

M.Sc. International Business
Master's Thesis

Companies Committing to the Fight Against Plastic Pollution

an explorative case study



Authors:

Henriette Bundgaard Knudsen. Student ID: 92260
Katrine Margrethe Bjorholm Arup. Student ID: 92424

Supervisor:

Torben Juul Andersen

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Abstract

The negative environmental impact from plastic waste is a growing area of concern, which has led various actors to take actions to address the issue. This thesis investigates how companies work with initiatives to reduce the adverse effects from plastic pollution. More specifically, the study addresses to what extent companies work with these initiatives and explore the factors that influence them. Companies show a willingness to implement actions and are exposed to pressure from various stakeholders, while simultaneously navigating in an uncertain field caused by a current legislative gap.

With an outset in existing literature on corporate social responsibility and supply chain management, an empirical study of six representative companies with introduced and implemented actions to deal with plastic pollution has been conducted. The study concludes that the extent to which the companies have addressed plastic pollution differ. It is shown that some companies have implemented a selected number of initiatives, others have developed a specific plastic or packaging strategy outlining future actions to be implemented, whereas for one company, the production of recycled plastic constitutes the actual business model. The thesis further concludes that companies are affected by both internal and external factors when looking into ways to address plastic pollution. Some of these factors are more company-specific. Communication and cooperation are identified as key factors, as these are mentioned by all the companies that participated in the study. Communication has different purposes; it serves to draw attention to the actions introduced by the companies and it is used to address misinformation about plastic, while at the same time encouraging consumers to take action. It is recognised that cooperation is required to find solutions for newer and smarter ways to use plastic. Collaboration takes many shapes, which is shown by collaborative constellations across supply chains, with NGOs, policy-makers, and industry participants.

The results extend existing research by providing an understanding of the underlying considerations of companies addressing plastic waste. From a practical view, this can serve as an inspiration for other companies on the verge of implementing solutions to cope with plastic and highlights that the current legislative gap creates uncertainty for companies initiating actions to address plastic pollution.

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Part 1: Introduction

Plastic production has increased twenty times since the 1950s and today reached over 350 million tonnes per year (PlasticsEurope, 2018). If the current trend continues, the plastic industry is estimated to account for 20 % of global oil consumption by 2050, accumulating to 15 % of the global CO₂-footprint (Barra et al., 2018). The adverse environmental impacts on global warming from plastic production are therefore significant. Adding to this, only 9 % of global plastic produced is recycled after use, a small part is incinerated whereas the remaining bulk accumulates in dumps, landfills or in the environment (UN Environment, 2018d).

Highlighting the severity of the problem, approximately 8 million tonnes per year are dumped into the sea, corresponding to a truckload of plastic every minute (WEF New Plastics Economy, 2016; Jarnbeck et al., 2015). If no changes are made, this will lead to more plastic than fish in our oceans by 2050, ultimately, ending up in our food chain (ibid; UN Environment, 2018d). The increasing plastic pollution and adverse environmental impact have recently attracted increased public attention (McKinsey & Company and Innovation Fund Denmark, 2019). The environmental effects from the current dealings with plastic are recognised by policy-makers, international organizations, global and national corporations as well as the general public.

International organisations have recognised the severity of plastic pollution and want to shed light on the environmental issue (UN Environment, 2018e). Therefore, they work with various stakeholders to look for viable solutions; the work of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UN Environment) emphasises that a solution requires joint action (UN Environment 2018d; UN Environment 2018e). Additionally, international NGOs have turned the spotlight at this issue to communicate the scope of the problem with plastic and to work with a wide spectrum of stakeholders to consider possible solutions (Plastic Change, 2019; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017b).

In March 2019, the European Union agreed on a law that addresses single-use plastic (European Parliament, 2019; European Commission, 2019). Targeting the biggest sinners of plastic pollution, the new directive puts a ban on selected products starting from 2021 (European Parliament, 2019), which illustrates that policy-makers have commenced addressing the problem. The wider business community has initiated actions to reduce the negative effects stemming from its use of plastic in products and as packaging material; supermarket chains are phasing out parts of their product range, companies are considering new ways of using plastic in their product development or reduce the use of plastic packaging, and more frequently companies ask consumers to pay for shopping

bags to carry their items - to mention some of the introduced actions (Meier, 2018; Gherasim; 2018; Carlsberg, 2019d; Gov UK, 2018).

Plastic pollution is currently a highly ranked concern among consumers, which is also evidenced in rising attention drawn to the topic (COOP Analyse, 2018; Euromonitor International, 2019; Joyce, 2018). This has resulted in consumers pressuring companies to come up with more sustainable solutions, while simultaneously supporting the companies that act on the problem (Joyce, 2018). However, it is not enough to leave the responsibility for a solution to the companies. The general public and consumers, in particular, are also a part of the solution as a change in current behaviour is also required from their part (UN Environment, 2018a). As evident from above, joint action from many stakeholders is necessary for a solution to be reached.

1.1 Research question

This thesis focuses on the business community's actions on plastic pollution. The study wants to investigate how different companies - both producers and retailers - design and work with initiatives to reduce the adverse effects from plastic pollution. The companies are particularly interesting to investigate because they find themselves in a situation with emerging legislation on plastic, and increased pressure from consumers and NGOs. The companies are therefore juggling with introducing new initiatives on plastic pollution to live up to the pressure, and the uncertainty of the future legislative demands. Additionally, it is interesting to see if companies see this as an opportunity to act on plastic pollution before their competitors or whether they strive to obtain a collective solution. The thesis has its outset in the observation that various companies increasingly implement corporate social responsibility initiatives or larger strategies to fight plastic pollution across their supply chains. To get a deeper understanding of the underlying considerations leading to corporate initiatives on plastic pollution, this thesis wants to explore the following **research question**:

To what extent do representative companies along the production-consumption supply chain work on initiatives to reduce the adverse effects from plastic pollution and what factors influence these initiatives?

1.2 Structure of the master's thesis

The thesis will answer the research question through an exploratory case study of six companies along the production-consumption supply chain of plastic. The companies provide the empirical

foundation for a detailed investigation of how they work with initiatives and which factors influence their initiatives. The thesis consists of six parts as shown below.

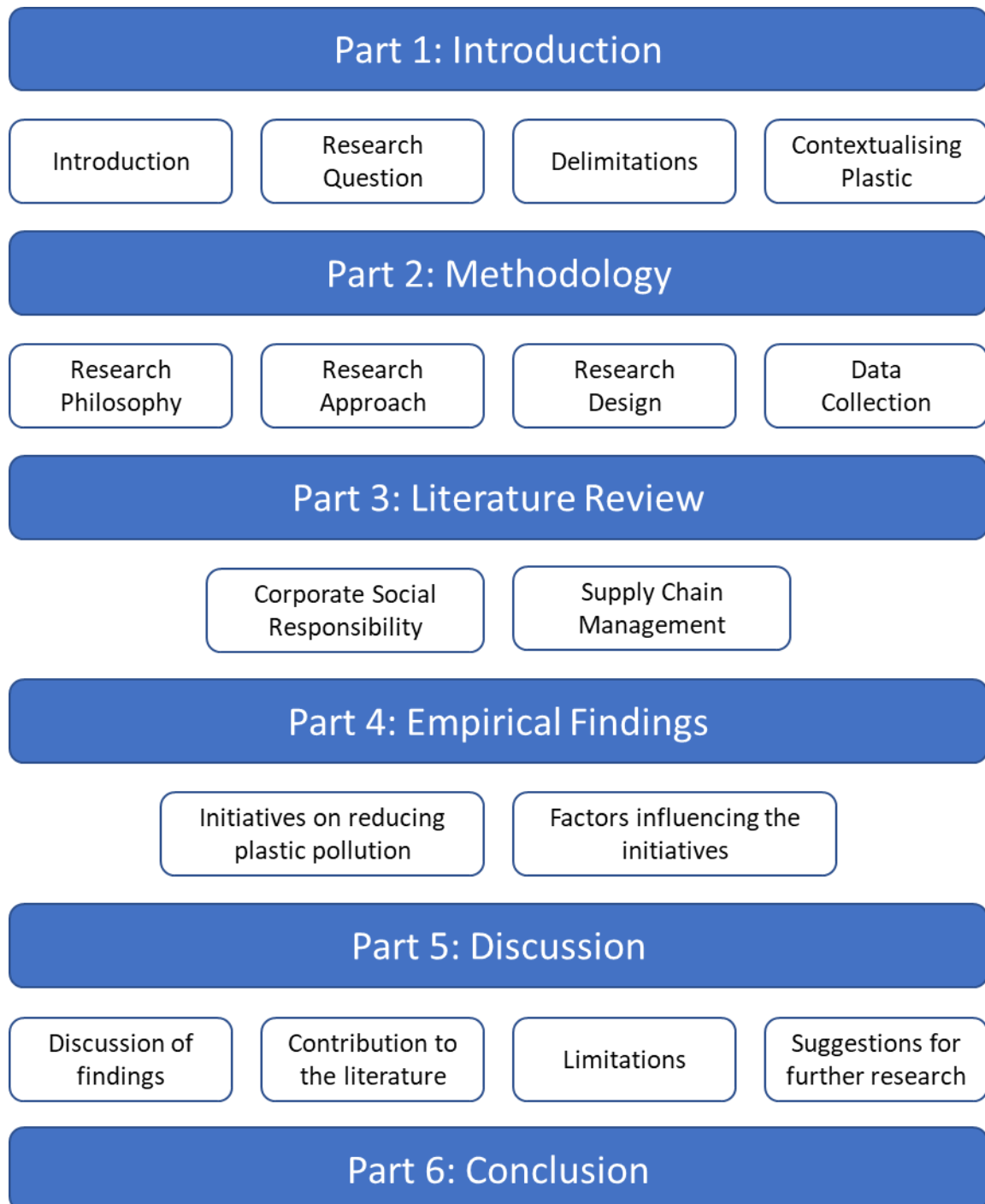


Figure 1: Structure of the master's thesis

The present part 1 continues with outlining delimitations of the study, before providing a more detailed overview of the current plastic production, and the various actions implemented already. Thus, contextualising the dilemma with plastic.

Part 2 explains the underlying methodological considerations. It starts by outlining the research philosophy and research approach providing the foundation of this master's thesis. This section is followed by a detailed explanation of the research design and the data collection process, which serves to substantiate our choices.

Part 3 reviews existing literature within corporate social responsibility (CSR) and supply chain management (SCM) to provide a context for the current research. As this is a new area of research, relevant reports and publications are included in the review to contextualise the topic. This serves as a starting point for the empirical findings.

Part 4 presents the empirical findings based on interviews conducted with representative case companies. This part firstly investigates the different actions on plastic pollution initiated by the companies and secondly, explores the various factors deemed influential by the companies.

Part 5 discusses the empirical findings relevant to the research question. Moreover, the findings are put in relation to the reviewed literature to discuss a possible extension of current research. Part 5 rounds off by addressing the limitation of the research design and findings before providing suggestions for further research.

Part 6 summarises the findings and thereby concludes on the posed research question.

1.3 Delimitation

As outlined above, this master's thesis focuses solely on companies' actions. Therefore, it was a deliberate choice not to view the different actions on plastic from the stand of policy-makers, NGOs or consumers. However, the growing plastic pollution has come to involve all parties and this interdependence means that the aforementioned groups cannot solely be ignored. It should be noted, that the inclusion of these will be from a company perspective, as it serves to answer the posed research question.

The study provides a snapshot of companies currently working with actions addressing plastic pollution. As this is a recently emerging trend, it was not possible to carry out a longitudinal study due to the recency of the implemented initiatives. This was further constrained by the timeframe of this study. Only case companies with initiated actions to reduce plastic pollution were relevant for the purpose of the study. This excluded companies on the verge of implementing initiatives and companies with no initiated actions. Moreover, the vast majority of the chosen companies selected are international, which was deemed important to underline the international scope of the issue.

As this is a new area of research, the topic has not previously gained attention in academic literature. Hence, it was decided to base the study on two areas of research, Corporate Social Responsibility and Supply Chain Management, to create the foundation of the explorative study. The reason for this choice is that corporate initiatives on plastic often take form as CSR initiatives or sustainability strategies and span across the companies' supply chains. Therefore, broader topics in academic literature, such as business strategy and marketing have not been included in the review, as literature in these fields would have had a different focus, and hence would be less relevant for the posed research question.

Regarding the research approach, quantitative methods have not been applied. This choice is connected to the purpose of the research, which seeks to explore and gain a detailed understanding of the underlying considerations behind the companies' initiatives to reduce adverse effects from plastic and the factors that influence these initiatives. Therefore, qualitative methods were deemed appropriate to fulfil the objective of the master's thesis.

Although the thesis explores to what extent the representative case companies work with initiatives, it has been purposely decided not to include an assessment of the initiatives. Therefore, no recommendations or proposals of amendments are given to the participating companies. This is deemed out of the scope of this master's thesis and furthermore, it would not serve to answer the proposed research question.

It has been an intentional choice not to interview external stakeholders on the companies' initiatives for the purpose of the master's thesis. These could potentially have provided a different view on some of the findings put forward, however, considering the timeframe of this study, it was deemed more relevant to focus on the companies' own perceptions and opinions on the investigated topic. This is further connected to the purpose of the research, which serves to understand how the companies also perceive their role in the current plastic debate.

1.4 Contextualising plastic pollution

“Plastic isn’t the problem. It’s what we do with it. And that means the onus is on us to be far smarter in how we use this miracle material” - Erik Solheim, Head of UN Environment.
(UN Environment, 2018a)

This section serves to provide an understanding of why we have plastic, why plastic has come to constitute a problem, and what actions legislators have initiated to handle it. The section begins with quantifying the amount of plastic produced and furthermore, the environmental and economic consequences of plastic waste are depicted. Lastly, this section provides an overview of global, regional and national initiatives and legislation on plastic.

1.4.1 Quantifying the plastic production

Plastic has been produced since the 1950s, and thanks to its versatility, cheap price, durability and functionality, the production of plastic has grown exponentially in the last half century (WEF, New Plastics Economy, 2016). As mentioned in the introduction, plastic production has grown twentyfold; from 15 million tonnes in 1964 to 348 million tonnes in 2017, and is expected to double again over the next 20 years (PlasticsEurope, 2018; WEF, New Plastic Economy, 2016). The reasons for the exponential growth of plastic production can also be attributed to the social and environmental benefits plastic has (UNEP, 2014). Among the advantages, plastic prolongs the lifetime of foods and alleviates food waste (ibid). Moreover, more than 1.5 million people are directly employed in the plastic industry in Europe with annual revenue of EUR 355 billion in 2017 (PlasticsEurope, 2018). By replacing plastic with other available materials, it has been estimated that packaging will increase by a factor of 3.6 and greenhouse gas emissions by a factor of 2.7 (UNEP, 2014). Despite these obvious positive benefits of plastic, there are also negative consequences, which will be delineated below.

As the quote above states; the growth in the production of plastic does not constitute a problem in itself, but the issue lies in handling plastic after it has been used. The vast quantity of plastic produced coupled with poor waste management, accidental losses or illegal dumping has the consequence that plastic debris is found even on shores of uninhabited islands, in the Arctic ice, in the deep ocean and in various marine organisms (UNEP, 2016). Worldwide figures on plastic leaked into the ocean estimate that 82 % stems from Asia, 2 % from Europe, and the remaining 16 % from the rest of the world. Plastic in the environment harms wildlife, safety of sea transport, fisheries, tourism, and

threatens marine ecosystems, and it should be considered a “*common concern of mankind*”, according to the UN (UNEP, 2016, p. “X”).

Single-use plastic is most prone to end up in nature due to its short lifetime and packaging makes up a large part of this (WEF, New Plastics Economy, 2016). Focusing in on plastic packaging, which made up 78 million tonnes out of a total of 311 tonnes plastics produced in 2013, it is estimated that only 14 % is collected for recycling, whereas a staggering 40 % ends up as landfill and 32 % ends up as leakages into the oceans and the environment (ibid). The issue is set to increase as the global packaging market has experienced a CAGR of 5 % in 2000-2015, and if this trend continues, the amount of total packaging will quadruple from 78 million tons in 2013 to 315 million tons in 2050 (ibid).

1.4.2 Who is producing plastic?

Asia contributes to half of the global plastic production, by which China alone is responsible for 29.4 %, whereas Europe and NAFTA contribute with 18.5 % and 17.7 %, respectively (PlasticsEurope, 2018, p. 9). However, when considering another dimension, namely by looking at the origin of the plastic producing companies, the picture looks slightly different. Even though the plastic production itself takes place in Asia, 85 % of the headquarters of the 20 biggest fast-moving consumer goods companies (FMCGs) are located in the US or in Europe (WEF, New Plastics Economy 2016). Moreover, 95 % of all plastic manufacturing companies have their headquarters in the US or Europe (ibid). These two regions are home to key global decision-makers at the top of the value chain: the designers (ibid), which means that innovations in regards to packaging and material redesign among other things lie in the hands of these companies. This constitutes a big responsibility when discussing the solution to the plastic pollution issue: without redesign or innovation, up to 30 % of today’s plastic packaging will never be reused or recycled (WEF, New Plastics Economy, 2016). The plastic, which is never reused or recycled, ends up as either landfill or leakage on land or in the oceans.

1.4.3 Plastic as landfill

Plastic designed for single-use purposes such as tear-offs, lids and wrappers, multi-material packaging, and fast-food packaging is usually the type that ends up as landfill (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017a). When plastic is landfilled, its energy is not recovered, and the plastic is not recycled. The single-use plastics products are most likely to leak into the environment after its short single use (ibid). Furthermore, the small size of these plastics make them prone to escaping various collection systems (where these exist), and due to their design, it is difficult to reuse these plastics

(ibid). However, the advantages that this type of plastics provide, makes it difficult to simply remove (ibid). Because of this, The Ellen Macarthur Foundation and World Economic Forum (ibid) suggest that these plastic variants are reinvented and modified to accommodate recycling or reuse.

1.4.4 Plastic in the oceans

The issue further substantiates when focusing on the plastic that is leaked into the world's oceans. As mentioned, Jarnbeck et al. (2015) estimate that between 4.8-12.7 million tons of plastic are leaked into the ocean every year. To put this figure into perspective, it corresponds to one garbage truck of plastics being dumped into the ocean every minute (ibid). As mentioned in the introduction, it is estimated that there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean in 2050, if the current trend continues (ibid).

When plastic is in the ocean, it does not disappear - it degrades and loses some of its original properties, and it fragments into smaller pieces (UNEP, 2015). Neither does biodegradable plastics, which name leads to believe that it mineralises into natural components in the environment (ibid). In order for this to happen, the process requires terrestrial treatment and often a temperature of +50 C for periods of weeks and months (ibid). Consequently, once the plastic has entered the ocean, it may fragment into smaller pieces, but it ultimately stays there.

When plastic is in the ocean, either as fragmented, degraded bits or as bigger pieces, it is sucked into so-called gyres by five different ocean currents (Madsen, 2015). The concentration of plastic in these five gyres (The North and South Atlantic, The North and South Pacific, and The Indian Ocean) is bigger than in the rest of the ocean, but the idea of plastic islands floating around in the oceans is incorrect because the plastic is fragmented into smaller pieces (ibid). Plastic has attracted scientists' attention because it attracts environmental toxins such as oil remnants, and if eaten by fish, it can ultimately find its way into the food chain (ibid). The following provides examples of how we are experiencing the plastic entering the food chain; more than 90 % of all seabird species have plastic in their stomachs (Wilcox et al. 2015), and more than 23 % of herrings and 39 % of all codfish in the North Sea have digested microplastic (Reeh, 2016).

1.4.5 Social and economic consequences of plastic

Apart from the environmental consequences described above, plastic pollution also has social and economic consequences. Socially, it produces various risks to the health of the workers producing it if they inhale the toxic fumes released in production (Lam et al., 2018). As stated in the above, microplastic has found its way into food consumed by human beings, but the effect of this on human

health is yet to be determined (WEF New Plastics Economy, 2016). Economically, when considering *only* disposed packaging that winds up in oceans or clogs urban infrastructure and the greenhouse gas emissions from its production, it is estimated that it costs USD 40 billion per year (WEF New Plastics Economy, 2016). Moreover, the environmental harm to marine ecosystems alone is estimated to be USD 13 billion, which stems from organised clean-ups, financial losses incurred by fisheries and tourism (UNEP, 2014). But it is not only environmental harm that is costly by mishandling plastic; McKinsey & Company and Innovation Fund Denmark have looked into potential economic gains by optimising the waste stream in Denmark (McKinsey & Company et al., 2019). By not optimally recycling domestic plastic waste and thereby having to import virgin plastics, it is estimated to cost Denmark DKK 1.6 billion per year.

1.4.6 Political actions to deal with the adverse effect of plastic pollution

The environmental impact of the current dealings with plastic waste is recognised by both policy-makers and international organisations, which can be seen from various actions to address the issue and to put plastic on the agenda (Chatain, 2019; UN Environment, 2017). An exhaustive list of actions falls outside the scope of the thesis, however, it is considered important to exemplify some of the actions to gain an insight into the current progress to address the issue.

At the international level, the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) is pushing to get plastic on the global agenda through campaigns and publications (UN Environment, 2017; UN Environment, 2018b). Plastic production, sustainable consumption and the focus on its potential environmental harm as marine litter is further mentioned in UN's Sustainable Development Goals (UN Division for Sustainable Development, 2018). UN Environment is handling environmental matters within the UN (UN Environment, 2019a), and their work involves encouraging actions to support sustainable development, consider various environmental trends, and to work with different stakeholders including member states and corporations on environmental matters (UN Environment, 2019a; UN Environment, 2019b).

In 2017, UN Environment initiated a campaign called Clean Seas with an objective to reduce plastic pollution in the oceans (UN Environment, 2017; Clean Seas, 2019). The campaign considers the main sources of plastic pollution, among others the large amount of single-use plastic (ibid). With a time horizon of five years, the agency strives to affect various stakeholders ranging from policy-makers, corporations and the general public to take actions to address the problem (ibid). This

includes influencing policy-makers to introduce policies on plastic, get the business community to consider their use of plastic, and influence consumer behaviour (ibid).

The Global Plastic Platform is another UN Environment initiative, which is a way to assist countries or cities that want to introduce actions to reduce the pollution stemming from plastic (Leone, 2018; UN Environment, 2018b). Through the platform, it is possible to get assistance on the preparation of new policies and share knowledge with other members (ibid). Furthermore, in a way to work towards circular economy, the platform looks into matters such as plastic design and waste handling to consider changes to the way things are currently done (ibid).

At the regional level, the European Union adopted a directive with the purpose of reducing consumption of lightweight carrier bags, which had a substantial effect on consumer behaviour already in 2015 (European Commission, 2019a; EU Directive 94/62/EC, 2015). Recently, the European Union banned single-use plastic (European Commission, 2019). On March 27th 2019, the European Parliament decided on a ban by approving the Single-Use Plastic Directive that aims to reduce plastic waste ending up in oceans (European Commission, 2019a). The Directive includes a list of specific plastic items covered by the ban, suggestions on how to reduce the use of plastic and producer responsibility schemes as well as presenting targets on highlighted actions (ibid). The actions put forward by the European Commission are an important part of their Circular Economy Action Plan (European Commission, 2019a; European Commission 2019b). An action plan, which was initiated in 2015, identifying actions and specifying targets to foster circular economy in Europe. Building on the measure to encourage circular economy, the plan considers the entire cycle including manufacturing, consumption and waste handling (European Commission, 2019b). Plastic waste is one area of concern identified in the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Commission introduced the EU Strategy for Plastics in the Circular Economy (European Commission, 2018) in 2018 incorporating the directive on single-use plastic (ibid).

