

John Lewis Partnership

Market – John Lewis Partnership (hereinafter referred to as JLP) is operating in the retail market. It is the parent organisation to John Lewis & Partners and Waitrose & Partners.

Objectives – JLP aims to reach £200m in profits in the next two years, and £400m by 2025 through a focus on service and cost savings.

Product – There are 43 John Lewis & Partner shops and 332 Waitrose and Partners shops across the UK (John Lewis Partnership, 2021).

Situation – JLP to consider whether their strategic vision should be adapted to focus on sustainability in order to create greater functionality through intelligent access to products or services and coordination of the resources of JLP.

SWOT analysis of current sustainability strategy

Strengths

JLP's strategy is informed by reporting frameworks including the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Reporting Initiatives Sustainability Reporting framework (John Lewis Partnership, 2021a).

JLP strategy is held to account by the Executive Team. The agreed strategy is overseen by the Partnership Board, and Nina Bhatia, the Partnership's Executive Director. There is a strong emphasis on governance of the sustainability strategy with an 'sustainability & Ethics Committee' reporting to Bhatia (JLP, 2021d). Their sustainability strategy and reports are also independently assured by KPMG yearly (JLP, 2021c).

JLP's sustainability strategy is focused. They have concentrated on 'priority focus areas where we can have the greatest impact' (JLP, 2021c). They cover all four areas of sustainability shown in the table below (Sustainability Illustrated, 2013).

Sustainability	Examples of how JLP's sustainability strategy covers this area.
We extract large flows of materials from the earth's crust	JLP measures emissions and energy usage (JLP, 2019)
Accumulation of substances created by society	From April 2021, JLP will follow the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures Framework (TCFD). JLP focuses targets on JLP's use of Buildings and transport, for example Waitrose to keep under a 7% refrigerant gas leakage rate (JLP, 2021).

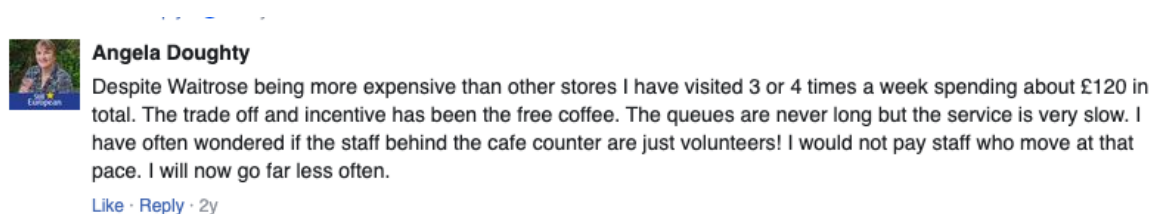
Physically inhibit nature's ability to run cycles	JLP's 'Responsible Sourcing Code of Practice' includes their commitment to 100% of palm oil used in own-brand products to be Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil certified by December 2020 (JLP, 2020a), which they achieved (Waitrose, 2021).
Barriers to people meeting their basic human needs world-wide.	JLP have a 'Responsible Sourcing Code of Practice' which covers areas such as worker's rights, which is based on the Ethical Trading initiative base code clause one (JLP, 2020a)

Weaknesses

Bhatia has accountability of performance of sustainability across the business (John Lewis Partnership, 2021b). This perhaps suggests that JLP are taking an approach towards sustainability 'influenced by accounting and financial control' (Schaltegger and Hörisch, 2015). Bhatia furthermore when joining JLP highlighted that the goal was to develop a strategy that... 'delivers commercial value' (JLP, 2020b) as an employee-owned business. Perhaps JLP supports Friedman's perspective who argued that a business' main goal is to maximise profits (Friedman, 1970).

