Case Study

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Cadbury & The Contradiction Factory

The scandals and contradictions of one of the world's biggest confectionery brands...

From the opening of a small grocery store in Birmingham, 1924, to the joy of how purple and gold wrapping brings smiles to the faces of children and adults across the planet, it is no secret that multi-billionaire brand Cadbury is one of the most celebrated confectionery names compared to their competitors. With products from classics bars to symbolic-holiday favourites, Cadbury are born leaders in the centre of the worldwide chocolate industry. This should mean all the more reason for us to celebrate a national treasure turned worldwide culture. Unfortunately, behind every corporate success story, there are usually a series of dark, underlying dishonesties that jeopardise the very moral fabrics of what it means to love and care for our fragile ecosystem. In Cadbury's case, the controversies highlighted affect not just one or two environmental burdens, but more than a lifetime of the most diverse, questionable acts seen in a brand's history.

To understand Cadbury's premise and relationship to current controversies, we must look back at where it all started going wrong and what sent them on their downwards descent towards becoming increasingly identified for their debatable choices. It starts with the brand's decision in 1950 to introduce palm oil as a key ingredient in their much-loved products. Post-war Britain gave products such as chocolate, canned and dried fruit, biscuits, treacle, syrup, jellies, and mincemeat exemption from rationing, meaning that demand from the sweet tooth became desired by people all over the UK and the world. Unfortunately, with such request for their sector, it became difficult to source more than the typical oils used in previous wartime rationing. The best solution was to find a cheaper, similar, plus more widely available source of oil, and palm oil would enable more quantities for shops across the UK; increasing the overall profit made from bulk purchases of the readily available product. This came at a desperate time for consumerism and may have been overlooked by both the people and corporations as a

way of means; after all, post-war times were hard, nothing was normal or expected to revert back to frugal times.

Demand rocketed for such delicacies and overtime, Cadbury became the provider to the cause, and they intended to meet the demand to stay loved amongst a growing market; whatever it took, they would yield. This also resulted in the brand expanding their very limited range to excite new interest, such as more drinking chocolates.

But did the brand know the future implications of their actions, affecting entire ecosystems? Would they have still gone along with production to meet sales targets or thought over their movements towards a more sustainable source of oil? These questions could have been up for debate, but due to further implications down the line that questioned the ethics of Cadbury, it was not so likely the moral decision was in sight. In the 1960's, the Brazilian rainforest was subject to being cut and burnt down at startling rates to provide palm oil. Although this may have nothing to do directly with Cadbury, it should have been a vital indicator to the brand that by using palm oil in their products, it would result in the loss of hectares upon hectares of rainforest land, not to mention animals that by the year 2020 would be classed as either endangered or extinct, simply for satisfying human nature. So, whether or not Cadbury could go back and change their ways, even with their own evolution in the balance, facts and figures have clearly been ignored even when results were and are very clear.

By 2009, the brand made another contentious decision to implicate the environment in their plans, due to the effect of the 2007-2009 financial recession that left not just everyday people out of pocket, but also businesses, brands and companies alike. All struggled to turn a profit without making many unwanted cutbacks to workers, outlets and trade/stock deals. The same misfortune also applied to Cadbury, but they had a similar trick up their sleeves similarly to 1950. Their method was to scrap their paper and foil packaging for a plastic alternative, providing a much cheaper wrapper for the brand to produce, a more easily sustainable and shinier aesthetic for the product. The benefits were endless for Cadbury, but not so much for the environment. Although plastic may be healthy for corporate pockets, when we see the damage of the decisions taking nearly 1000 years to decompose into our environment, with huge environmental consequences across land, sea and air; the negatives outweigh the benefits by quite a margin. Although the decision may have been necessary to keep Cadbury in business, 2020 sees a very different net-worth from the company of 2009, with healthier profits all-round, with a 2019 report stating the brand sees in turnovers of close to £122 million every year, with pre-tax profits in the regions of £25.3 million to £31.7 million (Robinson, Jon, 2019).

