base and is focused on the air cargo activity of this firm.

Air freight carriers provide fast and reliable delivery times, allowing logistics and e-commerce companies to increase on-time service (Dresner and Zou, 2020). The top five air cargo carriers worldwide in 2022 were: FedEx, United Parcel Services, known as UPS, Qatar Airways, Emirates, and Korean Air (IATA, 2023). Although the air cargo sector is dominated by DHL, UPS, FedEx, and TNT integrators (Schäfer, 2023). They are called integrators because their systems – pick-up, sorting, long-distance transport, and delivery – are integrated (Florida-Benitez, 2023a). There are, however, environmental differences between these companies. UPS and DHL have included sustainable operational activities as a competitive advantage, while FedEx has focused on cost savings through emission carbon reductions (Herold and Lee, 2017). However, FedEx was recognized as the 'Logistics Company of the Year' at the 2023 Logistics and Transport Awards for sustainability efforts, and integration of technology with transportation and e-commerce services (FedEx, 2023). For example, from a consumer perspective, FedEx provides the best customer value for express service in Taiwan, according to these six factors: land time between house and airport at both ends; administrative

processing time; pick-up and haul time in warehouse; level of accuracy; level of safety; and rapid turnover (Ding et al., 2016). More and more logistics and e-commerce companies try to adjust their product and service management strategies to cover other companies and their own consumers' needs and preferences (del Alcázar, 2022).

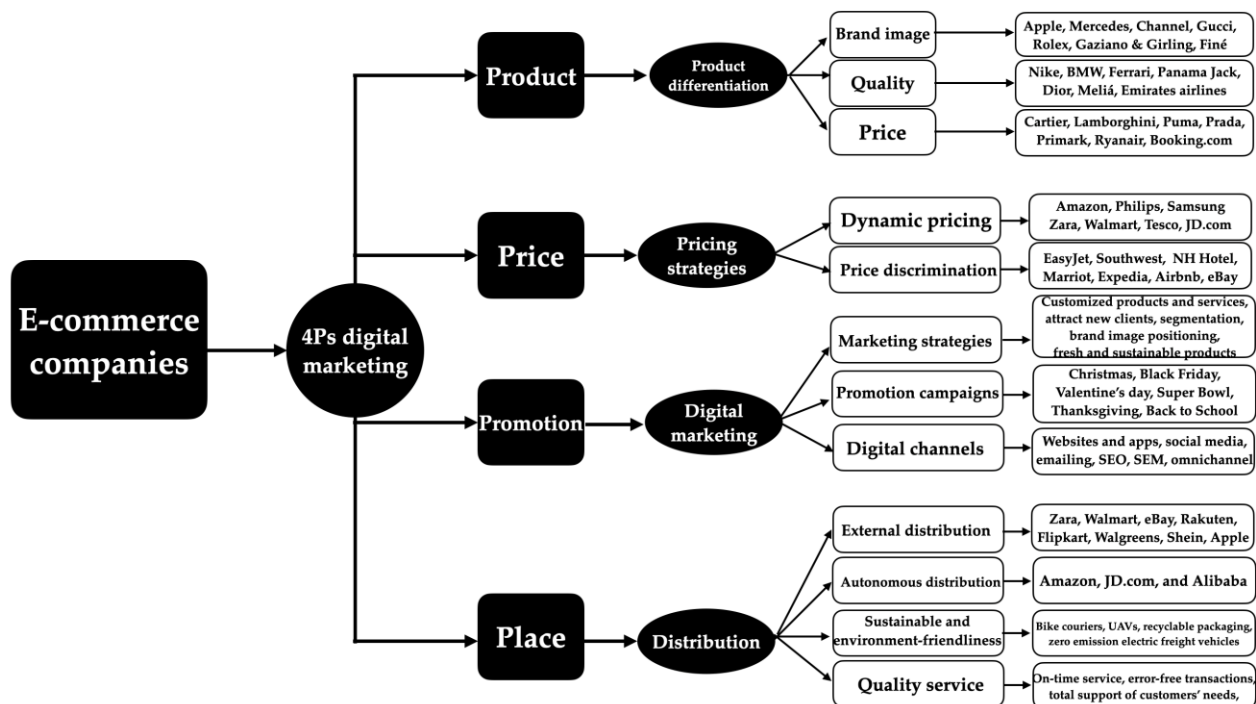
### 3. A GLOBAL VISION OF E-COMMERCE, DIGITAL MARKETING, AND LOGISTICS RELATIONSHIPS EXAMINED IN THIS PAPER

E-commerce companies are aligning with new consumer needs related to purchasing effects on the environment. Thus, logistics and e-commerce companies are focused on reducing their carbon footprint through innovative and sustainable activities. Sustainable packaging, also known as green packaging, is about sourcing, creating, and developing packaging solutions that leave no or little impact on the environment (Wandosell et al., 2021). Companies such as Gucci, Puma, KFC, ASOS, Frito-Lay, Calvin Klein, Seasalt Cornwall, Just Water, and The White Company have taken notable initiatives towards their objectives to save tons of plastic every year by using a thinner material for their product packaging (ShippingChimp, 2022). These sustainable actions are promoted on companies' websites, apps and social media as marketing strategies to show their commitment to the environment.

For instance, Ubuy India and Amazon have introduced 'Frustration-Free Packaging,' which reduces waste and eliminates the need for excess packaging materials (Khan, 2023). From the connotation of green logistics management, logistics companies need to use green packaging materials and easy recycling packaging materials for proper packaging, as well as reduce the use of packaging materials (Zhang and Zhao, 2012). The abundant cardboard waste generated by the e-commerce sector ends up being degraded and polluted nature (Escursell et al., 2021). We would like to point out that when we contaminate nature and the environment, we are polluting ourselves. Nguyen et al. (2020) note that consumers perceive eco-friendly packaging as an important marketing strategy for companies to remain sustainably competitive. In response, these concerns of consumers must be promoted through digital channels to raise people's awareness of environmental sustainability.

As sustainability continues to be important for consumers, companies that focus on sustainable business practices through digital marketing can become more relevant and profitable. Promoting more sustainable product and service offerings and new green packaging initiatives boosts companies' brand image worldwide and builds trust with consumers (Zhang and Zhao, 2012; Florido-Benitez, 2022e). Deloitte (2023) reported that e-commerce companies that wish to thrive in the future should continue to invest in new products and services and marketing efforts that help ensure a healthy and sustainable future, particularly through the metaverse and AI scenarios.

Figure 4: The 4Ps Digital Marketing Model for the Sustainable Future of E-Commerce Companies

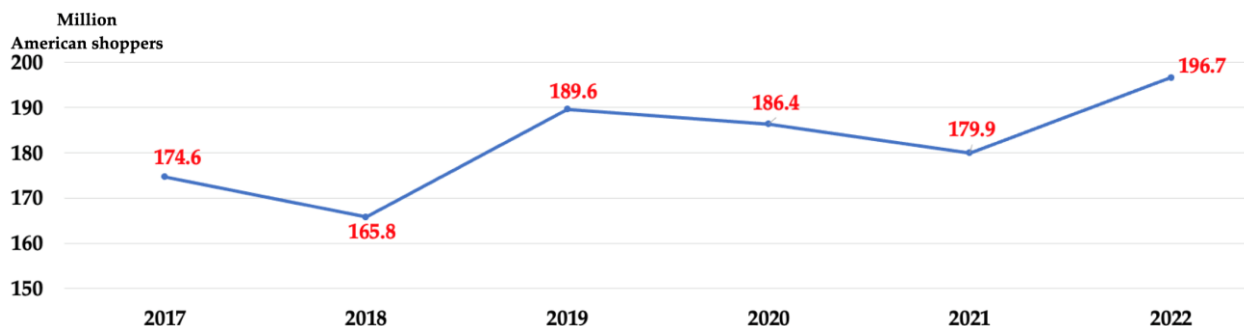


It is necessary, in this general context, to analyze all the information and data furnished to provide a global vision of the e-commerce sector. This study illustrates the sustainable future of the e-commerce industry through the 4Ps digital marketing model (see Figure 4) that will help e-commerce and logistics companies and researchers better understand the future scenario that they are facing to improve consumers' experience and satisfaction and the sustainability of the environment. For example, companies' distribution and sustainable operations are tackled in the section of distribution in Figure 4, where quality service and sustainability and environmental friendliness are very important activities for e-commerce and logistics companies, as well as consumers' perceptions and satisfaction. Customers' perceptions of quality services and environment friendliness by companies need to meet three factors: consumers' desires, expectations, and predictions (Wu et al., 2018).

Interestingly, a result of this study was that Amazon, JD.com, and Alibaba companies with their autonomous distribution have a huge competitive advantage against their main competitors because they do not depend on external logistics companies, their parcel shipments are more personalized, and they reduce time and costs in their processes. Amazon's efforts into distribution and logistics infrastructure allow it to control and reduce costs, time, and efficiency of its delivery system (Zhang et al., 2019). Conversely, when e-commerce companies depend on external distribution, the quality of their parcel shipment services is highly dependent on logistics firms to provide excellent service to their consumers. Sometimes, consumers' satisfaction is related to parcel shipments by logistics companies, which may be affected by poor services or even parcels arriving too late, and possibly customers will be dissatisfied. E-commerce and logistics companies must be conscious of the effects of delays in delivery on customers' perceptions of the service (Uzir et al., 2021).

