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Sustainable Business Model Innovation: The Cases of Patagonia and Bureo Skateboards

Fiona V. Stappmanns

University of Innsbruck, Universitätsstraße 15, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria
fiona.stappmanns@uibk.ac.at

Abstract *A sustainable business model generates a competitive advantage through the incorporation of sustainability at the core of a company. Especially small and medium- sized enterprises (SME) have potential to promote this instrument as they account for over 99% of the companies in the EU. This paper showcases and compares two firms, the outdoor clothing producer Patagonia and the sustainable start- up Bureo Skateboards, in regard to their application of sustainable business model innovation. The findings of the two case studies lead to the building of hypothesis regarding the differences between incumbents and start- ups in the development of sustainable business model innovation which can be tested in future research. The goal of this research is to develop instruments, which can be used to integrate sustainability into the business model of SME.*

1. Introduction

The shift of focus from profitability towards sustainability is driven by the realization that we currently use resources of the equivalent of what 1.5 earths (WWF et al. 2012) can replace and absorb within a year, meaning that we are 'borrowing' from the planet. This development is only possible due to the massive use of non-renewable resources such as oil, a process that has a finite character. Increases in efficiency, for example through product innovation, are not enough to counteract this development. Business model innovation goes beyond the individual scope of the firm and product or process innovation. Bocken et al. (2014) stress the systemic nature of business model innovation, capturing value not only within its organizational boundaries, but also for a wider range of stakeholders, creating new systems instead of simply new processes or technology. Consequently, many studies from practice and also scholars (e.g. Whan et al. 2014; Wells 2013; The Crowd 2014; Clinton & Whisnant 2014; Boons & Lüdeke-Freund 2013) suggest to integrate sustainability into business model innovation in a way that it has the power to catalyse a transition towards a more ecological and sustainable economy. Companies who recognize this development and use it to their advantage,

generating shared value both for themselves as well as external stakeholders, will generate a competitive advantage in the future when action in this area becomes more and more stressing. Many are already rethinking the way they are doing business or basing the whole business model on sustainable values.

Small and medium- sized enterprises (SME), consisting of less than 250 employees (European Commission 2005), are of special interest for sustainable business model research as they account for more than 99% of firms within the EU-27, outside of the financial sector. Contributing to over 58% of value added they are also called the backbone of the economy (Stawińska 2011). Especially small start- ups often show the highest degree of innovation (Gelbmann et al. 2013) and innovation processes within those companies were found to be different from those in larger companies (Bos-Brouwers 2010). The identification of instruments that facilitate sustainable business model innovation in those companies represents a huge potential for the shift towards a sustainable economy.

The research gap for this paper is derived from this relevance of SME for research on innovation, as well as the lack of literature that explores findings of sustainable innovation in the context of business models in SME. Instruments like the *value mapping tool for sustainable business modelling* (Bocken et al. 2013) or the *sustainable business model canvas* (Upward 2013) are already suggested by scholars to promote sustainable business model innovation. The focus of this work is the comparison of the different dynamics of sustainable business model innovation in large, existing firms compared to sustainable start-ups. With the insights gained from this research, hypothesis can be built on how small companies, especially start-ups, differ from larger companies regarding sustainable business model innovation. Ultimately the goal is to develop instruments to facilitate sustainable business model innovation and which are suitable to different company structures and stages of the company lifecycle.

2. Background

An innovation is characterized by two components; the invention as well as the commercialization or exploitation of said invention (Ahmed & Shepherd 2010). The second component describes the way an innovation is marketed and the way it is made commercially useful; a firms' business model. In other words: „A *business model describes the rationale of how an organization creates, delivers and captures value*“ (Osterwalder & Pigneur 2010, p.14). The emergence of the concept of the business model and business model innovation is driven by the