So, could Cadbury, now in an evidently better financial position, turn back to their paper and foil days once and for all - or simply just paper? The answer is a resonating yes, but the reality lays in a much deeper, situational no, as in 2010, £11.5 billion was 'accepted' by Cadbury for the takeover of their brand by American conglomerate, food manufacturing company, Kraft Foods (Hiscott, Graham, Clarke, Alex, 2018). This deal would later take both the public eye and trading world by storm, given the controversies that surrounded the nature of the contract. In many media discoveries, American Kraft Foods are said to have all too easily swallowed the British confectionary brand in a bid to engulf the competition through a series of lies and false promises. In the process of obtaining a deal, the company assured UK workers their jobs, and landmarks of where Cadbury chocolate is produced, such as Cadbury's Somerdale factory, would be left untouched. The result? If the deals had sounded too good to be true, now they were more fictional, as once the final arrangements had been made and now in the hands of Kraft, their first move was to both backtrack on their promises and close the muchloved Somerdale plant which resulted in the loss of real people's jobs. It was also decided by Kraft Foods that despite assurances made to keep ties with them, the partnership with much-trusted Fairtrade, which assured farmers being paid for every tonne of cocoa sold, would also cease to exist into the future.

In a spark response to this deal, it was decided that in 2011, The Takeover Code (the process and appropriation of how business standards should be reflected in the practice of when a company/brand is bought by shareholders of another business) would be reviewed by the Panel of Takeovers and Mergers in order to make sure such a merger deal like Kraft's purchase of Cadbury would never take place again. This meant that post-review, rules such as how more information on the intentions of what bidding firms would do with the company once purchased was required, a process that would ensure the jobs of workers, and that hiding behind an unfair anonymity bidding mask would no longer be accepted, as interested parties would now have to name themselves when making an offer (this would stop companies from accepting into a deal they may later regret).

Just a year later, Kraft foods then subsidised Cadbury into the highly controversial branching company Mondelez International, a company founded in the same year that Cadbury were to be moved under their name, and if it was thought that Cadbury could not get any more controversial, this move was about to reveal more secrets, facts and figures about the brand than they wanted, mainly down to the workings of Mondelez.

Over the years (2012-present), the company have come under heavy fire nearly every day for their constant 'crimes' against the environment, with

multiple and reoccurring investigations by charities such as WWF, Greenpeace and even the Global Brand Audit Report of 2018 showing how Mondelez fly high to the top spots concerning plastic waste, unethical palm oil use and deforestation tactics, just under the likes of Coca-Cola, Nestlé and PepsiCo, who also come under fire for the same problems.

But what do consumers say about this kind of behaviour; could they possibly speak out about this to encourage some sort of humility shown by Mondelez towards the environment? Currently, Cadbury is expected to sell anywhere around 21 million bars per year in the UK alone of their most popular product, Dairy Milk (Statista, 2020). If we were to multiply this figure by the average price in leading UK supermarkets of one bar, which is around £0.65, we would see a total of £13,650,000 made every year from sales alone, with 21 million solo purchases of the bar alone. (Sainsbury's, 2020); (Tesco, 2020). Although this total includes production costs, tax and the percentage taken by Mondelez, it does show how high demand still is for the product and how the British public love the well-known brand. However, according to recent Mintel surveys amongst "2,000 internet users aged 16+", what results show is that many people are very aware of the problems that surround our environment, especially where brands like Cadbury are concerned, such as what damage the packaging they buy is doing to the environment, the CO2 emissions that are produced when transporting goods, and even the problems of food waste. This shows that people will not compromise their favourite brand despite awareness of the issues that surround it and would appreciate it a lot more if the brand would change their ways instead.

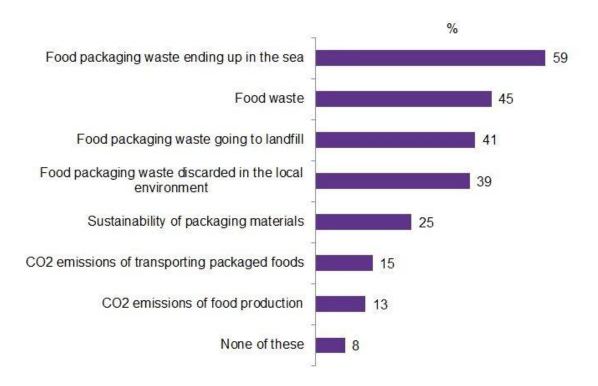


Figure 1: Caines, Richard, 2020

However, the main issue missed by consumers is the use of palm oil within Cadbury products, something that has gone amiss with their average customers since the end of World War 2. Palm oil, derived from that of palm trees mainly located in places such as the Amazonian, Brazilian and Indonesian rainforests, is one of the most widely used ingredients by worldwide brands. From Nestlé, Dove, Coca-Cola and Cadbury, the addition of the extract is used to combine the different kinds of particles needed to bind together the ingredients in most branded products such as ice-cream to stop it from melting, soap in order to create more foam, make-up smoother and other various items. Although a cheaper replacement to many other oils, what about the taste in comparison? One of the biggest distinctions between palm and other oils is its neutral taste, meaning it can be used in just about any recipe without adding or taking away from other ingredients. Also, palm is known to reduce that of cholesterol levels plus has one of the highest plant sources of vitamin A.

