# Linguistic Discourse Analysis of Sustainability Communication Regarding Child Labour of Four Chocolate Manufacturers

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## Background

- Illegal child labour: "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development" (UN, n. d.)

- Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 aims at eliminating "worst forms of child labour" (UN, 2015)

- At least 1.56 million children affected in cocoa production (NORC, 2020)
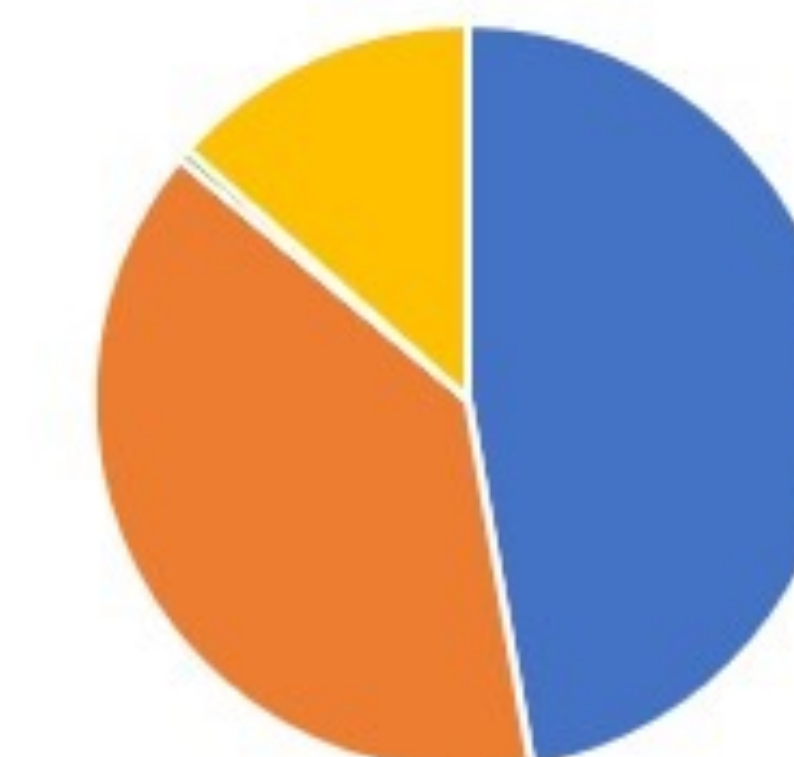
## Corpus & Methods

- Analysing sustainability reports (SR) from 2021 to 2022 and Instagram posts (IP) from 2022 to 2023 of four major chocolate brands in Germany and German language: Lindt, Ritter Sport, Tony's Chocolonely, Jokolade

- Linguistic Discourse Analysis → Identifying frames, keywords and linguistic patterns according to DIMEAN model (Spitzmüller, Warnke, 2011)

(Lindt)    (Tony's)    (Jokolade)    (Ritter Sport)

## Research Questions

**How do chocolate manufacturers communicate child labour in the industry?**

1. (How) does communication of established brands differ from the one of new brands?

2. (How) does the communication in sustainability reports (SR) differ from the one on Instagram posts (IP)?

## Results 1: Differences Between Brands

**Mentioning of keywords**

➢ Self-proclaimed *socially sustainable* companies Tony's and Jokolade explicitly mention the term *child labour*

➢ Established players try to avoid the stigmatized keyword *child labour* in their IP (Lindt) or altogether (Ritter Sport) → focus on positive aspects of *responsible sourcing*, *transparent supply chains* or *social standards*

**Different identifications**

➢ Tony's and Jokolade distinguish between a *we* and *others* or *the chocolate industry*, suggesting that they are not part of the traditional industry and the problem

➢ Lindt and Ritter Sport address the issue with a more neutral identification, talking in third person about the *goal of the supply chain act* or *challenges in the cocoa sector* – not denying that they are part of the problem, but also not explicitly taking responsibility

## Results 2: IP and SR

**Differences in how established brands communicate the issue in SR and in IP**

➢ Ritter Sport does not explicitly address the issue in either discourse arena

➢ Lindt frames the issue as a *collaborative challenge* internally, handing over responsibility, and avoiding it in external communication

**No differences in the communication in SR and IP of Jokolade and Tony's**

## Conclusion

All players mention child labour as a problem to be tackled, but they identify their roles differently. They are communicating it by using or avoiding certain keywords, frames or pronouns in SR and IP.

## Limitations

Quantitative studies could support the results of this qualitative approach (limited corpus and time frame).



Hit rate keyword *child labour* in SR — Hit rate keyword *child labour* in IP
■ Tony's  ■ Lindt  ■ Ritter Sport  ■ Jokolade