emergence of the internet and the accompanied evolution of new ways of doing business (McGrath 2010; Teece 2010). In order to constitute a business model innovation it is not enough to simply change a product or process but the way business is done needs to be changed (Amit & Zott 2012). Yet the change or innovation of business models is often times not radical but fundamental (Bisgaard et al. 2012, also Schaltegger et al. 2012). In their study about green business model innovation the authors identify four kinds of modifications of business models, depicted in order of the degree of change from gradual to radical: *“modification through small and progressive adjustments, Re- design materialized in significant changes, Alternative building blocks, which can fulfill the same function or operate as substitutes for the original ones [and lastly] creation and introduction of entirely new and innovative building blocks”* (Bisgaard et al. 2012, p. 6). Most promising for inducing real change was found to be the last mentioned approach, the creation of a completely new business model.

As SMEs contribute to a large share of the European economy, they symbolize high potential towards change when engaging in sustainable business model innovation. Scholars like Bos-Brouwers (2010) demonstrate the theoretical relevance and importance of studying sustainable innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in comparison to large companies. SMEs profit from a higher flexibility of the organization both in terms of the organizational structure as well as a shorter response to market. The spirit within the company generally is more entrepreneurial and embraces innovation, change and new ideas. The relationship to the customers is often tighter and SMEs tend to cooperate with them more often than larger companies. On the downside the resources are limited, especially the financing of innovations is more difficult. Thus SME have behavioral advantages, whereas larger companies have resource advantages when it comes to innovation.

This can also be supported by findings in the research on sustainable innovation, where Innovation patterns in larger companies were often found to be directed at eco- efficiency rather than a change of the value proposition. Kneppers (2014) also describes the reluctance, especially of bigger companies, to do something besides issuing a yearly Corporate Social Responsibility report. Smaller companies on the other hand show potential to more radically innovate and to incorporate sustainability at the core of the company, i.e. their business model.

Research done in practice supports the interest in sustainable business models, especially for the category of SME. Clinton & Whisnant (2014) found that business model innovation in their study predominantly occurred in smaller companies, half of the companies in their sample qualified as small- or medium sized businesses

with less than 1,000 employees. That finding supports the hypothesis that smaller companies, especially start-ups engage in business model innovation not only more often but also in a more radical way. Only seven out of the 87 companies in their sample belonged to the fortune 500 category. Also it was found that it is easier to generate a sustainable business model and design it from scratch than transforming an already existing, successful one. Three quarters of the companies in the study built their business model from scratch. These results draw further attention to the study of sustainable start-ups, represented in this paper by *Bureo Skateboards*. As this report is conducted by a consultancy the results have to be tested in an academic setting and should only be used to form hypothesis for further research.

In order to connect the findings of the literature and the practical findings from the case study a categorization of sustainable business models is needed. In their research (Bocken et al. 2014) develop eight archetypes of sustainable business models. Those archetypes are distinguished into the three wider categories of technological, social and organizational oriented innovations. Relevant for this paper are five of the archetypes; *create value from waste* in the technical category, *adopt a stewardship* role and *encourage sufficiency* as social innovations and both archetypes from the organizational level; *repurpose for society/ environment* and *develop scale up solutions*. The framework of sustainable business model archetypes shall be used to analyze the case study firms in order to assure comparability as well as pointing out the differences between the two companies. This paper discusses the question: How do start-ups differ from larger firms regarding sustainable business model innovation and what are the characteristics they share? In the following two exemplary case studies, *Patagonia*, a large, well-known outdoor-clothing and gear producer, and *Bureo Skateboards*, a sustainable start-up from Chile are discussed.

3. Method

Archival research through secondary sources like books, newspaper articles and websites of the respective companies were used to establish a framework of the case studies on *Patagonia* as well as *Bureo Skateboards*. For the case of *Patagonia* exists a vast number of newspaper articles and case studies that are already conducted, mostly with respect to corporate social responsibility, as well as a book about the company's history (Chouinard 2006) and what constitutes a responsible company in general, published by its founder (Chouinard & Stanley 2012). *Bureo Skateboards* was discovered through the company's crowdfunding

campaign on *Kickstarter*, which was accompanied by the coverage of well known online newspapers.