JLP (2021c) highlight that they share sustainability information that they consider to be 'of greatest interest to, and which has the potential to affect the perception of, those stakeholders who wish to make informed decisions and judgements about our commitment to sustainability'. This report however suggests that JLP's sustainability strategy is not conveyed to customer stakeholders effectively. Removing disposable cups from Waitrose stores for example was seen by customers as a reduction in loyalty benefits, taking one customer from an online forum as example below in figure A. JLP on this occasion seemed to be 'profit-seeking' appearing to only improve sustainability management only to improve economic success (Revell, Stokes and Chen, 2009).

Figure A



(Mason, 2018)

Opportunities

Consumer attitudes are changing towards placing importance on business' environmental standards. A Nielsen (2015) report which polled 30,000 consumers in 60 countries across the world found that 'sixty-six percent of consumers say they are willing to pay more for sustainable brands – up from 55% in 2014 and 50% in 2013. Getty Images (2020) reports that consumers are willing to pay 10-15% more for products and services from business that 'use sustainable practices, are aligned with their values and have transparent business practices'. JLP found that searches for the food waste page on Waitrose.com increased by 94% suggesting increasing awareness from their customers (Waitrose & Partners, 2020).

Waitrose unpacked' plastic free supermarket trial proved positive marketing for the business. As part of their sustainability strategy of reducing plastic, JLP benefitted from positive customer feedback from their trial in one store in Oxford in Summer 2019. Due to the success, the scheme has been expanded into a further three shops on a permanent basis (Jahshan, 2021). JLP have opportunity to develop this opportunity further as part of a new strategic vision.

Threats

Competitors have gone further publicly, and marketed their sustainability initiatives, such as Selfridges' 'Project Earth' with new strategies such as 'RESELLFRIDGES' where Selfridges are selling used designer clothing (Selfridges, 2021) and promoting using social media, targeting younger green consumers. Marks and Spencer's 'Plan A' is heavily promoted in-store – see figure B (Marks and Spencer, 2020). Both competitors benefit from consumers increased awareness and willingness to spend more on sustainable products.

Figure B



(Marks and Spencer, 2020)

New competitors have emerged that may benefit from first-mover advantage of positioning themselves as sustainable. Rêve En Vert is an online department store selling luxury sustainable and ethical goods, targeting consumers that are ONS social grade C1 or AB, similar to JLP.

Other competitors branding themselves as sustainability focused:

- Sustainable Department Store
- Buy me once LTD

PESTLE analysis

Political	- Corporation Tax will increase to 25% in 2023 (announced in budget 2021). (GOV, 2021a) - Non-essential retail including John Lewis stores currently required to close under COVID-19 guidance (GOV, 2021b)
Economic	- The fourth quarter of 2020 saw reduced GDP, as seen in figure B, which reflects reduced consumer spending. Overall GDP fell by 9.9% in 2020. - Recession in the UK in 2020 (ONS, 2021a) reflecting reduced consumer spending due to COVID-19 national lockdowns. - Income tax personal allowance and higher rate threshold will be maintained until April 2026, therefore consumers whose careers have not been impacted by COVID-19 may have more disposable income. - Bank Rate currently at 0.1%, Therefore cheaper for consumers to borrow, which may increase credit card spending with JLP. (Bank of England, 2021) - Both median and mean disposable income increased in FYE 2020 (ONS, 2021a) despite COVID-19 economic restrictions.
Sociological	- Non-essential retail closing meant John Lewis stores were closed, encouraging a further shift to e-tailing with online shopping 'the only means for consumers to satisfy their consumption needs' (Koch, Frommeyer and Schewe, 2020). - In the UK 77% of people now do at least some of their grocery shopping online, compared to 61% in 2019 (Waitrose & Partners, 2020) - There has been a large increase in online grocery shopping within the over-55 age group, where regular online shoppers have nearly trebled (8% in 2019 to 23% in 2020) (Waitrose & Partners, 2020) - The middle-income group in the UK (58%) is slightly smaller than the OECD average (61%) which is a JLP target market (OECD, 2019). - Increased consumer awareness of climate change and environmentalism (Nielson, 2015).
Technological	- COVID-19 has 'accelerated the shift towards a more digital world' (UNCTAD, 2021). Bailey, Waitrose & Partners Executive Director highlights 'because online shopping quickly becomes habitual – these changes are unlikely to reverse' (Waitrose & Partners, 2020).
Legal	- JLP has stopped international delivery due to export difficulties and increased paperwork to the EU since Brexit in early 2021 (Nazir, 2021).