At the national level, many countries have started implementing laws on single-use plastic and microplastic including bans on certain products or materials (UN Environment, 2018c). A report from 2018, published by UN environment, has looked at legally-binding initiatives on a global scale considering laws on plastic bags, single-use plastic and microbeads that are the three major concerns in regard to plastic pollution (ibid). Countries deploy different instruments to fight plastic pollution that ranges from bans and taxes to initiatives concerning waste handling (ibid). Around 66 % of the 192 countries evaluated have introduced legally-binding measures on plastic bags, whereas very few countries have implemented actions on microbeads. Other legal instruments include levies,

taxes, bans of single-use plastic and use of microbeads, increased efforts for recycling, support to voluntary clean-up campaigns, improved waste management, and measures extending producer responsibility (Lam et al., 2018; UN Environment, 2018c). With the recent European ban on single-use plastic, member states are required to take actions and the various countries have two years to integrate the rules into the national law (European Commission, 2019a).

Since the companies interviewed for this master's thesis all operate in Denmark, an overview of the Danish efforts on plastic is briefly delineated here. The Danish government released its "Plastic Action Plan" in December 2018, which contains 27 initiatives focusing on; *"less plastic waste ending up in nature, smarter production and usage, more cooperation in the value chain, a strengthened knowledge base, and far more recycling"* (Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet, 2018, p. 2-3). The action plan further ensures that Denmark will live up to the demands put forward by the European Commission (Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet, 2018). Among the initiatives relevant for companies are the extended producer responsibility, which will come into force from 2025, and economic regulation of the waste sector to increase incentives for recycling (ibid). Moreover, the number of bottles included in the Danish return system will be increased from 2020, which has implications for design (ibid).

This section has provided an understanding of the current challenge stemming from plastic pollution. The proceeding part 2 will outline how the present research has been carried out to explore how companies tackle the challenge outlined in the above.

Part 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and the methodological choices that have guided the exploration of the research question. It will further provide the overall considerations regarding research philosophy, methods, and data collection. The structure of the chapter can be seen in Figure 2. Firstly, the research philosophy is outlined as this explains how knowledge is perceived and created. Secondly, the research approach will be delineated as this has guided the knowledge creation process and provided a frame for the study. Thirdly, the methodological choices are highlighted as these explain how and why the research question is answered with qualitative methods. Finally, the data collection methods are described in detail in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the process including how reliability is ensured and how certain biases have been overcome. Methodological considerations and limitations will be further elaborated in the discussion in part 5.

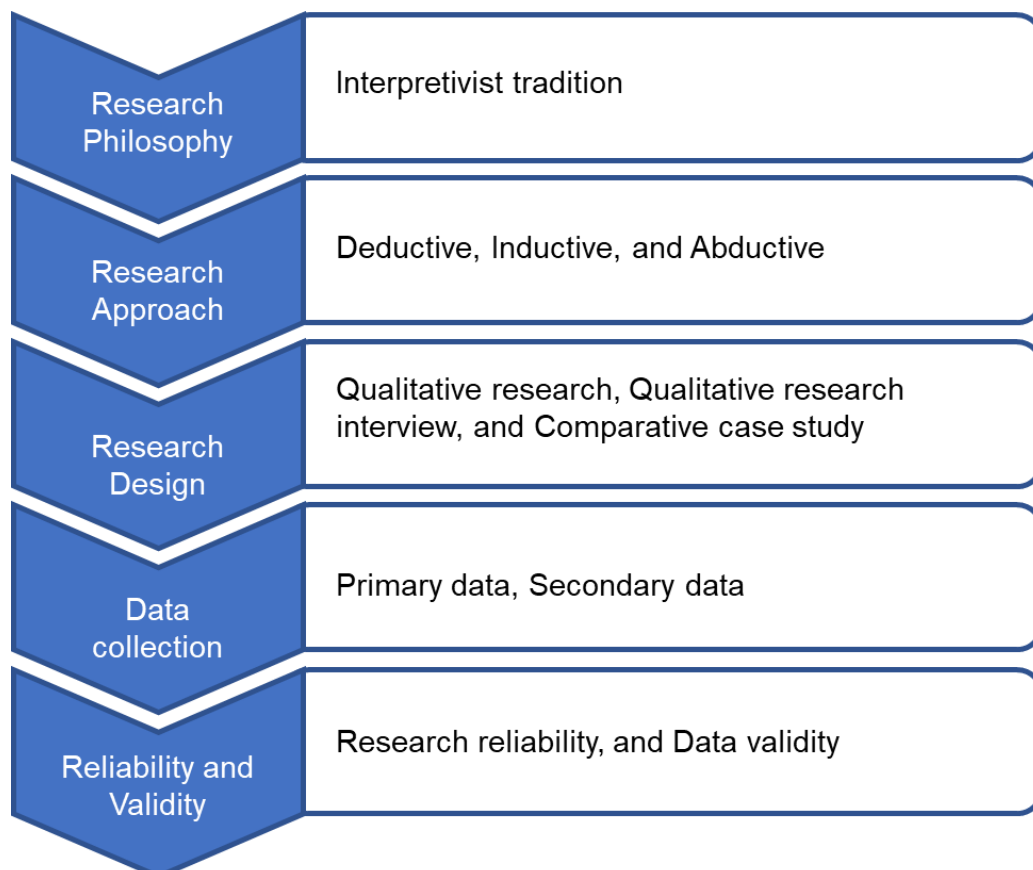


Figure 2: Overview of the methodology

2.2 Research philosophy

Before explaining the methodological considerations, the research philosophy is presented to provide a foundation of the present study. The research philosophy comprises an understanding of how knowledge is created, how it develops, and the nature of this knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012). The reason for its importance is that it inevitably guides the research question, the chosen research methods and how the findings are interpreted (Crotty, 1998 cited in Saunders et al., 2012).

The thesis leans on what Saunders et al. (2016) see as the interpretivist tradition, which is characterised by the belief that knowledge can be created through dialogue. This has influenced the research design which - through qualitative methods - aims to explore in detail how various companies work with initiatives on plastic, and what is considered key factors of influence. The purpose of this study is not to establish universal laws but rather to get a deep insight into the companies' initiatives and understand the motives behind these. Moreover, the interpretivist tradition has affected the way knowledge is created in this thesis, where knowledge predominantly has been created through interviews with selected case companies.

Building on this research philosophy, it was possible to discover how the different companies perceive plastic. The present debate on plastic is often focusing on plastic as something negative that needs to be eliminated. While plastic pollution is indisputably a problem, plastic also has apparent advantages and relevant application areas. Some of the various companies highlighted that plastic could be beneficial if used sustainably. With this in mind, it led to a better understanding of the companies' initiatives.

2.3 Research approach

As established in the preceding chapter, the current dealings with plastic is a rising area of concern. Although the known environmental consequences are well-known, it is not until recently that the topic has started to gain considerable attention. As this is a topic that has only recently gained attention, there is presently - to our knowledge - no academic research that specifically considers corporate initiatives in relation to plastic usage. Therefore, with an outset in the current debate on plastic, this thesis wants to contribute to the discussion with an exploratory study that investigates the reduction of plastic pollution in a corporate setting. The thesis aims to discover the factors and considerations that go into defining companies' actions.

The research has been designed to allow for new knowledge to be evaluated throughout the thesis process and tested against the selected theory. Knowledge creation, in this case, is not a linear approach and has thus been characterised by an iterative approach amending and including new findings throughout the writing process. Hence, this thesis takes an abductive approach to study the defined research question by combining deduction and induction, which will be outlined in the following (Saunders et al., 2016).

In the initial stage of the process, existing literature was studied to identify relevant theory to create the foundation of the empirical study. It was decided to base the empirical study on academic research within corporate social responsibility and supply chain management. Themes from the existing literature were derived to serve as a starting point for the interview with the case companies. As these themes were explored in the interviews, this phase was characterised by a deductive approach (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011).

The predetermined interview guides only served to facilitate the conversation while simultaneously allowing for new factors to be discovered during the interviews. Hence this part of the research process was characterised by the inductive approach (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011). This approach led to new aspects, which could subsequently be tested in interviews and against the theory. The interview guide was continuously updated to reflect emerging topics of interest for the purpose of the empirical study.

Using a combination of deduction and induction, by moving from theory to empirical data and back again, an abductive approach has been applied (Suddaby, 2006 cited in Saunders et al., 2016). This entailed that the pre-existing knowledge foundation has continuously been updated with new findings identified in the empirical investigation. These new findings were tested in subsequent interviews and led to a revision of the literature review in relevant areas. This broadened the understanding of the topic and guided the analysis of the empirical findings. Furthermore, the abductive approach has been used to subsequently extend existing literature to also include the field of corporate initiatives to reduce the adverse effects of plastic pollution.

2.4 Research design

2.4.1 Qualitative research

The research conducted in this master's thesis is based on qualitative methodology because the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of how the companies have worked with initiatives to reduce the adverse effects of plastic pollution. As stated earlier, no academic literature - to our knowledge - has been published on this subject, which highlights the need for a detailed description and exploration of what extent the companies work with initiatives, and what factors that influence these. This deeper understanding and exploration of the influencing factors could not have been obtained by observations or experiments.

In accordance with Hammersley's (2013) definition of qualitative research, the methodology allowed for an in-depth exploration of the companies' initiatives, which were then categorised into different degrees of working to reduce adverse effects of plastic pollution. Hence, the present study aims to extend the current literature connected to this topic by providing a detailed understanding of the companies' actions and the underlying factors influencing them. The choice of qualitative methodology is in alignment with the epistemology, which does not aim to generalise findings or test previously defined hypotheses on observations or objective facts.

2.4.2 Qualitative research interview

The nature of the research is not to test pre-defined hypotheses, but instead to generate and explore new knowledge (Hammersley, 2013) in the field of companies which work to reduce plastic pollution. When generating new knowledge and exploring new phenomena, the qualitative research interview is a preferred method, as it can provide insights, which are not otherwise accessible (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011; Saunders et al., 2016). This method can provide the researcher with information from people who possess unique information (ibid), where knowledge is created through the conversation between the parties of the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). As this study considers a new area of research, it provides further support for this method. In addition to this, gathering and producing empirical knowledge provides insight and allow for additional reflections other than what is described in e.g. reports, previous theory, and peer-reviewed articles. Adding to this, the interviews provided an insight into the underlying reasoning and decisions behind initiatives on plastic, which was otherwise not attainable.

2.4.3 Comparative case study

In order to answer the explorative research question, six case companies were identified to allow for an in-depth investigation of how they are working with initiatives to reduce plastic pollution. The in-depth investigation of the case companies was obtained by systematically combining various data sources (Maaløe, 1996) from interviews, newspaper articles, company websites, and sustainability reports published by the companies. The purpose of this research is not to generalise from a large population, but instead, the small sample size ensured an in-depth exploration of the different companies (Patton, 2002). The companies were compared to obtain further understanding of the underlying considerations behind their actions and to see if certain factors could be identified as influential for these actions.

Comparative case studies can be used to compare across different units (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011), and by exploring the similarities and differences between cases a further understanding of a topic is gained (Maaløe, 1996). In the present study, the companies are used as cases because these have all implemented actions on plastic. In the comparison of these companies, their similarities and differences provided a further understanding of the companies' actions and the factors influencing these. The companies were divided into three categories according to the extent of their work on plastic, and this allowed for an investigation of whether certain factors had influenced their actions in particular. Moreover, it was also possible to explore if some of the same factors had affected all companies' actions.

As the initiatives have recently been introduced in most of the cases, the study is not longitudinal but instead represents a cross-sectional snapshot (Saunders et al., 2016). The reasons for choosing the cross-sectional case study are; the ability to compare the companies' initiatives at present time, the limited time scope available to conduct the research, and the recency of the implemented initiatives, which hinders a comparison over time.

2.5 Data collection

2.5.1 Primary data

2.5.1.1 Interviews

Five semi-structured interviews and one questionnaire were conducted during the time span from the 13th of February, 2019 to the 11th of March, 2019 with selected case companies that have all initiated actions to deal with adverse effects from plastic usage. This empirical material has served as the main data source for the purpose of answering the research question.

In line with the characteristics of a semi-structured interview, an interview guide with overall topics and questions was prepared ahead of the interviews to guide the conversation (Berg 2009 cited in Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011). The themes and questions were derived from the literature review, which laid the foundation for the research and represented the given knowledge prior to the empirical data collection. The guide ensured consistency in terms of areas to be explored during all the interviews, but at the same time allowed for flexibility to explore new areas as they emerged (Patton, 2002; Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011). Further, the interview format allowed for cross-case comparison to being carried out in Part 4, Empirical Findings. Following the inductive approach, the interview guide was continuously updated to include new areas discovered during the interviews, without losing the possibility to perform the above-mentioned cross-case comparison. Additionally, the interview guide included company-specific questions to allow for further elaboration of implemented initiatives.

2.5.1.2 Selecting case companies

The companies were chosen based on an assessment of their relevance to the research question, and how each company could contribute to shed light on this (Schwandt, 2007 cited in Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011). Hence, purposive sampling was applied. News articles and company websites were used to identify the six case companies based on their initiatives on plastic. According to Patton (2002), there is no specific requirement for sample size in qualitative research. Therefore, it becomes a matter of judgement of the researcher (ibid). As the study aims to illustrate corporate actions in a broad sense, it was a deliberate choice to target companies of different sizes and industry characteristics. The six companies were chosen based on fulfilling two criteria; 1) the companies represented all links along the production-consumption line in the supply chain; and 2) the companies had implemented initiatives to reduce the adverse effects of plastic pollution. This allowed for a comparison of the companies across their different position in the supply chain. Along with theory (Hammersley, 2013), the small number of case companies allowed for an in-depth exploration of their various initiatives.

Each interview lasted about an hour and was conducted in person, via Skype or telephone. This allowed for flexibility for the respondents and did not put a constraint on approaching possible case companies. One respondent from each company participated in the study. As shown in Table 1 in Part 4, four out of six participants hold director positions, but all the interviewee are directly involved in strategic decisions on initiatives concerning plastic. Therefore, all respondents are seen to carry

out the same function in relation to sustainability despite differences in their official titles. The interviews have therefore provided valuable insights into the considerations that have laid the foundation for the sustainability actions introduced by the companies.

2.5.1.3 Interview considerations

As outlined above, the interviewer is participating in the knowledge creation process during an interview and therefore influences the outcome of the interview material. Hence, thorough considerations went into the planning process prior to the interviews in regard to selecting and phrasing the specific questions. This ensured that the questions were neutrally phrased to avoid leading responses as a consequence of interviewer bias (Saunders et al., 2016). Moreover, the participation of both authors made sure that the interviewees were asked to elaborate on points to avoid misinterpretations while allowing both to ask relevant follow-up questions. The questions asked were a combination of open, probing and specific questions to the companies' initiatives (ibid). After finalising each interview, debriefing served to discuss important points raised during the conversation and evaluate the interviewer performance.

2.5.1.4 Categorising data

All interviews were recorded to avoid omitting important points and to allow for a better interpretation of the data material, as opposed to only written notes (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011). Furthermore, the recordings ensured presence during the interview to follow up on interesting aspects and probe questions whenever comments were unclear (ibid). Following the interviews, comprehensive notes were taken for all interviews based on the recordings. The recordings are attached as appendices. As the interviews are few and relatively short, the comprehensive notes provided a sufficient overview, which is why transcription of the interviews was not deemed necessary.

All the interview notes were coded using a combination of open and closed coding to process the data material (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011). Applying overall themes and keywords to the text material served as an important starting point of the analysis of the empirical findings, as it enabled identification of potential patterns across the cases, contrasting and similar points, and new aspects (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011; Patton, 2002). The closed coding involved applying the predefined themes from the interview guide to categorise the data, while the open coding served to group new findings in categories, which were not predefined beforehand (ibid).

2.5.1.5 Questionnaire

Helsam was unable to participate in an interview, and the company instead provided written answers to a questionnaire. This required a special focus on preparing the questions to ensure that the purpose was clear to the respondent and to ensure subsequent usefulness of the information obtained by the questionnaire (Bøgh Andersen et al., 2011). A limitation of this approach was a lack of opportunity to ask the respondent to elaborate on answers or pose follow-up questions, as was possible with the other interviews (Saunders et al., 2016). This had an impact on the analysis, as the data material from Helsam was less elaborate. The approach has also been questioned as appropriate for exploratory studies that benefit from open-ended questions (ibid). However, despite the limitations, it was considered important to include Helsam in the sample due to the company characteristics - size, market and business - that provides the study with a broader view on company initiatives across different kinds of businesses, which has been a key consideration when initiating the study.

2.5.2 Secondary data

In addition to empirical data obtained through the use of interviews and questionnaire, various published data has served as secondary data for the purpose of the study (Saunders et al., 2016). This includes academic articles, news articles, industry reports, publications by NGOs and consultancies, company information including sustainability reports, annual reports, and company websites. The data was used to 1) contextualise the challenge with plastic pollution and 2) bring additional points to the analysis and 3) to verify the findings obtained in the interviews through triangulation (Saunders et al., 2016).

2.5.2.1 Literature review

The literature review as a methodology has been conducted to stimulate theoretical sensitivity and allow for concepts used by others to be used in relation to the data collected in this master's thesis (Gibson & Brown, 2009). The review was systematically organised with a starting point in academic literature from lectures taught at Copenhagen Business School with relevance to the chosen research question. Different scientific journals were thereby chosen after which cross-references allowed for more key research to be chosen. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Supply Chain Management (SCM) were identified as relevant concepts for the purpose of this research. After having identified the themes, the search was narrowed to several relevant keywords; "sustainability", "green supply chains", and "circular economy", which were connected to SCM and "philanthropy", "marketing", and "strategy" were connected to CSR. After having conducted the

search, the literature was grouped according to similar theoretical arguments, same distinctive use of concepts and contrasted with other research to identify similarities and differences and track development in the relevant concepts (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Publications from NGOs and consultancies were drawn on to further contextualise this new area of research. Even though the topic is yet to gain traction within academic research, the review has served to situate the current work into existing theoretical literature.

2.6 Research reliability and data validity

As mentioned above in considerations regarding research philosophy, the aim of the paper is to explore the topic in-depth and thus not to produce generalisable findings. This is in accordance with the chosen research design. The research design had to consider two goals; 1) all links of the production-consumption supply chain had to be covered; and 2) the timeframe of the thesis process was limited. Therefore, it was decided to carry out one interview with each firm to accommodate this. In order to ensure that the research design led to a desirable exploration of the topic, secondary data was drawn on, which has served to overcome limitations of only conducting one interview with each company. Additionally, this has also served to address potential biases, where the secondary data, such as sustainability reports, have been used to verify the information obtained through the interviews. Hence, triangulation has been conducted by combining the empirical data with published data sources to avoid potential biases (Saunders et al., 2016). This increases the validity of the findings by reducing the influence of personal biases of the interviewees (ibid).

Considerations related to the researcher's role in the data collection process was also considered (Saunders et al., 2016). Triangulation has also served to overcome biases when analysing the data material from the interviews. Informant verification - allowing for interviewees to sign off on findings from the interviews - was used to avoid potential biases stemming from a wrong interpretation of the information provided by the respondents (ibid). This allowed for verification of the information and the interpretation of the data used in this research. Because the interviews were conducted in Danish, the subsequent informant verification also served to account for misinterpretation in the translation.

The above-mentioned data validation has increased the reliability of the study. Additionally, the thorough and transparent description of data collection serves the purpose of increasing replicability of the study and further increases the reliability. This has been done to ensure a high quality of the

research. Having established the methodological considerations, the literature review will be presented in the following part 3.

Part 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction to literature review

This literature review serves to provide an overview of existing research within CSR and SCM with relevance for the present study. Moreover, it will set the scene for the empirical findings. The review is divided into two parts according to the two concepts. Since corporate initiatives on plastic have not yet been explored in academic literature, relevant industry and consultancy reports are also included in this review.

The first part considers literature within CSR drawing on relevant conceptualisations of CSR. The reviewed themes are; CSR as a marketing strategy, the stakeholder perspective on CSR, and CSR as a strategic tool. The second part of the literature review considers relevant research on sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) and includes SSCM and stakeholder theory as well as existing literature on SSCM and circular economy. Both concepts (CSR and SCM) are reviewed from a practical angle by including the above-mentioned industry reports.

3.2 Justification for chosen literature themes

The justification for choosing to review literature within the academic field of CSR is that corporate initiatives on reducing plastic often can be seen as a part of companies' CSR. These initiatives range from rather small CSR initiatives or may be implemented in the overall company strategy or business model. As will be discussed below, CSR takes many forms, and it is to various degrees investigated whether it should be kept as a small, arm's length initiatives characterised in research as a philanthropic add-on, or if it should be - as other researchers suggest - incorporated into the overall business strategy.

Some of the plastic used may be produced or consumed in other links of the supply chain than the company itself. When companies have to change their products or production methods - be it because of CSR initiatives or changes in the overall strategy - it, therefore, influences their supply chain. Hence, the other field of reviewed literature is SCM. Because the nature of the research topic brings companies to focus on sustainability in their supply chains or even circular economy, these are the topics further reviewed in that section.

Common for both areas of research, the academic fields of CSR and SCM have not yet looked directly on corporate actions addressing plastic pollution. Hence, the areas are reviewed to provide a contextual understanding of the topic of the study. Throughout the review, CSR activities and

sustainability initiatives will be used interchangeably as this is supported by various authors (Linnanen et al., 2002; Marrewijk, 2002).

3.3 Corporate Social Responsibility

The discussion about companies and the expectation of their socially responsible behaviour has been widely debated. Milton Friedman famously said that: *“there is one and only one social responsibility of business - to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits...”* (1962, p. 133). By stating this, he highlights that companies should only focus on creating profits and that this is the sole objective of a business. However, development over time and trends of CSR policies seem to imply that businesses need to consider their social responsibility as well.

3.3.1 CSR as a philanthropic add-on

It is widely acknowledged that Bowen (1953) was the first to define CSR: *“It [Social Responsibility] refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society”*. (Bowen, 1953, p. 6). Carroll’s vastly quoted CSR-pyramid is in line with Bowen’s understanding and classifies CSR as a four-dimensional concept consisting of corporate philanthropy on top of the corporation’s economic, legal and ethical responsibilities (Carroll, 1979; 1991). Carroll further states that philanthropy entails a contribution of a company’s resources to the community and improving the quality of life (ibid). In this early CSR definition, Carroll thereby posits that CSR not necessarily needs to be rooted in a company’s mission, vision or strategy, but merely is about improving society with a voluntary contribution, which is either financial or rooted in human resources. Moreover, Carroll’s view on CSR is normative; there is an expectation within society, which is brought upon the company that it has to be good, be ethical, obey the law and be profitable.

Following Carroll and Bowen, companies have an obligation to focus on more than profits - as Friedman stated. It is expected that companies should contribute with their resources to improve society and the overall quality of life. Carroll argues that profitability is the mere foundation of existence of the company, but that it is expected to both obey the law, be fair and contribute to society. Thus, Carroll extends the responsibility of the company to a further degree than Friedman (1962). Following Carroll (1979; 1991), CSR can be viewed as economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic add-ons to the company’s existing operations. Hence, the practical implication of this definition of CSR becomes that companies can have CSR as a separate, good cause for society - but it needs not to be strategically rooted in the company.