For the cases where theoretical saturation was not satisfactory, as an addition and to gain further insights, three interviews were conducted with different experts in their field. Environmental Consultant Johnny Nesslinger is an expert in the application of the environmental footprint concepts for companies. As *Patagonia* applies this principle in their *Footprint Chronicles* initiative he was interviewed via e-mail, asking about the general role of a sustainable business model and its potential to transform the economy. Prof. Dr. Harald Welzer is a professor for sociology and founder of the *Futurzwei* Foundation, which has the goal of promoting a sustainable economy and new perspective for the future. He is one of the most prominent representatives to advertise *sustainable business thinking* and was asked in person about sustainable businesses and their role in transforming the economy by inspiring other entrepreneurs and firms. Last but not least Ben R. Kneppers, *co-founder of Bureo Skateboards*, did not only answer questions about his company but also gave a broader point of view, basing on his own experience as a worldwide acting environmental consultant prior to his entrepreneurial activities. The 40 minute interview was conducted via Skype, asking about the genesis of the idea, challenges and opportunities, and motivations of social and sustainable start-ups in general as well as the case of *Bureo Skateboards* specifically.

The case study method offers the opportunity to learn from best- practice examples. Case studies are a first step for a topic like sustainable business model innovation to reach a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms in order to develop, hypothesis, more representative studies and frameworks in the future. The cases of *Patagonia* and *Bureo Skateboards* were chosen out of several reasons. *Patagonia* is an example of an established company, which has a reputation of being highly sustainable. On the other side, *Bureo* represents a new era of young entrepreneurs who go into business in order to follow a passion and participate their share towards a better future instead of just wanting to get rich and live a good life.

4. Cases of Sustainable Business Innovation

4.1 Patagonia: an established sustainable company

The first conducted case study is *Patagonia*, an example of a big company that successfully converges towards a sustainable business model and by that gains a

competitive advantage against its competitors. When *Patagonia* respectively its predecessor *Chouinard Equipment* was founded, it in fact came from a background of environmental conscious people but was far away from being a sustainable company. Its only purpose was to sustain its founders lifestyle of climbing and surfing (Chouinard & Stanley 2012). The company later gradually became one of the leading firms in the regard that it is today. As soon as they realized that their business has potentially harmful impacts on the environment *Patagonia* tried to counteract those impacts. Corporate responsibility has a long tradition at *Patagonia* and was part of the company in many facets since the early beginnings (Patagonia Inc. 2014a). Activities at *Patagonia* range from the establishment of childcare, maternity leave and flexible working hours over the support of grassroots initiative to actions for reduced resource use both within the company as well as in the value network. Practical studies show that employees, especially the younger generations, demand commitment to sustainability, leading not only to the rise of internal pressure but also to the opportunity to attract talent by outshining the competition in this area (Kiron et al. 2013). At *Patagonia* close to 900 people apply for one job opening (Casey 2007).

Right in time for the years biggest shopping frenzy on black Friday, respectively cyber Monday, *Patagonia* launched a somewhat counterintuitive ad- campaign 'Don't buy this jacket', asking consumers to rethink their purchasing decision if they really needed this jacket. The advertisement was part of the *Common Threads* initiative, communicating to consumers: "Reduce what you buy, repair what you can, reuse what you no longer need, recycle what's worn out" and thus an attempt to close the loop of the product- life- cycle (Patagonia Inc. 2014b). Consumers can pledge to live by these principles and join the community of those who already do. *Patagonia* on the other hand also pledged to reduce resources, consumption and waste. For example some of their fleeces are made out of recycled plastic bottles, thus upcycled or reused. The campaign proved to be very successful branding: not only creating an interactive brand experience, but also binding people to the brand, building a community of people who see themselves as environmentally conscious and demanding high quality products- but are also willing to pay a premium for such a product. The firm also partnered with *eBay* and launched a brand shop, further encouraging customers to sell or acquire used *Patagonia* gear, following the 'reuse' principle they pledged to. *Patagonia* thus created a special place, dedicated to the sale of its used products and educated its customers about this opportunity, although the company may lose potential customers through this. The *Common Threads* campaign was a huge success in a way that it was not: people were pledging and joining the community- and buying the jacket. Sales rose by almost 40 percent within the next two years (Stock 2013). This development seems almost