	- Reduced income from Northern Ireland due to The Northern Ireland Brexit deal, meaning EU custom rules are applied. JLP have re-introduced shipping to NI in March 2021, after pausing due to Brexit (Campbell, 2021). - The Agricultural Act 2020, may reduce supply of British grown and farmed goods for Waitrose & Partners, as it reduces the direct payments paid to farmers currently, which may result in bankrupt farmers (GOV, 2021c).
Environmental	- The world is facing a climate crisis, where key steps towards sustainability must be made (United Nations, 2021). - JLP must consider the packaging of their products, particular in their own-brand Waitrose products, due to proposed changes in the Extended Producer Responsibility reforms due to come in 2023, where the full cost of collecting household waste will shift from taxpayer to producers if implemented. (Recycle More, 2021)

Propositions for value creation

JLP should reconcile their ‘separation fallacy’ (Matten & Moon, 2008), the idea that ethical issues ‘can be separated from business’ instead, JLP should follow the mindset that ‘business and ethics are not perceived as conflicting but fundamentally interlinked’ in order to create value (Hörisch, J., Freeman, R. and Schaltegger, 2014).

‘Sustainable development within a business can create value for customers, investors, and the environment’ (Kralj, 2009). There is insufficient need for JLP to choose between sustainable business practices and the financial cost of doing so. Some businesses have viewed sustainability as an opportunity which allows reduced costs and risk or increasing revenue and market share through innovation (Holliday, 2001). Value creation can be referred to as a benefit to the customer ‘whether it is value in use or symbolic value’, however it also applies to the ‘value created for financial stakeholders’ (Freudenreich, Lüdeke-Freund and Schaltegger, 2019) which are JLP’s employees.

Due to the limited nature of this report, alongside JLP’s seeming priority of financial benefit, the following section will focus only upon ‘cost and risk reduction’ under Hart and Milstein’s (2003) Shareholder value model. Further opportunities for sustainability strategy can be seen in appendix B.