Unfortunately, all these benefits from palm oil have come with huge repercussions for our planet, outweighing the gains altogether. Even though it may benefit the quality of our everyday supermarket purchases and debatably enhance our health; where nature is concerned, the demand for the oil is now surely one of the largest contributors towards our earth's suffering. The consequences of rainforest destruction have caught up with us enormously as now, we are seeing alarming deforestation rates, proven by pictures from NASA (2019) and calculations from rainforest loss data just to show how much irreversible damage that has been caused:

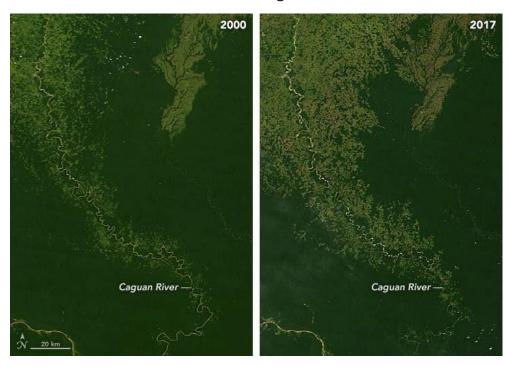


Figure 2: Earth Observatory, 2019

In total, we see the loss of more than 78 million acres of rainforest every year and the main driving forces behind these figures are not just down to the people/farmers carrying out the actions, but the ever-growing demand from first-world countries (mainly Western society) of products ruled by capitalist and consumerist values (Taylor, Leslie, 2019). What links these two driving forces together is our temptation, desire and needs for the brands we buy, and the more popular one is, the more that brand will have to produce in order to meet expected sales targets and in the top ten companies who are involved in this demand for palm oil are Coca-Cola, Nestlé, PepsiCo and none other than Mondelez International, who hold some alarming statistics for their percentage of this destruction. In total, Mondelez alone are responsible each year (since 2016) for 70,000 hectares of deforestation damage - meaning that if this was a percentage of the 78m acres of worldwide rainforest destruction each year, Mondelez are singularly responsible for 0.22% of this figure (Dalton, Jane, 2018).

Of the 70,000 hectares of damage Mondelez cause, 25,000 of this is home to orangutan habitants who are near the edge of extinction. According to the latest statistics, what remains of all orangutan species is just 119,346, with the most critically endangered species on the list being 800 of the Tapanuli species, with the most populated being Bornean, at a total of 104,700 - even though over a century ago, Bornean figures would have stood at around 230,000, approximately a 54.48% rise of current standings (World Wildlife Fund, 2020). Unfortunately, where maximum profit and minimal corporate impact is concerned, there does not seem to be any signs of slowing down. Considering worldwide implications of the Covid-19 impact, will companies have to make further cutbacks to keep affected income steady to fight the threats of liquidation or bankruptcy? Could this furtherly affect the homes of orangutans and the many lives of Indigenous communities who are habitant to the world's rainforests?

Hot Spots of Primary Forest Loss in Brazil's Indigenous Territories

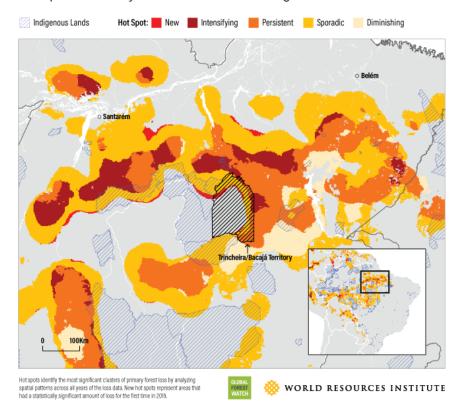


Figure 3: Weisse, Mikaela, Dow Goldman, Elizabeth, 2020

In figure 3, we see the different hot spots across just one of many sections where Brazil's Indigenous territories are being eradicated by new, intensifying, persistent, sporadic, and sometimes diminishing areas of rainforest.

