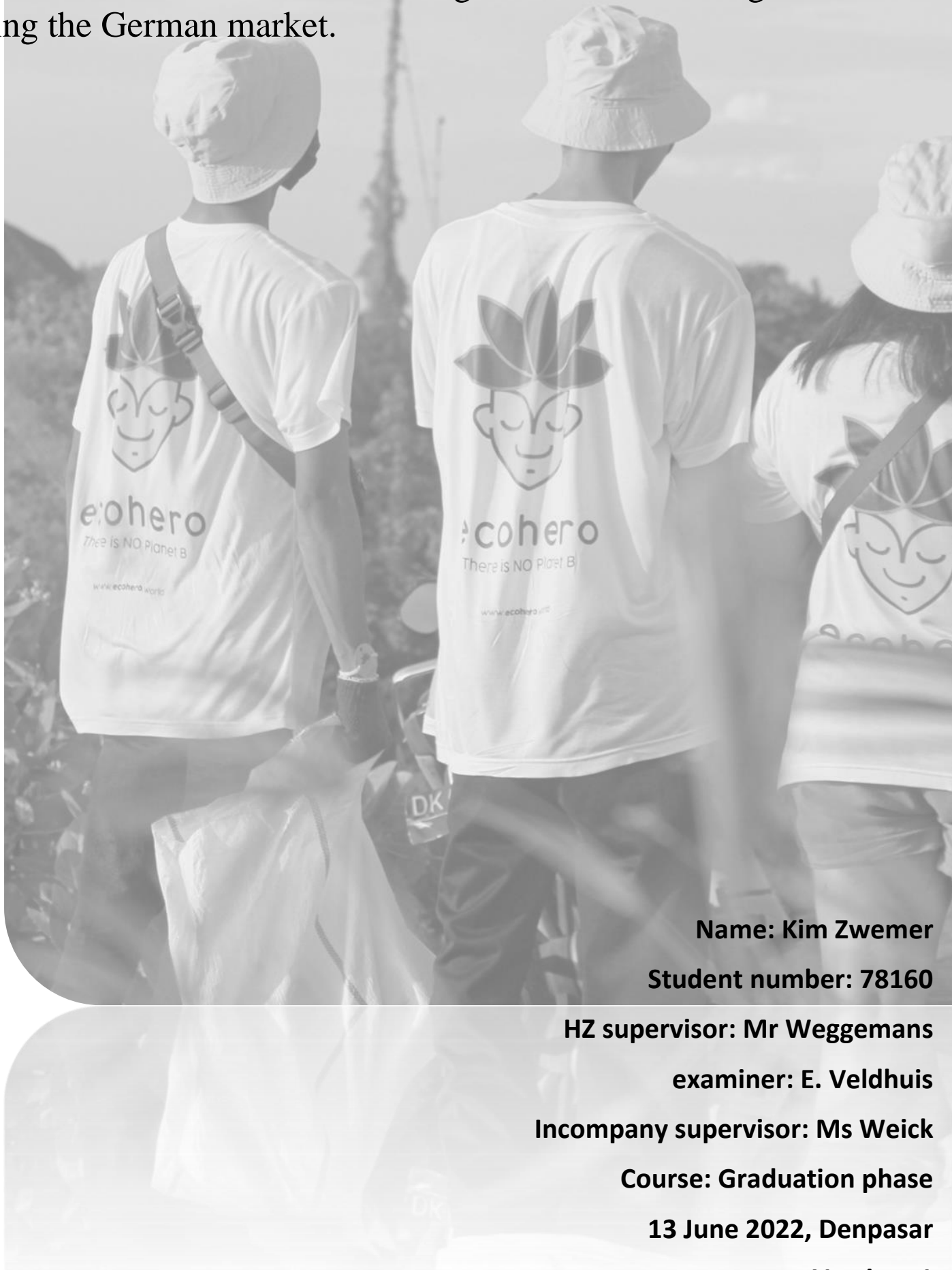# Social media marketing to increase sales: A study on how ecohero can improve its performance on social media and get more sales through this when entering the German market.

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Executive summary

This research was done on behalf of ecohero, ecohero is experiencing a problem with its current social media marketing strategy. The company does not present as well on social media as management would like, in addition, no to hardly any sales are made through the social media marketing activities. Ecohero is a company located in Bali, they are engaged in online and offline sales of sustainable alternatives to everyday products. They are a young company and are currently in the phase of scaling up and expanding to a different country. The next step for the company is to enter the German market and be available there in supermarkets and online. This research justification aims to find information that provides sufficient quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research question. The research question is; "What marketing strategy should ecohero follow to generate more sales through social media?" in regards to their expansion to the new German market. To provide ecohero with advice the following information gaps had to be filled.

1: What is their current social media marketing strategy and what are the results?

2: What does the German market for sustainable alternatives look like and who is the target group?

3: How can social media help ecohero to generate more sales?

The information was collected by combining different research methods. With the information gaps filled in, an answer could be given to the research question. Also, with this data, recommendations could be written for ecohero to solve/reduce the problem the company is experiencing with their current social media strategy. The main findings of this study were that; the current strategy is not giving the desired results when it comes to performance on the social media channels. Subsequently, the research showed the opportunities (growing interest in sustainable products from the target market) and dangers (threat of substitutes and competition) of expanding into the German market. Market research identified who the target group is that should be reached with social media marketing and how they can be reached. Finally, information was collected about which strategies ecohero should apply to get more out of social media and generate sales from these marketing efforts. This research had a few limitations because of the shortage of time and the distance from the German market.