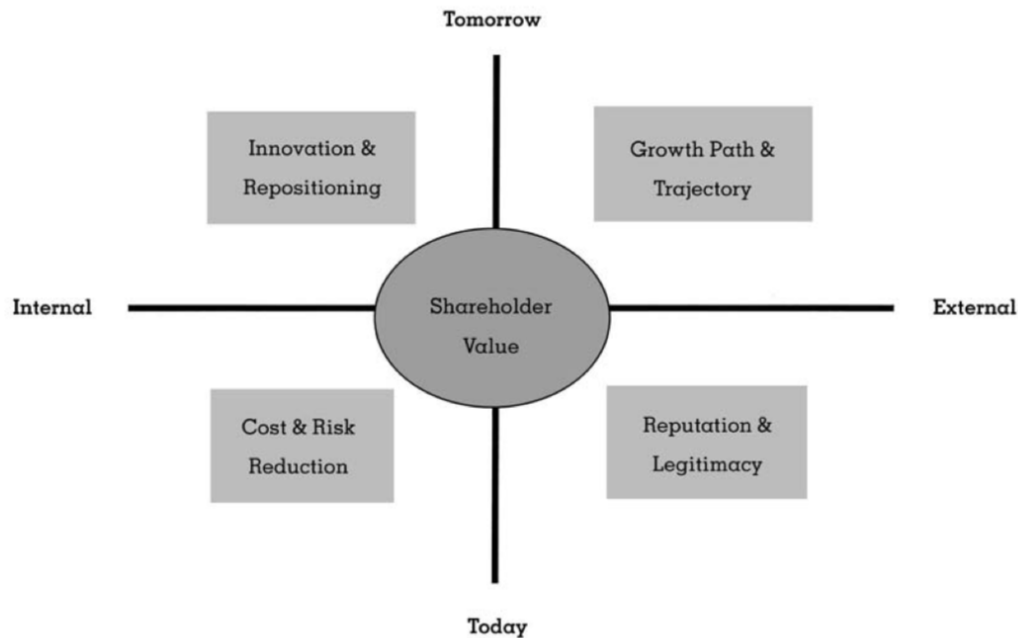


FIGURE 1
Key Dimensions of Shareholder Value

(Hart and Milstein, 2003)

Cost & Risk Reduction

Becoming environmentally friendly lowers costs due to reduced inputs. Additional revenues can be created through better products, or new business opportunities. JLP could benefit from early mover advantage, meaning competitors will struggle to match and ‘yield substantial first-mover advantages in terms of fostering innovation’ (Nidumolu, Prahalad and Prahalad, 2009).

Operations and efficiencies from building a sustainable supply chain also offer opportunity for JLP to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. JLP currently have 4,800 vehicles in their transport fleet. There is opportunity for value creation through investment in Biomethane fuel use for their fleet. Biomethane a fuel source can be 35% to 40% cheaper than diesel and emits 70% less CO₂ (Green Gas, 2021). JLP could go further and invest in electric vehicles for their Waitrose last-mile deliveries. Other businesses have begun to invest, for example Amazon who have purchased 100,000 custom electric delivery vehicles (Amazon, 2021). JLP could consider transitioning to a circular business model, using food waste from their Waitrose stores to produce Biomethane Gas.

JLP should comply with the most stringent rules, before environmental rules are enforced. They can therefore then focus on being proactive about environmental issues (Nidumolu, Prahalad and Prahalad, 2009). JLP can focus on the reduction of non-renewable resources, this may ‘create a better image, but most corporations end up reducing costs or creating new businesses as well’ (Nidumolu, Prahalad and Prahalad, 2009). Further carbon and energy footprint analysis could help JLP identify the sources of waste within the business as additional benefits. Similar to being involved in Carbon Disclosure Project, proactively

managing JLP's environmental impact prior to legislation may allow JLP to be 'better prepared for future regulations and consequences of environmental development (Schumm, 2021)

Nidumolu, Prahalad and Prahalad, 2009 have found that 'that vendors consume as much as 80% of the energy, water, and other resources used by a supply chain, and that they must be a priority in the drive to create sustainable operations'. JLP could focus on reduction of energy usage in store, and committing to renewable energy sources, sooner than the proposed 2028. Marks and Spencer's operations for example have had carbon neutrality since 2012 (M&S, 2021).

JLP could take advantage of new social acceptance of working from home due to COVID-19 lockdown measures. This could lead to 'reductions in travel time, travel costs and energy use' (Nidumolu, Prahalad and Prahalad, 2009). JLP currently have two head offices, in London and Berkshire. John Lewis could convert these head offices into remote working opportunities in order to significantly reduce cost, whilst boosting its environmental credentials. Furthermore 80% of employees want to work from home at least some of the time (Owl Labs, 2020). JLP therefore could use remote working to attract talent to the business. Learnlight Insights (2021) research suggests that employees are 'more aware of their use of electricity', their consumption of materials such as single-use coffee cups and paper when outside of the office environment. Learnlight Insights (2021) suggests that increased remote working can also contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through assisting with gender equality, climate change, and through promoting wellbeing (for example more leisure time due to reduced commutes). However, research from WSP (2020) suggests that remote working in the UK 'may only be more environmentally friendly in the summer' due to the need to 'heat individual workers' building' compared with one building, even considering commutes.