All these actions equate to the many different ways of how land is used to make way for 'legal' and questionable farming methods, which are then sold to companies such as Mondelez.

This also displays that despite their many attempts to make a household friendly impression, Cadbury are quite the contradiction to the image they claim to represent, and it could be stated that their past and present methods in order to build on their brand and production are considered ignorant, unsustainable, problematic, even racist towards Indigenous communities. The ignorance towards the problems that Cadbury causes can be seen in their marketing too. The problem is that these issues have not been highlighted in a negative light by the media before and only ever praised upon the awards they have received.

An example of this is in 2007, Cadbury produced one of the most iconic advertising campaigns of all times, and most probably their biggest achievements in advertising history. Featuring a man dressed up in a gorilla suit, drumming along to the popular Phil Colins song, 'In The Air Tonight', the

advert's relation to Cadbury was lost in the weird and wonderful nature of what London-based advertising agency Fallon had produced for the brand. However, despite all odds, the advert's success brought Cadbury more attention than they bargained for, and a spot in the limelight of being rated one of the most influential adverts of all times, which was recognized by a huge influx of awards, with names such as the British Television Advertising Awards: 2008, 'TV Commercial of The Year', Campaign Live: 2007, 'Advert of The Year', D&AD Yellow Pencil and the D&AD Black Pencil, all of whom highly praised the creativity and smart execution by Fallon London. The public were also quick to praise the efforts too, as following the huge popularity of the campaign in UK alone, sales of the brand were up by some of the highest numbers ever recorded by market research agency Hall & Partners. For example, the sale value of Cadbury had risen by 7% by the end of October, just 2 months after the advert's official TV release date back in August, and across the entirety of the campaign's TV residency, Cadbury also enjoyed a 9% weekly boost for total sales (Macegrove, 2007).

However, the question that still lingers around this advert is, was there a hidden message in this entire campaign? Despite defying the odds of both their expectations and other marketing analytics, do Cadbury really have the right to be using such a fronting 'mascot' for their brand, or was this intentional on the side of Fallon themselves? This refers to how since the brand's 1950 decision to start using palm oil, leading to the destruction of many orangutan habitats (part of the Hominidae family of gorillas, who are also seeing their homes being destroyed too), Cadbury have shown no mercy of these innocent lives, and currently still show no immediate signs of doing so. Is it contradictory of Cadbury to allow the exploitation of gorilla homes in the rainforest whilst also profiting of gorilla mascots as part of their marketing schemes? This has been a question highly ignored throughout the advert's recognition and remains to this day in the same stance; despite one small breakthrough by YouTube channel 'Polisz Reklamowski' in 2018, giving their updated take on the advert, featuring it with inserted scenes of the suffering of orangutans due to deforestation.

Sadly, it is not just the land that is being exploited by Cadbury, as previously highlighted, the decision to turn to full plastic in 2009 created more environmental problems. Plastic, the material that came into commercial use mainly in the 1960s, has revolutionized both our everyday and working life. It has changed the way we shop, from how we carry our plastic wrapped items home in the plastic bags that we use to hold them in, to basic toothbrushes and the everyday items we use in our households, these are just a fraction of the many ways plastic has replaced the world of just decades ago, where fewer sturdy materials were used. Plastic is essential in many life-changing medical practices too, giving second chances to those in need of improving their quality life; from prosthetic limbs to CT scanners used in hospitals.

Despite miracle breakthroughs that may not have been possible without the use of plastic, it has played a very unfortunate role where our oceans and environment are now paying a heavy price for our radical breakthroughs. Like the misfortunes of palm oil, these downfalls of plastics also fall heavier on one side of the scales than the other. Although decades may have provoked exciting new benefits because of plastic, they have also provoked the deaths of more than 100 million marine animals per year that have circled the oceans for approximately 3 billion more years than that of human existence, who are only a fraction of this 4.54-billion-year-old planet (exactly 0.0044052863436123% of the planet's age) (Redd, Nola Taylor, 2019); (Condor Ferries, 2020). It is even more shocking to think that because plastic has been around for less time than our existence, it not only outnumbers the human population, but it is now expected to even overpopulate that of marine kind by the year 2050, due to current figures that never seem to fail multiplying in their masses. (Condor Ferries, 2020).