3.3.2 CSR as a marketing strategy

CSR has also been discussed by marketing scholars focusing primarily on how it can be used as a marketing tool to brand the company. Among other disciplines, this entails CSR as a branding tool and CSR reporting.

Corporate branding and CSR have traditionally been two separate areas within business strategy literature because corporate branding has comprised a broader range of characteristics communicated to consumers (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009). However, within recent years more have acknowledged the need for incorporating not only product-related features but also the CSR strategy of the company into its corporate brand (ibid). Werther and Chandler (2005) are in accordance with this view and state that corporations can even use effective CSR as insurance against problems that will undermine the brand in the future. This further entails that CSR is incorporated systematically in the entire organisation (ibid).

Hildebrand et al. (2011) agree with the authors above and position CSR as a corporate branding tool and argue that this is “*making it [edit: CSR] a pivotal instrument of corporate marketing*” (p. 4). Interpreting on CSR as a branding tool, it means that CSR can be used strategically by companies to shape the corporate identity of the company. Hence, this goes against Carroll’s argument of CSR as a philanthropic add-on independent of the corporate strategy, mission or vision. Elaborating on the marketing view, CSR can be used as a tool to brand a corporation and foster a certain corporate identity - i.e. not just to make society a better place. This also influences how corporations should design their CSR strategies because they become a tool the company can utilise both to engage their employees, to communicate its corporate reputation to its external stakeholders (Hildebrand et al., 2011), but also to protect the brand from problems going forward (Werther & Chandler, 2005). The practical implication is, therefore, wider than Carroll’s, because it has to resonate with the brand and thus, be somewhat aligned with the corporation and its strategy.

Even though CSR as a marketing tool is widely acknowledged, it mostly focuses on the link from companies to consumers. Moreover, Porter et al. (2003) argue that CSR as marketing removes focus from social impact towards publicity, the strategic element of CSR falls short. The reason being that companies using CSR as a marketing tool focus on improving goodwill rather than nourishing their competitive position (ibid). Following this assertion, CSR as a marketing tool provides on perspective on CSR, but not the whole picture. The literature review will, therefore, investigate CSR applied in a broader context than only marketing and review research based on the notion that companies can work strategically with CSR.

3.3.3 The link between CSR and strategy

Galbreath (2009) agrees with Porter et al. (2003) argues for strategic CSR but disagrees with Siegel and McWilliams by claiming that CSR - in order to be strategic - needs to be rooted in either competitive advantage, company, strategic issues, markets, customer needs or resources. Galbreath argues that only when companies manage to incorporate CSR into their strategy, they can gain a competitive advantage (ibid). Thus, by proactively incorporating CSR into their strategy, instead of reactively responding to CSR, firms can obtain a competitive advantage.

Bonn and Fisher (2011) and Perrott (2015) similarly argue that companies should view sustainability as an integrated part of the overall business strategy. This point is supported by the business world, where a study from 2010 shows that 96 % of the surveyed CEOs view sustainability as an area that needs to be integrated with company strategy and operation (Accenture & UN Global Impact, 2010). Sustainability should be a part of the strategic decision-making process if companies want to succeed in achieving a sustainable business (Bonn & Fisher, 2011).

Palmer and Flanagan (2016) study corporate sustainability strategies with a particular focus on sustainability goals. As these goals are more frequently an incorporated part of sustainability strategies, the study serves to shed a light on how companies commit themselves to sustainability (ibid). The authors group the goals based on the Triple Bottom Line pillars of people, planet and profit (ibid). The majority of goals address planet issues, where goals on emissions are the most prevalent (ibid). Least sustainability goals are found to focus on profit, however, the authors argue that measures on planet and people can have an effect on profit (ibid). Falling in between the categories, many goals address processes within sustainability involving aspects of supplier sustainability and engaging with stakeholders outside the company to jointly look at sustainability practises (ibid).

Research has also been focusing on working strategically with CSR in the case of strategic partnerships. Partnerships can be between corporate actors and NGOs, corporate actors and governments, governments and NGOs, and partnerships between all three parties (Selsky et al., 2005). Establishing a strategic partnership with non-profit organisations can be mutually beneficial for both parties (Lafferty et al., 2006) where companies provide revenue sources in exchange for improved image and bottom line (Park et al., 2004). Similar points are made by Schumate et al., (2010) who argue that corporate-NGO partnerships can facilitate social, economic, cultural, and political capital in joint creation.

Based on this section, it can be established that these authors argue that companies should strive to work strategically with CSR, but the question is whether working strategically CSR can provide companies with a competitive advantage, research on this will be reviewed in the following section.

3.3.4 CSR as a competitive advantage

Multiple authors have discussed whether there are any advantages of CSR and how to reap them. Porter et al. (2003) argued that CSR, in the form of corporate givings, can contribute to a company's competitive advantage, if given strategically. More specifically, the authors argue that donations should be given to surrounding areas where the company operates and will result in both social and economic gains (Porter et al., 2003). Kuehn et al. (2014) follows along with this reasoning and argues that aligning internal managers and external stakeholders in a CSR strategy formulation will enable companies to find a strategic fit. Moreover, by engaging in sustainability work, companies can be inspired to new business opportunities and vice versa (ibid). In 2006, Porter and Kramer looked at CSR in a broader sense and argue that by integrating social initiatives in business strategies, companies can obtain a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter et al., 2006).

Siegel and McWilliams (2011) also argue that strategic CSR can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage in field of indirect effects of corporate reputation such as consumer loyalty or premium pricing, the means to attract and keep qualified human capital, or the ability to create co-specialised assets, but CSR can be profitable if carried out strategically (Siegel and McWilliams, 2011). However, they distinguish themselves from Porter et al. (2003; 2006) by arguing that the motive behind the CSR strategy pursued is irrelevant for the obtained, positive effect of CSR (Siegel and McWilliams, 2011). By claiming a link between CSR and profitability, Siegel and McWilliams shift the layers of Carroll's pyramid around; CSR is not an add-on but should be incorporated in the strategy to create profit. Moreover, CSR can be used in a broader sense than as a branding tool, which mostly affects the intangible asset such as brand value - as argued by Hildebrand et al (2011). This argument further goes against Werther and Chandler (2005), because they only see CSR as a damage limitation insurance incorporated in the organisation, but thus not as a core input in the corporate strategy.

Thus, by strategically utilising CSR, companies can differentiate themselves from their competitors and ultimately, create a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter et al., 2006; Siegel and McWilliams, 2011). As Kuehn et al. (2014) argue, CSR activities can also open up for new business opportunities. This goes against Carroll's idea of CSR as a philanthropic add-on because it has to

be interlinked with the company's core operation (i.e. the bottom layer in Carroll's pyramid) - and not a separate layer on top. However, by mentioning the reciprocity between external stakeholders as well as internal managers in deciding on CSR initiatives, Kuehn et al. (2014) opens up for a stakeholder perspective on CSR. This will be reviewed below.

3.3.5 The stakeholder perspective on CSR

As mentioned above, the CSR perspective outlines that companies have other obligations than solely satisfying their stockholders, i.e. the companies have other stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010). However, an important distinction is to be made between CSR and stakeholder theory: where CSR delineates businesses' responsibility to society, stakeholder theory outlines businesses' obligation to their firm-specific stakeholders (Forster & Brown, 2011).

Post (1978) cited in Freeman et al. (2010) argues that the interpenetration between firms and society determines the need for the firm to respond to its stakeholders. Post further elaborated that CSR was an "equilibrating mechanism" to balance the interests of all the corporation's stakeholders (ibid, p. 237). Supporters of the stakeholder theory argue that "*interests of specific stakeholder groups have to be considered in defining the purpose of the corporation*". (ibid, p. 242). Normally, stakeholders relevant for businesses have been customers and shareholders (Linnanen et al., 2002). However, with the increased focus on CSR, stakeholders relevant for business have been extended to comprise a wider audience such as the surrounding communities, employees, developing countries, and suppliers (ibid).

The inclusion of stakeholder theory has ultimately two consequences for the firm. Firstly, a firm cannot operate in isolation of its surrounding society. Secondly, the stakeholder theory means that the company cannot delineate its CSR strategy on its own but has to consider its various external and internal stakeholders in this formulation.

The stakeholder literature on CSR, therefore, posits an extra layer to both Werther and Chandler (2005) and Hildebrand et. al's (2010) position because the strategy formulation is influenced *by* stakeholders - not merely used strategically in a one-way communication *to* them. Consequently, the stakeholder perspective of CSR means that the firm cannot operate in isolation of its stakeholders - neither in its daily operations nor in the formulation of its CSR strategy. This does, however, not mean that corporations cannot utilise CSR initiatives strategically. In accordance with Bowen (1954), Friedman (1970), and Carroll (1979; 1991), the stakeholder theory also imposes a normative expectation on the business; they describe how firms live up the responsibility imposed

on them by their various internal and external stakeholders (Rodriguez et al., 2002 cited in Galbreath 2009), but do not offer any explanations on how CSR can be strategically linked with the firm's overall strategy as highlighted by Galbreath, 2009.

3.3.6 Practical investigations of CSR

McKinsey & Company has looked into the value of CSR programs and argues that CSR serves as a measure to enhance stakeholders' attitude of the companies' tangible actions and thus, leads to improved company reputations (Bonini et al., 2009). This report, therefore, underlines the argument put forward by Hildebrand et al., (2011). In addition to branding value, the study has found that CSR further leads to growth, increased returns on capital, improved risk management, and better management quality (ibid). This supports Siegel and MacWilliams findings of the link between CSR and profitability and underlines CSR goes further than damage limitation as argued by Werther and Chandler (2005). Similar points are put forward in an MIT survey that shows that the main benefits of sustainability actions are a positive effect on brand image, cost savings, competitive advantage and satisfaction among employees (Berns et al., 2009).

To gain most business and societal benefit from a CSR strategy, it requires that companies establish mutually beneficial - and hence strategic - partnerships in the field that they are already operating in (Keys et al., 2009). The authors take a different approach than Carroll (1979;1991), and divide CSR projects into four areas; managers' pet projects, philanthropy, propaganda and partnerships (Keys et al., 2009). According to the authors, the partnerships are the most desirable as these lead to both benefits to society and new business opportunities or business development (ibid). Moreover, CSR strategies need to be rooted in the company's business area in order for them to have the desired effect (ibid). This last finding supports Galbreath's argument about strategic CSR that needs to have a business motive (ibid; Galbreath, 2009). Hence, this has the practical implication that companies should strive for strategic and mutually beneficial partnerships when designing their CSR strategy.

3.3.7 Sub-conclusion on CSR literature review

To sum up, companies who focus on CSR can either do so as a distanced initiative independent of their corporate strategy or work strategically with CSR and build up their strategy around it. The aim of this master's thesis is to contribute to the existing literature by extending the literature to investigate how respective case companies have worked specifically with plastic initiatives in relation to CSR. It will, therefore - among other things - be investigated, how the companies interviewed in this paper have proceeded with different ramifications of CSR initiatives on the plastic area if they

can be seen to have worked with plastic strategically, and what has influenced and shaped their respective initiatives.

3.4 Supply Chain Management

3.4.1 Sustainable Supply Chains and Circular Economy

When companies engage in CSR activities and sustainability actions, some authors argue that it transcends their organisational boundaries (Seuring et al., 2013). Therefore, sustainability efforts require that companies manage the links to their suppliers, which is supported by academic literature (Kovács, 2008; Brandenburg; 2014). According to Mentzer et al. (2001, p. 4) a supply chain can be defined as *“a set of three or more entities (organizations or individuals) directly involved in the upstream and downstream flows of products, services, finances and/or information from a source to a customer”*. Thus, this definition implies an interplay between various actors who are linked through an exchange of some sort that links them in the ‘chain’. SCM thus becomes the management of this chain in both upstream and downstream direction, and should preferably lead to a higher value for customers as well as reduced cost to the overall supply chain (Christopher, 2011).

Previously, research within SCM has focused on concepts such as lean, throughput, and consumer responsiveness (De Angelis, Howard and Miemczyk, 2018). The constant strive for optimisation of business processes has increased the vulnerability of supply chains and this has led to attention on supply chain risks (Christopher, 2011). Moreover, as companies are not only accountable for their own social and environmental performance but also their suppliers’ (Yang et al., 2016), there has been a rising tendency to couple sustainability with SCM (Christopher, 2011). A commonly cited definition of sustainability is the definition made by the Brundtland Commission (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018; Seuring & Müller, 2008) *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”* (WCED, 1987). Elkington (1998) makes the link between sustainable development and CSR by assessing companies based on their contribution to comprising financial, social, and environmental, which all contribute to sustainability (ibid). This is defined as the Triple Bottom Line (ibid). The focus on sustainability can ensure the supply chain and business continuity while simultaneously incorporating a focus on the environmental, social and economic aspects (Christopher, 2011).

Different terms and definitions are used in research that covers the linkage between SCM and sustainability (Ahi & Searcy, 2013). It is argued that SSCM broadens the conventional concept of SCM by incorporating dimensions of Elkington's Triple Bottom Line (Carter & Rogers, 2008; Seuring

& Müller, 2008; Ahi & Searcy, 2013). Extending the concept of SCM, Carter and Rogers (2008) defines SSCM as *“the strategic, transparent integration and achievement of an organization’s social, environmental, and economic goals in the systemic coordination of key interorganizational business processes for improving the long-term economic performance of the individual company and its supply chains”* (Carter & Rogers, 2008, p. 368). Ahi & Searcy (2013) add to the definition by arguing that SSCM also satisfies stakeholder requirements and improves competitiveness and resilience of the organization.

The increased focus on companies’ supply chains and the sustainability of these, has led to researchers proposing new ways of assessing sustainability across the entire supply chain instead of only focusing on the focal company (Azevedo et al., 2016; Esfahbodi et al., 2016; Montabon et al., 2016). Montabon et al. (2016) argue that sustainability practices should not only focus on reducing negative environmental and social impact when it makes sense from a profit perspective but instead, companies need to consider environmental and social matters before concentrating on profit.

To round off the section on sustainable SCM, the last part serves to explain the concept of circular economy in relation to SSCM. In recent years, there has been an increase in the literature discussing the concept of circular economy (CE) in relation to SSCM (De Angelis, Howard and Miemczyk, 2018). The concept of circular economy can be defined as an economy where: *“the value of products and materials is maintained for as long as possible; waste and resource use are minimized, and resources are kept within the economy when a product has reached the end of its life, to be used again and again to create further value”* (European Commission, 2015).

As visible from the quote by the European Commission (2015), circular economy is distinguished from the original SCM school of thought, which focuses on optimising the linear process from the production of raw material to the end consumers (De Angelis, Howard, and Miemczyk, 2018). However, the constant optimisation of linear supply chains came under pressure as changing environmental conditions and general exposure to disruption arose (ibid). As further described above, an increased focus on sustainability in supply chains incorporated the dimensions of the triple bottom line to assess companies’ sustainability efforts (Carter & Rogers, 2008) while simultaneously increasing the resilience of the supply chains (Ahi & Searchy, 2013). Increasing sustainability in supply chains also led to a focus away from the linear manner to a closed-loop supply chain as put forward by Guide and Wassenhove (2009). Apart from sustainability, closed-loop supply chains also consider recovering value from returned products, and how end-users consume the products, get

repairs and services, and ultimately dispose of the products (Abbey and Guide, 2012). Circular economy additionally considers environmental loops and builds on three overarching principles: 1) natural systems should be regenerated, 2) waste and pollution should be designed out of the system, and 3) materials and products should be kept in use (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

The practical implications of resorting to circular economy have been looked into by McKinsey & Company. First of all, there are environmental benefits in consequence of the circular economy, and by focusing more on renewable resources, both nations and companies will become more resilient (McKinsey & Company et al., 2015). Second of all, businesses will have to change their business models and across their supply chains (ibid). De Angelis, Howard, and Miemczyk (2018) have looked into specific implications for businesses. The overall implications reached by the authors are; focus will shift from merely ownership of the products to leasing, the closed- and open-loops of materials must be considered and may cause challenges geographically, it requires close collaboration both across industries and supply chains, and there is a need for pressure from political stand to raise the bar of minimum requirements (ibid). Geissdoerfer et al. (2018) adds that circularity should not only be addressed in relation to supply chains, but also should be integrated into the entire business model and that this will lead to both a circular economy and sustainable development.

3.4.2 Stakeholder perspective and SSCM

As evident from the above, companies are dependent of various stakeholders both upstream and downstream in their supply chain, which has led to various research linking stakeholder management and SCM. Within this field of research, scholars have also looked into stakeholder management and SSCM. Research on this will be reviewed in this section.

Brookhaus et al. (2013) look at the implementation of sustainability initiatives within supply chains. They distinguish between a “mandated” and a “collaborative” approach to sustainability implementation (ibid). Despite general consensus of a collaborative arrangement being the desired outcome, practices are characterized by a mandated approach where initiatives are forced upstream upon participants, often manufacturers or suppliers, by more powerful players such as retailers that possess a stronger bargaining power (ibid). Further, a lack of shared benefits discourages upstream suppliers to engage in SSCM beyond compliance with downstream requirements (ibid). The study stresses that in order to gain the most from implementing sustainability initiatives, companies should focus on collaborative constellations that take a long-term perspective with an opportunity to achieve competitive advantages across the supply chain (ibid). The findings are supported by Co et al.

(2009), who argue that collaborative stakeholder management and interdependency within supply chains is the most beneficial, whereas a low level of trust will hinder cooperation between companies.

Zhu et al. (2007) take an external view on SSCM and investigate potential benefits of SSCM. The study argues from an institutional view and defines three different types of institutional pressure stemming from the market, the governments and competition. The study concludes that increased pressure from external stakeholders will influence organizational practices and lead to increased environmental performance (ibid). Wolf (2014) similarly finds that external stakeholder pressure affects SSCM but further argues that companies can utilise SSCM proactively to protect their brand. This has a practical implication for supply chain managers because they can increase the company's sustainability performance through SSCM - and not just protect the corporate brand.

Gualandris and Kalchschmidt (2014) take a narrower approach compared to the above and investigate how a particular group of external stakeholders impact firms to adopt SSCM practices. In particular, the authors argue that customer pressure, as defined by pressure from direct customers and end consumers, positively and significantly affects SSCM practices forward. Kumar and Rahman (2015) similarly argue that consumer awareness of the environment along with stricter environmental laws and competition have pushed manufacturing companies to incorporate sustainability practices. These studies imply that external stakeholders in the form of direct customers and end consumers put an upstream pressure on focal companies and affect sustainability processes of companies.

3.4.3 Practical investigations on SSCM

A report written by Bancelhon (2011) supports the statement that sustainable supply chains are beneficial. The report zooms in on mutually beneficial gains to both buyers and suppliers from sustainability (Bancelhon, 2011). Once implemented successfully, the suppliers can gain productivity, improved product quality, increased competitiveness, and cost-savings. The benefits of the buyer range from; smaller environmental footprint, stronger relations with suppliers and greater trust in supplier compliance, less supply chain risk and therefore also reduced costs (ibid). Bancelhon (2011) further puts forward that the cost of implementing a sustainability program in supply chains can be significantly decreased by collaborating with third parties and peers.

The current state of sustainable supply chain has been assessed by EY and UN Global Compact, and has concluded that by focusing on sustainability in supply chains, *"companies can enhance processes, save costs, increase labor productivity, uncover product innovation, achieve market*

differentiation and have a significant impact on society" (EY, 2016). The interviewed companies have been divided into five different categories (EY, 2016). Based on interviews with 100 supply chain executives from 70 companies, the report highlighted that companies' sustainable supply chains vary from auditing and risk assessment of suppliers in the lowest category to the most mature who collaborate with their supply chain in product design and development and share value with their suppliers (ibid). Further, the report supported that there is a growing tendency of collaboration across companies, academia, and NGOs when it comes to making a greater sustainability impact (ibid).

3.4.4 Sub-conclusion on literature review on SCM

From the reviewed literature on SCM it can be seen how sustainability has found its way into company processes, which increasingly demands companies to look beyond the boundaries of their focal firm to implement sustainable practices across their supply chains. Some authors have suggested that linear supply chain practices should be changed to a circular view instead, to increase sustainable practices even further. The increasing pressure on companies also emanates from various stakeholders comprising of groups both in and outside the companies' supply chains. Especially, an upstream pressure for sustainability has been looked into, but authors argue that a collaborative approach is most beneficial to enhance sustainability across supply chains.

3.5 The outcome of the literature review

The reviewed literature has provided a theoretical and conceptual understanding of two concepts relevant to the present study; CSR and SCM. As stated, the topic of corporate initiatives to reduce the adverse effects of plastic pollution has not been investigated in academic literature. Thus, no gap has been identified as the entire topic is new to academic literature. Instead, the literature review has provided an understanding of how companies can work with CSR initiatives and how increasing sustainability practices oftentimes exceed firm boundaries to also comprise supply chains. The next part will present the empirical findings from the interviews, and in part 5 these will be discussed in relation to the reviewed literature.

Part 4: Empirical findings

4.1 Case companies: the plastic journey

For the purpose of this research, six representative companies along the production-consumption supply chain, who have all incorporated initiatives on reducing the adverse effect of plastic pollution, have been carefully selected. The case companies are: Faerch, COOP, Rema 1000, H&M, Carlsberg and Helsam, and an overview of the interviews conducted can be seen in Table 1 below. The companies are different in various instances, among the most decisive for this thesis; they operate in different industries, they vary in size, the majority is international while one company is Danish, and they have different positions along the production-consumption supply chain of plastic. But the key aspects of the companies are that they have all acknowledged the need for action on the issue of plastic pollution and have all initiated an initiative or an actual strategy to tackle the use of plastic. Before proceeding to a presentation of the findings from the interviews, the various companies' journeys to where they are today will briefly be delineated, primarily focusing on each company's focus on plastic. The purpose of this section is therefore to give an overview of the companies and to contextualise the subsequent analysis of their actions. For illustrative purposes, a model of a generic supply chain is used to highlight the companies' respective positions in the supply chain.

Company	Interviewee	Date and time of interview
Faerch	Henrik B. Andersen Group Technology Development Director Cited as: Faerch, HA, 2019	13th of February 2019 10:00-11:00
COOP	Mathias Hvam CSR Project Manager Cited as: COOP, MH, 2019	15th of February 2019 10:00-11:00
Carlsberg	Simon Boas Hoffmeyer Group Sustainability Director Cited as: Carlsberg, SBH, 2019	22nd of February 2019 15:00-16:00
Rema 1000	Anders René Jensen Marketing and Procurement Director Cited as: Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019	27th of February 2019 11:30-12:30
H&M	Mia Møgelgaard Sustainability Manager Cited as: H&M, MM, 2019	11th of March 2019 13:00-14:00
Helsam	Kenneth Guldager CEO Cited as: Helsam, KG, 2019	Questionnaire received on the 11th of March 2019.

Table 1: Overview of the interviews conducted

4.1.1 Faerch

Faerch is a Danish plastic packaging producer founded in Holstebro with nearly 1,300 employees (Faerch, 2019a). Faerch has been in the plastic industry for half a century, and with production sites spread over Europe, the company considers itself a strong international player (ibid). Faerch's customers comprise of food producers, but Faerch is also engaged in collaboration with supermarkets regarding packaging design (Faerch, HA, 2019). Faerch's journey from virgin plastic packaging into taking a lead role in sustainable packaging has evolved rapidly over the last 10 years, according to the Group Technology Development Officer (GTDO), Henrik Andersen (Faerch, HA, 2019).