contradictory. One might argue that buying the same product from a less sustainable and responsible brand is even worse, yet with a sales surge in that category it is somewhat sanctimonious. On the other hand the whole campaign would have massively backfired if *Patagonia* did not have the credibility to be a sustainable company (Kiron et al. 2013).

Consumers, especially in Europe, become more and more aware of environmental issues and react sensitive to the challenges environmental degradation is posing. Their changed mindset is one of the main drivers for sustainable business model innovation. This driving force of consumers as a catalyzer for social and environmental change through their demand for a higher value delivery can be characterized as 'consumer pull' (The Crowd & Fishburn 2014). They demand transparency from the companies and complete information of the circumstances the company delivers its value proposition. On the other hand they are willing to pay a premium for products they consider to live up to these expectations (Kiron et al. 2013). *Patagonia* meets this demand of their customers through their *Footprint Chronicles* initiative, an effort towards a more sustainable and transparent supply chain. They shorten the supply chain, for example by using organic cotton from the United States and also work closely together with their suppliers to ensure they meet certain environmental and social standards. All this is accompanied by a website where customers can trace their purchased products throughout the supply chain. The concept of the ecological footprint is used by *Patagonia* to show the impact of doing business, especially within the supply chain and also as a measure to show results in resource use reduction as it puts an absolute measure to resource consumption (Nesslinger 2014).

4.2 Bureo Skateboards: a sustainable start- up

The second case study on *Bureo Skateboards* demonstrates how a start- up differs from larger companies in generating a sustainable business model. The founders of *Bureo Skateboards* are connected through a mutual love of the nature and surfing. That is where they encountered the problem of marine plastic pollution and decided to do something against it (Kneppers 2014). They developed a technology to palletize discarded fishing nets and using those pallets to produce skateboard decks. Although there are a lot of established skateboard manufacturers out there, *Bureo Skateboards* offers a unique selling proposition by incorporating the aspect of sustainability and social responsibility (Hamed 2013).

Often the generation of a sustainable business model goes hand in hand with the need to build a new infrastructure, which can be both extremely costly and

challenging. In order to collect the nets used for upcycling, the founders of *Bureo Skateboards* had to create a supply chain from scratch. To do so, they established the initiative *Net Positiva*. This initiative puts the collection and handling of the fishing nets into the hands of fishing communities along the coast of Chile. Establishing a waste collection infrastructure that was virtually non-existent posed not only logistical but also sociological challenges. People's perception of the pollution needed to be changed radically as they did not seem to have respect for the environment or an eye for the problem at hand (Krichko 2014; Kneppers 2014). Whereas in metropolitan areas recycling rates are at about 12 percent (U.S.: 35 percent), the ratio is even lower in rural areas (O'Connell 2014). The founders of *Bureo Skateboards* faced major skepticism, when they first came to the communities and told them about the program (Kneppers 2014). Yet they took some nets back to Santiago and were able to show some prototypes on their next visit. People were amazed by the idea and the next time they came, the fishing communities were helpful and proactive. Using their dead-weight trucks to deliver the nets to Santiago was an idea posed by the communities. This is a good example how communities can be involved and engaged in the process of establishing a sustainable future and business model (Kneppers 2014). The initiative 'Net Positiva' is a program in cooperation with the Chilean government, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Chile, Marine Conservation Action Fund and local fishermen to set up collection points for old nets (Bradstreet 2014). It is Chile's first and only fishnet collection and recycling program, also including an organized buy back program in order to supply funds to help pay for new fishnets when disposing the old ones (Landry 2014; Save the Waves 2014). Currently operated by the founders themselves, the ultimate goal is to hand over the project to the communities, educating them on cleaning the nets (Krichko 2014). Getting them involved and compensating the people is another way to provide incentives to return the nets. The whole supply chain is designed in a way, which reduces environmental impact. The nets are transported via deadhead freight, trucks that are otherwise empty, from the collection points to the recycling facilities in Santiago de Chile (Foss 2014). Once the decks are finished, they are shipped with eco-friendly freight from Chile to California, where the skateboards are assembled. Using recycled material for the decks not only fights plastic pollution, but also saves over 70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions compared to the use of virgin plastic (Bureo Skateboards 2014). Issuing a full lifecycle assessment report in order to prove the responsibility of the product is another step towards a transparent, sustainable company and especially challenging with regards to transportation costs (Hamed 2013), specifically in a land like Chile, where the materials are transported across long distances.