Another important outcome was that digital marketing plays a significant role in the future development of logistics and e-commerce companies' economic, commercial, and sustainability. The e-commerce sector requires constant evolution and updating of technologies to achieve success for firms, as is providing excellent customer experience and service through marketing strategies and promotion campaigns. Christmas, Black Friday, Valentine's Day, Super Bowl, Thanksgiving, and back – school promotion campaigns through digital channels such as websites, apps, social media, and emailing, among others increase companies' online sales and revenues. US retailers consider that their most profitable days are the Friday after Thanksgiving, Black Friday, the Monday after Thanksgiving, and Cyber Monday, thus, their ROI in marketing campaigns increases their incomes annually (Swilley and Goldsmith, 2013; Sailer, 2022). In 2022, almost 197 million Americans shopped in stores or online from Thanksgiving through Cyber Monday, spending an average of \$325.44 each over the five days (National Retail Federation, 2022). In these five days, Americans spent more than \$35.3 billion on online purchases (Tretina, 2023). Indeed, Thanksgiving's shoppers have not stopped growing from 2017 to 2022, as we can see in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Thanksgiving Weekend Shoppers from 2017 to 2022**



Source. Author's own elaboration from National Retail Federation (2022).

Furthermore, promotion campaigns are an excellent tool to promote personalized products and services during off-seasons because these marketing actions help to attract new clients and position the company's brand image on digital channels. Therefore, providing specific product and service information through omnichannel and promotion campaigns might help consumers make better decisions in terms of quality and price compared to traditional stores. Online consumers value other online user-generated reviews on products and series offered by e-commerce companies and their business performance. 74% of travelers use the comments of other consumers as information sources when planning trips for pleasure (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). Traveler reviews have a significant impact on online sales, with a 10% increase in traveler review ratings boosting online bookings by more than 5% (Ye et al., 2011).

Regarding the pricing strategies in the e-commerce industry, we included the dynamic pricing strategy, which is commonly used by Amazon, Philips, Walmart, Zara, Tesco, JD.com, Alibaba, and Samsung, amongst many others. Most of these e-commerce

companies are monitoring and comparing their prices with their main competitors daily to provide the most competitive price in the market in terms of price-quality ratio. The prices of products and services of Amazon, JD.com, Yonghui Supermarket, and Alibaba companies are conditioned by their high-speed deliveries to consumers (Wang and Ng, 2020). Notwithstanding, price discrimination strategy is more frequently applied in hospitality, OTA, and air transport companies such as Booking.com, Hilton, Hercha, Marriot, Ryanair, American Airlines, Expedia, or Airbnb companies because this pricing strategy has a greater impact in terms of revenue maximization than dynamic pricing strategy. This is due to squeezed profit margins existing in the hospitality, OTA, and air transport sectors, selling perishable services, and a high level of competition between domestic and international operators. Han and Bai (2022) note that big data-enabled price discrimination as marketing practices in the tourism and air transport industries increase competition between companies and fare revenue. From the consumer's point of view, the price discrimination strategy helps buyers receive targeted offerings that better meet their preferences in terms of products and services, the price asked, and preferred purchase timing (Namin et al., 2020). The biggest representative of the price discrimination strategy is eBay.

To conclude this section, the e-commerce industry is helping companies establish a wider market presence by providing cheaper and more efficient distribution channels for their products or services through brand image, quality, and price digital marketing strategies. Online stores such as Apple, Mercedes, Chanel, Gucci, Rolex, and Gaziano & Girling have known how to put their brands at the top of the e-commerce sector thanks to their marketing strategies and position their brand image more effectively than other companies. Mao et al. (2020) suggest that Apple and Huawei smartphones' brand image influences customers' purchase intentions. However, BMW, Nike, Ferrari, Panama Jack, Dior, Meliá, and Emirates companies are recognized for the quality of their products and services, and sometimes these firms pre-launch their products and services online with reservations in limited quantity before release to test the market. For instance, Nike has a strong brand and quality recognition among teenagers across the globe, and this company promotes their products through digital channels to increase their sales, particularly Nike advertise its sneakers through celebrities and famous athletes such as Will Smith, Michael Jordan, LeBron James, and Serena Williams. As stated by Zhu (2022) this is one of the main digital marketing strategies for Nike, and its revenues are increasing every year.

On the contrary, Ryanair, Shein, Primark, or Booking.com companies apply low and affordable pricing strategies based on the 4Ps digital model to their websites and apps to compete with their main competitors. The main competitors of Shein are Zara, H&M, ASOS, Primark, and Amazon. Shein's prices are low and reasonable to attract new clients and increase its sales. A tweet went viral claiming that \$280 at Shein is equivalent to a year's worth of clothing (Shen, 2022). In the case of Booking.com, its main competitors are Airbnb, Expedia, Orbitz, Kayak, and TripAdvisor. One of the main marketing strategies of Booking.com is its low prices and promotion campaigns through its omnichannel tool (Santos et al., 2021). Companies are perfectly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the e-commerce industry, and some of them, like Cartier, Puma, Prada, Hermes, or Amani, have seen the e-commerce perfect scenario to differentiate their products through their high prices and an opportunity to sell their products much more quickly and efficiently than in their physical stores.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The main goal of this manuscript was to analyse e-commerce companies in a digital marketing and logistics context to better understand the future of the e-commerce companies. Initially, one of the most significant advantages of e-commerce industry is the ability to reach customers anywhere in the world through companies' websites and apps, and digital marketing strategies, as we can see previously. Digital marketing's advantages include accessing new markets with fewer expenses. The sustainable future of e-commerce companies will lie in their efficiency and efficacy management, the sustainability of the environment, logistics services, technological innovations, and marketing strategies to increase sales conversion and cover new consumers' needs.

Findings reveal that logistics plays a very important role in the distribution of firms' products and services, as an on-time delivery improves the quality of services. For instance, Amazon, JD.com, and Alibaba companies with their autonomous distribution have a huge competitive advantage against their main competitors because they do not depend on external logistics companies, their parcel shipments are more personalized, and they reduce time and costs in their processes. Nevertheless, when e-commerce companies depend on external distribution, the quality of their parcel shipment services is highly dependent on logistics firms' ability to provide excellent service to their consumers. Sometimes, consumers' satisfaction is related to parcel shipments by logistics companies, which may be affected by poor services or even parcels arriving too late, and possibly customers will be dissatisfied.

Another important result was that the sustainable future of e-commerce and logistics companies requires replacing fossil fuel-driven vehicles with zero-emission vehicles to achieve environmental targets. Indeed, green packaging and parcel shipment fulfilment are vital elements of an omnichannel marketing plan to enhance consumers' experiences. However, air cargo carriers

are the ones that pollute the most in the world, and government bodies must be aware that it is not only about reducing emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>. This great issue requires better measures and laws to help enhance the air quality in cities. Therefore, air freight carriers urgently need to develop other alternatives to fossil fuel 'decarbonization' to achieve zero-emissions. Unfortunately, none of the air cargo carriers are achieving this difficult challenge. Consumers demand that logistics and e-commerce companies include sustainable and ethical activities as an essential part of their processes to reach CO<sub>2</sub> zero emissions. The sustainability of the environment by governments, companies, and consumers needs to become an established reality rather than merely a trend.

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## A THEORETICAL SUGGESTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SAFETY CULTURE: CIVIL AVIATION CONTEXT

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### Olcay Olcen

Nisantasi University, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Neotech Campus, Istanbul, Turkiye.

[olcay.olcen@nisantasi.edu.tr](mailto:olcay.olcen@nisantasi.edu.tr), ORCID: 0000-0002-4835-1171

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - This paper aims to place aviation safety culture on three pillars theoretically, and by doing so, to distill findings. By more clear words, It tries to give a more detailed explanation of the concept of safety and safety sciences. Regardless of the business branches, safety should be an important branch, depending on its clear importance in aviation, maritime, health and engineering and more technical sciences to give a clear insight into safety another purpose.

**Methodology** - Methodologically, the differences between the communities of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft of Tönnies and epistémê and technê discrimination of Greek philosophy pave the way for Habermas's Communicative Action Theory to create a cultural form that is exemplified as safety culture in civil aviation depending on the increasing impacts of the communication and communication networks. In the end, it concludes that the safety culture of civil aviation can be explained with this type of theoretical background and this methodology can be utilised in other industrial branches and sciences.

**Findings**- The main findings of this research can be collected in two groups. One of them is directly related to the creation of a cultural form (safety culture) and its main features by theoretical means, the other one is the evaluation of these theoretical means to the specific ends in a specific business branch, so civil aviation.

**Conclusion**- Through these ways, the importance of communication, sociological heritage and knowledge forms in aviation safety culture will be more theoretically understandable which is a complementary recipe of the research gap. On the other side, and in clearer words, safety is one of the great problems of humankind and business life. Like many other concepts such as security, the importance of heritage, culture, transmission and transportation of knowledge will be more understandable with these kinds of papers or works.

**Keywords:** Safety culture, civil aviation, theoretization, communication, knowledge

**JEL Codes:** B26, O18, R11

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Paris Agreement of 1919 and especially the Chicago Convention of 1944, civil aviation has grown at such an absolute pace that it was impossible to detect the true directions, timing and place of the last innovations and inventions. For example, hybrid or electrical engine systems are still in ambiguity and a great question mark for airports in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of fuel systems, on the other hand, unmanned aerial vehicles are still in question if it is concentrated on security matters and international laws.