According to Henrik Andersen (Faerch, HA, 2019), Faerch has moved through three overarching phases. The first phase, which started in the 1990s, was characterised by the production of entirely new plastic with no recycled material (ibid). Faerch believed that its unique selling proposition (USP) lay in producing the best quality food packaging, which was only obtained by producing virgin plastic with no previous use (ibid). However, when the supermarkets started demanding recycled content, Faerch had to move away from its original USP (ibid). In the second phase, which started around 2010, Faerch increased its share of recycled content (ibid). The advantages of this were twofold: the company saved CO₂-emissions and reduced costs while simultaneously caring for both the environment and its stakeholders (ibid).

What characterises Faerch's third phase is the focus on circular economy. With the recent acquisition of the Dutch company, 4PET Group, in H2 of 2018, Faerch has become one of the world's first integrated plastic packaging suppliers to retrieve a circular economy in its production (Faerch, HA, 2019). The acquisition enables Faerch to recycle the plastic trays it produces, thereby converting recycled plastic into a valuable resource (ibid). With this particular shift, Faerch takes plastic production from linear to circular and thereby plastic becomes a sustainable solution for food packaging (Faerch, 2019b). Further to this, Faerch has been in close collaboration with supermarket chains in both the United Kingdom and in Denmark to consider ways to increase the amount of recycled plastic in trays (Faerch, 2018a; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Underlining its transformation from plastic producer to packaging specialist, the company recently decided to change its name to Faerch (Faerch, 2019c).

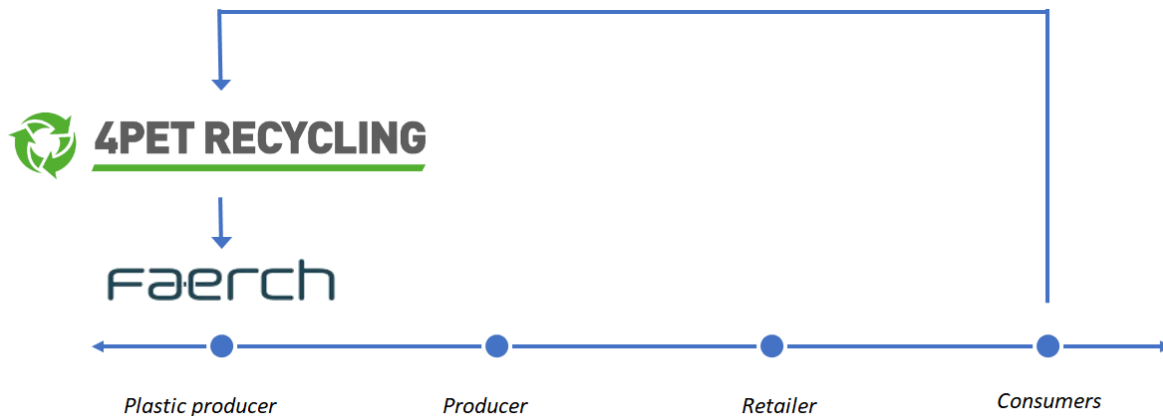


Figure 3: *Faerch's position in the supply chain*

4.1.2 COOP

With a market share of 35.8 %, COOP Denmark (COOP) is the biggest retailer in Denmark (COOP 2018a). In Denmark, COOP comprises of Fakta, Kvickly, Super Brugsen, Dagli' Brugsen, COOP mad, and Irma (ibid). In essence, COOP is a cooperative meaning that COOP is owned by its 1,700,000 Danish members. According to Mathias Hvam (COOP, MH, 2019), one of COOP's CSR Project Managers, who is responsible for the company's plastic strategy, COOP prides itself on its corporate social responsibility strategy and initiatives, which sets them apart from its competitors. COOP embarked on an ambitious packaging strategy in the summer of 2017 and has released this strategy in 2018 (ibid). By being a retailer, COOP has to manage its initiatives on plastic use and packaging next to other sustainability goals such as CO₂-emissions, reducing food waste, promoting ecology among others (ibid).

The overall foundation of COOP's packaging strategy is circular economy (COOP, MH, 2019). COOP's packaging strategy consists of six different steps with the ambition of setting a new standard for sustainable packaging in the retail industry (COOP 2018b). The goal for plastic covers; all packaging on COOP's own brands should be recyclable materials, wherever possible; COOP's own packaging should be produced by recycled materials; and COOP wants to reduce the use of conventional plastic and single-use plastic by 25 % in 2025 (ibid). The last goal should be obtained by phasing out single-use plastic and unnecessary packaging as well as converting to bio-based or recycled materials where possible (ibid). COOP has also made a guide on the above strategy to guide and support its suppliers and collaborators to move in the same, sustainable direction.

The total impact is an important aspect from a CSR-perspective when prioritising plastic initiatives in COOP (COOP, MH, 2019). This is also the reason why plastic bags were chosen as the first

initiative, as these contain a large amount of plastic (ibid). Some of the other initiatives include recycled packaging material for cleaning products and a change in plastic trays for meat products - both initiatives for COOP's own brand Änglemark (COOP, 2019) However, CSR-initiatives need to be aligned with commercial interests, which also affect the packaging strategy and the corresponding initiatives (COOP, MH, 2019).

Figure 4: COOP's position in the supply chain

Rema 1000 is a Norwegian discount retailer and is a part of the Reitan Group. Rema 1000 entered the Danish market in 1994, and by the end of 2018 more than 320 stores were present in Denmark (Rema 1000, 2019a). Rema 1000's motto is "Discount with attitude", which was also the reason behind its early stance on plastic use, according to the Marketing and Procurement Director in Denmark, Anders René Jensen (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Overall, Rema 1000 is concerned with people, food waste, health, and the environment, which it tries to address through its CSR strategy (Rema 1000, 2019a).

for private-label cleaning products, and more sustainable plastic trays for meat products (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019).



Figure 5: Rema 1000's position in the supply chain

4.1.4 Carlsberg Group

With a history that dates back to 1847, Carlsberg Group (Carlsberg) has a long tradition within the market for beverages (Carlsberg, 2019a) and is among the leading brewery companies in the world (JP Morgan, 2018). Besides the Carlsberg brand, the Danish company holds brands like Tuborg, Kronenbourg, and Baltika and has a large global presence in more than 150 markets (Carlsberg, 2019a; Carlsberg, 2019c). According to Simon Boas Hoffmeyer (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019), the journey towards Carlsberg's current sustainability position started 12 years ago, where the company took the initial steps and ensured a joint action for all the companies within the Group (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). This resulted in its 2017-2030 sustainability strategy on the foundation: "together towards zero" (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019; Carlsberg, 2019b).

Carlsberg's sustainability strategy comprises four areas; zero carbon footprint, zero water waster, zero accidents, and zero irresponsible drinking (Carlsberg, 2019b). The first point, zero carbon footprint, covers emission-reducing initiatives such as packaging (including plastic), which is responsible for 40 % of Carlsberg's overall CO₂ emissions (ibid). Therefore, Carlsberg does not only look at the brewery emissions but also at emissions stemming from supply chain and all the way to the end consumers (ibid). By using less packaging material, Carlsberg reduces its CO₂-footprint (ibid). Carlsberg thus focuses on reducing CO₂ from its supply chain by 15 % in 2022 and 30 % in 2030, but the company does not have an outright plastic strategy. This means that where plastic can be reduced, reused, removed or recycled, Carlsberg will do so or find innovative solutions to do so (ibid).

In 2018, Carlsberg launched two plastic initiatives, the 'Snap Pack' and recycled shrink wrap, with the aim of reducing plastic consumption with a corresponding positive effect on CO₂ emissions

(Carlsberg, 2019b). The idea with the ‘Snap Pack’ began in 2014 and as it reached the market in 2018, it was the first sustainability initiative Carlsberg had supported by significant marketing resources and it received a lot of public attention (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). It reduced the plastic consumption of the multipacks by 76 % (Carlsberg, 2019b).



Figure 6: Carlsberg’s position in the supply chain

4.1.5 H&M Group

Through nine separate brands, the H&M Group (H&M) sells a wide range of products within fashion, accessories, beauty, home articles and food (H&M Group, 2019a; H&M Group, 2019c). With approximately 4,900 stores in 72 different countries, the company has a considerable scale within the global fashion industry (H&M Group, 2019a). H&M aspires to take a leading role in making the fashion industry more sustainable, which is clearly marked as one of three key ambitions in its sustainability strategy (H&M Group, 2019b). This vision was also expressed by Mia Møgelgaard (H&M, MM, 2019). She explained that H&M seeks to be a frontrunner within sustainability due to its size and that the company’s size simultaneously provides H&M with certain resources compared to smaller brands (H&M, MM, 2019).

Another key ambition in H&M’s sustainability strategy is to be “100 % circular and renewable”, which looks across the whole value chain (H&M Group, 2019b). The company has defined a packaging strategy where plastic is a major consideration due to its impact on the environment (ibid). H&M has committed to a number of goals within the packaging strategy that builds on a circular mindset (H&M Group, 2019b). Additionally, and through its commitment to the New Plastic Economy Global Commitment, H&M has committed to; “take action to eliminate problematic and unnecessary plastic packaging by 2025”; “take action to move from single-use towards reuse models where relevant by 2025”, and “100 % of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025” (H&M Group, 2019b, p. 35).

Each brand has the freedom to launch sustainability initiatives within the overall sustainability strategy defined at the Group level (H&M, MM, 2019). In addition to this, the country-specific

sustainability managers are free to look at trends in the market and initiate sustainability actions (ibid). Among the Danish H&M initiatives is a fee on shopping bags in an effort to disincentivize consumers to request a shopping bag and thereby bring down the amount of plastic (ibid; TV2 Nyhederne, 2018b). The profit is donated to the charity organisation WWF. At Group level, the company has introduced special clothes collections and accessories made from old plastic bottles and fishing nets, among others (ibid).



Figure 7: *H&M's position in the supply chain*

4.1.6 Helsam

Helsam is a Danish health food company with products ranging from food, skin care, nutritional supplements and nature healer products. It has 165 employees and 28 stores across Denmark (Helsam, 2019a). Although smaller in size compared to other companies in the sample, the company has a broad representation in Denmark considering their amount of nationwide stores. Helsam has currently introduced two initiatives to encourage reuse and reduce plastic. The company has designed a more sustainable shopping bag produced by 80 % recycled material and is charging the customer a fee for the bag (Helsam, 2019c). Moreover, the company has introduced a string bag produced by recycled bottles (ibid). The company is in dialogue with its suppliers to look at ways to reuse packaging materials (Helsam, KG, 2019). Helsam collaborates with the organisation Plastic Change in an effort to reuse plastic as well as to reduce the consumption of plastic (Helsam, 2019c). The company aspires to be a company that other companies look to follow when considering sustainability initiatives (Helsam, KG, 2019).



Figure 8: *Helsam's position in the supply chain*

4.1.7 Representative case companies

The companies selected for this master's thesis were carefully chosen because they represent various stages in the supply chain of companies dealing with plastic. The supply chain of plastic is pictured below with each company placed in its respective place. Faerch, which is a business-to-business (B2B) packaging producer, is placed first in the supply chain. Secondly, the brewery, Carlsberg, is placed as a producer, which is still considered B2B because the company sells its products to retailers. The reason why Carlsberg is not in line with Faerch is that Carlsberg does not produce the packaging itself.

Third in line in the retailer group comes the two supermarket retailers, COOP and Rema 1000, which distribute the products to customers - both their own private label products and other branded products. At the same stage as the retailers, H&M and Helsam are also placed as retailers which sell their products directly to customers. As such it can be seen that the companies represent all parts of the supply chain from the producer all the way to the end user (the consumers). This provides a unique view into the supply chain of plastic and different views on corporate initiatives on phasing out plastic across the supply chain.

4.2 Empirical findings from the case interviews

By having presented the case companies and their journeys toward their current plastic agenda, the empirical findings will be presented. They are divided into two overall sections according to the coding of the primary data as described in part 2. The first part serves to provide an overview and categorisation of the companies' initiatives to reduce the adverse effects of plastic pollution. The second part explores the various factors that have influenced the companies' initiatives on plastic pollution.

4.2.1 To what extent do the companies work with initiatives?

Since actions concerning plastic are often associated with CSR initiatives, this section aims to explore, to what extent the companies work with initiatives to reduce the adverse effects of plastic pollution. Moreover, this section explores if the case companies work strategically with plastic and whether they see this as contributing to a first mover advantage. From the empirical data, it is evident that the companies differ in their initiatives to tackle plastic pollution. Based on the empirical data combined with secondary corporate data, the case companies have been placed along a two-dimensional scale that ranges from 'few CSR initiatives on plastic' to a 'plastic strategy as a business model'. This is shown in Figure 9. Each company's scope of the plastic initiatives and the extent to which plastic is integrated into its business model will be investigated below. The initiatives and the companies' focus on plastic are not evaluated but are merely used to make the below categorisation on how the companies work differently with their plastic efforts.

4.2.1.1 *Helsam and Carlsberg*

Helsam

Helsam has initiated two CSR initiatives with a specific focus to reduce and reuse plastic, but the company does not as such have a clearly defined strategy for its plastic use or a packaging strategy (Helsam, KG, 2019; Helsam, 2019c). The company aspires to expand its efforts and is in dialogue with its suppliers to look at other ways to tackle the issue (Helsam, KG, 2019). Helsam is collaborating with the NGO Plastic Change, which allows the company to discuss potential future actions (Helsam, 2019c). Helsam's current actions on the plastic area are characterised as CSR initiatives aligned with the company's CSR ambition, which aims to improve the climate, the environment and working conditions (Helsam, 2019b).

Carlsberg

Carlsberg looks at plastic as a way to reduce its CO₂-emissions across its supply chain (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019; Carlsberg, 2019b). This implies that Carlsberg's actions are guided by the goal to eliminate its carbon footprint by 2030, where plastic is among the possible solutions to reach this (Carlsberg, 2019b). Due to Carlsberg's position in the supply chain, the company does not have clear targets on reducing plastic but instead focuses on reducing overall emissions stemming from its packaging (Carlsberg, 2019b; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Therefore, Carlsberg is interested in promoting sustainable packaging solutions, but the company is also aware of its role regarding plastic consumption; *"There is one thing that is important to understand, so, we brew beer. We do not own the packaging firms, and we are also not supposed to do that"* (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). The

objectives of its CSR initiatives were clear; it should make a contribution to the bottom line, and it should fulfil more ambitions than just complying with minimum standards (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Carlsberg's actions concerning plastic ('Snap Pack' and shrink wrap) can be characterised as initiatives as part of its focus on reducing CO₂-emissions stemming from its packaging.

4.2.1.2 H&M, Rema 1000 and COOP

H&M

Similar to Carlsberg, H&M works with clearly defined areas in its sustainability strategy, which has a wider scope than just complying with minimum standards (H&M, MM, 2019). H&M's efforts to address plastic pollution fall under its goal to become 100 % circular and renewable (H&M Group, 2019b). Due to H&M's commitment to the New Plastic Economy Global Commitment, H&M has specific goals aimed at reducing pollution that stems from plastic (H&M Group, 2019b; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019). The engagement with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has had an impact on the strategic considerations; both in regard to knowledge-sharing on the plastic issue across the garment industry and in regards to circularity (H&M Group, 2019b; H&M, MM, 2019).

The plastic initiatives are characterised as a long-term strategy on reducing, reusing and eliminating plastic by 2025, with measurable results (H&M Group, 2019b; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019). Plastic and sustainability initiatives, in general, are approached strategically because this can increase resilience; *"...we believe that it [edit: sustainability] also has an economic gain and that it can ensure our business going forward"* (H&M, MM, 2019). More than resilience, it was also important for H&M to be at the forefront of sustainability. Being at the forefront is seen as a strength for H&M; *"...regardless of how customers respond to it [edit: sustainability], we believe that in 10-20-30 years from now, it [edit: sustainability] will be considered a hygiene factor..."* (H&M, MM, 2019).

Rema 1000 and COOP

Rema 1000 and COOP are placed next to H&M because these companies have aligned their sustainability strategies to address the plastic problem. Both companies have defined a specific packaging and plastic strategy within their overall sustainability strategy, which guides their actions and identifies how they assess their role in the plastic challenge (COOP, 2018b; Rema 1000, 2019b). These strategies outline the expected actions and targets with time horizons (ibid). The companies have already reduced plastic, phased out certain products, and redesigned several of their own products in order to commit to alleviating the problem of plastic pollution. Similar to H&M, both

companies have timelines on their strategies, which span from 2023 to 2030 (ibid), which also signals long-term planning when working with sustainability and CSR challenges.

4.2.1.3 Faerch

For obvious reasons, plastic is at the core of Faerch's business model and the company's strategic move towards recycled plastic and a circular mindset, as explained earlier, has permeated its overall business model. Faerch's strategic move to pursue upstream integration in its supply chain through the acquisition of 4PET also underlines the fact that its plastic strategy has had a decisive role for its business model and strategy. Furthermore, there is a belief that the market may end up with a short supply of reused plastic in the future because the current demand has increased rapidly in recent years (Faerch, HA, 2019). To accommodate a future short supply of plastic input that can be recycled, the company has acquired 4PET Group, a bottle and packaging recycling plant (ibid). Hence, considering the company's initiatives towards more sustainable solutions for plastic production, plastic is as an integrated part of the company's business model.

4.2.2 Categorising the companies

As shown in **Figure 9**, the companies have been divided into three groups starting with Helsam and Carlsberg whose work on dealing with plastic pollution can be characterised as CSR initiatives. H&M, Rema 1000, and COOP have all implemented plastic and packaging strategies with clear goals and measurable targets and are therefore working with plastic to a further extent than Helsam and Carlsberg. In comparison to H&M, COOP and Rema 1000 have already initiated their strategies, phased out several of their products, and have more clearly defined how they will obtain their goals. Faerch has plastic as the core of its business and has recently made a transition to a circular business model.



Figure 9: The extent of the companies' initiatives

4.2.3 Subconclusion

Three things can be highlighted from the above section about the companies and their actions on addressing plastic pollution. Firstly, plastic pollution can be tackled in various ways varying in scope and it also depends on the responsibility that the companies take on. Despite a distinction in the scope of the initiatives concerning the plastic, all companies have implemented strategic actions to fight the plastic challenge; spanning from CSR initiatives to a complete business model. Secondly, it is noteworthy that most companies stress that sustainability issues require long-term strategic planning because plastic is inherent in their businesses. Hence, when the challenge is fought via a CSR strategy, there is a tendency for long-term planning.

4.3 Factors influencing the various initiatives to fight plastic pollution

From the interviews, it was clear that various factors influenced the companies and the degree to which they work with their initiatives to fight plastic pollution. These will be explored in the forthcoming sections. While certain company characteristics have influenced the companies' actions, the empirical findings have discovered a range of factors deemed influential for the companies' various actions to address plastic pollution. Each section highlights relevant factors that have influenced the companies and is accompanied by figures to illustrate the different factors. However, it is important to bear in mind that there are several factors that have influenced the extent to which the companies work to reduce plastic pollution. Moreover, some factors were only mentioned by one or few of the companies and can therefore not be ascribed to the others. The figures serve as a tool to provide an understanding of the overall factors and whether or not these were experienced to influence the companies' actions positively or negatively.

The factors are divided into five overall categories each representing several factors. The categories are internal and external factors, motivation, communication, cooperation, and challenges. Some of the identified factors are more common across companies, while others are more company-specific in character. It should be noted, that the different company characteristics mentioned in section 4.1.7 (representative companies) may also count as factors, which can influence the companies' initiated actions.

4.3.1 Motivation

As shown above, the interviewed case companies vary a lot in size, value chain role, and scope regarding their implemented, strategic initiatives on phasing out plastic. Despite their differences, they have decided to take action on the plastic that enters their production, in their value chain or

the plastic that they pass onto or sell to their consumers. Therefore, it is interesting to see what motivates these companies, and how current trends including current consumer sentiment affect their decisions. The motivational factors identified are shown in Figure 10.

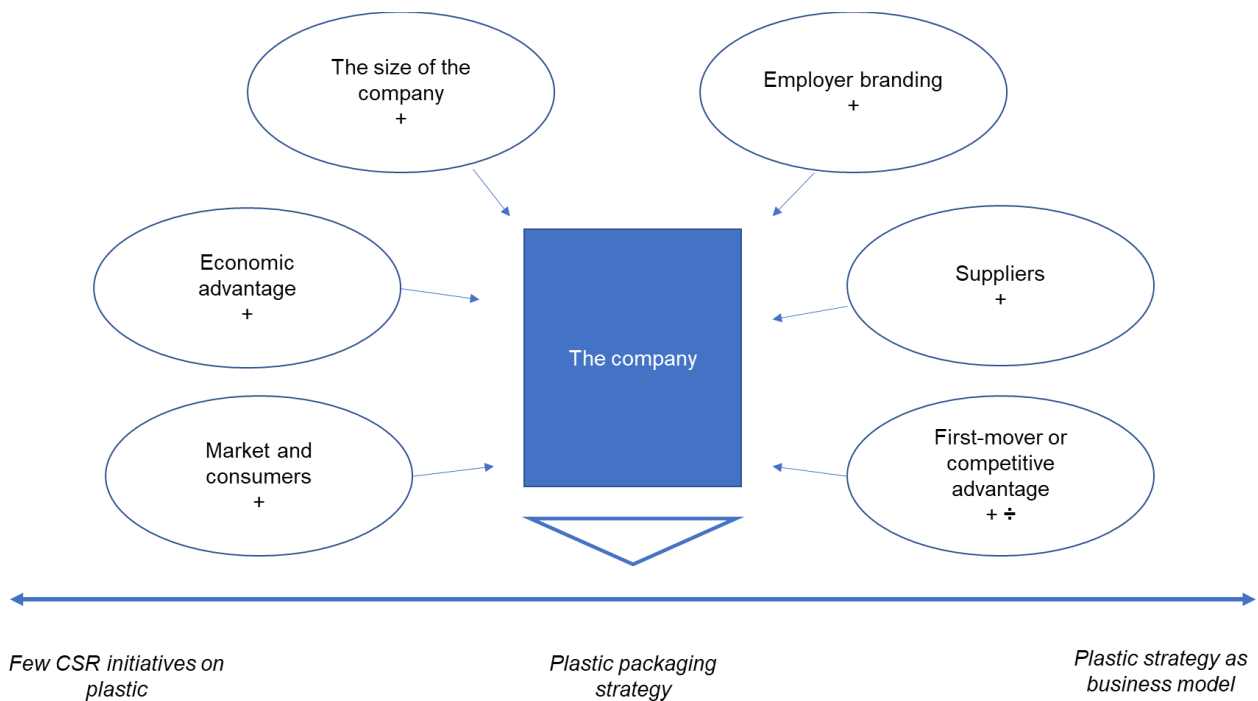


Figure 10: Motivational factors influencing the companies' initiatives

4.3.1.1 Motivation from the market

All the companies mentioned and agreed that plastic has attracted increased attention in recent years (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019; Helsam, KG, 2019). When media, suppliers, consumers and direct customers all of a sudden perceive plastic as a problem, the companies have felt the need to take a position on the issue (ibid). From Faerch's perspective, the motivation was driven by the increased focus in the market and particularly its customers; *"The focus on recycling came from collaboration and inputs from big supermarket chains. Thus, Faerch's focus arose from a close dialogue with the customers and was not a product of internal innovation - but rather a strong customer focus"* (Faerch, HA, 2019). Faerch had not focused on recycling plastic in its production before the company's customers brought attention to it 10 years ago (ibid). Therefore, the motivation for its focus on increasing recycled plastic in its production was initiated by close collaboration with the company's customers, the supermarket chains. Helsam was also motivated by increased media attention on plastic and increased demand from consumers for environmentally friendly alternatives (Helsam, KG, 2019).