The funds for their first product, the *Minnow*, were raised through equity-based crowdfunding, *Bureo Skateboards* sold simple gadgets up to complete *Minnow* boards over their Kickstarter campaign. The positive effects, like broad media coverage, customer relationships and engagement, community building identification were also enhanced throughout that campaign. Additionally they raised awareness for their cause as well as their product through events like organized beach clean ups – another way of actively engaging with their customers.

Some bigger companies are interested in cooperating with *Bureo Skateboards* in order to profit from their knowledge in fishnet recycling (Kneppers 2014). If more companies use recycled plastic from fishing nets, *Bureo* succeeds in their goals: creating a small disturbance in an ocean of plastic, leading to a powerful change.

4.3 The Business Models of Patagonia and Bureo Skateboards

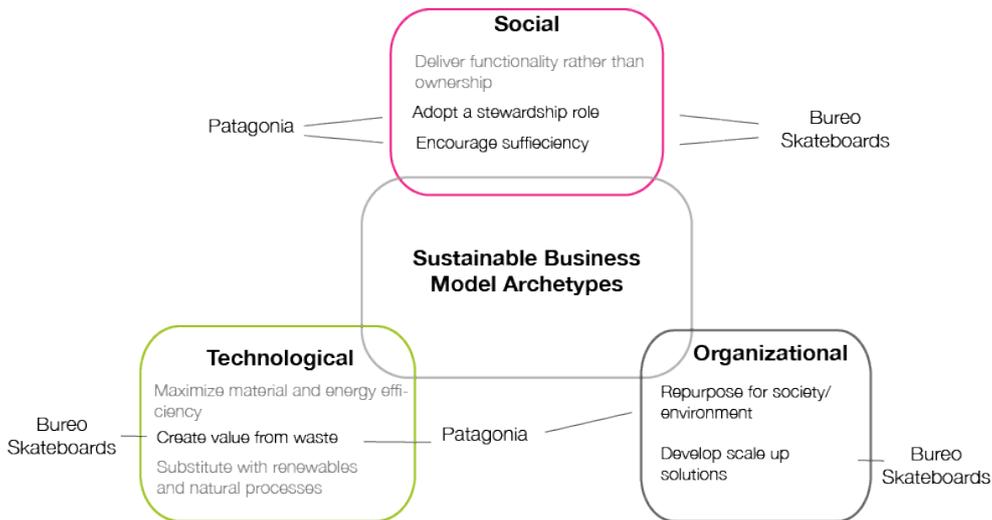
At first glance, the two companies are, apart from the sustainability aspect, quite different. But looking at foundation of both firms it becomes clear that both companies were developed out of a passion. Yvon Chouinard wanted to have better climbing equipment for himself, so he developed it. *Bureo Skateboards* was founded on a deep passion for the ocean and action sports.

As *Patagonia* constantly works on becoming more sustainable, many initiatives and aspects coexist under the roof of one, complex business model. This supports the findings of Bocken et al. (2014), that this combination of business model approaches potentially leads to a higher sustainability of the overall business model. *Patagonia* but also *Bureo Skateboards* are constantly working on being more energy efficient and resource friendly. This engagement can be seen as the first stage towards more sustainability identified by Nidumolu et al. (2009) being proactive regarding environmental standards, yet it does not qualify as a sustainable innovation of the business model itself.