The research resulted in five recommendations for the company.
1. Create a new social media marketing strategy specific for entering the German market. Se
2. Do more extensive research on how the German target audience views ecohero's products.
3. Do a (German) influencer campaign
4. Have a budget for social media ads
5. Insert an Instagram shop.

All these changes can be implemented within 3 months, but some of them will take a bit longer before conclusions can be drawn from the measured results. Two of these recommendations were implemented, a new social media marketing strategy was developed and an outline was created for the influencer campaign. Applying these recommendations will help to improve performance on social media, reach the right target audience and ultimately lead to more sales thanks to the activities on social media.

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Foreword

In front of you is my research justification for the research "What marketing strategy should ecohero follow to generate more sales through social media?". This research justification was written as part of the graduation for the study International Business at the HZ University of Applied Sciences in Vlissingen. From January 2022 to June 2022 I have doing my Internship in Indonesia and this is the end result of my research for ecohero.

Together with my (first) internship supervisor, Sofia Renner, I created the research question. The research was complex and challenging. I would like to thank her for the time and support she gave me during the first part of my internship. In the second part of my internship I was supervised by Stephanie Wieck, I would also like to thank her for her help and comprehensive feedback. I felt valued within the team and that my work and research made a valuable contribution. I also want to thank my Indonesian colleagues who welcomed me with open arms to learn about their culture. It was a pleasure to work together with them and to learn from each other.

I especially would also like to thank my supervisor Mr Weggemans for the guidance and support during this process. He was always available to give advice, help and feedback when needed. Finally, I would like to thank my classmate Fleur van der Meer for her (moral) support and motivating words.

I hope you enjoy reading my research justification.

Kim Zwemer

30 May 2022, Denpasar

Preliminary Research

In this chapter, an introduction to ecohero and its products has been given. Subsequently, it described what the problem of ecohero was, this resulted in the information gaps and research questions that need to be answered. This chapter also discusses the project aim of the research. After reading this chapter the reader should have a clear idea about the company, the problem and what the goal of this research is.

1.1 Company/product analysis & developments

The company that this research is focussing on is ecohero. ecohero is founded in 2019 by Tamir Feldtman and is located in Bali. The company sells sustainable alternatives for products people use in their everyday life. Ecohero has products in the following categories; household articles, beauty articles and disposable articles. The company is operating in a rapidly growing market for sustainable products. According to research done by the Compound Annual Growth rate will the global green technology and sustainability market size grow from $11.2 billion in 2020 to $36.6 billion in 2025. (Compound Annual Growth rate, 2021). Most of those products are made in Bali or countries close by, all products are produced sustainably and fairly. They are made from suitable materials such as bamboo or made from residual waste. Ecohero makes sure that the people that are making the products are paid a fair wage and have good working conditions. These products are both sold online and offline and the company sells directly to customers (B2C) as well as to other businesses (B2B). The online platforms on which ecohero currently offers its products are; Amazon, Tokopedia, and Shopee (Tokopedia and Shopee are both Indonesian webshops). The website of ecohero is under construction at the moment and is being prepared for the German market. Currently, most of the sales are coming from Indonesian customers and businesses. (Y. Kurnia, 2022)

The company structure is organic and within the team, there is constant change depending on the current needs of ecohero. For ecohero this is an effective organizational form because of the constantly changing circumstances. Within the company there is staff with the necessary skills, for some specific tasks freelancers are hired. Many of the staff members work remotely, some in Bali but some also from another country because of this meetings are often held online.

ecohero's business model could be described as a sustainable-start up with a focus on eCommerce. They are currently in the phase of scaling up and expanding to the German market. The company has been financed by the CEO, as well as by outside investors. All of these investors come from the CEO's personal circle. The company is active on various platforms to inspire people, increase brand awareness, and gain potential customers. These platforms are LinkedIn, Instagram, Tiktok, and Facebook.

Ecohero has the following mission; "Our mission is inspiring and educating companies and individuals to increase the usage of sustainable alternatives of many daily-used products. We believe that nature and humankind can coexist in a productive harmony that can sustain and support present and future generations as long as we pursue these sustainable alternatives." (ecohero, 2022) Next to their mission they also have a vision; "Our vision is to be a sustainable network dedicated to protecting the environment, the animals and people's health through the promotion of usage of sustainable products and by manufacturing locally to introduce economic benefits to those more in need" (ecohero, 2022)

The company began to focus on the global market, so its products could be ordered from almost anywhere. However, ecohero noticed that the overall performance of the company was less because of the lack of focus. This changed in 2022, and ecohero will now focus on the German market first and expand from there. This will affect both the marketing activities and the logistics. The sales in Germany will come from the website Amazon and selling through supermarkets.

1.2 Problem analysis

Ecohero wants to increase the number of sales achieved through social media. According to the management of ecohero, this should be feasible with a new marketing strategy that is adjusted to their country of focus, Germany. Therefore, it is important to have a social media marketing strategy that contributes to this. Ecohero's current strategy does not lead to the desired results. Performance in terms of engagement, increasing brand awareness, reach and sales retrieved from social media are lower than ecohero would like. The current strategy is made 1.5 years ago and was mainly created for the first months of the company, the strategy is outdated as it misses important factors. The company grows very slowly on social media and targets are not being met. In addition, the company is looking to expand to the German market, however, its current social media strategy is focused on the whole market (worldwide). This is a problem because it negatively affects the revenue as fewer sales are being made because of this. The potential that the company could derive from social media marketing is not being exploited. The fact that the strategy is not focused on Germany makes it more difficult to reach this target group and achieve the goals set for Germany. This problem is observed in the social media performance reports and during interviews with the ones involved with social media. But even without doing any research, you can see from the social media pages that they are not very successful at this. This is not only a marketing problem, it affects the overall performance of the company. It affects the sales and thus the profitability of the company. The problem had been discovered in the company's second year. The strategy used until then was made for the start-up of the company and worked well for that time. However, since that time the company has entered a different phase and the possibilities on social media have also changed. That the strategy was not up-to-date or specific enough for the German market was discovered during a marketing meeting earlier this year. The problem is observed in the social media performance reports, when looking at the sales retrieved from social media marketing and when looking at the social media page in general. This is a problem that is continuously present and according to ecohero could be solved by having a new strategy.