Consumer sentiment, in general, was mentioned as a motivating factor; consumers increasingly perceive plastic as a problem, and as they are the ones to buy the products, their opinion matters (COOP, MH, 2019; Helsam, KG, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Together with food waste, plastic is the main area that supermarkets need to prioritise according to a consumer survey (COOP, MH, 2019; COOP Analyse, 2018). Accordingly, 77 % of consumers are concerned with plastic (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; Plastic Change, 2018). Carlsberg expects that there will be an increasing demand for sustainable solutions in the future (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019).

4.3.1.2 Motivation from economic advantages

The economic incentive also counts as a motivational factor in focusing on plastic (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Faerch found that by recycling plastic instead of producing packaging from entirely new plastic, the company could reduce production costs (Faerch, HA, 2019). In the case of Rema 1000 and COOP, they have, among other things, been able to cut costs by reducing packaging sizes (Rema 1000, ARJ 2019; COOP MH 2019). For COOP, it was a question of process optimisation in the beginning, where the company was able to reap the lower hanging fruits (COOP, MH, 2019). Rema 1000 experienced that it could reduce transportation costs and CO₂-emissions by optimising its diaper packaging (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019).

To gain an economic benefit from its CSR initiatives was also an important driver for Carlsberg, who stated that sustainability initiatives preferably should have an impact on the company's bottom line, as explained by the Sustainability Director; *"I am not in this company just to carry out philanthropy or for the sake of my blue eyes, even though I also want to make the world a better place. But that is not only why I am here. I am here because we should earn money by making sustainability projects"* (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). The belief that plastic reduction can be used as a means to sell more beer is also why Carlsberg has promoted its 'Snap Pack' heavily through various marketing channels (ibid).

Despite reducing costs on launching these initiatives, the companies have also incurred additional costs due to changing processes, which they are willing to bear (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019, Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019). Implementing new sustainability or CSR initiatives require initial investments, but the costs of doing so are decreasing in the longer run (COOP, MH, 2019). H&M also acknowledged the large initial investment, but the company is incentivised to invest because of

the belief that sustainability will lead to market shares in the future (H&M, MM, 2019). This can be seen as a derived, economic motivational factor.

4.3.1.3 Motivation qua size of the company

H&M mentioned another motivation behind its sustainability efforts in general; *"It all falls back on us being one of the biggest players in our industry. It also implies that we have a huge responsibility when you consider our total consumption of plastic both packaging, shopping bags, etc."* (H&M, MM, 2019). Due to its size, H&M has a responsibility to be a first-mover when it comes to sustainability, which the company is willing to take on to change the agenda in the fashion industry - despite requiring additional resources (ibid). Additionally, the company's sustainability initiatives have a great impact (ibid). Therefore, H&M has been one of the first companies in its industry to implement payment on its shopping bags (ibid). The motivation for H&M has not been incentivised by economic advantages, as the company donates the profits generated from selling plastic bags to NGOs such as WWF in Denmark (ibid). That size of the company matters is also supported by Helsam who mentioned that the company has been unable to implement certain initiatives because they would have demanded a considerable amount of resources (Helsam, KG, 2019).

4.3.1.4 Motivation to attract employees

A solid CSR strategy can also be seen as an important employer branding tool. An aspect, which was highlighted by both H&M and Rema 1000 (H&M, MM, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). From an employee perspective, it matters to be a part of an organisation that cares, and it can be a way to get the right people (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Further to this, H&M sees it as a way to differentiate itself from competitors when hiring new employees and finds that people consider this when applying for a new job (H&M, MM, 2019). According to Helsam, CSR also plays an important role in employee satisfaction (Helsam, 2019b).

4.3.1.5 Motivation from suppliers

Carlsberg mentioned that its suppliers had played an important role in initiating the new 'Snap Pack' (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Since Carlsberg's core product is beer, the packaging is secondary in its production and the company does not have full ownership over this part of its supply chain (ibid). However, it was mentioned that Carlsberg gladly collaborated to develop the 'Snap Pack' in cooperation with its supplier (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Collaboration, both downstream and upstream

in supply chains and with other actors, is a key driver that all companies mention, and this will be treated as a separate topic below.

4.3.1.6 Motivation to obtain a first-mover or competitive advantage

While a few companies asserted that they have a first-mover advantage through their actions on plastic, it was contended among the interviewees whether or not plastic actions should serve as a competitive advantage. Carlsberg stressed that all CSR-initiatives preferably should result in a competitive advantage; *“Preferably, all that I am doing within sustainability should lead to a competitive advantage, but that is not possible with all initiatives”* (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Faerch also argued that the company has obtained a first-mover advantage by acquiring 4PET Group because it ensures that Faerch has enough production input: reused plastic (Faerch, HA, 2019).

In contrast to the above, Mia Møgelgaard (H&M, MM, 2019) stated that H&M's packaging strategy will provide them with a first-mover advantage. But it was also asserted that H&M is more concerned with finding the right solution in the industry rather than the opportunity to gain a competitive advantage (ibid). Despite this focus, it was added that when implementing a new sustainability initiative, the company would like to get publicity and share the message (ibid). Rema 1000 similarly stressed that its focus is on working alongside competitors to obtain a common solution, rather than focusing on either first-mover or competitive advantages (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). In the Procurement and Marketing Director's view, the focus on competitive advantage distorts the best and most sustainable solutions because companies spread in different directions to differentiate themselves (ibid).

COOP was also in alignment with the view that a common solution of best practice is desirable, however, also expressed that a competitive advantage can be achieved with good CSR practices; *“...we think that we have - at CSR all together - a competitive advantage and have had that in many years”* (COOP, MH, 2019). Further elaborating on this, COOP underlined that the company uses its CSR agenda to position itself in the market as a way to preserve its high market share (ibid).

4.3.1.7 Sub-conclusion

Six different motivational factors were identified in the interviews as having influenced the actions concerning plastic. A push from the market and consumer sentiment in general, motivated the companies who were not already at the forefront with their CSR-initiatives regarding plastic. Other companies emphasized the motivational factor from direct and derived economic advantages.

However, it was also seen that there are additional costs involved in changing processes. The company size was another element mentioned that encourage some to be frontrunners, while suppliers also played a part in motivating some of the interviewed companies. Further, it was seen that a good CSR strategy has a positive spillover effect in terms of employer branding. Finally, the companies disagreed on whether they should strive for their plastic initiatives and CSR to provide them with a first-mover or competitive advantage. Some companies saw it as a motivating factor, while others saw it as possibly distorting the ability to reach a joint solution to plastic pollution.

4.3.2 Internal and External factors influencing the companies

During the interviews, it was clear that the companies' plastic initiatives and CSR strategies also were influenced by both internal and external factors. The factors are shown below in Figure 11 will be examined in the following section.

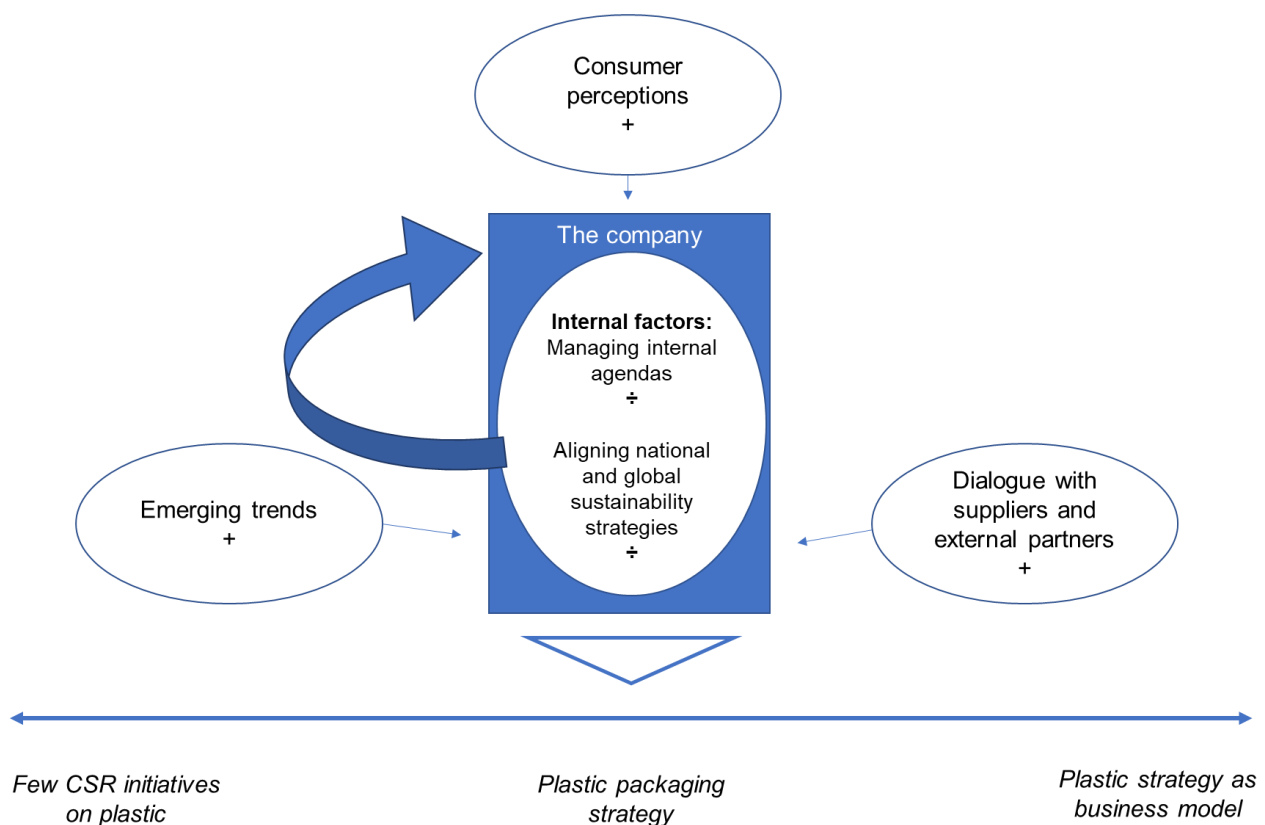


Figure 11: Internal and External factors influencing the companies' initiatives

4.3.2.1 Internal factors influencing the companies

Many of the interviewees expressed that differing internal agendas are a factor, which affects their CSR strategy (COOP, MH, 2019; Faerch, HA, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019). The alignment of internal interests within the organisation impacts how the initiatives are carried out and therefore affects the actions that the company can implement to address plastic pollution. Different aspects of alignment of internal agendas were discussed during the interviews with the case companies.

Henrik Andersen (Faerch, HA, 2019) illustrated the need to align internal interests by highlighting differences between departments within Faerch and stated that what was viewed as the best solution to some, might not be considered the most viable solution from a technical point of view. In line with this, Mathias Hvam (COOP, MH, 2019) explained that while the CSR agenda is driven by impact, commercial interests will be the main driver of the rest of the organisation. Hence, these will have to be aligned and some CSR actions might be prioritised differently, as they need to be balanced with other interests (COOP, MH, 2019). H&M has tried to accommodate alignment of sustainability agendas with other internal agendas by employing a sustainability manager in each corporate function in its headquarter (H&M, MM, 2019).

H&M also highlighted a different aspect when describing the organisational setup: the company has an overall global sustainability strategy, but each market has the freedom to define strategic initiatives on a national level (H&M, MM, 2019). This is facilitated by a global sustainability department at the headquarter and the local sustainability managers in the different markets (H&M, MM, 2019). To illustrate global differences, H&M Denmark has introduced a fee on its shopping bag, whereas other markets have tackled this in a different way by introducing paper bags (Jahshan, 2018). Hence, the CSR strategy of the individual country managers has to be in alignment with the global strategy.

4.3.2.2 External factors influencing strategic considerations

Apart from the companies' own strategic considerations and goals with their CSR strategies as well as internal agendas, it was evident that the CSR strategies were influenced by emerging trends and external stakeholder opinions. Despite clearly defined actions on consumption and dealings with plastic, it was described how the strategic scope is influenced by emerging factors that arise in the market.

The last-mentioned point was put forward by Mia Møgelgaard (H&M, MM, 2019) when mentioning how the scope of H&M's overall CSR strategy keeps expanding due to new trends in the market. In H&M, the company has an option to add new areas of concern to its existing strategy (ibid), which shows a need to adapt existing strategic considerations with emerging trends. Back in 2017, Rema 1000 discovered growing attention on plastic, and the company began to look into how to address the problem and decided on a way forward to initiate an action plan (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019).

COOP explained another aspect of the need for adjusting the CSR actions according to trends in the market (COOP, MH, 2019). The prioritisation of actions can be influenced by consumer perception of current areas of concern and a push from their members to address specific sustainability issues (ibid). A similar point was described by Helsam, who experiences that their customers are increasingly opinionated about plastic, and the topic gets a lot of media attention, which creates a demand for more sustainable packaging solutions (Helsam, KG, 2019).

Some of the companies also expressed how their dialogue with suppliers and external partners has served as a factor for initiating actions. Faerch has experienced growing attention on plastic among consumers through increased pressure from the supermarket chains, among others (Faerch, HA, 2019). This has both resulted in pressure in terms of requirements but also forced Faerch to focus more on communicating its efforts on plastic recycling (ibid). A similar pattern was also seen in the case of Carlsberg, where the development of the 'Snap Pack' happened in collaboration with its suppliers (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019).

4.3.2.3 Sub-conclusion

It was also discovered that the companies do not decide on their CSR initiatives or strategies in isolation. In fact, both internal agendas and external stakeholders are seen to affect CSR actions on plastic. Internally, economic factors may trump CSR projects with high impact (COOP, MH, 2019), and there may arise a conflict of interest to which products are the most viable to sell (Faerch, HA, 2019). Externally, trends in the market, consumer demands, or suppliers and external partners can influence the companies' CSR actions (Faerch, HA, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Helsam, KG, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019).

4.3.3 Communication

Communication is paramount to succeed with goals and actions to act on the plastic challenge; this point was stressed by all the interviewed case companies (Faerch, HA, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019;

Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Helsam; KG, 2019, Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Different aspects of communication were addressed but all companies agreed that it plays a role, if they want to influence consumer perception, whether it concerns general awareness of their actions or marketing efforts (ibid). However, some of the companies also mentioned that communication constitutes a challenge. The different points put forward by the interviewees will be treated in this section and can be seen in Figure 12 below.

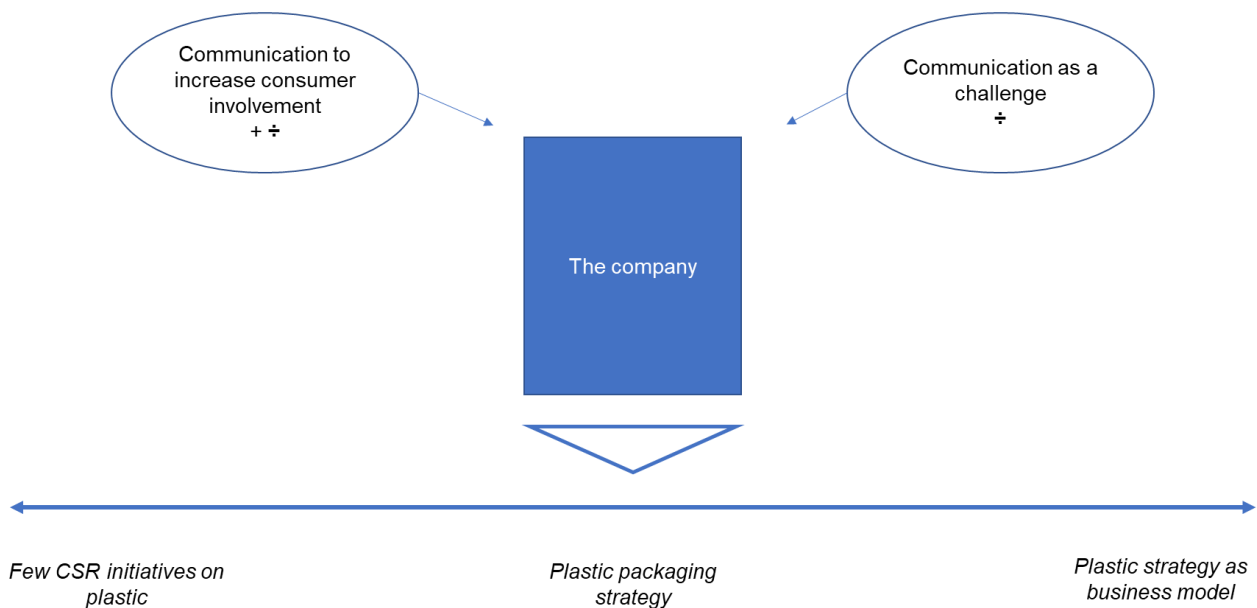


Figure 12: Communication factors influencing the companies' initiatives

4.3.3.1 Consumer involvement

As it is shown in the following examples, communication is an important tool to drive consumer involvement in the process of plastic recycling and reuse - especially when talking about circular economy, where consumers play a role in the process. Rema 1000's packaging and plastic strategy is built on the principles of circular economy and the company's actions are defined based on a 'designed to reuse' objective (Rema 1000, 2019b). According to Anders René Jensen (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019), communication is an important parameter to get consumers to participate actively and to understand the importance of their actions (ibid). Rema 1000 uses its collaboration with Plastic Change and the Municipality of Copenhagen to reach the consumers and to explain why it makes a difference to act on this problem (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019).

Carlsberg's 'Snap Pack' is designed with a plastic handle, and it was important for Carlsberg to explain how to recycle the handle to avoid backlash from the introduction of its plastic-reducing initiative (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Carlsberg has used videos as a communication tool to educate

consumers, and the company wants to expand the communication to influence the general public in a more sustainable direction (ibid). Furthermore, in the case of Carlsberg, it was shown how communication through a widespread marketing campaign played a key role when introducing its new packaging innovation (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Another way to communicate with consumers is to use a press release. Helsam has made use of press releases to inform about its initiative, and Kenneth Guldager (Helsam, KG, 2019) described that local newspapers have published articles about its sustainable shopping bag (Helsam, KG, 2019). Furthermore, the company has equipped its stores with posters and signs that provide information to the consumers about its CSR initiatives (ibid).

4.3.3.2 Challenges

Due to the widespread focus on the issue and because plastic is at the core of its business model, Faerch risks losing market shares to competitors, if the company is not able to successfully communicate its actions to its customers (Faerch, HA, 2019). Being a producer of plastic products, negative connotations about the company are easily created (ibid). Henrik Andersen (Faerch, HA, 2019) explained how Faerch has previously failed to communicate its recycling initiatives, and it has been a valuable lesson for the company to realise the importance of communication, which is something that the company has a lot of focus on now (ibid). The company is collaborating with its customers on plastic initiatives (ibid) and with this collaboration, the company has received media attention about its efforts on sustainable plastic solutions (Dreyer-Andersen, 2018).

H&M similarly stressed the importance of communication, but also expressed the challenge of communicating CSR initiatives - especially when talking about topics such as circular economy (H&M, MM, 2019). There is not necessarily a simple answer to the plastic challenge nor to the respective actions to fight the problem. H&M wants to provide comprehensive information to its consumers but risks losing them halfway through a Facebook post (ibid). The consumers are not interested in long explanations, and it requires finding a balance between being able to communicate the message in an interesting format without being perceived as trying to educate its customers (ibid). Communication is also an important way to reach customers when introducing a new CSR initiative; Mia Møgelgaard (H&M, MM, 2019) mentioned an example of a CSR initiative, which was launched in 2013, and despite an extensive focus on communicating this, as of today only 50 % of H&M's customers are aware of this possibility.

Communicating CSR initiatives sometimes end up differently than intended (COOP, MH, 2019). It is difficult to predict how actions are received in the public eye and how much media attention they will get, hence smaller initiatives may gain more attention than larger initiatives (ibid). Another challenge is misinformation about the plastic problem and the possible solutions to deal with the issue (COOP, MH, 2019; Faerch, HA, 2019). Companies and NGOs are busy communicating their own initiatives and pushing their own agendas, while media publish the 'good story' sometimes without processing the facts (COOP, MH, 2019). Consequently, consumers end up as misinformed 'victims', as it is hard to distinguish right from wrong in the plastic debate (ibid). Therefore, there is a need for all stakeholders to communicate the same message, as explained by Rema 1000; *"This is why I am saying that we have to treat it as a joint project; it should both be public authorities, it has to be us as companies, retail, producers, it should be NGOs. It is all of us who have to go out and tell the same story"* (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019).

4.3.3.3 Sub-conclusion

It can be established that communication is seen as a necessary tool if companies want to succeed with their CSR strategies. All the interviewees stressed that they have used communication - varying in scope - to spread their effort in the plastic area. However, it is not necessarily an easy tool and there are many challenges involved in communicating plastic initiatives. The challenges stem from both trying to use communication as a means to market the different CSR-initiatives and to educate consumers in the most sustainable solutions. Additionally, misinformation adds an extra layer of distorting communication. Therefore, communication becomes more than just a marketing tool as it is a way to influence consumer perception and guide the sustainability agenda in a right and joint direction.

4.3.4 Cooperation

The plastic challenge is difficult to solve single-handedly, as it was highlighted at the very beginning of this thesis. This points towards joint action as a means to solve the challenge. Cooperation to address and work towards a common solution on the plastic challenge was mentioned by all the interviewees (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019; Helsam, KG, 2019) and exemplified by this quote; *"If you want something that really works, something sustainable, and something future-proof, then we have to work across the value chain - all the way through the value chain from the consumers to the producer but also have a common standpoint in retail"* (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Cooperation comes in many forms, and the six companies drew on many aspects of it; some mentioned cooperation across their

industry, others stressed collaboration in their supply chain, and a third aspect was cooperation with actors such as consumers or NGOs. The different ways to cooperate will be exemplified, analysed and contrasted in this section.