Returns from customers can reduce corporate profitability on average by 4% each year (Nidumolu, Prahalad and Prahalad, 2009). Instead of disposing returned products, JLP could recapture some of the lost value by reusing, particularly in their John Lewis and Partners business.

Stakeholder consideration

JLP (2021d) express the importance of 'building strong relationships' with internal and external parties and understand that it is important for their 'vision for ethics and sustainability and long-term business success'. JLP (2021d) highlight that 'it is important we listen and respond to their concerns, are honest in our expectations and fair in how we communicate our performance'. JLP must also ensure strategy is communicated with employees to maximise support and minimise resistance to change (Falle, Rauter, Engert and Baumgartner, 2016).

JLP (2021d) highlights their key stakeholders as the following groups:

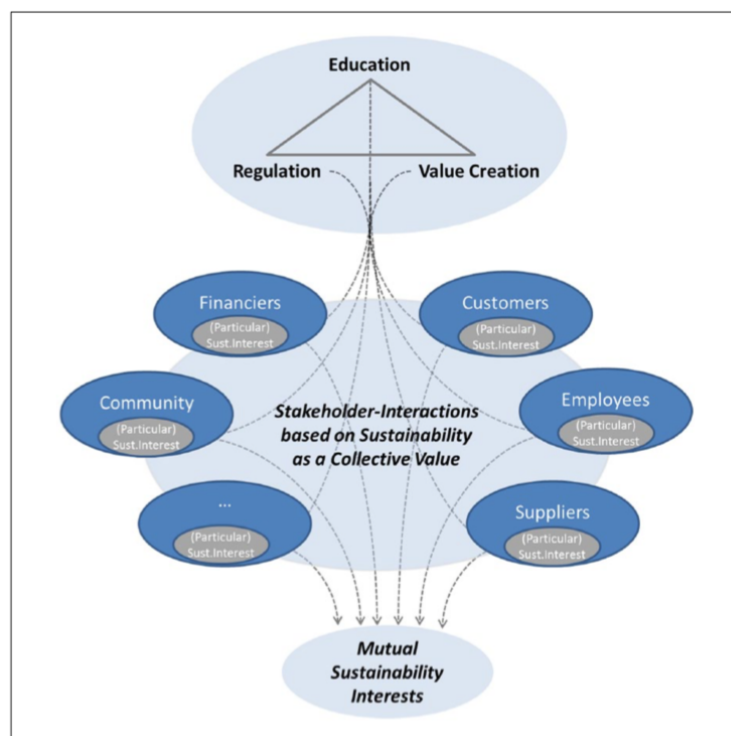
- Partners
- Customers
- Local communities where JLP operate

- Government
- NGOs
- Campaign groups

JLP must consider the following three challenges to incorporating stakeholders with sustainability strategy raised by Hörisch, Freeman and Schaltegger (2014).

- 1) Anchoring sustainability in the mindset of all stakeholders
- 2) Creating mutual sustainability interests
- 3) Empower societal and environmental interests

Lacy, Cooper, Hayward and Neuberger (2010) highlight that consumers have become the most important stakeholder group for many CEOs, above employees and government. JLP must consider conventional consumers alongside green consumers. In regard to the second challenge above, JLP must consider how to create a mutual sustainability interest, visualised in the diagram below. Each stakeholder has a different interest or motivation towards sustainability. Whether it be shareholders (JLP's 'Partners' wanting to reduce cost in order to maximise dividends as an employee-owned business), or consumers that have environmentally aware and therefore it is important to create synergies through education between stakeholder groups.



(Hörisch, Freeman and Schaltegger, 2014)

JLP's Sustainability story

JLP have an opportunity to re-position John Lewis & Partners as a sustainable department store available on the high-street. JLP have further opportunity to expand their Waitrose Unpacked supermarkets, allowing for re-branding of the JLP revenue streams. Freeman, Pierce and Dodd (2000) argue that 'behind every stakeholder concern is a potential marketplace, if approached with the innovation mind-set'. JLP can take advantage of consumers growing concern of environmental issues, especially as this concern is growing particularly within the millennial market, a market JLP has struggled to gain market share within this market previously (Shakespeare, 2019).