In the middle of this dense agenda, this paper's first aim is to evaluate civil aviation's place in the world business community. As we realize the first step, we will benefit essentially from the distinction of the great German philosopher Tönnie's dualism (2001) between Gemeinschaft (communion) and Gesellschaft (society). The first question of this research is formed here as what are the main motivations behind aviation communities, therefore we will make a philosophical positioning and we'll focus on this matter so closely. Secondly, we'll concentrate on knowledge analysis, the main tools and vehicles in this analysis will be mainly taken

from the dualism of the age of the Greek Philosophers between *epistēmê*(theory) and *technê*(practice-craft)<sup>1</sup>. We can observe the importance of these knowledge types not only in civil aviation business activities but also in the training and education activities of aviators as a priority that is the heart of every branch and sub-branches of civil aviation, therefore we will pave the way for an investigation in terms of means and ends. Thirdly and lastly, we will theoretically analyse safety culture in aviation. In this analysis, we will make vulnerable and comprehensive contributions from Habermas' Communicative Action Theory (1981a; 1981b). By doing so, we will re-evaluate civil aviation which is said and accepted as a communication-based safety climate and safety culture, because of the lack of theoretical connections in this context.

In light of the arguments above, we will set up a theoretical background for the research in the first section, we will make a literature review in the second section, the discussion which is the essence of our work, in the third step, the conclusion and suggestion will be the last part of the research.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

While and After the Industrial Revolution, one of the great leaps of organized people was witnessed in the understanding of work and business life and projections of this situation to the human social lives were great. The direction, density, effectiveness and efficiency of the transformation were so frank that philosophers and scientists tried to find new definitions, identifications, classifications and new theorizing to succeed by mean-end chains, articulations and concepts.

Gemeinschaft (communion) and Gesellschaft (society) are products of these efforts. If underlined here the differences between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft as Waters (2016) utilized, Gemeinschaft generally refers to a human unity in which emotions, affections and family relations, for these reasons, personal loyalty to family, ethnic relationships, professional memberships to the religious community and feudal rank. On the other side, Gesellschaft is another form of human unity in which rational motives and rational will, the power of money overcomes all of the other human-belonged-motives, therefore it is a materialistic one. Besides these, Soares (1997) states that a typology of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft is so beneficial to explain social relationships and the roles of modernized or industrialized individuals and continues affectivity, particularism, ascription, diffuseness, collectivism are forms of Gemeinschaft, on the other hand, neutrality, universalism, achievement, specificity and individualism are patterns of Gesellschaft. According to Christenson (1984), the other differences can be realised through classifications for spatial (rural-urban) and communal (collectivistic-individualistic). For Greeley (1966), the Christian Church always became a good developer and feeder of Gemeinschaft that carries religion-dependent patterns. Nonetheless, as Sanstedt and Westin (2015) underline the Gemeinschaft as a public life indicator, Gesellschaft can be considered as a work and business life descriptor. In addition, Nilsson and Hendrikse (2009) support the idea of different norms behind the Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft dualism. The emphasis of Bennett (2011) is also so important that she defines Gemeinschaft as a human unity formed around one Geist (Soul), while agreements, protocols or contracts are the main ties or boundaries of Gesellschaft and also it includes all of the modern business habits, norms and even economical theories that begin from the job division of Adam Smith. So, there are strong, concrete and open differences between members of Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft in life and professional life habits, she exemplified them with plagiarism in science. Consequently, Kornbeck (2001) determines the main Gemeinschaft skills as common-sense knowledge, intuition, traditionally selected implicit communication and negotiation, compassion, subjective appreciation, induction, as comparatively as legal, administrative and psycho-social scientific knowledge, reasoning, deduction, analytical and casework skills, explicit and coherent communication and negotiation are main features of the Gesellschaft individual.

The second theory to form of this analysis is the duality between *epistēmê*(theory) and *technê* (practice-craft), according to ancient Greek philosophical schools, There are five virtues of thought: *technê* (technical knowledge), *epistēmê*(scientific knowledge), *phronêsis*(daily knowledge), *sophia* (wisdom), and *nous* (rationality). Various translations have been offered for each of these terms. Most often, *technê* is translated as craft or art. While *epistēmê* is generally rendered as knowledge, in this context, where it is used in its precise sense, it is sometimes translated as scientific knowledge<sup>2</sup>. In analyses of Karpov (2015), it is underlined that practices of art, craft and science can be counted as *technê*. He gives examples of the craft of war, playing music, authority administration and agriculture, steering a boat and cookery, real estate management, blacksmithing, medical treatment and mathematical operations, making money, the art of painting, measuring the Earth and the motion planets, witchcraft and

<sup>1</sup>[https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-techne/#:~:text=Epist%C3%AAm%C3%AA%20is%20the%20Greek%20word,%20or%20'art'](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-techne/#:~:text=Epist%C3%AAm%C3%AA%20is%20the%20Greek%20word,%20or%20'art')). Accessed at 15.07.2022.

<sup>2</sup> [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-techne/#:~:text=Epist%C3%AAm%C3%AA%20is%20the%20Greek%20word,%20or%20'art'](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/episteme-techne/#:~:text=Epist%C3%AAm%C3%AA%20is%20the%20Greek%20word,%20or%20'art')). Accessed at 15.07.2022.

prophecy are main and different styles of *technê* in Ancient Greek and adds that they need commerce wisdom. There are some practices of slaves (unworthy of a free man, a citizen). On the other side, Leonard and Tochia (2022) state that *epistêmê* is an expression and a standard of scientific knowledge that grows with Enlightenment thinking, it is objective, value-free and independent. Here, the classification of Chia and Holt (2008) is also clearly important in this context that *technê* is more associated with precise, codified and technical instruction, and a tacit form of knowledge, conversely, *epistêmê* includes experimental (scientific), explicit and universal knowledge. According to Rawlins (1950), the main projections of *technê* and *epistêmê* to the current are "pure science" and "applied science".

The third pillar of our theoretical base is the Communicative Action Theory of Habermas. If it is looked at the deep roots of the business world, it is so normal to confront with the problematic of communication. In this pillar, we will elaborate following questions and other types of questions, for example, how can we define communication in a business context? Is there a communication type for all of the actions of humans or an action for all of the communications types? etc.

Communicative Action Theory takes its roots in Speech Acts, which aims to minimal use of the unit of communication in messages from A to B, but to increase the message's direction, intensity and correctness. Rationality, mutual understanding and own design of communication (regulative, commissive and declarative) and inclusivity are important determinants in this context (Dietz and Widdershoven, 1991). For Mitrovic (1998), social actions, interests, life world, social system and regulation need different communication types in specific considerations of action such as teleological, norm-regulated, dramaturgical and communicative. These actions are products of different interests of the mind such as theoretical, practical and emancipation. To ensure and sustain a stable development degree in social facts (knowledge), moral justifications (legitimacy) and legal norms (regulation), a good order requires these detailed communication types that are products of examined minds in the Communicative Action Theory of Habermas and according to Risse (2003), because of these reasons, it's one of the main theories which are included and given directions in international legal arrangements agreed upon by national governments, from larger scope, it aims governance without a government by its ultra descriptive and definitive-communication-based structure oriented to reaching understanding while other communication structures focus on the success (Thompson, 1983). Again, Baxter (1987) describes that Habermas aims for a cultural form, which begins from this communication-based structure, and includes cultural standards of interpretations, values, and expressions. Silva, Pereira, and Felizardo (2022) named this interactive process with Habermas' words as "lifeworld" and put it on his triangle that is composed of culture, person and society. While Kihlström and Israel (2002) define communicative action, they put strategic action opposite to it and give great importance to the acts of influencing and manipulating the other. Both of these actions can be observed in the modern business world and life conditions. Nonetheless, Chilton and Cuzzo (1999) maintain that Habermas tries to put forward a wide conflict resolution methodology with this theory.

Regarding its comprehensive nature, Habermas tries to develop a wide theory based on social order. However, according to Hoch (2007), although communicative action theory gives insights into urban/city life, it can not be fully addressed to social, economic and political changes.

Besides these, Kecmanovic and Janson (1999) talk about the significant impact of communicative theory on information systems research especially with the explanative concepts of successfulness, legitimacy, justification, sincerity, truthfulness and cognitive-instrumental rationality about communication. For Kernstock and Brexendorf (2009), the theory of the Habermas is so important not only because it tries to regulate cognitions and moral and aesthetic dependence on knowledge, but also because it increases the validity of communicative actions.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The declaration of Ilan and Fowler (2005) is so important that the automobile and aviation industries are the main focus points of safety-related research because of their safety management-dependent nature. This determination also is supported by Turan et al. (2016). To ensure good management practices in civil aviation, we should concentrate on safety matters first. If we look more closely at safety practices and theories, it can be confronted with the needs and requirements of decision-making, safety management systems and the implementation of policies and procedures related to civil aviation. Besides these, proactive safety resource allocation, operational safety management systems, and risk scenarios gain importance, and to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and proactivity good communication is essential (Bhattarai et al., 2022). For Atak and Kingma (2011) development and growth phase of an organisation and the production interests of a company are strictly, soundly and comprehensively concerning its safety culture in aircraft maintenance as well as other branches of civil aviation. If it is historically concentrated on the safety culture development, the increasing interactions of academics, publishers, consultants, regulators and industries and