1.3 Information gaps

The current social media marketing strategy does not work, this results in lower performance on social media and almost no sales from these marketing efforts. ecohero believes they can solve this problem by creating a new social media strategy. With this, they would be able to reach the German target audience better and improve their overall results. To identify how to advise ecohero to solve this problem there were information gaps that needed to be filled. To achieve this it was necessary to map out their current strategy and find out more about what the new market looked like and which target group they would be serving there. Also identifying what techniques were possible in the area of social media marketing. This resulted in three different information gaps. One information gap about their current strategy and the results, one information gap about the German market and one information gap about what techniques are available to improve performance and increase sales.

1.4 Research questions

The information gaps resulted in the following sub-questions, they were needed to provide evident answers to the main research questions.

Main question: What marketing strategy should the company follow to generate more sales through social media?

Sub-question 1: What is their current social media marketing strategy and what are the results?

1.1: What does their current social media strategy look like?

1.2: What are the results of this on social media?

1.3: What are the sales results because of this?

Sub-question 2: What does the German market for sustainable alternatives look like and who is the target group?

2.1: What are the motives to expand to the German market?

2.2: What does the German market for sustainable products look like?

2.3: Who are the competitors?

2.4: Who should ecohero target in the German market?

Sub-question 3: How can social media help ecohero to generate more sales with current capabilities?

3.1: What social media platforms should ecohero be focussing on to reach their target audience?

3.2: How can social media be used to reach more people?

3.3: How can social media be used to generate more sales?

1.5 Project aim

Ecohero has a lot of potential with its ambitions and plans to enter the German market. But to fulfil this potential, their strategy for social media should be specific and efficient. Therefore there is a need to know what their current strategy is and what the results of this are. Moreover, it's important to gain a better understanding of the German market to be able to advise on how to adjust the current strategy. In addition, there is a need to know what social media marketing strategies are available to improve performance and eventually increase the number of sales. The performance/results are measurable with the following KPIs; engagement, reach, social media sales and the community. There were some limitations to this research, the main ones were the lack of time and the distance to the German market.

This research aimed to give recommendations to ecohero that would help to be more successful with their marketing strategy on social media to get better results in the German market. This started with collecting all the data to answer the 3 sub-questions. Once all the information was filled in, the main question of this research could be answered. This led to five recommendations for ecohero that could contribute to solving the problem. These were; an updated social media strategy, an influencer campaign, additional research into the German market, using social media ads and implementation of an Instagram shop. Two of those resulted in a professional product, a new social media strategy and an influencer marketing guide. These professional products are corresponding to the working and management tool Marketing & Sales. The project contributed to working on WTM 15 & 17. The period of this project was 19 weeks.

2. Research approach

In this chapter, the approach to fill each information gap will be described. Moreover, the methods used to collect the data and analyse it will be discussed. This is followed by explaining the validity and reliability of this research. The last paragraph describes the limitations of the research. The type of research that has been executed is called applied research "also known as action research, which aims to find solutions for an immediate and specific problem(s). Accordingly, findings of applied studies are valuable on practical levels and can be applied to address concrete problems" (Dudovskiy, n.d.). The research design can be described as exploratory research. For this the definition of J. Dudovskiy has been used "exploratory research design simply explores the research questions, leaving room for further researches, whereas conclusive research design is aimed to provide final findings for the research." (Dudovskiy, n.d.)

2.1 Approach per information gap

The three information gaps have been answered by combining desk research with field research. This was the best option to gain the needed information to fill the information gaps. Each information gap required a different combination of research methods, which will be discussed here.

The approach to fill in **the first information gap** was the following; gathering primary data about ecohero's performance on social media and combining it with in-company information gained from two interviews and sales reports. A structured observation of social media resulted in quantitative data that was used to analyse social media performance. For this, an in-company system (Valtech social media performance system, see appendix 12) has been used. The semi-structured interviews with the marketing manager and the head of administration resulted in qualitative data about the company's current strategy and current sales performance.

Combining qualitative data with quantitative data in a study is called triangulation. This will result in a better understanding and it will create a balance between the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs. (de Bont, 2014)

The combination of field research and desk research is the best for this information gap because it gave the necessary insight into their current performance and strategy.

The following approach has been used to fill in **the second information gap**; primary data about the company's ambitions to enter the German market was combined with market research into this market. Company ambitions have been collected by one semi-structured interview with the CEO Tamir Feldtman. The market research was literature research where secondary data has been gathered and an overview of the market and its target audience had been created.

Secondary data is reanalysing data that have already been collected for some other purpose. (Saunders, M, 2000). This was the right approach because it helped to see if the assumptions made by the CEO were realistic and if the literature research gave the needed data.

Filling this information gap has been done by desk research both internally and externally.

To fill in **the third information gap** both field research (structured observation) and desk research (external) have been used. The approach for this gap was to start with research methods to improve the performance, of this literature research. This research was then tested where possible on the audience on social media by performing structured observations on how people's behaviour changed with these new methods.