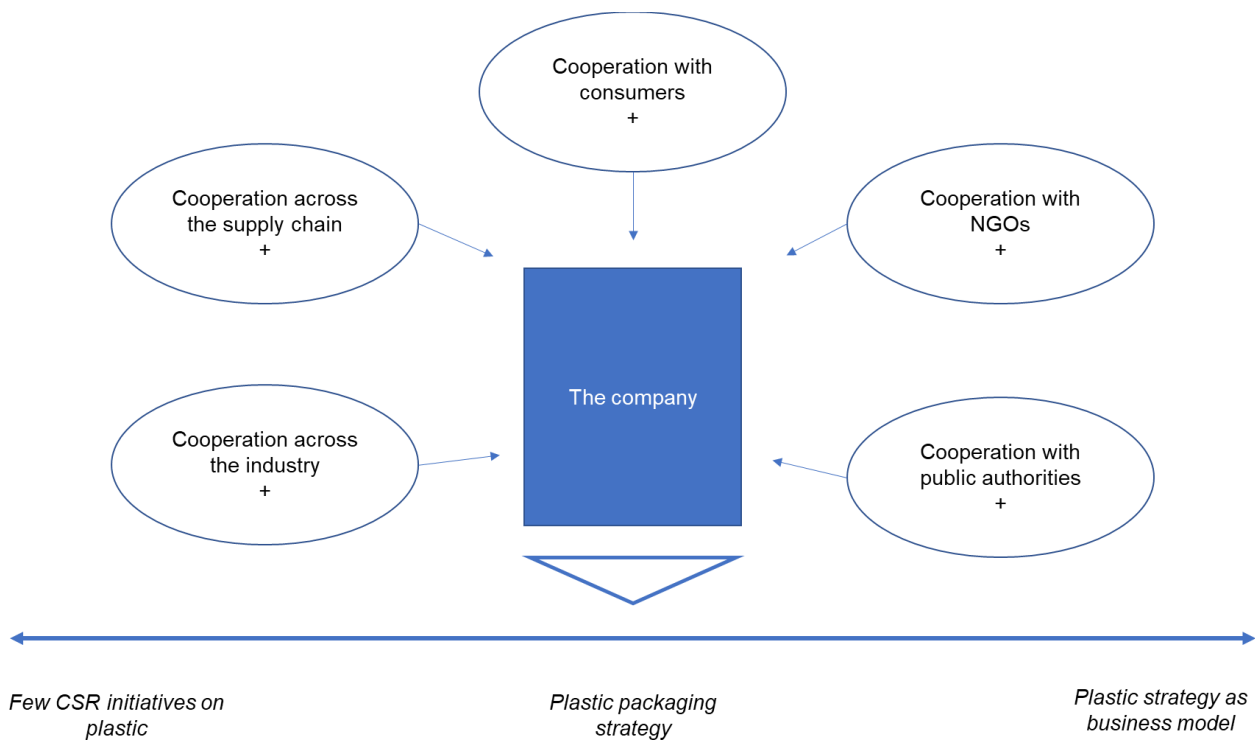


Figure 13: Different factors of cooperation influencing the companies' initiatives

4.3.4.1 Cooperation within the industry

The ways to tackle the plastic problem are manifold, which can be exemplified when looking at how some supermarket chains operating in Denmark have developed shopping bags to reduce plastic consumption. Zooming in on the plastic bag, it becomes clear that there are various solutions available to the companies:

- Salling Group has introduced deposits on returnable plastic shopping bags (Salling Group 2018).
- COOP has made a shopping bag from recycled and biobased materials (COOP, 2018c)
- Rema 1000 has made a reusable plastic bag made from polyester (Rema 1000, 2019b).
- Lidl has banned plastic bags and now sells paper bags in all its stores (Lidl, 2019).

Cooperation across supermarkets is vital to finding the right solution, otherwise, all supermarkets develop their own initiatives in various directions (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019), which is shown in the

above example. According to Anders René Jensen (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019), focus strays from finding the “best” or the “right” solution and instead the companies focus on single initiatives, which may end up working against each other (ibid). Apart from working against each other, the supermarkets give their suppliers a hard time by demanding different plastic solutions, also because various kinds of plastic may be recycled differently (ibid). Consequently, a lack of cooperation to find the “right” solution may end up getting more expensive, more difficult to recycle, and not a long-term viable solution (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019).

H&M argued that cooperation within the fashion industry is important to drive the industry in a more sustainable direction (H&M, MM, 2019). In order to ensure that this is done correctly, H&M is collaborating with many actors in the fashion industry through the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (ibid). It is the impression that collaboration in the industry is more concerned with finding “right” solutions than thinking about competitive advantages (ibid). Mia Møgelgaard (H&M, MM, 2019) explained that with plastic and other sustainability challenges, the problem is so immense that it cannot be solved solely by H&M; *“The challenges are so big - regardless of it being plastic or resource consumption in production or working conditions and salaries in production (...) - these are not problems we can find the ultimate solution to by ourselves. We have to cooperate with other brands and organisations or other industry associations”* (H&M, MM, 2019).

4.3.4.2 Cooperation across the supply chain

The interviewed companies all stressed the importance of cooperation upstream and downstream in the supply chain, depending on their position, in order to implement strategic initiatives on the plastic challenge (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019; Helsam, KG, 2019). Considering Section 4.1, the companies take on different roles from a supply chain perspective. Their different positions in their supply chain foster different demands from both upstream and downstream stakeholders in the supply chains. Even though consumers can be depicted as being part of the supply chain, cooperation with consumers will be treated as a separate point below.

Faerch used to be dependent on recycled plastic input from its suppliers (Faerch, HA, 2019), but as mentioned earlier, Faerch acquired the leading plastic recycling company, 4PET Group, to secure the recycled plastic input (ibid). Today, Faerch’s cooperation within its supply chain is mainly downstream where the company cooperates with various supermarkets on developing new packaging solutions (ibid). This means that Faerch sometimes bypasses its direct customers, the

food producers when working on new plastic solutions (ibid). Henrik Andersen (Faerch, HA, 2019) mentioned that the supermarkets experience direct demand from consumers, which is passed onto Faerch; *“To a large extent, they [edit: supermarkets] return to the producer and ask us to explain all kinds of questions that they get from the market or from end users”*. This point is also supported by Rema 1000 (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Additionally, many supermarkets are currently redesigning their packaging and plastic strategy, and Faerch would like to influence this process through participation in the public debates and by turning focus to also include food waste and food safety (Faerch, HA, 2019). The opinion of Faerch remains that cooperation across the supply chain is the way forward if a solution to the plastic problem is to be reached (ibid).

Two of the downstream stakeholders of Faerch are Rema 1000 and COOP. Both companies stressed that their upstream cooperation with Faerch is vital to obtain their goals with their packaging strategies (COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Rema 1000 has cooperated with Faerch in designing recyclable meat packages (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Previously, meat packages posed a challenge for conventional sorting plants, but with the new invention, the packages can be recycled alongside other plastic waste (ibid). Rema 1000 is in continuous dialogue with its suppliers and prioritise new initiatives according to the suppliers' readiness to accommodate new solutions (ibid).

Apart from cooperating with direct suppliers, COOP has initiated cooperation with its secondary suppliers in order to influence plastic designers, producers, and recyclers (COOP, MH, 2019). *“We cooperate a lot with our suppliers - in the sense that they ask us a lot. And...we are in that fortunate position that we have a market share of 30 % (...) So, what we ask for, we usually get. And then (...) it becomes a question of price”* (COOP, MH, 2019). The quote indicates that COOP - due to its size - has bargaining power upstream in its supply chain. Further to this, it was added that changes have a price, but the company is in a bargaining position and therefore not heavily affected by this (ibid).

H&M drives sustainability demands on plastic (H&M, MM, 2019). Similar to COOP, H&M can exert buyer power over the company's suppliers when implementing new sustainability initiatives in its supply chain; *“They [edit: the suppliers] have to sign our new terms and comply with them if they want to continue producing for us. That is how it works with all our requirements”* (H&M, MM, 2019). The suppliers have to align their production methods within a given time period according to the new plastic requirements, as this is vital for H&M to fulfil its goals outlined in its sustainability strategy (ibid). Since H&M has collaborated with some of its suppliers for a long time, the company helps to ensure this transition towards a more sustainable production (ibid). The company is experiencing increased willingness from suppliers to invest in sustainability due to economic and social benefits

resulting from this (ibid). However, if this transition is unobtainable, the company has to find other suppliers (ibid).

Helsam, Carlsberg, and H&M are similarly cooperating upstream with their suppliers. Helsam has initiated a dialogue with its suppliers on incorporating recycled plastic in its packaging (Helsam, KG, 2019). Carlsberg's cooperation with its suppliers is illustrated in its development of the 'Snap Pack', which was initiated by its suppliers (packaging producers), but developed in close collaboration with Carlsberg (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Since Carlsberg's supplier of packaging is B2B, the suppliers relied on Carlsberg's expertise to commercialise the 'Snap Pack' and to put it into production (ibid). Moreover, Carlsberg had to make sure that it appealed to consumers, which is why the company's inputs regarding design were more or less invariable (ibid).

4.3.4.3 Cooperation with consumers

When companies are inspired by thoughts of circular economy, this adds another dimension to their plastic strategies. It becomes necessary to cooperate and sometimes educate stakeholders to close the loop of sorting and recycling plastic (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Therefore, the cooperation across their supply chain is not only upstream but also has a downstream dimension.

With H&M's brand "& Other Stories", consumers can return their used makeup packages, which are then recycled (H&M, MM, 2019). The consumers are given a voucher of 10 % on their next purchase, which has the purpose of incentivising the circularity of fashion (ibid). According to Mia Møgelgaard (H&M, MM, 2019), consumers need this incentive to put in the extra effort, despite their positive understanding of H&M's sustainability efforts. The monetary incentive is also proven effective by Carlsberg's return system where consumers receive deposits by returning their bottles after use (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019).

COOP and Rema 1000 have initiated similar incentives to work with consumers with the companies' waste sorting guidelines on their products (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019 and COOP, MH, 2019). A prerequisite for this to work is to address how the packaging is designed to alleviate consumer recycling, hence the importance of the cooperation with suppliers of plastic also comes into play (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). It was stressed that even though consumers are necessary for the process of recycling, the company cannot put unnecessary burdens upon the consumers (ibid). Carlsberg has put messages on its shrink wrap to communicate that the plastic is from recycled materials,

which the company hopes will convince consumers to recycle it by emphasising a need for the right consumer behaviour (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). COOP is actively participating in debates where the company sees an opportunity to educate consumers on the topic of recycling (COOP, MH, 2019).

4.3.4.4 Cooperation with NGOs

It was also found that cooperation with NGOs - ranging from strategic partnerships to sparring and donations - provide invaluable information and sparring (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; H&M, MM, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Rema 1000 cooperates with the NGO, Plastic Change, who wants to help them obtain the objectives regarding its sustainable packaging on its private label products (Rema 1000, 2019 a). The relationship between the two is a strategic partnership, and Plastic Change was also guiding Rema 1000 and Faerch when the new meat packaging was developed (Rema 1000, 2019 a; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). In return, Rema 1000 helps Plastic Change by educating its consumers about plastic pollution (ibid).

Similarly, Plastic Change provides Carlsberg with guidance on how to reduce plastic in its production (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). Carlsberg was in dialogue with Plastic Change on the design of the 'Snap Pack' as well as how to guide consumers on recycling the different components of the product (ibid). Lastly, Helsam also cooperates with Plastic Change, and this partnership entails guidance on Helsam's usage of plastic against a donation of the profit from the recycled bags (Helsam, KG, 2019).

H&M has found it advantageous to work with the NGO, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, because the foundation mobilises a larger part of companies within the same industry (H&M, MM, 2019). This collaboration is less focused on differentiation and gaining competitive advantages and more on learning from each other to combat the larger challenge (ibid). In addition, H&M also donates its profit from the sale of shopping bags in each country to a charity, which is tangible and resonates with consumers (ibid). In Denmark, H&M has chosen WWF because the organisation fights to combat ocean plastic on the coast surrounding Denmark (ibid). Likewise, Faerch is donating its annual Christmas Donation to WWF (Faerch, 2018b).

4.3.4.5 Cooperation with public authorities

A challenge often mentioned by some of the interviewees was a lack of policy to guide the right solutions. To drive the process further, a different form of cooperation has also been found in the form of corporate-public collaborations. The advantage of engaging in public-private cooperation is that the solutions generated are supported by both parties, and corporate actors can influence the solution in a desirable direction (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). For instance, Rema 1000 and Faerch

cooperate with the Municipality of Copenhagen to investigate some of the current challenges with recycling and to incorporate the circular mindset with the recycling units (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; Faerch, HA, 2019). The municipality also worked as a sparring partner on developing Rema 1000's plastic and packaging strategy and participated in various pilot projects with new products (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Similarly, COOP collaborates with KL - Local Government Denmark and both national and EU legislators when new initiatives are discussed (COOP, MH, 2019). COOP has also been involved in the bill on producer responsibility, which is currently being drafted in the EU (ibid).

4.3.4.6 Sub-conclusion

Cooperation is decisive in succeeding with a turnaround on the plastic challenge, however, cooperation comes in many forms and with many different parties, which differ from company to company. While some companies stressed the need to cooperate within their industry, all the interviewed companies cooperated within their supply chain either upstream or downstream. However, it was also clear from the interviews that both consumers and retailers exerted upstream pressure in their supply chains. To close the recycling loop, several companies mentioned the need to cooperate and educate consumers, who are necessary to recycle the plastic once consumed. Most of the companies mentioned their cooperation with NGOs when planning their strategic initiatives to solve the plastic challenge. Lastly, cooperation in the form of public-private partnerships has been initiated to drive the process forward of finding and testing solutions that can lead to a more sustainable and circular use of plastic.

4.3.5 Challenges

Finding solutions to fight the current plastic problem is not necessarily straightforward but it involves different kinds of challenges, which were described by the interviewed companies. This section will provide an overview of the identified challenges by looking at the various aspects put forward. As it is evident from the following, some of the concerns are more common across companies, while others are more company-specific in character. Communication was also seen as a challenge, but as this has already been treated in section 4.3.3 (communication), it will not be included in this section. Additionally, the overarching challenge is that the problem cannot be solved single-handedly by one company, which has been addressed in section 4.3.4.

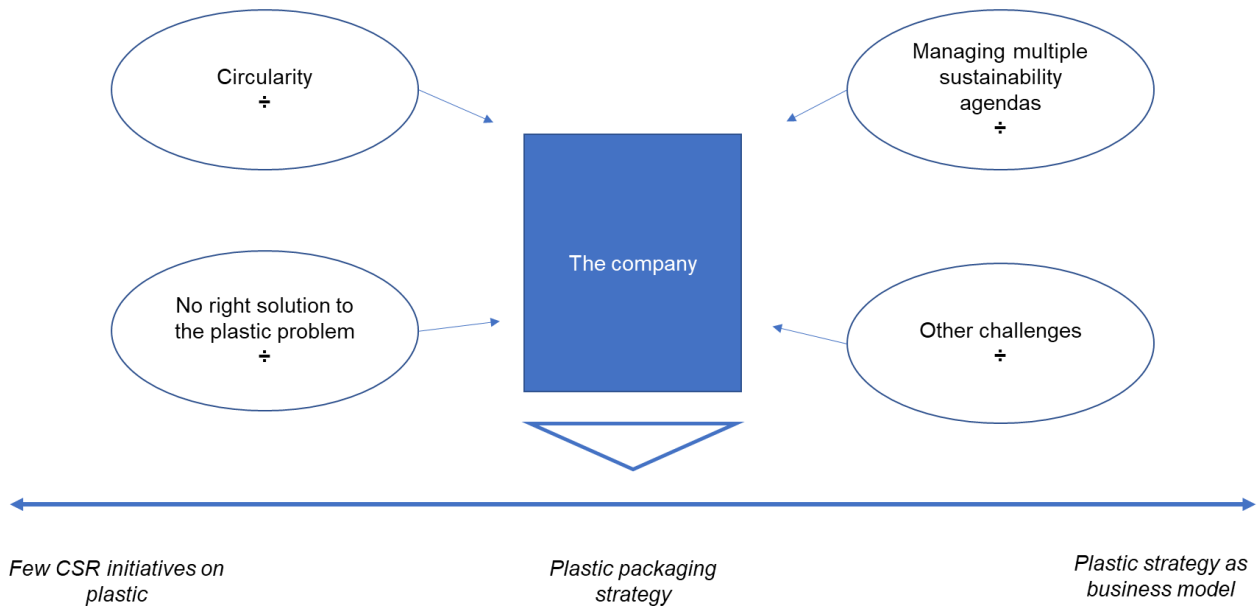


Figure 14: Factors challenging the companies' initiatives

4.3.5.1 No "right" solution to the plastic problem

Due to the recent increase in the focus on the environmental impact of plastic, it is a fairly new area, which makes it difficult when looking at ways to improve the problem (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). There is currently a lack of legislation in this field, which is a challenge when trying to find a suitable solution for practices going forward (ibid). There are still many uncertainties and topics to be discussed and decided upon from a political stand, which discourages some actors to start looking into possible solutions (ibid). Being present in multiple markets around the world further complicates this challenge, as there is a need to balance different legislation on sustainability issues to find a common global solution (H&M, MM, 2019).

In line with the ongoing work towards uniformity of rules, there are currently different perceptions of suitable solutions, and diverse actions are introduced by companies that want to be frontrunners, as exemplified by the different shopping bags in section 4.3.4.1. There are different actions and conflicting opinions about plastic put forward by media as well as NGOs (Rema 1000; ARJ, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019). COOP explained that it challenges the companies when trying to do the right thing (COOP, MH, 2019). Similarly, Rema 1000 has experienced that customers have questioned the company's unwillingness to introduce paper bags, available at a competing supermarket chain (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). However, this constituted a challenge as the paper bag was not perceived as the "right" solution (ibid). Politicians need to help push the plastic agenda in the right direction to avoid diverse short-sighted solutions (ibid).

Another challenge is the absence of uniform waste handling systems among the municipalities in Denmark, which complicates decisions of new design and recycling processes (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). COOP mentioned that when 40 % of the municipalities (COOP; MH, 2019; TV2 Nyhederne, 2018a) do not have a system in place for sorting the plastic waste, it challenges the rollout of strategic actions, because some municipalities are lacking the necessary processes to facilitate such actions (COOP, MH, 2019). Hence, both representatives from the supermarkets agreed that it is hard to make proper guidance to consumers for sorting the plastic due to the lack of consistency in the way the waste is handled after use (COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019).

As a plastic producer, Faerch has experienced the difficulty of having to manage different customer opinions regarding suitable solutions for plastic packaging (Faerch, HA, 2019). At first, it was quite difficult with the increased focus on plastic and especially recycled plastic with diverse opinions on what was right, and that nobody wanted to make a decision (ibid). Because of this, Faerch is relieved to find that the industry has started focusing more on finding common solutions or at least has made some important decisions on which plastic they demand (Faerch, HA, 2019). Faerch produces plastic to a lot of different customers, and if they all require conflicting solutions and different kinds of plastic, it can become a major challenge for the company (ibid).

In terms of technological development, a drawback of being a frontrunner with plastic initiatives is that companies risk that newer technological solutions will be introduced that will bypass the solutions and strategic considerations (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). There is also a risk of being caught between emerging legislation (ibid). However, by taking an active role through collaboration with the Municipality of Copenhagen, Rema 1000 tries to influence the agenda (ibid).

Another facet of why plastic constitutes a challenge was highlighted by Carlsberg's Sustainability Director: *"Plastic is cheap and is produced in many different types, which - if mixed - makes it difficult to recycle. This is the core problem with plastic"* (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). The various types of plastic - often mixed in the same product - makes it difficult to sort and recycle for consumers (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). As a solution to this, Rema 1000 argued that guidelines of 'design to recycle' should be drafted, which can alleviate recycling for consumers (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Further aggravating the issue is the discussion about bio-based and biodegradable plastic (COOP, MH, 2019; Faerch, HA, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Biodegradable and bio-based plastics are yet another form of plastic some companies have resorted to (ibid). The problem with these types of plastic is that they do not possess the same abilities as conventional plastic and thus, depreciate the

value of recycled, conventional plastic (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; Miljø- og Fødevareministeriet, 2018). This further supports the challenge constituted by the lack of uniform rules on plastic as mentioned above. ■

4.3.5.2 Circularity

A lack of a uniform waste handling system hinders the circular economy solutions that many of the sustainability strategies are based on (Faerch, HA, 2019). The challenge of circularity is two-sided; first, in addition to an alignment of waste handling systems, the circular mindset requires that all participants in the loop - all the way from producers to consumers and recycling systems - contribute to the recycling process. *“It goes hand-in-hand if you want to succeed with circular economy (...) we are very dependent on somebody to sort and treat it [plastic] carefully in the consumer end...”* (COOP, MH, 2019). Second, the aspiration of a circular system may constitute a challenge when restricting the development of new solutions; *“We have to come up with solutions where circular economy does not put a constraint on the development and progress”* (Faerch, HA, 2019). This quote highlights a challenge from the producer side when aspiring circular economy.

4.3.5.3 Managing multiple sustainability agendas

Plastic is not the only sustainability issue that needs to be addressed and managing multiple sustainability concerns is not a straightforward task (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019). Balancing a reduction of plastic packaging with the issue of food waste was put forward by Faerch, COOP and Rema 1000 (Faerch, HA, 2019; COOP, MH, 2019; Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). Faerch argues for a focus on food waste instead of only looking to reduce the use of plastic wrapping (Faerch, HA, 2019). This point was supported by COOP and Rema 1000; *“It [edit: plastic] is the best existing packaging to store food (...) it is very important that we avoid throwing out food because, after all, that has the biggest environmental impact”* (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019). It was argued that plastic does not constitute a problem in itself; but instead, the way plastic is used and handled after use (Rema 1000, ARJ, 2019; Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). COOP stressed that removing all plastic is not a goal, therefore COOP aspires to use less plastic where possible, but when there is a continuous need for plastic packaging, the company thinks of smarter ways to use it (COOP, MH, 2019).

4.3.5.4 Other challenges identified

Plastic is the core of Faerch's business model and Henrik Andersen (Faerch, HA, 2019) mentioned the challenge of being able to secure enough input of plastic to be able to produce recycled plastic.

With the acquisition of 4PET Group, which was mentioned earlier, the company has tried to reduce the potential risk from a lack of sufficient quantities of plastic (ibid).

The challenge of dealing with a new sustainability initiative was put forward by Carlsberg's Sustainability Director when talking about the 'Snap Pack' (Carlsberg, SBH, 2019). When innovating a more sustainable packaging solution for its six-pack, one of the challenges was to get the endorsement from management due to many uncertainties in the project (ibid). Furthermore, some design solutions were not able to be realised and a compromise between possible solutions and a time aspect had to be considered (ibid).

4.3.5.5 Subconclusion

Many challenges stem from plastic being a new area of concern and a lack of uniformity of rules. This leaves the companies with uncertainty when initiating strategic actions to deal with the issue. The different perceptions of a suitable solution and different waste handling systems make the problem more difficult. Companies - that have initiated actions - not only risk the emergent legislation, but also technological advancements, which can present smarter solutions. Another challenge is the various types of plastic present in the market, which complicates recycling. In order to succeed with circular economy, all participants in the plastic loop need to be engaged in recycling, but circularity should not put a constraint on producers. CSR comprises different areas of concern, and companies find themselves managing various sustainability agendas that sometimes have conflicting interests. The focus on plastic has to be in alignment with the remaining sustainability goals. Apart from the above-mentioned, different company-specific challenges were also identified.

Part 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In line with the increasing focus on pollution stemming from plastic, this thesis has investigated the research question: *To what extent do representative companies along the production-consumption supply chain work on initiatives to reduce adverse effects from plastic pollution, and what factors influence these initiatives.* With an outset in existing literature, the interview guides led to a discussion and elaboration of predetermined themes with the companies. Additionally, new areas were brought up during the interviews, and all contributed to answering the posed research question.

This section presents and discusses the key findings from the empirical study and their broader, practical implication. Further, these findings will be compared with the research from the literature review to show how the study has extended the existing literature within CSR and SCM on corporate initiatives concerning plastic pollution. The chapter will round off with a discussion of the findings in relation to the chosen research design, its limitations, and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Presentation of key findings

5.2.1 To what extent do companies work with initiatives?

From the empirical findings, it can be established that there are various degrees to which companies work with initiatives to reduce adverse effects from plastic pollution. As identified in Figure 9 in Part 4, the companies can be grouped according to three different ways of working with initiatives.