the evolution to global safety culture can be observed (Le Coze, 2019). According to McDonald et al. (2000) and Yorio et al. (2019), safety culture is not only formed by individuals who are subjected to attitudes and behaviours but also, social psychological, sociology and anthropology research, which subjects norms, values and beliefs, assumptions as a necessity. Parker et al. (2006) and Glendon and Stanton (2000) underline the importance of human factors as another variable in physiologically, psychologically and socially determining safety culture. On the other side, Ek et al. (2007) offer ideas-supporting and conflict-solution communication mechanisms to increase the safety culture understanding. If it is concentrated on the other branches, out of some specific and operational conditions, the situation has not any deviations in Airports as concluded by Remawi et al. (2011), Air Traffic Management (Mearns et al., 2013) and Ground Handling (Ek and Akselsson, 2007) and Commercial Flight Operations (Gibbons et al., 2006). In the article of Bates (2023), safety in business aviation is associated with emotional intelligence. In the work of Liao (2015), there is a comparison of safety cultures between Chinese and Western pilots, rather than the results, the methodological approaches and titles are so important in this work, on which there are the increasing impacts of trust, high power distance, sharing information and knowledge, communication and reporting to a high degree of harmony. Legality is another important determinant, especially after a fatal accident, legal reporting and its dimensions such as international law and crime management and cultural identifications, and determinations, so safety culture gain importance (Lawrenson and Braithwaite, 2018). Besides these, Wilke et al. (2014) maintain that data management and informatic sciences, logic and reasoning are very important in safety management, for this reason, a safety database is a necessity. Anyhow, resilient safety culture is a subject and aim of the legal structure of Civil aviation with its special governance structure between policies, practices and procedures (Adjekum and Tous, 2020), as observed in Appendix 19 of ICAO. According to the analysis of Foster and Adjekum (2022) and Adjekum (2014), safety culture is a matter of increasing perceptions, harvesting desired behaviours, and increasing exposure to safety training. While Gill and Shergill (2004) underline the relationship between different cultures, they generalize employee safety responsibilities to more important variables than an effective safety management system and encouraging a positive safety culture.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Today, civil aviation is a worldwide regulated community with all of its roots. But, again and again, if it is looked at its deeper sides, it will be confronted with the same traditions of the 1900s such as military patterns, continental differences between Europe and the USA, and regional and cultural differences. For example, there are occupational differences between a Russian pilot and a Japanese pilot or an Iranian ground handler and a German ground handler in terms of discipline, work habits, ethics and morality practically despite standardized certifications and licencing, training and education, law, rules and regulations. Due to safety necessity which is the most exact feature of civil aviation, these differences shall not be and they are direct causes of accidents and incidents. In this part of the work, it will be focussed on developing a safety culture in theory. In this discussion, firstly, it would be concentrate on the community structure of civil aviation, secondly, it would make explanations on current knowledge structure of civil aviation and in the third phase we will evaluate culture and cultural structures in civil aviation benefiting from Habermas' approaches.

Civil aviation is a greatly human-resources-dependent society; therefore, human nature, social sciences and community sciences have priorities. But, in light of the last development, the impacts of technology, computer sciences, statistics and mathematical equations can be effective and efficient in describing aviation problems through simulations. But, the emphasis on safety, according to regulators and rule-makers, a standardized safety, is always the premier step of the definition of achievement in the aviation community. In order to achieve standardization, a context-subject connection is a necessity, for this reason, we should first analyze the main features of the civil aviation community when it is realized the dualism between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* will be so beneficial to reach a good benchmark.

It is a well-known reality that civil aviation is a communication, technology, and politics-intensive community, it is easily affected by negative economic variables. And it is a safety-oriented community, therefore, it has got its own tacit, implicit or explicit knowledge. If it's concentrated on the features of the civil aviation community, Appendix 1 will be so explanatory. The second classification of civil aviation can be examined according to cultural knowledge heritage. The most important factor here is to determine and to decide the differences between *techne* and *episteme*, Appendix 2 is organized for this purpose. Safety culture is the last component of our analysis. The interpretations of the safety culture with the elements of the communicative action theory of Habermas can be seen in Appendix 3.



## 5. CONCLUSION

This research is structured on three important pillars and a base. It is benefited from three important approaches in the theoretical background. They are the famous theorem of Tönnies, epistêmê and technê differences, and the communicative action theory of Habermas. Benefiting from these theoretical approaches and current aviation safety culture approaches, it is tried to form a framework. According to this theoretical framework, there are community structures, knowledge structures and communication structures through which civil aviation safety culture occurs. If it is made a deep analysis of the matter and focuses on the pillars, civil aviation carries motives and designs for its specific features such as communication dependence (For example, transferring of different knowledge types, cultural heritage, rationality and business-making), knowledge dependence and knowledge dependence between community and communication structures. According to our theoretical explanation, the community structure (Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft) where is the place of the knowledge creation forms and community structures distil knowledge types via different processes, these processes can be the subject of different research, and at the end, community and knowledge interactions, so dissemination of knowledge via communication frames the last step. It can be stated here clearly that systemized, aimed, framed and cumulative knowledge and its communication is a form of culture.

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**APPENDIX 1: Why is Civil Aviation a Gemeinschaft? Why is it a Gesellschaft?**

|                       | Why is civil aviation community a Gemeinschaft?  | Why is civil aviation community a Gesellschaft?   |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Civil Aviation</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National companies</li> <li>• Cultural habits,</li> <li>• Cultural forms,</li> <li>• Cultural understanding,</li> <li>• National identities,</li> <li>• Semi-military culture.</li> <li>• Transferring tacit and implicit knowledge through special communication</li> <li>• Apprenticeship-expert examples.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profit-oriented companies,</li> <li>• Rationality,</li> <li>• No-emotions,</li> <li>• Ruled and standardised explicit communication,</li> <li>• Scientifical knowledge and analytical reasoning</li> <li>• Protocols, procedures and standards,</li> </ul> |

**APPENDIX 2: The differences between Technê and Epistêmê in Civil Aviation**

|                       | Technê   | Epistêmê   |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| <b>Civil Aviation</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aircraft production and manufacturing,</li> <li>• Airport and aerodrome structuring,</li> <li>• Utilization of Aviation operations (Ramp, Ground Handling and Cargo),</li> <li>• Maintenance, repair and overhaul of the aviation industry and its elements</li> <li>• Realizing Pilotage and Flight Crew,</li> <li>• Making money and business practices through aviation activities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs of the aviation industry elements and components,</li> <li>• Theories of physics and related sciences and sub-branches.</li> <li>• Social sciences, human sciences and management sciences</li> </ul> |

**APPENDIX 3: Safety Culture in Aviation: A Theoretical Approach**

| SAFETY CULTURE   |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| COMMUNITY STRUCTURE  | KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURE   |  | COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE  |
| <b>GEMEINSCHAFT</b><br>1. Cumulative safety practices through traditions,<br>2. Safety-oriented norms, values beliefs and assumptions, | <b>EPISTÊMÊ</b>   | <b>TECHNÊ</b><br>1. Traditional and cultural experience,<br>2. Implicit and Tacit knowledge (apprenticeship and expert interactions)<br>3. Cultural habits, norms, beliefs | <b>Utilisation of communicative action theory</b><br>1. Creation of a rational culture through communication,<br>2. Creation of legal governance( includes monitor, internal and external audit, supervising technologies and mechanisms) through communication. |
| <b>GESELLSCHAFT</b><br>1. Profit-oriented safety<br>2. Safety-oriented business practices  | 1. Explicit knowledge,<br>2. Scientifical knowledge,<br>3. Organizational developments. | 1. Traditional and cultural experience,<br>2. Implicit and Tacit knowledge (apprenticeship and expert interactions)<br>3. Cultural habits, norms, beliefs                  | 3. Protection of cultural habits, norms, beliefs and assumptions through communication.<br>4. Protection of tacit knowledge through communication.   |

## GREEN MARKETING PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: A CASE STUDY OF AN ECO-FRIENDLY CLEANING FIRM

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Selahattin Semih Karakurum

Ege University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, PhD in Marketing, Bornova, Izmir, Turkiye.

[semihkarakurum01@hotmail.com](mailto:semihkarakurum01@hotmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0002-6121-8818

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose-** Having started of climate change's impact shaped businesses' production process directly in 21st century. After consumers' attitudes and behaviours had affected marketplace, businesses started to show themselves in aspect of corporate social responsibility. Since 1970s, sustainability has been highlighted as a topic reflected to corporate's politics. Environmental sustainability is a variety of sustainability takes environment on center and keep providing products or services for this perspective. By using of green marketing mix, aim of a lot of brands to get profit take environment on center. From producing of packets to types of electric energy that use in factories, many effects started turning to metaphors with corporates' environmental sustainability politics. In context of ethical production and environmental sustainability, while animal testing is being removed vegan product production is tried to develop. Aim of this research is to understand on how environmental sustainability affects firms'/brands' production process.

**Methodology-** In this research, case study is applied as a types of qualitative research designs. By Turkey's representative of an eco-friendly cleaning firm that from Denmark, semi-structured in depth interview were conducted. Then, the semi-structure in depth interview transcribed and highlighted to topic which turned into codes. The codes were got together and tied to themes.

**Findings-** In result of the analysis reveals that 4 main themes which are 1) Scandinavian Morality and Ethical Production; 2) Green Sustainability; 3) Vegan Product; 4) Organic Product. To the analysis, Scandinavian morality has a big impact on ethical production. The firm's practices are related to green sustainability; almost all production processes become "green". In context of climate change, vegan perspective is rising day by day in the marketplace; producing animal-derived resources evaluate a part of climate change. Organic production is assessing an aspect of ecological life which is related to environmental sustainability.

**Conclusion-** In green marketing perspective, environmental sustainability is one of the most indispensable issue, especially, while climate change gaining visibility. Basic marketing mix turning to "green marketing mix". When brands and firms go green by politically, their production process goes directly green, as well. Climate change could be assessed like ethical issue in marketplace in context of environmental degradation. In addition, firms and brands caring about vegan and organic products, due to green conditions, are being positioned in environmental sustainability can be evaluated as a method of differentiation.