Combining structured observations with desk research was the best approach to fill in this gap. Because it helped to see if the methods found in the literature on how to improve social media performance also worked for ecohero. Due to the limit of time, not all methods could be tested, unfortunately.

2.2 Data collection & Data analysis

Each information gap required a suitable method to collect the data and analyse it the correct way. In this paragraph, the data collection and analysis for each information gap will be discussed and explained why this is the most appropriate way.

Data to fill in the first information gap has been collected in the following way; using the data social media provides. Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook analyse all the data available and present this data to the account manager (when using a business account). To understand which data is needed and to analyse this data an in-company system has been used (see appendix 12 Valtech social media performance system) this system is designed by a marketing company (Valtech), especially for ecohero. This system helps to analyse the performance of each month and to compare it. In addition, data was collected by performing semi-structured interviews with the marketing manager and the sales manager. The interview with the marketing manager happened via Google meets and the interview with the sales manager happened in real life. Both interviews have been recorded and transcribed later. This data was later compared with data from the sales reports. The above methods were the right way to collect and analyze the data because they resulted in enough reliable data that could be analyzed and used to fill the information gap.

To fill in the second information gap data was collected in a semi-structured interview with the CEO of ecohero, the same method used as with the other interviews. Due to the fact for each subject only one person could be interviewed, there was no need for deductive coding they only needed to be transcribed. This data was combined and compared with the German market research. To collect secondary data about the German market and the target audience external desk research in the form of literature research has been applied. To analyse the data these models have been used;

Pestle analyses; "The DESTEP analysis is an analysis of the external environment of the company. This analysis can be applied to existing markets and new, potential markets of the company." (Leeman, 2015, pp. 60–71)

Porter 5 forces; "Porter's model can be applied to any segment of the economy to understand the level of competition within the industry and enhance a company's long-term profitability." (The Investopedia team, 2020)

STP marketing model: "STP marketing is effective because it focuses on breaking your customer base into smaller groups, allowing you to develop very specific marketing strategies to reach and engage each target audience." (Wright, 2022)

This helped to find specific data that could be used to create the target market research and to fill in the second information gap.

To fill in the third information gap data was firstly collected by performing desk research into the different social media strategies that could help with achieving the goals that ecohero has. This was literature research, a lot of scientific research could be used for this (secondary data). A few methods found in the research to improve social media performance could be tested. The insights from social media showed whether or not this improved engagement, followers and reach. This was the best way to collect the data because that made it possible to analyze the data and compare it to the previous performance. Testing was possible for adding hashtags, increasing activity, including Instagram stories & reels and interacting with other accounts on social media.

By collecting all the data and analysing it an answer to the research question could be delivered. In addition, it resulted in the data needed to give recommendations and create professional products.

2.3 Operationalisation

To find out how ecohero can improve its social media performance, this research uses the definition of inquivix: "Social media performance is basically how your page has been performing, the rate of engagement you've received, how much it has been shared, and what kind of progress you have had" (inquivix, 2022). Based on this definition and Valtech's incompany system, the following performance indicators (KPIs) for ecohero were established concerning social media performance.

- Engagement

- Reach

- Sales volume

- Community

In this research, the previously mentioned KPIs will be measured by using the data from the social media channels. Information about these channels will also be gathered through two interviews, one with the head of administration and one with the marketing manager. Below is the operationalization table, the purpose of which is to make concepts tangible, and measurable and to justify where the data was obtained.

Table 2.1 Operationalization table

Concept	Dimension	Indicators	How to collect this data
Social Media Performance	Engagement	- Amount of people that like the content - Amount of people that react to the content - Amount of people that share the content - Amount of people that save the content	- The average amount of likes/reactions/shares/saves per post this information was collected from the ecohero Instagram homepage
	Reach	- Amount of people that have been exposed to the social media account of ecohero.	- Amount of people that have been reached in total per month this information comes Meta Business report that Instagram creates to give an overview of the performance of your account
	Social media sales	- Amount of sales made from being exposed to social media. - Amount of website visits gained	- N/A This has not been measured

		through social media	
	Community	- Amount of followers - Amount of people that tag ecohero in their post -	- Information about followers is found on the homepage of ecohero's Instagram account. - Information about the number of people that share something about ecohero can be observed by keeping track of these notifications

2.3 Validity and reliability

In this research justification, the following definition of validity has been used "validity is the quality of being correct or true; when a statement is true and has a lot of evidence backing it up, this is an example of a situation where the evidence supports the validity of the statement." (Youronlinedictionary, 2019) The following definition has been used for reliability in this report; "Reliability refers to how consistently a method measures something. If the same result can be consistently achieved by using the same methods under the same circumstances, the measurement is considered reliable."(Scribbr, 2022)

To fill the information gap the research method was gathering data by performing observation research about the result of the current social media strategy. Observation research; "enables businesses to observe potential customers in a natural setting, which can reveal penetrating insights unavailable through other methods such as focus groups and surveys. This is especially the case when research participants have a conscious or unconscious bias towards presenting their "best self" to a researcher." (Steber, n.d.).

The method used to analyse the social media marketing performance has been especially for ecohero developed by Valtech. By using their method to obtain and analyze the data that is provided by the social media platforms, valid and reliable conclusions about the marketing strategy can be drawn. The results are valid because they are being backed by data provided by Instagram, the results are reliable because if someone would use this method under the same circumstances the results would have been the same. The information can later be used to answer the main question. This information was also combined with the insights gained by interviewing the marketing manager and sales manager.