Although the mechanisms both companies apply to be more sustainable differ, there are also some similarities (see Figure 1). The technological archetype *create value from waste* described by Bocken et al. (2014) has the goal of eliminating waste by closing the production loop and upcycling otherwise wasted material into a new product, thereby creating new value. This archetype is the core *Bureo Skateboard's* business model as they create a new product –a skateboard deck– out of discarded fishing gear. *Patagonia* also applies this business model although

less prominent, in the scope of the company's *Common Threads* initiative, where recycled plastic bottles are used to produce fleece.

Figure 1: The Business Models of Patagonia and Bureo Skateboards



Own depiction, based on Bocken et. al (2014)

Other archetypes applied by both firms are in the social sector; the *adoption of a stewardship role* as well as the *encouragement of sufficiency* (see Figure 1). The former involves the active engagement of all stakeholders throughout the value network in order to ensure their and the firm's long time well-being. *Patagonia* and *Bureo Skateboards* both engage in *upstream stewardship*. The *Footprint Chronicles* initiative of *Patagonia* involves the cooperation with suppliers in order to meet environmental and social standards throughout the whole supply chain. Through their website every step and supplier is made transparent and trackable for the consumer. *Bureo* discloses its whole supply chain and ecological footprint through a comprehensive lifecycle report. The *Net Positiva* initiative is an even more radical form of *upstream stewardship* as it emancipates and actively involves the communities in being more environmentally friendly rather than ensuring quality standards. Additionally this initiative is developed from scratch and has the potential to be replicated all around the world it also qualifies as the archetype of *developing scale up solutions*, defined as the delivery of sustainable solutions on a large scale. This archetype also involves the engagement of consumers through

crowdsourcing or crowdfunding. *Bureo* raised the funds needed to manufacture the first product through a Kickstarter campaign. Apart from fighting the problem of marine pollution the founders of *Bureo Skateboards* state the inspiration of other company leaders or entrepreneurs as their motivation to start the company. They want to induce a change through educating consumers about the harmfulness of marine plastic pollution, a fact that they even incorporate in their mission. This goal is shared by *Patagonia* in their *Common Threads* initiative, which aims at educating its customers about the principles of the three R's: reduce, reuse, recycle and create awareness for sustainability issues. According to Bocken et al. (2014) those actions constitute for an *encouraging sufficiency* archetypes, which aims at actively reducing consumption and production of products. A study by Kiron et al. (2013) finds that companies who innovate their business model towards more sustainability are 80 percent more likely to collaborate with consumers than those who do not, a finding that is supported by both the cases. Both Welzer (2014) and Kneppers (2014) name inspiration as a motivation of their work as well as a way for sustainability to diffuse into mainstream thinking. Amongst other scholars Bocken et al. (2015) call this phenomenon *Sustainable Business Thinking*. Especially entrepreneurs were identified to be drivers for a different way of thinking about sustainability in business (Whan et al. 2014).

Last but not least, the archetype *repurpose for society/environment* is again shared by both firms. It involves the close integration of the firm and local communities as well as other stakeholders in order to deliver social and environmental benefits instead of only financial gains (Bocken et al. 2014). This is the archetype that is rooted at the core of *Patagonia's* business model from the beginning. The firm engages in a variety of actions ranging from possibilities such as employee initiatives, granting them paid time off to support local environmental group to flexible working hours, childcare services and maternity leave. *Bureo* organizes events such as beach clean-ups to educate local communities about the problem of plastic solution.