**Keywords:** Ethical production, climate change, green sustainability, nordic countries, vegan product

**JEL Codes:** M31, D21, Q01

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the growing activist movements since the 1960s, the process of gaining environmental and social rights on the basis of society has been reflected in businesses. The mainstreaming of human, animal and environmental rights has brought ethics to the agenda in the business world. Before the 1960s, business ethics was not a major concern for business people (Lantos, 2001: 597). Apart from human rights, the consideration of animal and environmental rights in the context of social justice has led to a multidimensional evaluation of sustainability. Since the 1970s, the development of environmentally sustainable policies has gained momentum. The prominence of the theme of ecology has also accelerated studies on the environment. Ecology deals with the interconnections between human life and the environment (Humm, 1995: 74). In particular, the fact that businesses focus only on the profit-oriented production process and cause an increase in environmental pollution and deterioration of the ecological order has started to attract the reaction of consumers in the marketplace. Accordingly, businesses have started to organize their standard policies in production processes according to environmentally sustainable policies. Sustainability is linked to world problems such as poverty, limited natural resources, climate change and environmental pollution (Buerke et al., 2017: 960). While sustainable development is being monitored with growing interest by academia, industry representatives and policy makers (Saunila, Ukko, & Rantala, 2018: 631), the

consequences of ethical and sustainable business practices cannot be ignored by both consumers and organizations (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004: 214).

With postmodernism, the phenomenon of ethics has been compiled (Cherrier, 2007: 321). Ethical issues also include contributing to the solution of social and environmental problems (Kavaliauske and Ubartaite, 2014: 73). Ethical consumption brings an ethical management approach for businesses to protect the environment and evaluate products and services in the context of social responsibility (Oh and Yoon, 2014: 278). Although the issue of sustainability can be addressed in social, economic and environmental contexts, especially after the 2010s, corporate sustainability has come to the fore. The social dimension of sustainability is concerned with the well-being of societies, organizations and people (Saunila et al., 2018: 633), while the environmental dimension of sustainability focuses on the environment. Along with environmental sustainability, the concept of "green marketing" has also emerged. The term "green marketing" has its roots in the concept of ecological marketing and was first discussed in 1975 (Sohail, 2017: 230). As of the 21st century, green marketing has conceptually started to shape the corporate policies of many businesses.

The standard 4P marketing mix of product, price, promotion and place has started to evolve into the "green 4P marketing mix". Green product production has become prominent in export markets, and agreements between countries have directly affected green product production. In order to achieve the goal of cleaner industrial products, it is inevitable to produce green products that do not harm the environment and habitat (Kaur, Gangwar and Dash, 2022: 1). Whether the production locations of products are sustainable or not is of great importance in terms of marketing.

## **2. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY GAINING VISIBILITY IN THE BUSINESS WORLD**

The economic paradigm is one of the most important factors in the structure of human society, culture and history (Shin et al., 2008: 1823). Although the acceleration of industrial and technological developments has improved the standard of living (Akhtar et al., 2021: 2), sustainability has become a central issue in both the political and economic spheres in the 21st century as an inevitable consequence of the exploitation of the environment since the Industrial Revolution (Graciano et al., 2022: 458). The rise of global concerns about the harmful effects of natural resources used for economic development towards the end of the 1980s was the starting point of sustainable development (Wan, Chan and Huang, 2017: 87). Sustainability values have their roots in voluntary corporate social responsibility and environmental disclosures in the 1970s (Livesey and Kearins, 2002: 234). In the early 1990s, the focus was on the win-win effect in climate policies (Jänicke, 2012: 14). Sustainability is not only an important issue in the context of global politics and macroeconomics, but also in business processes and consumers' way of life (Cantele and Cassia, 2020: 1).

Sustainability has become a topic of interest in academia, business, government and society (Sajjad, Jillani, & Raziq, 2018: 714). If perceived as resource adequacy, advocating sustainability as a philosophical rationality is a social welfare debate (Thompson & Nardone, 1999: 116). This concept, which can be handled in different dimensions, has been examined in environmental, social and economic contexts, and recently, corporate sustainability has come to the forefront. The concept, which is shaped on the basis of the use of resources owned by businesses, is also important in terms of market dynamics. Within the framework of sustainability, it is possible to reconsider goals, objectives, stakeholders, activities, inputs and outputs (Santos-Corrada and Figueroa, 2012: 534). While in the traditional sense, organizations are only responsible for the financial well-being of their customers and investors (Zhou, 2021: 3), focusing only on profit on the basis of sustainable policies can also be evaluated negatively by consumers in the marketplace.

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability are very close in concept and sometimes used interchangeably (Reilly and Larya, 2018: 621). The business world can emphasize environmental sustainability policies in the context of corporate social responsibility. The main factors affecting green sustainability include environmental pollution, the attitudes and behaviors of consumers in the marketplace, economic and political factors in order to take measures against global climate change, the effects of which have become more evident in the 21st century. Organizations have a great impact on all kinds of people around the world (Ludwig and Sassen, 2022: 1). Businesses are moving forward with dynamic business cycles to ensure the continuity of sustainable developments (Putra, Lestari, & Nasionalita, 2017: 234). Since sustainability is considered not only on the basis of environmental but also social and economic issues (Machová et al., 2022: 2), various social issues lead to other motives, and accordingly the presentation of information is significantly different (Fux and Čater, 2018: 30). Businesses share more information about human rights, labor and environmental policies than ever before (Kapstein, 2001: 114).

Consumers are aware of environmental, economic and social events (Niezgoda and Kowalska, 2020: 2) and this can directly affect the functioning of organizations. In order to win consumers, businesses can pay attention to value creation. Corporate social responsibility can be considered as a strategic investment in the creation of value, the organization of competitive advantage and the best performance of businesses (Bacinello, Tontini, & Alberton, 2021: 776). Value creation is seen as the most important critical, objective perspective in the strategic decision-making processes of businesses (Burke & Logsdon, 1996: 496). In the context of value creation, environmental sustainability policies may have meaning for the consumer in the marketplace. In many areas of society, stakeholders expect businesses to fulfill their responsibilities towards society and nature (Wong et al., 2021: 1). Businesses that embrace social responsibility make special efforts to integrate other stakeholders in their policies, decisions and operations (Carroll, 2015: 87). Marketers have the advantage of being leaders

when other stakeholders take social responsibility (Lantos, 2001: 622). Core values are linked to the brand's mission, vision and humanistic organizational values in the internal process of brand building (Kent and Stone, 2007: 532). More and more organizations are involved in social responsibility activities around the world, which leads to more social and environmental information being communicated to the public (Tilt, 2016: 1). As consumer segments have become more differentiated and unique, the marketplace has become more diverse. Economic drivers can be simultaneously cooperative and competitive (Kallmuenzer et al., 2021: 2). Uncertainty and dynamism in competitive markets ensure that organizations continue to seek innovation (Elsharnouby and Elbanna, 2021: 2).

The first wave of post-war involvement in environmental protection took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s and saw a mutual grouping of consumers and those concerned about the environment (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen, & Diamantopoulos, 1996: 37). Concern for the environment influences people's environment-related behavior, especially consumers' purchasing behavior (Chen, Wu, & Jiang, 2022: 1). Simply having a green label is not enough for today's consumers (Baybars & Ventura, 2020: 470). Green consumerism is necessitated by the market where the products are located and manifests itself in products that include eco-labeling and energy efficiency (Akenji, 2014: 15). Green consumerism can be addressed under 2 headings; individuals' attitudes, behaviors and environmental awareness and behavioral intensity, decision-making process and paying to be happy (Sharma, Chen, & Liu, 2020: 922). Businesses are perceived as role models, albeit taking on different identities, by helping other communities, adapting green habits and policies, and connecting stakeholders through business operations (Raza et al., 2021: 1107). Today, associations of consumer groups, socially responsible investors, labor unions, environmentalists and human rights activists - mostly in affluent countries - can be nervous about current changes in the global economy (Kapstein, 2001: 108).

Rapidly advancing climate change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries drew attention to the unnecessary use of fossil fuels by humans (Luke, 2019: 161). Household energy demand is growing worldwide and is a major driver of greenhouse gas emissions (Blumberga et al., 2014: 134). Environmental sustainability cannot succeed without clean energy sources (Vand et al., 2019: 1). The agricultural system relies on natural resources as well as renewable and non-renewable economic investments (Wang, Shen and Zhang, 2014: 510). The main environmental problems are the greenhouse gas effect, air pollution, and human-induced ecological imbalances (Ahmed et al., 2023: 11473). Greenhouse gas emissions contribute to climate change regardless of the location of their source (Vita et al., 2019: 13). Stratospheric ozone depletion and biodiversity loss are prominent issues in the context of climate change (Jabbour and Flachsland, 2017: 193). Carbon tax has started to be used by governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Dong, Liu and Shen, 2019: 193). Consumers can be informed through applications that can measure the carbon footprint in different categories according to water saving, the type of motor vehicles used, and the types of food eaten on a daily basis. Basic water management strategies include water saving devices and wastewater reuse (Mendoza et al., 2023: 494). Water efficiency is a reflection of the effectiveness of water use and the tools used to save water (Balaji, Jiang, & Jha, 2019: 3289).

### **2.1. The "Green" Evolution of Standard Marketing Mixes**

Ethical consumerism points to the social and environmental consequences of global trade (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004: 214). Green marketing has never played such an important role as it has in the 21st century (Machová et al., 2022: 1). Green marketing is concerned with the protection and promotion of the environment in determining the satisfaction of consumers' needs, wants and desires (Gustiani et al., 2022: 3501). Consumers have the power to reduce or avoid environmental damage by purchasing green products (Lim et al., 2022: 80). The growing customer desire for environmentally friendly products is competing with businesses to switch to environmentally friendly materials (Fauziah and Mulyana, 2018: 171). "Animal welfare" and "eco-friendly" are often used to sell niche products in the marketplace because they carry emotional meaning in social value (Siegford, Powers, & Grimes-Casey, 2008: 380). Second-hand goods, electric cars or, more broadly, products such as coffee, tea and garbage bags can have ethical values ranging from environmentalism and solidarity to fair trade, health and community (Cherrier, 2007: 321).