1. Hølsam and Carlsberg have implemented initiatives on reducing and recycling plastics, which fits with the companies' overall CSR strategies.
2. H&M has implemented initiatives and recently formulated a plastic strategy within its overall packaging strategy. Rema 1000 and COOP have formulated packaging and plastic strategies with clear goals on fulfilment and time horizons.
3. Faerch has integrated its circular mindset of the company's plastic strategy into its business model.

From the study of the six companies, it can be seen that the work to reduce adverse effects from plastic pollution varies from company to company. The actions span from plastic initiatives to having

plastic as a business model. The empirical findings also show that the different ways of working with plastic initiatives are influenced by several factors.

5.2.2 What factors influence these initiatives?

The empirical findings highlight that various factors influence the initiatives that have been introduced by the companies. These factors have been categorised into two groups spanning from 1) key factors highlighted by all companies to 2) factors only highlighted by some of the companies. The factors highlighted by more than one company are of most interest, as these are influencing several companies in this study. However, the company-specific factors cannot solely be ignored, as they have influenced the extent to which the specific companies work with their initiatives. Moreover, the company-specific factors may also have influenced other companies, although it was not discovered through the interviews.

5.2.2.1 Factors highlighted by all companies

The first factor highlighted by all companies is communication. This factor is paramount for companies to succeed with their plastic initiatives. Communication is used to draw attention to implemented actions as well as serving to address misinformation among consumers. If companies fail to consider communication or do not succeed to manage it properly, it can lower the potential effect of introducing a plastic initiative. Additionally, it was shown that the companies' focus on communication highlights a wish to contribute to a circular economy, as communication serves to influence consumers and their habits to recycle plastic after use.

The second influential factor is the recognition of various forms of cooperation. It was emphasised that plastic pollution cannot be solved single-handedly, hence collaboration plays an important role when working on solutions to tackle plastic. This implicates that the companies are cooperating with various stakeholders to address plastic pollution. The constellations of these collaborations vary between the companies and will, therefore, be outlined in the next section.

5.2.2.2 Factors highlighted by various companies

The findings show that key motivational factors when implementing initiatives are pressure from the market, employer branding, cost savings, supplier actions and the size of the company. All these factors are in some way contributing to the companies' work on initiatives to reduce plastic pollution. Further, the extent to which the companies work with their initiatives is also influenced by both

internal and external factors; internal factors are more constraining in nature, whereas external factors can be both constraining and contributing in nature.

Some companies mentioned that cooperation across the industry is as a contributing factor when looking at new plastic initiatives. However, if industry cooperation is missing, it will not necessarily be a constraining factor, but it is more likely leading to differentiated initiatives with short-term solutions. Cooperation within the supply chain serves as a contributing factor to the companies' initiatives. It was further found that pressure to implement sustainability practices in the supply chain is mainly exerted upstream.

The companies are also trying to cooperate with consumers, which was highlighted as an important factor to drive the initiatives further towards circular economy. Cooperation with NGOs also counts as an important, contributing factor, as NGOs can guide the companies in the right direction, foster broader cooperation, and provide a forum for knowledge-sharing across industries. The broader cooperation in NGO-company partnerships can create a forum for finding common solutions, which alleviate the constraining factor that no right solution has been laid out from a political stand. Moreover, some companies have to manage multiple sustainability agendas, which also constrains their efforts on plastic.

It was clear from the empirical findings that the companies are exposed to different factors and that these factors influence the companies differently. Hence, all interviewed companies have different factors that specifically have had an effect on their plastic initiatives. Moreover, some of the identified factors were seen to be company-specific or only mentioned by one company. These factors can only be ascribed to the companies who mentioned them. The following section discusses some of these company-specific factors and shows their influence on the companies' initiatives.

5.2.3 Discussion of influencing factors

As established above, there are various degrees to which companies work with initiatives to address plastic pollution. The following will discuss how the outlined factors have influenced the extent to which the companies have initiated actions.

Helsam has implemented two initiatives to address plastic pollution. The reason for implementing these actions stem from two factors in particular; increasing demand from the consumers and the company's aspiration to be first-movers. However, due to Helsam's relatively small size, it has been

too costly to implement wider initiatives, but the company is currently collaborating with its suppliers to discuss new possible initiatives.

With its 'Snap Pack' and recycled shrink wrap, Carlsberg has shown that the company has the size to launch game-changing initiatives. But the company is concerned with an overall goal to eliminate CO₂-emissions stemming from its supply chain, hence Carlsberg's focus is to promote sustainable packaging in general rather than having a narrow focus on plastic. Moreover, the company's position in its supply chain makes the company less exposed to the factor of consumer pressure compared to the retailers in the sample.

H&M has felt an expectation for the company to be first-movers due to its large size within its industry. This pressure also holds when it comes to plastic. Therefore, H&M has launched a plastic strategy within its existing packaging strategy. A large influential factor for H&M has been the cooperation with the NGO, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which has also helped in outlining the goals of its plastic strategy.

Rema 1000 has defined a plastic and packaging strategy with measurable goals and concretised initiatives to reach them. An important, influential factor for the supermarket has been the growing attention on the issue of plastic pollution among consumers. Moreover, it was shown that the supermarket industry is characterised by a trend where various industry participants have introduced different initiatives to tackle plastic instead of looking for similar solutions, as exemplified with the various developed shopping bags in Part 4. Similar to Rema 1000, COOP is operating in the supermarket industry and is influenced by many of the same factors. COOP has also launched a plastic packaging strategy with clearly defined goals and measurable initiatives.

Faerch's initial steps taken to increase the use of recycled plastic in its production were influenced by the company's close collaboration with its customers, who began requesting recycled plastic. This had an impact on the transition towards recycled plastic in its production. Today, the company has made a full transition where recyclable plastic is a part of the company's business model.

5.3 Practical implications of findings

Companies on the verge of implementing actions on plastic pollution can draw on the experiences and identified factors that have influenced the investigated companies. The findings presented in this thesis suggest that other companies with no implemented initiatives should; utilise plastic

initiatives strategically to obtain benefits for their businesses, focus on effective communication of their initiatives, and aim for cooperation with various stakeholders to foster sustainable solutions. Due to the diversity of the sampled companies, these findings are relevant to a wide amount of firms along the production-consumption supply chain. Additionally, both Danish and international companies have contributed to the empirical findings; hence, the factors can be considered in both a national and international context.

This master's thesis has its outset in the observed trend that an increasing number of corporations have started to implement initiatives to reduce the negative effects from plastic pollution. This suggests that companies that have not already addressed plastic pollution may potentially end up with a competitive disadvantage in the near future.

Lastly, there is a wider practical implication for policy-makers, who can use the current momentum on plastic to create a level playing field and address the current legislative gap causing uncertainties for the companies. It was highlighted from the study that this can be done by establishing a common solution on preferred plastic types and a homogenous recycling system. Thus, policy-makers play a role in pushing the agenda in a more sustainable direction.

5.4 Discussion of findings in relation to the existing literature

It has been established that no existing literature within CSR and SCM has considered company initiatives specifically concerning plastic. Therefore, the literature review took a broad focus by considering studies that have looked at how companies work with CSR initiatives and sustainable supply chain management, and the practical implications of the findings. This master's thesis contributes to the current literature by extending the research to the area of corporate initiatives on reducing adverse effects from plastic pollution along the production-consumption supply chain. In the following section, the literature will be discussed in relation to the key empirical findings and its application area on corporate initiatives on plastic pollution.

5.4.1 CSR as a marketing tool

The empirical findings support that CSR can be used as a marketing or branding tool (Hildebrand et al., 2011; Polonsky & Jevons, 2009). Carlsberg has used CSR on plastic as a branding tool and stated that the company marketed the 'Snap Pack' because it supports Carlsberg's sustainability transition and image. Marketing was also used strategically to avoid backlash when introducing the 'Snap Pack', where it was used as a communication tool to explain the purpose of the plastic strap

and glue. This supports the argument that communication on CSR can be used strategically to protect a brand (Werther and Chandler, 2005; Bonini et al. 2009). Moreover, the findings from the interviews show that Rema 1000 and H&M have used CSR and initiatives on plastic to brand the companies to future employees, further emphasising the argument by Hildebrand et al. (2011). Hence, the research conducted in the present master's thesis extends its application area to also comprise CSR initiatives concerning plastic.

All the interviewed companies stated that using CSR as a marketing tool, especially as communication to external stakeholders, is challenging. This finding was not put forward in the reviewed literature. Therefore, it can be added to existing literature that CSR initiatives on the plastic area require careful and skilful communicative skills to lead to the desired branding effect.

5.4.2 CSR and stakeholders

CSR initiatives can be influenced by various stakeholders and thus, these are not independently drafted by the focal firms in a one-directional manner. From the interviews, it was evident that external stakeholders also influence the companies' initiatives. Three externally influencing factors were put forward; trends in the market, consumer perceptions, and direct customer opinions. In fact, it was both the pressure from and close collaboration with external stakeholders that drove Faerch into recycling plastic in the beginning. This supports the stakeholder theorists (Post, 1978; Freeman, 2010) who assert that external firm-specific stakeholders should be considered when delineating corporate initiatives. Moreover, internal stakeholders should be considered, as argued by Rodriguez et al., (2002 cited in Galbreath, 2009). This point was also supported by Faerch, COOP, and H&M who all had to balance several agendas.

The above findings support that CSR strategies on plastic can be affected by both internal and external stakeholder opinions. This contrasts the argument put forward by Friedman et al. (1957), that companies should only focus on their shareholders and concentrate on profits. Further, H&M explained the expectation from its surroundings for the company to be first-movers within its industry, which highlights the normativity that is inherent in stakeholder theory (Rodriguez et al., 2002 cited in Galbreath, 2009).

5.4.3 CSR as a strategic tool

Several authors have argued for working strategically with CSR initiatives (Porter et al., 2003; 2006; Galbreath, 2009; Bonn & Fischer, 2011; Perrott, 2015; Palmer & Flanagan, 2016). From the empirical

findings, it can be established that the companies to various degrees work strategically with CSR to fight plastic pollution. By exploring how the companies work with their initiatives, there is empirical evidence to support Galbreath (2009)'s argument that strategic CSR is rooted in either the company itself, the market, strategic issues, customers, or resources. In extension to this argument, it was found that all companies have strategic partnerships with NGOs involving their CSR initiatives on plastic. Hence, the argument put forward by Schumate et al. (2010) about the benefits of corporate-NGO partnerships can be extended to include plastic partnerships. Moreover, Carlsberg's and Rema 1000's cooperations with Plastic Change provide evidence that it is mutually beneficial, as argued by Lafferty (2006).

All companies have integrated their plastic initiatives, packaging strategies or plastic strategies into their overall sustainability or CSR strategy. Taking a stance on sustainability and setting clear goals were important to all the interviewed firms. Moreover, it was mentioned that sustainability is linked and aligned with other corporate decision processes. Hence, as recommended by existing theory, the companies have incorporated sustainability into their overall decision-making process (Bonn & Fischer, 2011; Perrott, 2015). This contrasts Carroll's (1979;1991) argument that CSR should be a philanthropic add-on independent of the company's vision or mission.

Faerch's competitive advantage stemming from its business model with recycled plastic, confirms Galbreath's (2009) and Berns et al., (2009) arguments. However, utilising CSR to gain a competitive advantage, as research states (Galbreath, 2009; Porter et al., 2006; Berns et al., 2009), was debated by Rema 1000 and H&M. The companies argued that a common solution to plastic pollution and cooperation within industries are more desirable than striving for a competitive advantage. Supporting the latter argument is the fact that striving for a competitive advantage leads to dispersed, short-term solutions instead of alleviating the problem. Therefore, it remains debatable whether the empirical arguments support the utilisation of CSR to gain a competitive advantage (Porter et al., 2006; Galbreath, 2009; Berns et al., 2009), as the empirical findings both support and contradict this argument.

5.4.4 SSCM: Stakeholder collaboration and supply chain pressure

Plastic initiatives are concerned with addressing adverse environmental effects stemming from plastic usage. Supporting prior research (Seuring et al., 2013; Kovács, 2008; Brandenburg, 2014), it was found that these initiatives cover the whole supply chain and exceed focal firm boundaries through collaboration with actors across the supply chain. The findings suggest that plastic initiatives

often involve an additional expense for the companies who make the initial investment, whether in packaging, product or production equipment. However, once realised and implemented, many of the introduced actions lead to reduced costs.

Upstream and downstream collaboration in the supply chain is paramount for actions on plastic to be realised, according to all the interviewed companies. This supports the research by Brookhaus et al. (2013) and Co et al. (2009) who argue for a collaborative constellation among the participants in a supply chain to gain beneficial outcomes when implementing sustainability initiatives. The empirical findings showed that companies benefit from upstream cooperation and sparring with suppliers to rely on their expertise supporting the arguments of Bancelhon (2011). This also applies when the companies are finding new plastic packaging and product solutions. Exemplified by the collaboration between Faerch and Rema 1000, both companies expressed to have gained advantages from their collaboration on a new packaging solution. Hence, the argument on collaboration put forward in the existing literature by Brookhaus et al. (2013) and Co et al. (2009) can be extended to corporate initiatives on plastic.

In addition to a collaborative approach, Brookhaus et al. (2013) argue that supply chain cooperation can also be characterised as a mandated approach. A mandated approach, with the ability to exert buyer power to drive sustainability actions, was also evident from the interviews. When introducing new sustainability initiatives, H&M expressed that suppliers ultimately have to comply with the new requirements, if they want to continue to work with the company. However, H&M showed a willingness to also engage in collaborative relationships assisting their long-term suppliers with a sustainability transition. COOP similarly expressed that the company usually gets what it asks for when engaging in work with suppliers due to the size of the company. In its role as a supplier of plastic, Faerch had felt increased pressure from its customers for recyclable plastic solutions. The upstream pressure was also exemplified by Faerch, as the company receives questions from consumers, which are passed on to Faerch by its customers - in this case, the supermarket chains. Thus, both bargaining power of the retailer and companies using a mandated approach (Brookhaus et al. (2013) can be extended to comprise corporate initiatives on plastic. The findings further support the arguments made by Gualandris and Kalchschmidt (2014) who content that pressure emanates from direct customers and consumers. However, the empirical evidence also supports the argument put forward by Brookhaus et al. (2013) that the interdependency of parties in a supply chain leads to a collaborative approach across the supply chain.

The empirical findings support prior research (Zhu et al., 2007; Wolf, 2004), which suggests that external stakeholder pressure positively affects sustainable practices. Zhu et al. 2007 identified three types of pressures stemming from the market, competition and governments. H&M has felt an external pressure for the company to take action on plastic. Due to the size of the company, H&M has seen it as its responsibility be a first-mover on plastic within their industry. Within the supermarket industry, the increased focus on plastic pollution, pressure from consumers and the industry have led various supermarket chains to introduce plastic initiatives. Thus, the fact that pressures from market and competition affect sustainability practices (Zhu et al., 2009) is supported by the empirical evidence. However, it should simultaneously be added that it is disputable whether competition has contributed to a long-term, sustainable solution - as exemplified by the various shopping bags developed. The last point stems from the fact that legislation on plastic pollution is in its modest beginnings within the EU. The lack of legislation leads to uncertainty for the companies rather than increasing their sustainability efforts as argued by Zhu et al. (2009).

5.4.5 Incorporating circular solutions

The increased focus on a transition towards circular economy is evident from corporate actions, from NGOs and from a political stand as seen with the European Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; European Commission, 2019 a). Further, existing literature has looked at circularity in relation to supply chain management (De Angelis, Howard and Miemczyk, 2018). In line with this, companies that have initiated packaging or plastic strategies incorporate circular solutions or base the strategic foundation on a circular mindset. Faerch's use of recycled plastic in its production is an example of incorporating circular solutions into the overall business model, as suggested by Geissdoerfer et al. (2008). However, companies striving to incorporate a circular mindset into their plastic solutions often find themselves facing challenges.

A circular system requires that all links in the loop contribute to the process. To address the loop to the consumers, it was found that the companies were heavily engaged in communication to consumers as a part of their work with plastic initiatives. According to the companies, communication serves to influence consumer behaviour to ensure that materials and products are kept in use (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017) which is necessary, if the corporations are to succeed with their initiatives. Further, it is used to provide information to consumers, who are exposed to a great deal of misinformation about plastic. Thus, it was shown that companies perceive it as their responsibility to influence consumer behaviour, to reach progress on circular solutions and that communication is an important tool to succeed with this work.

Companies do not only try to influence consumer behaviour, but they also attempt to push the political agenda on plastic. In a Danish context, one of the concerns mentioned by Faerch, Rema 1000 and COOP is the waste handling system. A lack of standardised systems across municipalities adds a constraining factor when considering sustainable solutions for plastic recycling. Additionally, there is a need for politicians to take action to encourage streamlined actions. De Angelis et al. (2018) suggest that one of the implications when working towards a circular economy is the need for political pressure. Even though the authors call for an adjustment in the minimum requirements (De Angelis et al. (2018)), the overall argument of political involvement resembles the companies' urge for politicians to push for a standardisation of solutions without restricting development of viable solutions. It was found that lobbying through participation in various committees, is seen as a way to affect the political agenda and ensure that policies endorse the introduced initiatives.

Corporate initiatives on plastic pollution have not gained attention in existing literature on CSR and SCM, hence no gaps were identified in the literature review. The master's thesis can contribute to the existing literature by extending it to comprise corporate initiatives on adverse effects of plastic pollution. Moreover, the findings add some nuances to existing literature that are specifically applicable to CSR and SCM concerning plastic.

5.5 Discussion of findings, limitations, and suggestions for further research

5.5.1 Assessing the initiatives

The extent to which companies work with initiatives varies from company to company. In order to assess how companies work differently with plastic initiatives, they were evaluated based on whether they have introduced plastic initiatives, plastic or packaging strategies, or integrated plastic strategies into their business strategies. When evaluating these initiatives and strategies, the amount of time spent on developing these have not been considered, as this was not seen to be a determining factor for categorising the companies. The categorisation can be found in Figure 9 in Part 4. Alternatively, the initiatives could have been assessed quantitatively by calculating the amount of plastic reduced after implementing the actions. This would lead to a more objective ranking of each company. However, this would not have revealed the underlying considerations behind the initiatives, which is the objective of the study.

5.5.2 One interview with each case company

The number of interviews and their duration were spread evenly among the case companies. One interview with each person in five companies and a single questionnaire have laid the foundation for the empirical findings of this master's thesis. The fact that only one interview with each company has been conducted has some implications for the factors identified. The interviewees were not specifically asked to identify key factors. Therefore, what the interviewees mentioned as having a decisive influence on their initiatives was systematically identified as influential factors. Depending on the prevalence of these factors among different companies, they were either characterised as general factors or more company-specific in nature. As a consequence of only conducting one interview with each company, other key factors with a decisive role may not have been disclosed. Similarly, factors mentioned by one company may have been influential for other companies, although these were not brought up during the interviews. This could have been addressed if more interviews had been conducted with other people within in companies to confirm or modify the prevalence of the identified factors. But as stated in the methodology chapter, this was not possible due to the scope of the master's thesis. It should be noted that due to the positions held by the interviewees and their involvement in sustainability and plastic initiatives, the factors highlighted must - *ceteris paribus* - be key in influencing their initiatives.

5.5.3 Interviews with Danish representatives

All interviews were conducted with Danish representatives in the sample of five international companies and one Danish company. As an implication of this, some of the initiatives and factors influencing the companies have been explained in a Danish context rather than an international one. However, all of the international companies have launched their initiatives internationally, which suggest a broader application area. Moreover, it provided a detailed insight into how the companies have set out to collaborate with public authorities, NGOs, and across industries to provide more sustainable solutions for handling plastic pollution. To test if these findings are applicable in a broader context than the Danish, interviews with Sustainability Directors or similar positions in other countries can be addressed by future research. Further, this can investigate whether the findings and the influential factors are country-specific or not.

5.5.4 The selection of case companies

As stipulated in the research question, this master's thesis takes a broad perspective on corporate initiatives addressing plastic pollution by considering different companies along the supply chain. The companies chosen for this research were purposively sampled because they differ in

characteristics and have implemented different initiatives within a national or international setting. This approach has allowed for an exploration of how these companies work with plastic initiatives. The cross-case comparison in this study takes a broader corporate perspective than focusing on a specific segment or industry. Further, this research format has enabled a study of aspects from the perspective of a producer of plastic as well as users of plastic, the retailers.

The selection has some implications on the findings of the research. The differences of the companies have the shortcoming of decreasing generalisability within industries or according to specific company characteristics. Alternatively, companies within the same industry or with the same position in the supply chain could have been chosen to allow for further generalisation to be made. Further research can take this into account by looking at similar companies within the same industry for more generalisation to be established. Additionally, this will enable an in-depth investigation exploring the prevalence of certain factors when taking a closer look at a specific industry. Lastly, this can also serve to further investigate the company-specific factors identified in this study.

Despite the decreased ability to generalise from this study, it has been possible to look at trends for supermarket chains, as both COOP and Rema 1000 are in the supermarket industry and are placed in the production-consumption supply chain of plastic. The empirical findings showed that these companies have implemented similar initiatives and they share many of their views on how to address plastic pollution. When initiating actions on plastic, the common trends suggest that companies begin by optimising their current solutions by considering ways to reduce the amount of plastic. Next, they look for smarter solutions of applying plastic in products or as packaging where plastic is needed. This step also includes considerations of circularity where the design of plastic solutions is reconsidered to accommodate recycling. Hence, the study also showed that supermarkets are not against plastic per se, as it has apparent advantages, but instead argue for sustainable usage of plastic where it is deemed necessary. Moreover, the study has enabled identification of the key factors influencing supermarkets in particular; increased pressure from consumers, and a pressure in the industry to act on plastic pollution.

By including two companies from the same industry in the small sample, the purpose of looking at a diverse group of companies is potentially hurt. However, it allowed to discover similarities and differences within industries - and not only across different industries. Despite being in the same industry, the findings also showed a difference in the factors influencing the two companies' work with their plastic initiatives. Further research can meaningfully explore other supermarkets to confirm or reject the factors put forward in this study, which would allow for further generalisation within this

industry. It would be particularly interesting to investigate Salling Group and Lidl because both companies have also initiated plastic strategies.

In relation to the company selection, it should be noted that there is large proportion of retailers in the sample. This implies that a larger part of the sample has direct involvement with consumers, which has potentially had an impact on the findings compared to a more even proportion. However, looking beyond the two supermarkets, Helsam and H&M operate in different industries, which offers a broader picture of the factors affecting retailers. Further, the study has been able to shed light on corporate initiatives on plastic pollution for both smaller and larger corporations by allowing for a larger proportion of retailers. Hence, supporting the choice of selection these companies. However, further research can take a broader selection of companies and test whether the same findings and factors are prevalent or not.

Adding to the discussion concerning retailers above, it can further be discussed whether the companies provide a representative picture of corporate dealings with plastic. Despite the argument that the companies vary in size, Helsam is the only small- or medium-sized company (SME) included in the sample. Further, considering Helsam's product range and environmental profile, it can be difficult to establish whether its focus on sustainability and plastic, in particular, is representative for SMEs. Moreover, many of the companies pointed to the fact that they are first-movers, which suggest that they might not represent a representative sample from a wider group of companies. Therefore, based on this assertion, the suggestions for further research are two-fold. First, further research can look specifically at SMEs to establish if the factors identified in this study are relevant in broader SME context or whether other factors can be identified. Secondly, further research can look at companies that have not yet initiated actions to address plastic pollution and see whether or not they feel an increasing pressure to mobilise action.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

Further research should first and foremost address the limitations mentioned above. Due to the recent attention on this topic, there are various aspects that further research can explore. This thesis has set out to investigate how companies can contribute to reducing plastic pollution, and the suggestions for further research, therefore, have the companies as their focal point.