Also, the second information gap has been filled with reliable and valid data because of the following; the information gathered from the interview with Tamir was backed by desk research. By doing so there was a lot of evidence backing up the previously gathered information. To examine the market well known scientific models are used, such as Porter's Five forces and the pestle analysis, this increases the validity and reliability of the results from the market research. To gain valid and reliable information about the target market the STP marketing model has been used. Additional confirmation of this was that Valtech had carried out market research at the same time on behalf of ecohero and came to the same conclusion about the target group. This had been discussed during one of the weekly marketing meetings. To back up statements about social media strategies a lot of scientific research has been consulted. All the findings are also checked by the (new) marketing manager and wherever possible tested on social media. By doing all of this the results of this research can be seen as valid and reliable according to the definitions mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph.

2.4 Limitations

The research did have some limitations. One of the limitations was the amount of time available to perform the research and to test the developed strategy over a longer period. In addition, the market research has due to limited resources from the company, physical distance from the market and the short period mainly be based on the information from desk research. The research could be improved if additional time would have been given to perform field research in the form of talking to the target audience to understand them better. Setting up different campaigns to see what works best would result in additional details about what the marketing strategy should look like. The final limitation was that the website was finished very late so the marketing campaign, influencer collaboration and an Instagram store could not be worked out until the completion phase of the internship. Therefore, there are few results available on how effective it was in terms of sales. That's why the company could consider doing follow up research on these topics, more about this in the recommendations.

3. Results

This chapter will present the results of the study. With this, the information gaps can be filled and the main question can be answered, which is necessary to be able to provide ecohero with advice in the end. The research results provide an answer to the question of how their current social media is performing, what the German market for ecohero looks like and what techniques are possible to improve the social media marketing performance.

3.1 What is their current social media marketing strategy and what are the results?

1.1: What does their current social media strategy look like?

The current social media strategy is based on the social media strategy that Valtech had made for ecohero when the company was launched. Valtech is a big marketing company that is based in Mexico. Since 2022 ecohero does all the marketing themselves but they still receive consultancy from this Valtech from time to time. The most important investor in ecohero is the owner of this marketing company, so he still has a big influence on the company. The strategy focused on achieving the following actions; inspire, recognise and inform. To achieve this, a guide was made with a strategy to follow. This guide can be found in appendix 1. In addition, a bigger analysis of their social media strategy can be found in appendix 2.

The strategy is missing information in regards to stories, reels, influencer marketing, paid advertising and social media shops. Ecohero is active on the following social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Linkedin and Tiktok.

In the current strategy, there is no budget available for placing advertisements on social media or for influencer marketing. Ecohero is looking at whether this is possible in the short term, because of the high ROI on investments on social media (E Ismagilova and others,2021)The (previous) marketing manager (Sofia Renner) said the following about this: "We see the value that online advertising on social media and influencer would bring but so far no budget has been made available for this, these are plans once the new round of investments are in. " (Renner, 2022)

1.2: What are the results of this on social media?

The result of each month is presented in a monthly social media report (appendix 7 Monthly social media reports). The social media performance reports shows little to no improvement over time. Especially the engagement is low for example on Instagram, on Instagram ecohero has 5500 followers and around 20 people engage per post. (Instagram @ecoheroworld, (private data) professional dashboard, Feb 2022). However, Instagram is still the best performing platform, followed by Facebook. LinkedIn and TikTok have the lowest results, this is also because the company does not focus on these channels. On all platforms there is little interaction with the content and the number of people that are being reached is staying the same or decreasing. (appendix 2 analysis of the current social media

strategy.) Therefore according to the results found in the social media report, it can be concluded that the current strategy does not work as it is supposed to be working.

1.3: What are the sales results because of this?

This can also be seen when looking at the sales, almost no sales are gained through social media (Sales report, January 2022[1].) According to the head of administration, the company makes mainly sales by selling to restaurants and supermarkets nearby. The social media activities did not lead to increased sales. "Little to no sales have been made through social media." (Y. Kurnia, 2022) The social media pages are missing some important details such as an Instagram shop, a clear description, and an easy way to reach the site.

In short, the current strategy is not delivering the desired results. The current social media marketing efforts result in low engagement, small reach and little to non-sales related to the marketing efforts. The best performing social media channel is Instagram, but here too elements are missing in the strategy. Therefore it can be concluded that the current strategy for social media marketing should be adjusted to improve the performance and that Instagram is an interesting platform to start with.

3.2 What does the German market for sustainable alternatives look like and who is the target group?
2.1: What are the motives to expand to the German market?

According to CEO Tamir Feltman, there are three reasons why the company should expand to the German market. (appendix 13 Interviews) The first two reasons are personal, he is German and in addition, he has friends in Germany who can help place the products in the supermarkets and drugstores. The third reason is that he sees a lot of potential in the German market for the products that ecohero is selling. To verify this information research has been done, the whole research can be found in appendix 3 German market research. The most important findings of this research were the following;

According to the PESTLE analysis (see appendix 3 chapter 1) **the biggest opportunities** lay within the following; Firstly, the political landscape is changing, and more people are voting for "green" parties in Germany. This gives them more power in parliament and more sustainable rules and laws are being implemented. (Andersen, 2021) Ecohero can respond cleverly with its products and adjust the marketing campaign accordingly. Secondly, Germany has experienced climate change up close (recent floods etc.) and therefore a larger part of the population is aware of the need to become more sustainable. This results in a larger target group interested in paying more for sustainable alternatives. (Müller & Müller, 2022). The **biggest threats are** coming from the economical factors like – give an example, the war in Ukraine and the recent covid crisis harm the economical growth. (Bloomberg, 2022). This could result in a negative impact on the financial situation of the target group resulting in they do not having the resources to buy sustainable alternatives.