Below (figure 4) shows the process of how our plastics are produced, and the figures of just where the percentages of plastic are made:

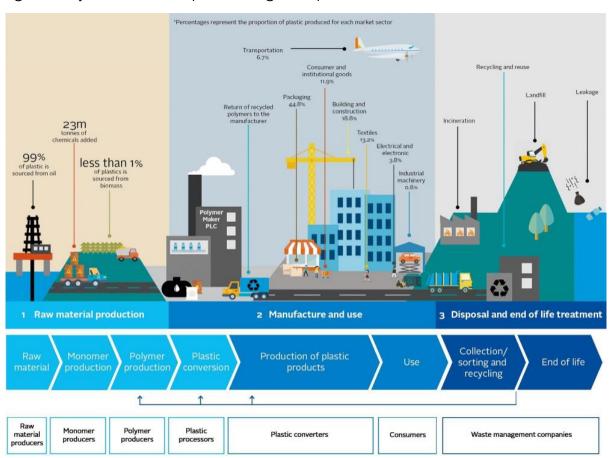


Figure 4: PRI, 2019

When it comes to the most fashionable plastic in the market, it seems that the production of throwaway food and drink packaging under manufacture and use prevails over more permanent plastic solution usage, and in this sector,

Cadbury happens to be a frontrunner, where the important branding and marketing of their products lay; if it was not for the plastic packaging sector, Cadbury would not be where they are today. Overall, the main use of packaging is to highlight the purpose of what a product does or what it is, to underline the brand or company that it was made by and be traceable back to the original manufacturer; the plastic versions taking 1000 years to decompose will definitely leave their carbon footprint. Thanks to the expertise of Greenpeace and the statistics of the Global Brand Audit of 2018 by the Break Free From Plastic movement, a worldwide collection of rubbish has been conducted in order to determine just what kind of brands come on top of the polls in terms of the most plastic waste across the planet. As mentioned, Mondelez International appears fifth in the world, just above brands such as Procter & Gamble, Unilever and Perfetti van Melle, and just below Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé, and Danone. However, when it comes to looking at one of the largest, most populated continents in the world - Asia and their influx of rubbish from both Western civilization and their own, it is easy to tell how Mondelez have come so high, as they rank in the top 5 here alone, just alongside Coca-Cola and Perfetti van Melle, who all three together make up for 30% of the rubbish accounted for by volunteers located across Asia.

Although Coca-Cola is the biggest plastic polluter and much higher than Mondelez (currently), it does give an indication to how much the top brands produce, and the figures that they could generate in time to come, with continued consumer demand. Luckily, Mondelez have given some hope in terms of plastic pollution news, especially in Cadbury's case. In a recent statement by the company, Mondelez pledged to swap to 100% recyclable packaging by the year 2025. The company also pledged to see in 2020 with packaging down by 65 million kilograms. This may be well-received on the company's behalf, but when it comes to still being near the top of the charts and seeing how shop shelves are still very well stocked of Mondelez produce, including the purple and gold of Cadbury, do these pledges come across as true, or will they yet again contradict themselves?

What can definitely be made out by the efforts that have been made since their statements are that given all this time, the way the company is currently exercising their goal of '100% recyclable packaging' is already being made into a gimmick campaign tool. For too long has the discussion, protests and awareness been made towards what troubles that plastic spells for our oceans. From charities such as Greenpeace and Surfers Against Sewage, with organized protests and events, the worldwide discussion amongst parliaments of world leaders, to the speeches made by environmental influencers such as Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough in the call for immediate change, there has been substantial evidence for years that in order to see change, it must first come from the highest powers in order to

show that efforts are being made. From those in high, political positions to the brand leaders themselves, if brands were to start majorly changing from not just the surface but also intrinsically, customer awareness would rise considerably. When it comes to current corporate actions being made, it would seem that the stance on the situation is to only change for the better on the outside, whilst unfortunately remaining scandalous from the inside, and where Cadbury are concerned, this especially shows in their most recent campaigns.