Adding the use of ethics and social responsibility to products and services as a means of differentiation can be perceived as marketing ethical products (Crane, 1997: 561). Understanding consumers' willingness to use and purchase green products is important for organizations and businesses (Suganda, Theresia, & Wijaya, 2022: 3). In the regulation of contemporary beauty products, the natural "green" cosmetic standard has become a necessity rather than an option for industrial production (Shimul, Cheah, & Khan, 2022: 37). Clean beauty has become the norm as a result of increased demand for safety, transparency and sustainable options (Grappe et al., 2022: 2). Green products can often be sold at higher prices than standard products (Balzarova, 2020: 165).

Consumer behavior is complex; it is influenced by internal factors such as personal values, attitudes, psychological factors as well as external factors such as price and advertising (Gilitwala & Nag, 2021: 444). The main factor that distinguishes the traditional marketing mix from the green marketing mix is consumer preferences for sustainable lifestyles and sustainable consumption habits that are not harmful to the environment (Sohail, 2017: 231). Many businesses have started to shape their processes in the theme of "green" in line with their environmental sustainability policies. Green marketing is also referred to as "sustainable marketing" or "environmentally friendly marketing" and is used in product and service promotion in the

context of environmental advantage and value (Kaur et al., 2022: 1). Green 4P marketing mix is defined as green product, green price, green positioning and green place. Businesses contribute to the development of green products in achieving their environmental sustainable goals (Dangelico, 2016: 560-561). Green products are typically produced in more environmentally friendly processes (Davari & Strutton, 2014: 566). Consumers' actual green purchasing behavior is directly linked to their knowledge of green products and in turn depends on the green marketing efforts undertaken by product providers (Hong and Guo, 2019: 155). Green pricing is one of the most important elements in the marketing of green products. The environmental awareness of the consumer may require evaluation in the consumption of green products and the pricing of green products (Sana, 2020: 1). Green promotion tools are mostly focused on attracting consumers' decisions to "go green" in order to persuade consumers in terms of environmental benefits in order to explain messages (Davari & Strutton, 2014: 566). The availability of green products at the right time, in the right quantity and in the right place by marketers is an element of the green marketing mix as green distribution (Kaur et al., 2022: 4). Green distribution is the distribution of green products from production to consumption by incorporating management tactics (Davari & Strutton, 2014: 567). Supply chain management has started to gain importance in reducing the environmental impact of businesses (Wycherley, 1999: 120).

### **3. SHAPING THE MARKETPLACE OF VEGAN LIFESTYLE IN THE CONTEXT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

The increasing importance of ethical behavior by business owners has been influenced by the rapid changes expected from the performance of organizations in the late 1960s and early 1980s (Cleek & Leonard, 1998: 620). As the concepts of well-being and ethics have gained importance all over the world, they have also started to shape societies. Environmental issues such as climate change, animal welfare, pollution, deforestation and loss of biodiversity are widely discussed, and the consequences of this are creating ecological movements (Wuisan & Februadi, 2022: 35). Both the increasing effects of climate change and the rise of animal rights discourses in society have brought the vegan lifestyle to the fore. Ethical, health, environmental and spiritual motives (Jamieson, 2017: 19), which are at the basis of vegetarian life, can affect the attitudes and behaviors of vegetarian consumers. Participation in the ethical production decision is situational as it is a decision or preference (Bezençon & Bliili, 2010: 1309). In particular, the vegan lifestyle, which has become widely known after the 2010s, has started to shape the marketplace. Although the transformation of the animal rights movement into a way of life is often defined as veganism, some people consider veganism only as a food habit and not as a way of life (Fux & Čater, 2018: 32-33). External factors, including economic, institutional, social and cultural factors, can influence an individual's ethical decision-making (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018: 420).

The concept of "ethical consumer" can carry various meanings and be subjective for businesses and consumers (Carrigan, Szmigin and Wright, 2004: 401). The increasing visibility of ethical consumption in the marketplace can also be reflected in the policies of businesses. The destructive impact of animal industries on the environment has also found its way into the corporate policies of businesses. Brands have started to participate in vegan certification programs and receive vegan certificates that they produce vegan products. Veganism is a way of life that not only does not consume animal output, but also rejects the use of products that experiment on animals. The fact that a product is plant-based does not directly make it vegan, because some brands in the marketplace do not qualify as vegan products because they experiment on animals, even though they are plant-based.

#### **3.1. Cruelty-Free Product Production**

In the 21st century marketplace, businesses demonstrate their awareness of ethical and human rights issues by increasing their responsibilities through economic, environmental and social activities (Kanji and Chopra, 2010: 119). In addition to human rights, environmental and animal rights have also started to transform societies. Ethics is closely related to values, and value focuses on our actions, the meaning given to our lives, how to be "good", and living together with others (Croney and Anthony, 2011: 539-540). The pursuit of rights for the environment and animals has started to be considered as a social problem and has begun to be included in the concept of justice. Animal rights, like human rights, can be addressed in the context of social justice. Attitude is a form formed in the context of an individual's beliefs and values (Akhtar et al., 2021: 2). With animal rights gaining a place in society, elements that contain elements of violence against animals have started to affect the purchasing behavior and attitudes of consumers.

Experimentation/testing on animals has become very vocal, especially after the 2010s with the proliferation of social media platforms. Compared to traditional media, social media can reach a wider audience at a lower cost and can contribute to raising awareness of social issues, as it allows for higher exposure (Fux & Čater, 2018: 30). Although some people think that animal testing is harmless, animal testing practices have negative impacts on both the environment and animals (Wuisan & Februadi, 2022: 34). The publication of videos on social media platforms about animals being imprisoned in laboratories and experimenting on them has started to affect consumers' attitudes and behaviors. For example, in 2021, the short film "Save Ralph" went viral on social media by visualizing what experimental animals go through in the form of animation.

In the marketplace, cruelty-free and vegan products can cause confusion. The cruelty-free label indicates that the product is not tested on animals (Wuisan and Februadi, 2022: 34). Not all cruelty-free products are vegan products, as some products may contain direct animal outputs even if they are not tested on animals. For example, a soap brand can be included in the



"cruelty-free product" category because it does not test its products containing cow's milk on animals, but it cannot be included in the "vegan product" category because the soap directly contains cow's milk. Every vegan product is also a cruelty-free product because, by its very nature, veganism rejects the consumption of products that do not contain animal output, as well as the consumption of experiments on animals.

#### **4. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was conducted to explore the green policies in the production processes of a company that does not experiment on animals and carries out sustainable production. Within the scope of the research, the researcher identified the companies engaged in vegan production and reached the relevant company in this study. A semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted with the Turkish representative of the Denmark-based company through an online platform. Before the interview was conducted, the participant was informed that a voice recording device would be used during the interview. After the semi-structured in-depth interview, the audio recording was transcribed. During the transcription process, the researcher listened to the recording over and over again for the correct transfer of each word. After the transcription process was completed, the researcher sent the written version of the interview to the participant. Descriptive analysis technique was used in the research. The process proceeded as follows; the end of the in-depth interview, the transcription of the audio-recorded interview, coding and finally transforming the codes into themes. Criterion sampling method, which is a type of purposive sampling, was applied in the study. Criterion sampling is the consideration of all conditions that meet predetermined criteria (Yağar & Dökme, 2018: 6). As a research constraint, there is only one participant in this study because there are only a limited number of brands that have an environmentally friendly production process abroad and also sell their products in Turkey. In this context, only one brand's representative in Turkey was reached. In terms of future studies, more comprehensive studies can be conducted with the representatives of brands that only have environmentally friendly production processes by ensuring participant diversity.

##### **4.1. Aim of the Study**

Whether environmental sustainability is practiced as greenwashing or actually internalized as corporate policy can directly affect consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Attitudes can be shaped positively or negatively on a topic or an object and are linked to beliefs (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018: 422). Moral obligations can serve as a link between decision-making and mental practices (Akhtar et al., 2021: 3). In this study, the focus is on exploring the environmental sensitivity of a company that determines environmental sustainability as a corporate policy in its production processes. This study was carried out in order to make sense of the sensitivity of an organization that adopts environmental sustainability to the environment in its production processes.

##### **4.2. Research Model and Sample Selection**

In this study, case study research, a type of qualitative research method, was applied. Criterion sampling, one of the types of purposive sampling, was used as a research technique in this study. In this context, the number of brands that have only environmentally friendly production processes abroad and also sell their products in the Turkish market is limited. In this context, only one brand's representative in Turkey was reached. For the research, a semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted with the Turkish representative of a Danish detergent brand with environmentally friendly production. The prominent factor in the selection of the relevant brand was the brand shares that they care about the environment as a corporate policy, and the fact that they do not experiment on animals and produce vegan products was another factor.

#### **5. FINDINGS**

The research was evaluated in terms of understanding how organizations can reflect environmental sustainability practices to their production processes. This study was conducted with the research question "What are the production policies adopted by organizations in their environmental sustainability policies?". The elaboration of the research question, what kind of a framework is used in terms of the concept, leads to the collection of data and the appropriate evaluation of the analysis (Sofaer, 2002: 334). The resulting data were named according to appropriate themes and explained and interpreted with the support of the literature. In the creation of themes, the topics that are related to each other were connected in the main theme and the subheadings of the theme were created. The division of themes into subheadings was done to facilitate the comprehensibility of the subject.