In general, it can be concluded that the CEO has been right about the possibilities, However, also the threats need to be taken into account. In addition, these insights from the PESTLE analysis will be used in the new marketing campaign responding to the current situation and thereby appealing to the target audience in Germany.

Moreover, Porter's five forces have been used to identify the profit potential of this market (appendix 3 chapter 2). This information will be used to create the strategy, this will boost profitability and it will help with competing with the competition. The analysis revealed the following key insights. The company has to deal with high competitive rivalry and therefore needs something else to stand out from the competition. Supplier power is low, due to fact that there are many suppliers to choose from and the material used is in abundance available. The threat of substitutes is high for the products that ecohero

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[1] The details of this report are private and can therefore not be shared as an appendix

is offering. However, the customer power is low because will most likely have small customers in high quantity. The threat of new entrants to the market is high as it is an easy market to enter.

In conclusion, we can see that the company will face some challenges in getting profitable in this new market. The right marketing strategy will make it easier to stand out from the competition and convince people to buy ecohero.

2.2: What does the German market for sustainable products look like?

Ecohero has a varied collection of sustainable alternatives to everyday products. (Appendix 6 Catalogues). The products can be divided into the following sub-categories: household articles, beauty articles and disposable articles. Ecohero falls into the segment of sustainable alternatives for these items. Ecohero wants to be present in German discount supermarkets. When asked why they choose discount supermarkets, Tamir Veltman said the following: "In the larger supermarket chains, the sustainable alternatives are already on the shelves, we still miss these products in the discount supermarkets. With this, we believe we can fill a gap in the market. However, the prices will have to be adjusted to the buying behaviour of this German target group." The products will also be sold through eCommerce platforms such as Amazon, Etsy & Avocado stores.

In Germany, the e-commerce business is big, it has the fifth largest eCommerce market in the world (Industry Insights, 2020). In addition, the products will be sold on the company's website to offer sustainable products to biggest audience as possible. The promotion of supermarkets, eCommerce platforms and their website will be part of the social media marketing campaign.

2.3: Who should ecohero target in the German market?

In Germany, the interest in sustainable alternatives is growing, due to both government influence and the German population itself. (Appendix 3 German market research) "As of 2021, 9,65 million Germans fully agreed that they would be willing to spend more money on an environmentally friendly product, while the number of those who only mostly, somewhat or hardly agreed, perhaps wishing to be certain whether an eco-friendly label was validated, was still higher" (Statista, 2022) Based on the STP marketing model, the market has been segmented.

The following target group was defined: 23-40 years, predominantly women, living in Germany, medium to high income, more sustainable lifestyle, online and offline shoppers, active on social media. Based on this, 4 segments were created (Appendix 3 chapter 7). According to this research, ecohero should focus the marketing activities on social media mainly on segments A & B. These segments have an acceptable size and include all the characteristics of customers that would fit ecohero. Segment A consists of young sustainable millennials that will mainly buy online. Although they do not have the biggest budget they are motivated to buy eco-friendly products. Segment B contains middle-class families who want to live more sustainably without changing their lives too much. They are likely to stumble upon the product by accident for example in the story or via a social media ad.

The information about ecohero's target audience will be used to make the strategy for the social media campaign. The complete research about the target market can be found in appendix 3 chapters 6-10. This target market has been confirmed by research done by Valtech.

2.4: Who should ecohero target in the German market?

Research into the competition ecohero will face yielded the following key results. For the target market in the supermarket, the biggest competition is Pandoo. Their products are similar to

ecohero's products and they are in the supermarkets where ecohero's target group also shops. However, this company has almost no activity on social media, in this ecohero can take advantage. Three companies that are particularly strong online are Bambaw, Coconutbowl and Jungle Culture. These will also be the companies that are hardest to compete with. These competitors are strong on social media, have a good Amazon ranking and end up high in the Google results. Something they are very strong in is creating engaging content for social media. On the one hand, they are a threat because they are direct competition, but they also contribute to making these products more popular so it can also be seen as an opportunity. A full analysis of the competition can be found in appendix 4 Competitor analysis German market. Something that stands out is that they have a presence on almost every platform but all have the most success on Instagram.

In short, it can be concluded that the CEO's hypothesis is in line with what the research showed. The German market would be an interesting marketing. The target group that has to be reached by using social media are Germans between the age of 24-40, mostly women who have an interest in sustainable alternatives. The competition will on the one hand cause a threat but also opportunities in terms of creating more awareness for the products. Overall it can be said that expanding to Germany is a logical step.

3.3 How can social media help ecohero to generate more sales with current internal capabilities?

3.1 What social media platforms should ecohero be focussing on to reach their target audience?

Ecohero is still a young company, currently in the phase of scaling up. However, this still means that they do not have a large marketing team. Therefore, a choice will have to be made as to which social media channels are the most effective to use. Research into the target market (appendix 3 German market research) showed that they mainly use Instagram and Facebook.

Research from Walker-Ford (2021) shows that Facebook still scores best as a social media platform for generating leads and making sales. However, research done by De Verge shows the following. " Facebook's struggle to attract users under the age of 30 has been ongoing for years, dating back to as early as 2012." (De Verge, 2021)

In 2022, the number of Instagram users increased by 11%, whereas Facebook saw a decline (Shopify, 2022). This is one of the reasons why the company should focus on other social media platforms besides Facebook that have more potential for growth and appeal to the target group. In 2020 nearly 25% of the German population between 18 and 34 years purchased something directly from social media (content works, 2021). The results of the monthly social media reports show that ecohero on Instagram is by far the most successful in reaching people. Almost 55% of all people reached, were reached through the activities on Instagram in March (Monthly report ecohero March 2022, Appendix 7). In addition, there are more and more features on Instagram that make it easier to buy directly from Instagram.