Patagonia was set up as a normal venture and gradually became more environmental friendly as management became aware of certain problems. It can be said that they are gradually shifting to be more and more environmental friendly. *Bureo Skateboards* on the other hand is actively set up as a company with the purpose to fight marine plastic pollution and made a business out of it. Often times the degree of sustainable business model innovation is more radical as in the case of *Patagonia*.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Based on those two exemplary case studies it can be argued that sustainable business model innovation in an existing firm differs from the sustainable business model generation of a sustainable start-up; a gradual and ongoing effort to make daily business more sustainable on one side, a 'green' start-up on the other. Companies with an already existing business model tend to react to changes in their environment and slowly converge to a more sustainable business model over time, like *Patagonia* did, through mechanisms of modifications, alternatives and re-design of its business model. Their structures are more sedate compared to those of smaller firms and they often face change management challenges caused by complex hierarchies. Although *Patagonia* is a sustainability leader they are still far away from being a fully sustainable company. Start-ups like *Bureo Skateboards* on the other hand have the possibility to generate a business model to incorporate sustainability from the start, generating a sustainable business model. Changes and adjustments to the business model can be easily made as hierarchies are usually flat and change is often seen as a positive dynamic. On the downside the impacts of a sustainable business model of such smaller firms is rather low at the beginning, compared to the possible impact of a sustainable business model of a larger firm.

Christensen (1997) analyzes the failure of formerly very successful, industry-defining, best practice firms a phenomenon he calls *Disruptive Innovation*. This refers to innovations that often develop and evolve in a niche market, not profitable enough for bigger companies, but have the potential to shake the established markets to the bones. Once actuated, they are unsettling the successful business models and driving incumbents into ruin. Sustainability and sustainable businesses not only show many characteristics of such a disruptive model but may have the potential to change the way we are conducting business. Presently the sustainable business models mostly show a lower return on investment than their traditional counterparts but are build to be more successful in the future (The Crowd & Fishburn 2014), a finding supported in the disruptive innovation literature. When asked for the business models with the highest disruptive potential, participants in the study conducted by The Crowd (2014b) most frequently mentioned models with a high appeal to consumers or a high consumer engagement. Many findings from the disruptive innovation literature were also found in the literature comparing larger firms against SME. Following the disruptive innovation literature existing firms can promote sustainable business model innovation through several strategies (Christensen 1997). One solution is the creation of an independent business unit within the firm, creating a start-up –like business culture within the

bounds of the larger company. Another way is the collaboration with sustainable start-ups as in the case of *Bureo Skateboards*, who provide their know-how of fishnet recycling to companies that use the nylon polymer in their production processes. Also the acquisition of sustainable start-ups is an option. Sustainable SMEs on the other hand are mostly driven by the inspiration of other successful and sustainable companies or the provision of a solution to an environmental or social problem. Entrepreneurs were also found to be the main source of the promotion of *Sustainable Business Thinking* and the most influential sustainability leaders (Whan et al. 2014). The applicability of instruments for promoting disruptive innovation is another hypothesis for future research.

5.1 Limitations

As only two cases were analyzed and compared the generalizability of the results is rather difficult. Although the results show promising patterns the cases can only be used to formulate hypothesis regarding the different business model innovation patterns in larger companies compared to SMEs regarding the incorporation of sustainability. Another limitation is that no interview is conducted with a representative of Patagonia, yet as a lot of secondary material is available this is only of minor importance. Sustainable business model innovation is also widely applied in practice and there are studies from non-peer-reviewed sources quoted (Clinton 2014; The Crowd & Fishburn 2014). This further limits the generalizability of the results taken from those sources but also highlights the need for academia to further conduct research in this area.

5.2 Future Research

Future research will extend the number of conducted case studies and aims at further identifying patterns in sustainable business model innovation. Amongst those companies to be studied are both start-ups and big companies; mostly in Austria and Germany, but also international examples. Said research will contribute to further insights on how incumbents and start-ups apply different versions of sustainable business model innovation. It showcases successful examples in order to provide managers, entrepreneurs or other stakeholders with instruments to successfully promote or apply sustainable business model innovation. Last but not least human knowledge is known to be constructed through case learning (Flyvbjerg 2006). Thus case studies of sustainable companies trigger a learning effect, ultimately leading to the inspiration of people to follow in those company's footsteps and further promote *Sustainable Business Thinking*.

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