##### **5.1. Scandinavian Morality and Ethical Production**

Ethical judgment is the attitudinal development that occurs as a result of the determination of positive or negative evaluations in human behavior in moral standards (Alsaad, 2021: 1). Ethical consumption can lead to the transformation of organizations and in this context, there may be a relationship between corporate social responsibility and ethical consumption. The rising social consciousness in the 1960s brought the test of business behavior and various situations to corporate social responsibility (Carroll, 2015: 87-88). While the 1960s was the period in which unstoppable social movements, drawn on a large scale in terms of business and society relations, shaped social changes (Carroll, 2021: 1259), the concept of business

ethics rose rapidly and gained success after the 1980s (Carroll, 2021: 1262). The purchase decision is the process by which consumers define their needs, identify options and choose the product and brand (Gustiani et al., 2022: 3503). Ethics is concerned with choices and judgments about acceptable standards of conduct that guide individuals and groups (Erundu, Sharland, & Okpara, 2004: 350). The importance of the development of ethical values in businesses leads to the establishment or promotion of ethical standards in the daily actions of these businesses (Chun et al., 2013: 854). The code of ethics draws attention to internal rules for businesses and is a very important tool that improves the level of compliance with the rules in the legal order (Vitolla et al., 2021: 1). Codes of ethics are supported by ethical statements, value statements, ethical principles, mission and vision statements (Pollach, 2003: 283). The code of ethics covers the responsibilities, principles, values and norms of the organization (Donker, Poff, & Zahir, 2008: 527). While the corporate policies of the business directly affect the production process, the policies of the country where the business is located can also shape the production process. The link between environmental issues and business practices is more developed in developed countries, both in terms of public concern and governments (Lita et al., 2014: 262). The marketing of country names can differentiate many product or service options. The fact that Denmark is a Scandinavian country and that Scandinavian countries have a positive image around the world can directly shape the strategies of brands.

*"...we produce really clean products. In other words, we produce products that are free of any fraud and scrap, and thus we give confidence to our customers...Now, when you say "Scandinavian country", no matter which country, no matter which product, people in all around the world trust it. Why do they trust? Because of this ethic. And this is our biggest difference...we don't cheat, we don't scrap, of course, when I say "we don't" here, if you look at the products, there are already eco certificates, vegan standard, the standard that the bottles are recycled, the standard that the boxes are made from controlled cut trees or recycled paper...all of the standards are already there. In other words, we don't just say "We produce clean" and say "Buy this product"... You have to trust the certificate you receive. That's why, for example, our certificates are the most honest, the highest quality certificates; but we don't say "we got the certificate, we have a certificate anyway, let it say this on the outside of the certificate, let it say that on the inside"... When that man sees the inscription "Made in Denmark", he doesn't even hesitate. That trust is a very different thing... Look at it this way; Denmark has such a feature, I mean, this should not be considered only as a company, I mean, whether it is Denmark or other Scandinavian countries, Sweden, Norway, we went to Denmark during the contract stages, while we were chatting with the officials of the company there, the official of the company said, "We are the biggest company in Denmark in this regard. Since we produce an environmentally friendly, clean product, the country and the state provide great support and incentives, but they also inspect it very strictly. Do you know why it inspects this? It's not because we cheat or not, we wouldn't do such a thing anyway, but it inspects to prevent damage to the name of Denmark, the name of the country." This is the critical point of the issue. Denmark is Denmark; that's why people who know Denmark, or the culture there, or the standards there, already look at it, and when they see the words "Made in Denmark", they buy it without even looking at it...He said that Danish brands are not at the forefront as a brand, but as a state...for example, what you call "LEGO" is also of Danish origin. Why do you trust LEGO? You trust LEGO not because it is LEGO, but because it is Danish. In other words, the country is in the foreground, the product is in the background. And in order to ensure this, people actually inspect it, like I said, people have no intention of cheating, but if they do, they know the punishment they will face... The most distinguishing feature is trust, nothing else. After all, I'm telling you, you're not making a space shuttle, that's a different thing, you're making detergent, so your difference should be these kinds of things. I mean, when people buy it, they shouldn't really think, "Is there this, is there that, is there this?" That's what we are trying to ensure, we are trying to establish this... now it's like this; you are a company that produces a chemical product, you see that there is such a market here, "Let's produce this, let's produce this next to it"...it is not a subsidiary, it is an organization established for a direct purpose. Therefore, this is our aim, to leave a decent world for our children and future generations. In the meantime, of course, you are doing business, you will make money...there is nothing more natural than that. I mean, but the work you do gives you peace of mind... but of course, commercially, we want it to sell more, that's the essence of it... Now go to Denmark or something like that, they have done such things that it's mind-boggling, you know those wind turbines in the middle of the sea. Everywhere, mountains, stones, wind energy. They are investing in these. They are really trying to do work at very high standards in very empty spots...now, when the man is establishing this, whether he is Danish or German, I mean, you look at the companies that have grown up with that culture, the man enters these businesses with the foresight of 20 years, 30 years, 50 years ahead. He says, "Look, the world has reached the end of its life in the chemical sense, the situation is bad. There is global warming. There is this and that, we are eating poisonous things, we need to put a stop to this." And he sets out with this consciousness. So that is the first starting consciousness here, making money is secondary. Therefore, you look and see that the country you call Germany has a 500-year-old company. The country you call Denmark has a 300-year-old company. I mean, it was established 300 years ago, 500 years ago, and it is still standing. Because they do the right job. That's the thing... As I said, what I would add is the issue of morality. That is the most important thing. Of course, you will also trust the standards, so there is nothing to do... But there, that company that gives that certificate should really be auditing." [Iliker, Turkey Representative of an Eco-friendly Cleaning Firm]*

## 5.2. Green Sustainability

As the effects of climate change are becoming more evident day by day, the attitudes and behaviors of consumers in the marketplace have also begun to change. With the further damage to the ecological environment in the 1990s, consumers'

development of environmental protection and sustainability has increased and the concept of green consumption has become visible (Wang et al., 2022: 2). Although the production systems developed with the Industrial Revolution encouraged consumers to consume more, differentiation in consumption practices has started, especially with the development of social media. One of the most important and complex questions in the concept of sustainable development is the successful interaction between economic development and the environment (Juknys, Liobikiene, & Dagiliute, 2014: 54). The visibility of a more environmentally friendly form of consumption in the marketplace has led businesses to change their corporate policies. The phenomenon of "consuming more" is beginning to be replaced by the phenomenon of "consuming greener". The addition of recycled production techniques to production processes is also reflected in labeling systems. Green growth affects not only the quality of growth but also the entire production (Jänicke, 2012: 14).

*"...[Participant says the name of an environmentally friendly cleaning company] that's already one of the purposes of its establishment... to oppose climate change. Because if you produce naturally, I mean, it doesn't matter if it's detergent, tomatoes, I don't know, textiles. If you are doing something natural, it means you are already against it, you are saying "protest". Again (Participant says the name of an environmentally friendly cleaning company here), of course, being Denmark, those Scandinavian countries have a standard structure above Europe... I mean, people's values are very different. Therefore, Denmark is above all these, let me tell you that. I mean really above them, as a country and so on. Now (The participant here says the name of an environmentally friendly cleaning company) has the following feature; for one thing, the content of the products it produces is completely natural, and this is enough in itself. Plus, the plastics used in the packaging are completely recycled plastics, it is an environmentally friendly product, in that sense, that is, in terms of waste, it recollects the discarded products and brings them back to the economy, brings them to the environment, in that sense." [İlker, Turkey Representative of an Eco-friendly Cleaning Firm]*

Business practices combined with green marketing support sustainable development (Zaremozhzabieh et al., 2021: 732). With the establishment of an environmental system and consumers' awareness of green consumption, business decision-makers pay attention to the production and marketing processes of green products (Wann et al., 2022: 2). When consumers prefer to purchase green electricity, wind energy can stand out from an environmental perspective (Ek, 2005: 1678). Wind energy is defined as one of the cleanest energy sources (Vand et al., 2019: 7). The use of wind turbines as a type of energy production has become prominent in the brand promotion of many businesses.

*"The electricity used in production is entirely clean energy obtained from wind energy, which is another thing. As I said, these are things with very high standards...if you look at the level of education, people in Europe now go to the extent of education and awareness, of course the budget should also allow; but generally comfortable people go and look at those logos on the products, look at the values written on the packaging, and buy accordingly. Therefore, in that sense, our environmentalist approach is very important. We look at recycled plastic, its content is completely natural, its electricity is produced in such a way, it is produced in such a way, so these (Participant says the name of an environmentally friendly cleaning company here) are products that help the environment as much as they can." [İlker, Turkey Representative of an Eco-friendly Cleaning Firm]*

Each organism in the ecosystem is interconnected and significantly affects the well-being of the environment (Akhtar et al., 2021: 3). In studies conducted in the green context, consumers' values and beliefs as well as their green behaviors are very important (Jeong et al., 2014: 11). Environmental image is related to how concerned consumers are about environmental issues (Ahmed et al., 2023: 11476). Environmental knowledge and awareness directly affect consumers' attitude towards green products (Zaremozhzabieh et al., 2021: 734). Consumers with environmental awareness may tend to have altruistic motivation in the context of green values (Jeong et al., 2014: 11). The prominence of products with their environmental image can make a difference in terms of differentiation of brands. Brands can support the sustainable production process at the point where they attach importance to production quality as well as environmentally friendly production processes.