3.2 How can social media be used to reach more people?

Research findings show that ecohero should consider using social media to increase brand awareness, reach the target audience and ease the purchasing process. (Appendix 11 Instagram performance) There are several techniques ecohero can use to reach more people on social media.The most important findings will be discussed here. According to new research does more reach lead to an increase in website visits and the amount of sales. (Gothivarekar, 2022).

Social media platforms work as a search engine with an algorithm, which has a lot of influence on how many people you can reach. By already starting to post regularly, both stories, reels, normal posts and

videos more often, will give people a reason to follow. Research done by Kosobucki,found the following; "The primary benefit of Reels is brand awareness. It will enable your content to be seen on the Explore page and an endless feed of Reels. When your content can be seen on the Explore and Reels page, you reach people you would otherwise not have your brand in front of."((Kosobucki, 2022) By using the right kind of hashtags and the right amount, the algorithm knows what the content is about and can reach the right target group. (see appendix 5 Hashtags research) Moreover, it helps to interact with other similar accounts on social media to create more (brand) awareness for your own social media account. The main results were the following; using Instagram stories, hashtags, and being more active overall helped to increase reach by 35.5% and followers by 1.46% (23 February- 23 May). See table 3.1 overview KPI's Instagram ecohero.

	January	February	March	April	May
Engagement					
Average like per post	17	17	20	23	34
Average amount of reactions	4	3	5	5	9
Average amount of shares	0	1	2	2	3
Average amount of saves	0	0	2	3	5
Reach					
Average amount of people that have been exposed to the social media	1916	1917	2242	2390	2596
Social media sales					
Amount of sales from social media	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Amount of website visits	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Community					
Followers	5967	5967	5973	5980	6054
Mentions	0	2	4	12	10

Table 3.1 KPI Instagram ecohero (Appendix 11 Instagram Performance)

In addition, influencer marketing will help to create brand awareness and introduce ecohero to a larger group. "Influencer marketing appears to be an effective and cost-efficient marketing tool, as it is often not perceived by consumers as advertising and guarantees a wide reach to very engaged audiences." (Ye, G., Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). Research done into influencer marketing for ecohero gave the following insights; influencers will help to gain brand awareness in Germany because they have a way to reach the target group that feels natural. In addition, when the right influencer has been chosen the money invested in it will be earned back and profit can be made. With micro-influencers, only the products have to be paid in exchange for exposure on their account. The complete research about influencer marketing for ecohero can be found in appendix 8.

Moreover, advertising on Instagram & Facebook is an easy and cost-effective way to reach many people. Research by Blue Corona indicates the following "Social media ads allow you to target audiences that may not have seen your post otherwise while also increasing brand awareness and product awareness. In addition, paid social is a great driver of micro-conversions, whether they be for trials, free samples, or just funnelling additional traffic to your website." (Blue Corona, 2022). The complete research into ads on social media can be found in appendix 9. The most important findings in this research are that it will be the most effective to start with ads on Instagram. Firstly because of higher engagement on ads Instagram ads than on Facebook (23% difference) (Hoodsuite 2021). Secondly,

because Instagram is their best performing platform and where most of their target group is present. Thirdly because the influencer campaign will also be on Instagram, the ads and Instagram campaign combined will a big reach. With a small budget, a lot of people can be reached on social media (reaching 1000 people will cost between $2.50 - $3.50) (Instagram, 2022). One of the benefits of using social media ads is that you design your entire campaign, on Facebook ads manager you can choose the goal of your campaign, your budget and to who you want to display your ad

3.3 How can social media be used to generate more sales

By using the right strategy, social media will, first of all, ensure that more people see ecohero and go to the website. The strategy needs to be adjusted to the German market and the chosen target audience. In addition, the possibility of adding a shop from which visitors can make purchases can also be used. How this works exactly can be found in appendix 9 social media ads. The most important thing is that this simplifies the purchase process for the customer and increases the chance of a purchase. Influencer marketing can be used to persuade the reached audience into buying the products from ecohero. In addition to promoting sales directly on the own website of ecohero can social media also be used to promote purchases in supermarkets and drugstores. Via a marketing campaign, the company can let the target audience know where and how they can buy the products both physically and online.

From this, it can be concluded that it's advised for ecohero to mainly focus on Instagram and Facebook. Different techniques can be used to improve the overall performance of ecohero on social media. When all techniques are implemented it is expected that the number of sales retrieved from the social media marketing activities will improve as well.

4. Conclusion

This study sought to answer the question: What marketing strategy should the company follow to generate more sales through social media? Several research methods were used for this purpose. This conclusion will start by giving a conclusion to the 3 different sub-questions.

Firstly, the results of research into their current social media strategy showed that engagement and reach were disappointing and lower than ecohero aimed for. The main reason for this was the lack of budget and time, in addition, the strategy that the company had during the launch was still being used and was therefore outdated. Stories, hashtags, reels, paid ads and influencers were not being used in their strategy. In addition the research showed that Instagram the company's most successful social media channel is.

Secondly, the company's reason for going to Germany has mainly to do with the personal connection the CEO has with Germany and the opportunities he sees in the German Market. Research shows that the German market is indeed interesting for ecohero. The results have indicated that the target group for ecohero will mainly consist of 23-40-year-old women, middle to high income and care about sustainability also they are active on social media. The population can be reached through social media and have the (financial) means to pay for the products, in addition, the increasing demand for eco-friendly products creates opportunities in the market. Social media can be used to reach the German target group and inform them about the possibility to buy the products both online and in the supermarkets.