In a bid to start working towards ditching plastics throughout their brand, especially after the Mondelez pact, Cadbury recently announced trials over Australia to test out a new product that would be packaged in 100% recyclable paper. The bar has a different design from their usual purple and gold colours and a different layout all together. This may not come as a sudden surprise to most due to how other products under Cadbury such as Flake, Fudge, Chomp and other bars that also deviate from the brand's usual colours, but for the original Dairy Milk bar product that does not feature their iconic purple colour anywhere on the packaging is an historic first for the brand, since they ceased to own copyright to their iconic purple colour back in 2019. Despite this move in the brand, it still does not make subtle the case that the launch of this product felt like a gimmick for popularity in the eyes of the public.

Cadbury deems the project as a 'trial', a word meaning to 'test (something, especially a new product) to assess its suitability or performance' which in the long run would then be rolled out. However, the use of packaging both suitable and sustainable is no new discovery to the brand, this being down to how evidence from the brand's past already shows how valid this route would be to go down. In 2009, the brand's decision to buy into plastic packaging was made around times of financial uncertainty during the recession. Now however, considering times are more financially viable for Cadbury, especially with their growth in sales and profit under mother company Mondelez, this should mean the brand would now be able to revert back to their paper and foil packaging all together. This however does not seem to be in the brand's field of vision, as rather than doing what is evidently more valuable towards the ecosystem, Cadbury would rather entertain the idea of making this into another profitable marketing decision.

It is not just Cadbury but brands such as Lindt, Galaxy and even Green & Blacks, who have remained paper packaged under the name of Cadbury that endorse that it would not prove a challenge either financially or image wise to swap to such ways automatically. This may also prove a much better marketing move than creating an entirely new product. For example, just like a Galaxy bar that has a label with the graphic design and dietary requirements, plus their signature brown as the colour of the foil which wraps

the chocolate. Cadbury could follow a similar route, but only time will tell what decisions the brand will make to better not just their public image, but also the inner workings of the discussions that have been exposed about them.

Another controversy wrapped into a Cadbury Dairy Milk bar comes from the milk industry, and the exploitation of their methods. To date, the UK approximately consumes more than 350 million Dairy Milk bars a year alone, showing just how popular the brand really is (and also proves reasons why the brand produces so much palm oil and plastic waste in the meanwhile) (QED London, Unknown Date). Yet, this does raise the question about how much milk it would take to produce these types of quantities in order to meet consumer demand, and just where Cadbury manages to resource it.

So, if one bar of Cadbury's Dairy Milk contains 426ml per every 227g bar, and approximately 350 million bars are sold every year, then the maths would work out that 149,100,000,000ml of milk would be needed each year to keep up with current demand (Cadbury, 2020). Each year, one British cow can produce up to 7,959ml per year, meaning that this would take 18,733,509 cows every year to produce enough milk (AHDB, 2019).

Farming has grown reliant on mass production and livelihoods depend on this kind of structure, as without it, farmers would have to relocate to different sectors of work, which they may find difficult considering the potential financial loss and change of life. Fortunately, this is where some farmers have decided to embrace the calls for change and give up their lives of animal-based farming in turn for oat milk production. Derbyshire farmer Jay Wilde gave up the life of dairy farming where he and his wife could no longer face sending their cows to slaughter. Instead, Wilde took up the life of oat milk production, and stated "We are now working in a more ethical way... and can support the 17 cows in our retired herd who still live with us at the farm" (Plant Based News, 2020). Wilde was later recognized by charity Refarm'd who help farmers in the milk farming industry transition to producing plant-based drinks, giving cows the chance to live a better quality of life instead.

This is just one of many examples of how people are standing up for our planet. From the inspiration 17-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg gives millions of young people worldwide in the fight against climate change to masses of people protesting globally, and the way charities like Oxfam and Extinction Rebellion pressurise worldwide powers to review the ways palm oil distribution, plastic circulation and the dairy trade is handled.

However, to send the message out to Cadbury and Mondelez that their practices are no longer widely accepted in the society that we live in today, this would take the actions of raising awareness to the brand in order to show how the people feel, and to start letting them know exactly what needs to

be heard and what needs to be changed, in order to meet the expectations of the preferred market people would rather buy into (including many other brands). Change does not come into place without actions and interventions, as to make brands like Cadbury start acting upon a more ethical operation, it is important to understand how impactful public voices are. To see the end of palm oil, plastic production and of milk industry exploitation in all their current conditions, we now need to see big brands and companies create a much more sustainable and forward-thinking system. Cadbury needs to one day accept the changes needed in order to see a brighter future for our planet, or they will continue down their path towards one day becoming one of the worst ranking brands ever heard of.

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