*"...we produce sustainably sourced products...all of our ingredients are natural. Now, in order for it to be natural, it is already a naturalness based on agriculture because it is of plant origin. Look, the majority of the content used by companies producing such products is sugar beet. Now, in order to respond to such a production, such a pen, beet fields need to increase, it is that clear. The raw material of what you call "SLS" in natural products is coconut. Now, coconut trees need to grow in order to meet this demand. Likewise, the fragrance you smell is of herbal origin; it comes from lavender, I don't know, orange, eucalyptus. These need to multiply in order to meet the demand. Therefore, the product itself already contributes to the sustainability of that ecological system. Plus, the electricity you use is clean energy, so what it does is it prevents the consumption of fossil fuels. What does it do, like obtaining it from the wind. That's why we are directly involved in this business. Likewise, our packaging, whether it's labeling or boxes, is produced from controlled cut trees or recycled paper that are produced just for this job. What does this do? It causes the consumption of existing forests to decrease... Moreover, of course, people don't pay much attention to these; but now our products are really... products that do business. Now, what is a product that works? Now, the surface that you clean in one spraying, if a commercially immoral manufacturer is doing it, you clean it in 10 sprayings with the product of another brand. Your product runs out in 3 months, the other product runs out in 1 month. After 1 month, they buy 1 more product, after 1 month, they buy 1 more product. So they inevitably have a negative impact on this ecological balance." [İlker, Turkey Representative of an Eco-friendly Cleaning Firm]*

### 5.3. Vegan Products

Production is a process that can also directly affect the consumer. Prioritizing ethical values in the production process can directly affect the existence of a business in the marketplace. When a belief is adopted personally, the individual performs his/her actions in line with this belief (Ojo et al., 2019: 249). The theme of "ecology", which has become prominent in the corporate policies of businesses, can also be reflected in production processes. In particular, the ethical and environmentalist motives of veganism can be directly involved in business policies. Individual responsibility also extends to informed consumers with well-developed decision-making mechanisms (Zaremozhzabieh et al., 2021: 734). Ethical consumption is a growing phenomenon and can be embedded in many ethical business approaches such as social justice, environmental and animal welfare (Annunziata et al., 2011: 520). Animal outputs from animal farms can be perceived as valuable by people, and the pollution generated in these places has negative impacts on human health and the environment in which people live (Thompson and Nardone, 1999: 116). Since a brand's products must also be free of animal experiments in order to be vegan, some organizations can give the vegan logo in such a way that the logo of their organization is also visible through their own audits. Since the fact that the content of a product is only herbal does not mean that the product can be considered "vegan", some brands can be audited by organizations that can issue vegan certificates.

*"...Now trade is getting so difficult that you try to earn something by making a difference... but in the end, there is also trade in the back dimension of the business. You are doing trade. Now someone says "My product cleans very well", someone says "My product is organic", someone says "My product is natural", someone says "I produce cruelty-free vegan products". So in that sense, in my opinion, veganism will be a very big, how can I put it to you, event in the future, because the world is already moving towards veganism. Now, in such a trend, of course, our production of vegan products makes a difference... Now, there are so many product productions that each product cannot keep up with the production. Therefore, new companies, new organizations are emerging... But the Vegan Society, that logo you see on our products is the most valuable logo, I mean, it is the biggest organization, the most valuable organization that really tests with very strict rules, inspects with very strict rules... so it's not just about naturalness, veganism, this and that. There is also the commercial dimension. Now, what the man is doing is like this, they all have a cost, now getting that vegan certificate is a matter of money, no matter what you do. The Vegan Society says, "I will give you this logo, I will check it thoroughly. My right is - for example - 100 liras. The man says, "Adam, we don't have 100 liras to pay for this." He starts researching. Of course, this leads to sub-segments. Another vegan certification company says, "We can give it for 70 liras." That's why new sub-firms are emerging, after all, the business is commercial, I mean, those people also earn money, no one is doing this for charity. Therefore, our company strategy, our idea is to put the best possible logos and the best certificates on the product. Eco-Cert, which is one of the most stringent inspection companies, is already at the top. Vegan (meaning Vegan Society) is the same way. So for example, when we look at our products, you can see the right logos." [Ilker, Turkey Representative of an Eco-friendly Cleaning Firm]*

### 5.4. Organic Products

Green products do not pollute the environment and do not harm natural resources, but are recyclable and save energy (Wang et al., 2022: 2). Sustainability and organic production are highly interrelated (Browne et al., 2000: 71). Consumers can make decisions on the purchase of organic products in a broad framework such as health, environment, ethics and quality (Annunziata et al., 2011: 521). The growing interest in organic, ethical production and trade is influenced by consumer and business motivators (Browne et al., 2000: 70). Ethical products are often referred to as "organic products" because the word "organic" is perceived by many as linked to social and environmental phenomena (Kavaliauskė & Ubartaite, 2014: 73). Cooperation with relevant certification firms in terms of the inspection of organic products can affect the image of brands in front of consumers. The fact that organic production is seen as a part of ecological life may lead businesses to attach importance to the production of organic products.

*"...(for the brand's) organic part is of 2 types; one organic, one natural. Now (Participant says the name of an environmentally friendly cleaning company here), in the product range, there is a completely natural group, that is, not in the sense of organic, the lane of organic is a little different, there is also a completely natural group, also Eco-Cert certified. There is also an Eco-Cert certified organic group, so we produce 2 types of products. But of course, the natural one also has criteria stemming from Eco-Cert and the Danish government's own laws and rules. In other words, it is natural, but it does not contain GMOs, it is natural, but it has to meet the criteria of so and so. Therefore, we produce 2 kinds of products, both natural and organic." [Ilker, Turkey Representative of an Eco-friendly Cleaning Firm]*

## 6. CONCLUSION

The rapid globalization of the world since the 1970s has led to the removal of many borders. With mass production, supporting excessive consumption by putting the consumer at the center has started to harm the environment. The evaluation of environmental rights in the context of social justice has caused consumers in the marketplace to question the corporate policies of businesses. The environmental dimension of sustainability has started to be considered as a necessity for many companies or brands in the 21st century. The concept of "green marketing" supported by environmental sustainability has tried to emphasize the differentiation process by many businesses or brands. The fact that being green in

the marketplace has begun to be defined as differentiation can lead to a green state of competition. Ethical and sustainable business practices are important for competitive advantage in terms of consumer value and consumer trust (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004: 214). The development of environmental justice awareness has also started to highlighted itself in green sustainability projects. In particular, with the 21st century, global climate change has become more evident and has started to affect the attitudes and behaviors of consumers in the marketplace towards businesses.

With the rise of ethical consumerism, consumers want ethical values to be included in the production process in their purchasing decisions (Bezençon & Blili, 2010: 1306). Issues such as global warming and environmental pollution have started to attract attention all over the world (Dong et al., 2019: 193). In the green purchasing process, consumers' decision-making process is affected by the interaction of the physical and social environment and external factors (Kim & Rha, 2014: 46). In the new century, humanity's main struggle is to find fair and sustainable production, consumption and living (Narimanfar & Nezhad, 2022). In addition to human rights, animal rights and environmentally sensitive businesses have come to the forefront. Organizations should identify the sources of environmental problems and translate their operational activities according to these problems (Mustapha, Manan, & Alwi, 2017: 160). Many businesses emphasize green marketing interactions through environmentally friendly production and social issues (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020: 2). The development of green production and systems depends on consumers' interest in environmentally friendly products or green consumer behavior (Samarasinghe, 2015: 1461). More and more organizations are involved in corporate social responsibility activities around the world, and as a result, more social and environmental information is being communicated (Tilt, 2016: 1). Promoting green sustainability allows for the recognition of ecological consequences such as damage to the ozone layer, loss of biodiversity, global warming, deforestation and erosion (Rusyani, Lavuri, & Gunardi, 2021: 1).

In this study, qualitative research method was applied and semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the Turkish representative of a Danish environmentally friendly cleaning company. The voice recording program of the phone was used for the interview and the participant's consent was obtained before the interview started. The interviews were linked to codes after the transcription process and themes were created by combining the codes. In the context of the analysis, it was concluded that the cultural structure of Denmark, the country of origin of the relevant brand, directly affects the production process. In Scandinavian countries, respect for the environment is reflected in production processes with state support. Scandinavian morality has shaped the production process and ensured that environmental sustainability is addressed in the context of ethical production. In the context of both animal rights and environmental rights, the vegan lifestyle has started to shape the production processes of businesses. Apart from animal rights, the environmental damage of animal output production has started to lead to the veganization of production processes. The rise of green sustainability in organizations directly affects the market structure. The importance of green marketing has gained visibility as a result of the damage to natural resources caused by consumption, climate change, air pollution and increased waste (Gustiani et al., 2022: 3501). The use of clean energy sources and the importance given to recycling the plastic used in the production of products can create value in terms of the applicability of green sustainable policies. The evaluation of organic production as ecological may allow brands to open organic product lines. The fact that organic production is audited by certification organizations and that brands receive these certificates may be linked to corporate image.

Governments, non-profit organizations and businesses must work together and address these environmental issues, as the social and environmental challenges are huge and complex (Halkos and Nomikos, 2021: 115). Organizations around the world need to be brought to sustainable maturity at both micro and macro levels as they strive to promote environmentally friendly systems and practices (Opatha and Kottawatta, 2020: 1). An important goal is how politicians and marketers can better motivate consumers towards responsible and sustainable development (Buerke et al., 2017: 965). Adopting environmentally sustainable policies and shaping production processes in this direction can support brands' differentiation processes as well as their image. The fact that consumers who are sensitive about the environment follow the production processes of brands can also shape the business policies of brands. Supporting the green status in production processes by the necessary certification organizations can eliminate contradictory situations in terms of the image of brands in the marketplace. The fact that businesses are audited by certification organizations that have the authority to audit the relevant production processes such as vegan production or organic products can also have an impact on trust in the brand or company. The realization of green marketing practices in accordance with environmental sustainability policies can also stand out in the value of the brand for the consumer.

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