Thirdly, different methods have been identified that will help to increase the reach of ecohero on social media. These methods include; posting more hashtags, being more interactive, use influencers and include ads. From this reach, more conversions can ultimately be achieved that lead to sales. The current strategy will have to be adjusted to achieve the goals within the new market. For this new strategy, a budget is needed to fund the ads and influencer campaign. To ease the purchase process a social media store needs to be set up.

To conclude, this showed that the German market is an interesting marketing for ecohero. Their current strategy needs to be adjusted because it does not result in the desired performance and is not focused on entering the German market. This adjustment can be done by using the right hashtags, creating appealing content, posting stories and reels, setting up influencer campaigns, and using paid advertising on social media. In addition, simplify the purchase process by adding a social media store on Facebook and Instagram could also help to increase the amount of sales made through social mediaso . Given the time, budget, and current results, the focus will primarily be on Instagram.

The research process went smoothly thanks to the openness and trust of the company, in addition, there was sufficient support from both ecohero and the HZ to bring this research to the desired result. However, there were also limitations within this research, the biggest limitations in this research were the time, if there had been more time the theories for a new strategy could have been tested more extensively. The company could consider testing out influencer marketing, social media shops and ads as soon as every aspect of the company is ready for that. In addition, the distance from the German market was a limitation, therefore the market research was mainly based on the knowledge that was available within the company and on literature research. If these limitations would not be there, the research could have been even more strongly substantiated. To compensate for this research limit the company could consider either doing field research into the German market themselves or hiring an external party to do this for them.

This conclusion can be considered valid because all statements within this study are supported by evidence backing it up. The information gaps were filled by applying the appropriate research method for each research question leading to valid and reliable results. By using purely reliable sources and verifying all results, it is free from errors in regards to reasoning, and irrelevant argumentation and has no misconceptions about meanings.

5. Recommendations

As mentioned in the project aim was the goal of this research was to come up with recommendations that would adhere to the criteria of SAFE. For this, the criteria of the original model from Johnson, Scholes and Whittington have been used. By using this the recommendations can be considered suitable, acceptable and feasible. The first and third recommendations have been performed and resulted in a professional product. The recommendations have all been presented to the management of ecohero and received positive feedback. All recommendations can be implemented within the next three months, but measuring the results and completely "solving" the problem could take a bit longer because this depends on variables such as money, time, manpower etc.

1. **Create a new strategy specifically for the German market**

Create a new strategy that fits with the German market and will help to achieve ecohero's objectives. This new strategy should include things that were lacking in the previous marketing strategy such as making use of influencers, social media shops, hashtags and a focus to reach the German target audience. This recommendation is suitable because it would be the biggest step toward performing better on social media. It is acceptable for the company and its stakeholders as the risks are low and it's easy to implement. The Instagram marketing strategy has been presented to the entire team and the main investor and all agreed. This recommendation is also feasible because the company already has the required skills in the team. This recommendation has resulted in a social media marketing strategy for ecohero most successful social media channel Instagram. Given the limit of time and ecohero's request, a deep focus on Instagram was chosen instead of a general focus on all social media channels.

2. **Research the German market more thoughtfully to get a better understanding of the new target audience.**

In this study, due to the distance of the market, language barrier and lack of time, it was decided in consultation with the marketing manager not to conduct field research on the German market. The advice is to do this as follow-up research to understand the target group even better and to make the marketing more personal. It would be most effective if this is done by a German speaker who preferably also has a presence in Germany. This would be suitable for ecohero because it will help by making their social media activities more focused on the target group. According to the general manager Sean this would be acceptable "I believe it would be worth the time and effort to get to know our target audience better, in addition, we have close contacts with people working in Germany so it will be easy to arrange this". This also makes this recommendation feasible as the company has the recourses and capabilities to perform this.

3. **Set up a plan for influencers' campaigns**

This research showed that influencer marketing could have a major impact on increasing brand awareness. Therefore one of the recommendations is to include a marketing campaign with German influencers to create more awareness. This is suitable advice for ecohero because it would improve their social media performance and if the right influencers have been chosen it should increase the number of sales as well. The risks of this recommendation are acceptable as it does not require a big investment as and the risk will be spread among the different influencers. The main investor has been informed and he agrees with spending some of the marketing budgets on influencer marketing. It is also feasible because they have already a budget allocated to execute this as soon as their website is ready and the marketing manager has the task to perform this. A professional product has been created with a "ready-to-perform" influencer marketing plan.

4. **Have a budget for social media ads**

The study found that social media ads can be done even with a small budget. Social media ads can contribute to different goals and be tailored specifically to the target audience. Therefore, it is

recommended to apply this in the strategy once the website is live. This is suitable because it will eventually contribute to more traffic to the ecohero website and social media and therefore improve the presentation. The risks and costs are acceptable for the company because you can start with every budget . ecohero has made a budget available for the social media marketing part of this could be used to finance the ads in addition to this, ecohero has the needed skills within the team.

5. Insert a social media shop

The last recommendation for ecohero is to insert a social media shop on their social media accounts. This will make the purchasing process easier because people can buy the products they see directly via social media pages. This is a recommendation that can be easily implemented and together with the other recommendations be a part of the solution. This recommendation has already been accepted and is currently being implemented by the other intern working on the website. This is a suitable solution because it makes the buying process easier which should increase the number of sales. In addition, it does not cost any money and there are no risks involved. Ecohero has someone who can do this and afterwards it can be managed by the marketing team.

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