They could furthermore adopt a 'resource based view' where they consider sustainability to strengthen 'organizational competitiveness by enabling its unique resource capabilities'(Starik and Kanashiro, 2013). Whilst JLP have announced further store closures on British highstreets this report suggests that with the closure of other brick and mortar department stores such as House of Fraser, and Debenhams, and their absence in physical stores, JLP have an opportunity to be the forefront of consumers changing priorities. This could build on the USP of JLP's decision in 2018 to add '& Partners' to their brands to reflect their partnership business model (JLP, 2018). A sustainability focus could build upon this image of wholesomeness and heritage. This would not only support society in providing an opportunity to for consumers to purchase quality products, again creating customer loyalty for JLP, which may lead to increased revenues, but also environmental benefits. A future of inter-connected value creation (Hörisch, Freeman and Schaltegger, 2014) could be possible for JLP.

Next steps

JLP could use the findings of this report as a starting point, and whilst not on an SME, could use the process as explained by Falle, Rauter, Engert and Baumgartner (2016) to create a sustainability Balanced Scorecard for JLP as a start to their true sustainability story.

Word count: 2749

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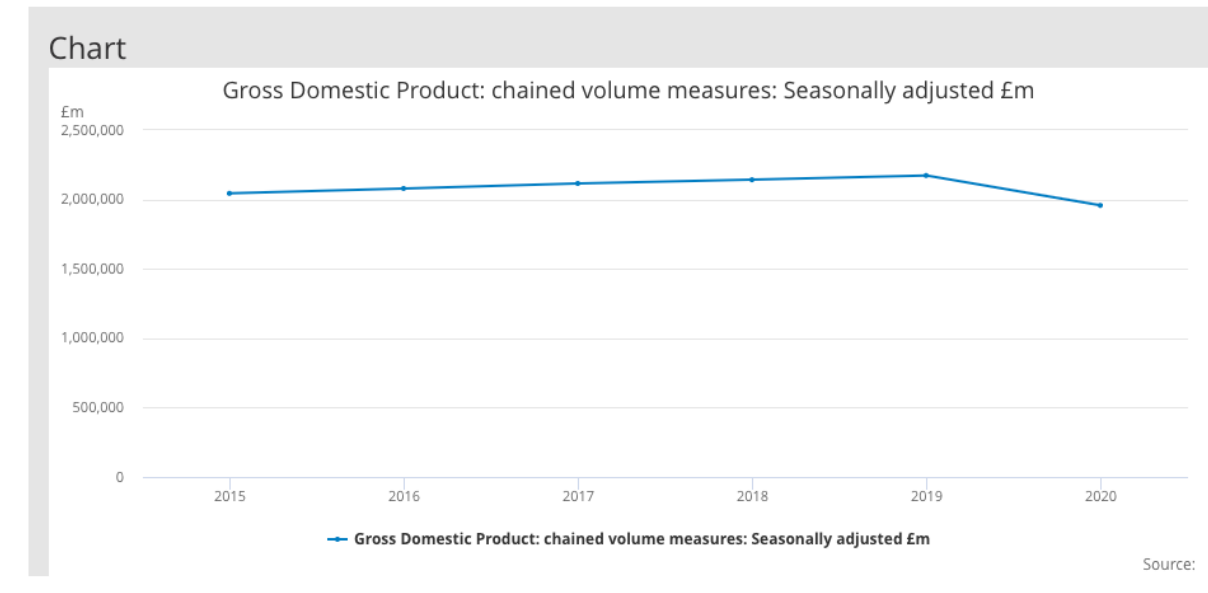
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Appendices

Appendix A



(ONS, 2021b).

Appendix B

Business Sustainability Strategic Map