As this study has provided a snapshot on the case companies' current initiatives on plastic, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study in the future to investigate the implications and effects

of the companies' actions over time. Thereby, it could allow for an exploration of the different factors to investigate if these are contextual to the present or if they remain influential over time.

The present study has mainly focused on cooperation across the supply chain but has also identified that cooperation with external stakeholders is an important factor when introducing actions to reduce plastic pollution. Further research can take a closer look at the different forms of external cooperation e.g. public-private partnerships or NGOs and corporations to see whether these collaborations affect the extent to which companies work with initiatives on plastic pollution.

The concept of circular economy has been around for some time and the companies have to a large extent built their plastic initiatives and strategies upon this school of thought. However, it seems that there are still areas to be addressed before transitioning to circular economy of plastic. This study has addressed the link to consumers because it was highlighted by the companies that consumers are key in order for circular economy to be successful. Future research can investigate motivating and constraining factors influencing consumers to contribute to circular economy. In line with this suggestion, it would also be interesting to uncover whether or not plastic affects consumers in the moment of purchase.

Part 6: Conclusion

Action is required to address the rapidly expanding challenge of plastic pollution. An increasing amount of companies are implementing initiatives seeking to reduce plastic consumption or consider new ways of using plastic - all with an aim to tackle the negative consequences of plastic usage.

With an outset in the existing literature on corporate social responsibility and supply chain management, the present master's thesis has explored company initiatives that address plastic pollution. The objective was to explore to what extent companies work with these initiatives and to understand what factors influence their decisions and their actions. To investigate this research area, the study was based on empirical findings obtained through interviews with six case companies along the production-consumption supply chain that all have implemented initiatives to reduce the adverse effects from plastic pollution.

From the empirical findings, it can be concluded that these companies have initiated different actions to deal with their plastic usage, and to illustrate this, the case companies have been grouped according to the identified actions. Helsam and Carlsberg have been grouped together because both companies have implemented a number of actions that address plastic pollution. Helsam's actions have been influenced by consumer demands to increase its efforts for sustainable solutions. The company has a clear aspiration to initiate further actions and is in dialogue with its suppliers. Carlsberg's implemented initiatives have been influenced by the company's goal to reduce CO₂-emissions from its packaging. Due to Carlsberg's position in the supply chain, the company has been less affected by direct consumer pressure.

Rema 1000, COOP and H&M have similarly been grouped, as these companies have introduced plastic strategies with defined measurable goals for their future actions on plastic. Rema 1000 and COOP have been influenced by increased consumer pressure and a competitive landscape with increased focus on plastic. H&M's actions have largely been influenced by an expectation for the company to take a leading role due to the size of the company. Finally, and in contrast to the other firms, Faerch's actions has affected its way of doing business, where recycled plastic has become an integrated part of the company's business model. Through the company's dialogue with customers and upstream supply chain pressure, Faerch had been influenced by increasing requests for recycled plastic packaging.

It can further be concluded that the implemented actions have been influenced by several general and company-specific factors. Through a thorough investigation, the factors have provided an

understanding of why the companies' actions vary in scope. It was discovered that, while many of the factors could only be ascribed to one company, two overall factors had influenced all six companies. These factors were communication and cooperation. It was established that communication was an influencing factor as it created the link to connect with consumers. Results have shown that companies utilised communication to spread information of initiatives, correct misinformation about plastic pollution and solutions, and to push the plastic agenda and consumers in a more sustainable direction. This was also deemed necessary to succeed with a transition towards circular economy. The second factor that has been identified was the need for various forms of cooperation, which ensured successful implementation of initiatives and helped to develop further actions. It was highlighted that joint action is required to reach a solution. The collaboration ranged from cooperation across the supply chain, within industries, with consumers, with NGOs or policy-makers.

In addition to the factors identified above, the empirical findings have revealed that several other factors have influenced the companies' actions to address plastic pollution. The results have shown that internal and external factors influenced company decisions. These factors included alignment of different, internal agendas, consumer pressure and upstream pressure from retailers in the supply chain. It was further discovered that different motivating factors influenced the companies' decisions to implement initiatives, among these were company size, employer branding, and cost reductions. It was also established that the companies were exposed to various challenges, stemming from the fact that there is no single solution to the problem with plastic pollution due to a present legislative gap with limited emerging legislation.

The findings have shown that companies currently take responsibility to push the agenda on plastic in a more sustainable direction and want to educate consumers on the right solutions. However, when a legislative gap exists, there is currently no right solution leaving an ample opportunity for companies to obtain a first-mover or competitive advantage by acting on plastic pollution. While this can be viewed as a positive trend, it may lead to differentiated, divergent, and less sustainable solutions in the long run.

In order to address the above, this master's thesis serves as a pledge to policy-makers to utilise the current momentum and address the current legislative gap, which leaves the companies with uncertainty. Therefore, policy-makers should especially look into drafting a common solution to the various types of plastic, and push for nation-wide, streamlined waste sorting facilities. Moreover, the master's thesis can be drawn on from companies on the verge of implementing plastic initiatives,

which can use this master's thesis as a starting point to draw inspiration to various initiatives on plastic, and consider relevant important factors put forward by the interviewed companies. Lastly, the increasing amount of companies initiating actions to address plastic pollution suggests that companies not focusing on this could potentially end up with a competitive disadvantage.

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Overview of Appendices:

Appendix A: Interview guide used in interview with Faerch - February 13 2019

Appendix B: Interview guide used in interview with COOP - February 15 2019

Appendix C: Interview guide used in interview with Carlsberg February 22 2019

Appendix D: Interview guide used in interview with Rema 1000 - February 27 2019

Appendix E: Interview guide used in interview with H&M - March 11 2019

Appendix F: Questionnaire and Answers used for interview with Helsam - March 11 2019

Appendix A: Interview guide

Firma: Faerch

Date: 13-02-2019 kl. 11-12.

Interview participant and Position

Henrik B. Andersen, Group Technology Development Director

Indledningsvis: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hvad er interviewdeltagerens funktion og arbejdsområder?- Hvad har din rolle været i Færchs strategi mod et større fokus på genanvendelse af plast?
Motivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hvis vi ser på Færchs øgede fokus på genanvendelse af plastisk → Hvad ser du som jeres primære motivation for det øgede fokus på reduktion / genanvendelse af plast?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opfølgende: nødvendigt for eksistensgrundlag? Lovgivning? CSR, forbrugere osv.- Hvordan kan det være, at I ændrede jeres strategi i første omgang til genanvendelse af plast?- Oplever I den samme motivation fra kunder i forskellige europæiske markeder?
Specifikke Færch initiativer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vi har læst, at Færch blandt andet samarbejder med supermarkeds kæder i England om genanvendelse af plast (plastbakker som kan genanvendes). Kan du beskrive vigtigheden af samarbejdet med jeres kunder? (Notat: kan belyse et supply chain perspektiv → stakeholder)<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opfølgende spørgsmål:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Oplever I, at initiativer/forslag kommer fra jeres kunder?- Drøfter I mulige løsninger på plastområdet i fællesskab, eller er jeres initiativer primært drevet af egen innovation på området?- I samtalen med jeres kunder, fornemmer I et pres fra forbrugerne om en mere bæredygtig tilgang til emballage?- Hvad gør I for at få jeres kunder til at deltage aktivt i øget genanvendelse af plast?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Eller er det ikke nødvendigt?- Har du et eksempel på et andet initiativ eller projekt, som I har foretaget i samarbejde med en af jeres kunder?
Strategiske muligheder: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vores speciale forsøger at belyse plastproblematikken ud fra et strategisk synspunkt dvs. om virksomheder forsøger at inkorporere initiativer som en del af

deres strategi. Derfor kunne vi godt tænke os at blive lidt klogere på jeres strategiske overvejelser;

- Vi har læst om jeres strategi samt initiativer/ambitioner - men kan du kort beskrive de vigtigste fokuspunkter i jeres strategi?
 - Hvad har det betydet for jeres overordnede strategi, at I er begyndt at fokusere mere på dette område?
 - Opfølgende spørgsmål: Er det jeres overordnede strategi, I har ændret, eller er det et strategisk (CSR)-initiativ
- Ser I jeres initiativer som et vigtigt led i at skabe en konkurrencemæssig fordel? **Færchs ambitionsniveau “lead” → sustainable packaging.**
 - Hvad skaber det af værdi for jeres virksomhed fra et forretningsmæssigt perspektiv?
 - Er der en (økonomisk) gevinst for jer ved at fokusere på genanvendelse?
- Kan du uddybe jeres ambition for jeres plaststrategi / succeskriterier?
 - Hvad er vigtigt for at opnå dette? / Hvad kræver det, for at kunne opnå dette?
- Hvis vi ser på implementeringen af jeres strategi/initiativer - kan du beskrive, hvordan I implementerer nye initiativer (operationelt, ift. jeres kunder, osv.)?

Færch specifikt Vi har læst, at I arbejder mod cirkulær økonomi, og at I allerede har initiativer som blandt andet rPET, der primært kommer fra plastikflasker.

Udfordringer:

- Hvilke problematikker/udfordringer er I stødt på?
 - Hvordan har I forsøgt at overkomme disse?
- Hvad betragter I som den største udfordring på plastområdet for at opnå mere genanvendelse?

“Best practise”:

- Kan du beskrive nogle af de erfaringer, I tager med jer?
 - Færch “best practise” på området?
 - Hvad har fungeret / hvad ville I have gjort anderledes?
- Gode råd/erfaringer som I ønsker at dele med virksomheder, der ønsker at komme i gang med en mere miljøvenlig indsats på plastområdet?

Afslutningsvis:

- Er der noget, som du ønsker at tilføje, som vi endnu ikke har talt om/belyst?

Appendix B: Interview guide

Firma: COOP

Dato: 15-02-2019 kl. 10-11

Interview Participant and Position:

Mathias Hvam, CSR Project Manager (CSR-afdelingen)

Indledningsvis: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hvad er interviewdeltagerens funktion og arbejdsområder?- Hvad har din rolle været i COOPs emballagestrategi?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Notat: COOP vil reducere deres forbrug af konventionel plastik i emballage og engangsprodukter med 25 % i 2025.
Motivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hvad ser du som COOPs primære motivation for jeres emballagestrategi og øgede fokus på plastområdet?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opfølgende: nødvendigt for eksistensgrundlag/konkurrenter? Lovgivning? CSR? forbrugere?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opfølgende spørgsmål ift. pres fra kunder → hvordan mærker I dette pres fra forbrugerne? (hvis de gør)- I samtalen med jeres kunder, fornemmer I et pres fra forbrugerne om en mere bæredygtig tilgang til emballage?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Notat: COOP analyse → kunderne ranker miljø/emballage højt.
Specifikke COOP initiativer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hvordan forsøger I at balancere både hensyn til mindre madspild samt en ambitiøs emballage-strategi?- Vi kan se, at I gerne vil benytte bioplast - hvilke overvejelser har I gjort jer for at nå frem til at anvende dette frem for eksempelvis genanvendt plast?- Vi har læst, at I vil udskifte emballage på 4000 produkter - hvordan påbegynder man en sådan proces?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Samarbejde?- Produkter?- Vi kender jeres bæredygtige indkøbspose. Det er et initiativ, som vi kan se, at mange virksomheder er begyndt på.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hvad var jeres grund til, at I lancerede den?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Økonomisk: Billigere eller dyrere? Hvem betaler?
Strategiske muligheder: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vi kan godt tænke os at blive lidt klogere på jeres strategiske overvejelser;

- Vi har læst om jeres strategi samt initiativer/ambitioner - men kan du kort beskrive de vigtigste punkter i jeres emballagestrategi på plastområdet?
 - Vi har læst, at I vil udskifte emballage på 4000 produkter - hvordan påbegynder man en sådan proces?
 - Samarbejde?
 - Produkter?
- Ser I jeres initiativer som et vigtigt led i at skabe en konkurrencemæssig fordel eller mere nødvendigt? **COOPs ambitionsniveau → have den mest ambitiøse og bæredygtige emballagestrategi.**
 - Notat: alle supermarkeder gør det
 - Hvad skaber det af værdi for jeres virksomhed fra et forretningsmæssigt perspektiv?
 - Er der en (økonomisk) gevinst for jer ved at have en emballagestrategi?
 - Er der en ekstra omkostning? Hvem kommer til at betale for det?
- Forbrugerne:
 - Reaktion fra kunder ift. udfasning af produkter eller ændring af emballage?
 - Hvad gør I for at få jeres kunder til at deltage aktivt i øget genanvendelse af plast?
 - Hvordan? Kan du beskrive nogle konkrete tiltag?
 - Notat: det er fint at have en emballagestrategi, men da COOP ikke er sidste led i kæden, er det nødvendigt, at forbrugerne også bidrager til, at emballagen i sidste ende bliver genanvendt.
 - initiativ: 1 kr. for at genanvende bæreposen.
- Leverandørerne:
 - Har I udarbejdet jeres emballagestrategi i samarbejde med andre aktører (leverandører, NGOs, osv.)? (Notat: kan belyse et supply chain perspektiv → stakeholder)
 - Opfølgende spørgsmål: vigtigheden af dette samarbejde for at opnå jeres målsætning på området?
 - Har du et eksempel på et initiativ eller projekt, som I har foretaget i samarbejde med andre aktører?
 - Kan du uddybe jeres ambition for jeres plaststrategi / succeskriterier?
 - Hvad er vigtigt for at opnå dette? / Hvad kræver det, for at kunne opnå dette?
- Vi kan se, at I aktivt informerer/markedsfører jeres emballagestrategi: hvilken rolle spiller kommunikationen for jeres emballagestrategi?
 - Notat: branding, business ethics

Udfordringer:

- Hvilke problematikker/udfordringer er I stødt på?
 - Hvordan har I forsøgt at overkomme disse?
- Hvad betragter I som den største udfordring på plastområdet for at opnå mere bæredygtig emballagestrategi?

Erfaringer ("Best practise"):

- Kan du beskrive nogle af de erfaringer, som I på nuværende tidspunkt tager med i forhold det øgede fokus på emballageområdet?
 - Hvad har fungeret / hvad ville I have gjort anderledes?
- Gode råd/erfaringer som I ønsker at dele med virksomheder, der ønsker at komme i gang med en mere miljøvenlig indsats på plastområdet?

Afslutningsvis:

- Er der noget, som du ønsker at tilføje, som vi endnu ikke har talt om/belyst?

Appendix C: Interviewguide

Firma: Carlsberg

Dato: 22-02-2019 kl. 15-16

Interview Participant and Position:

Simon Boas Hoffmeyer, Group Sustainability Director

Indledningsvis: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Indledningsvis, kan du fortælle os lidt om dine arbejdsområder?- Kan du beskrive Carlsbergs vej/rejse mod jeres nuværende sustainability strategi, herunder lanceringen af snap packen og shrink wrap?
Motivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hvad ser du som Carlsbergs primære motivation for jeres øgede fokus på plastområdet?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Opfølgende: nødvendigt for eksistensgrundlag/konkurrenter? Lovgivning? CSR? forbrugere? kunder?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pres fra kunder → har I mærket/mærker I et pres fra jeres kunder på plastområdet?- Fornemmer I et pres fra forbrugerne om en mere bæredygtig tilgang til emballage?- Er det med til at skabe en konkurrencemæssig fordel? → de første som går ud med snap pack-initiativet (first-mover).- Hvor længe har fokus på plastik været en del af jeres strategi?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Notat: Det står ikke specifikt uddybet i deres CSR-rapport → bruger overordnet betegnelse "packaging".
Specifikke Carlsberg initiativer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Snap Pack- Genanvendt 'shrink wrap' til jeres multipacks- Bionedbrydelig flaske lavet i samarbejde med EcoXpac (påbegyndt 2015).- I har nedbragt PET og rPET emballage fra 29% i 2011 til ~20% i 2018 → Arbejder I mod helt at udfase plastik fra jeres produktion?
Strategiske muligheder: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vi kan godt tænke os at blive lidt klogere på jeres strategiske overvejelser;<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vi har læst om jeres initiativer/ambitioner - men kan du give en lille beskrivelse af jeres overordnede ambition på plastområdet?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Er I i gang med andre initiativer på plastområdet?<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Overvejer I at udbrede til alle jeres brands?- Notat: Packaging → the biggest source of carbon emissions in the value chain (40 %) - her må plastik indgå.

- Ser I jeres initiativer på plastområdet som et vigtigt led i at skabe en konkurrencemæssig fordel eller mere nødvendigt?
 - Hvad skaber det af værdi for jeres virksomhed fra et forretningsmæssigt perspektiv?
 - Er der en (økonomisk) gevinst for jer ved at tænke i nye løsninger på plastområdet.
 - Kan du fortælle om mulige økonomiske gevinster for jer ved et øget fokus på plastområdet?
 - Er der en ekstra omkostning? Hvem kommer til at betale for det?
- Strategiske CSR-initiativer på områder, som ikke er jeres "core business" (brygning) ifølge jer selv → er det jer, der har drevet det øgede fokus på genanvendt plast/reducering af plast i forbindelse med packaging, eller er det i højere grad sket i samarbejde med jeres leverandører/eller solo-initiativ fra jeres leverandører?
- Forbrugerne:
 - Reaktion fra forbrugerne efter lanceringen af Snap Pack'en?
 - Hvad gør I for at få jeres forbrugerne til at deltage aktivt i øget genanvendelse af plast?
 - Hvordan? Kan du beskrive nogle konkrete tiltag?
 - Notat: det er fint at have en emballagestrategi, men da Carlsberg ikke er sidste led i kæden, er det nødvendigt, at forbrugerne også bidrager til, at emballagen i sidste ende bliver genanvendt.
- Leverandørerne:
 - Vi har læst, at samarbejdet med jeres supply chain partnere har været vigtig for at kunne udvikle en ide som Snap Pack'en. Kan du beskrive lidt mere om dette samarbejde og vigtigheden.
 - (Notat: kan belyse et supply chain perspektiv → stakeholder)
 - Opfølgende spørgsmål: vigtigheden af dette samarbejde for at opnå jeres målsætning på området?
 - Har du et eksempel på et initiativ eller projekt, som I har foretaget i samarbejde med andre aktører?
- Vi kan se, at I - udover samarbejde i jeres supply chain - også samarbejder med NGO'erne Plastic Change og WWF.
 - Hvad går dette samarbejde ud på?
 - Samme spørgsmål som til leverandører: vigtigheden af dette samarbejde for at opnå jeres målsætning på området?
- Kan du uddybe jeres ambition for jeres plaststrategi / succeskriterier?

- Hvad kræver det, for at kunne opnå dette?
- Notat: Med snap-packen reducerer I plastik i jeres produktion 76 % → er målet 100 %?

- Vi kan se, at I aktivt informerer om/markedsfører jeres Snap Pack blandt andet ved busstoppesteder, supermarkeder samt reklame med Mads Mikkelsen: hvilken rolle spiller kommunikationen for jeres initiativ? Hvor vigtigt er det at kommunikere initiativet til forbrugerne?
 - Notat: branding, business ethics

- Hvordan arbejder I strategisk med CSR? Hvordan aligner I jeres CSR-strategi op mod jeres virksomhedsstrategi?
 - Hvad får I ud af/Hvad er målet med at lave en CSR-rapport?
 - Kan den også skabe udfordringer for jer? Hvordan?
 - o Note: Mål i hver rapport for næste års actions

- Hvor får I inspiration til jeres CSR-initiativer?
 - Employees, Academia, SDGs, NGOs, partnerskaber, suppliers, customers, consumers?
 - Hvilken gruppe har størst indflydelse?

- SDGs er noget, som virksomheder i høj grad fokuserer på, og vi kan se, at det er et stort fokusområde i jeres sustainability rapport → bruger I dem til at udforme/skabe ramme om jeres sustainability strategi, eller laver I strategien og aligner den op imod de SDGs, som I kan have en indflydelse på?

- Hvor langt planlægger I frem, når I laver en ny CSR-strategi?
 - Hvordan påvirkes den af trends i samfundet/medierne?

Udfordringer:

- Hvilke problematikker/udfordringer er I stødt på?
 - Hvordan har I forsøgt at overkomme disse?

Erfaringer ("Best practise"):

- Kan du beskrive nogle af de erfaringer, som I på nuværende tidspunkt tager med i forhold det øgede fokus på plastområdet?
 - Hvad har fungeret / hvad ville I have gjort anderledes?
 - Har det ført udfordringer/gevinster med sig?

Afslutningsvis:

- Er der noget, som du ønsker at tilføje, som vi endnu ikke har talt om/belyst?

Appendix D: Interview guide

Firma: REMA 1000
Dato: 27-02-2019 kl. 11:30
Interview Participant and Position:

Anders René Jensen, Procurement and Marketing Director

Indledende spørgsmål
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Kan du indledningsvis fortælle lidt om dine arbejdsområder?2. Hvad har din rolle været i udarbejdelsen og implementeringen af REMA 1000s plastikstrategi?
Motivation
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hvad ser du som REMA 1000s primære motivation for jeres øgede fokus på plastområdet?<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Mærker I et øget pres fra forbrugerne for en mere bæredygtig tilgang til emballage og plastik generelt?<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Hvilke områder vægter forbrugerne højest?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eksempel: madspild, emballage, dyrevelfærd, osv.b. Vi kan se, at flere supermarkedskæder har fokus på at nedbringe eller genanvende plastik. Forsøger I at differentiere REMA 1000s plastikstrategi fra jeres konkurrenters?
Specifikke REMA 1000 initiativer
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Vi har læst, at I har ændret emballage for tre af jeres rengøringsprodukter, og at I har en målsætning for 2030 om, at alle jeres private label-produkter skal være i genanvendeligt materiale.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Hvordan påbegyndte I en sådan process?b. Hvordan prioriterer I rækkefølgen af produkter for at opnå jeres målsætning?2. I har lanceret en bæredygtig indkøbspose, som er et initiativ, flere virksomheder er begyndt på.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Hvad var jeres grund til at lancere dette initiativ som noget af det første?b. Har I oplevet nogle fordele ved at lancere jeres bæredygtige indkøbspose?3. I 2017 ændrede I design på jeres REMA 1000 bleer til en smartere løsning og mindre emballage. Dette initiativ gjorde det samtidig muligt for jer at spare på transportomkostninger.

- a. Har du eksempler på andre tiltag, hvor I har haft en lignende omkostningsmæssig gevinst uden at det var hensigten bag initiativet?
 - b. Er det en prioritet, at initiativer på plastområdet har en omkostningsmæssig gevinst?
4. Vi kan læse i jeres CSR-rapporter, at I rangerer hensynet til madspild højere end hensynet til plastik. Hvordan forsøger I at balancere både hensyn til mindre madspild samt en ambitiøs plastikstrategi?
5. Hvilke overvejelser har I gjort jer med hensyn til brug af bionedbrydeligt plast og i forhold til biobaseret plast?

Strategiske muligheder

Plastikstrategien:

Vi kan godt tænke os at blive lidt klogere på jeres strategiske overvejelser. Vi har læst om jeres plastikstrategi samt jeres initiativer og ambitioner.

1. Kan du kort uddybe de vigtigste punkter i jeres plastikstrategi?
2. Hvordan har I udarbejdet disse initiativer?
3. Kan du beskrive implementeringen af jeres plastikstrategi i løbet af 2018?
4. Ser I jeres initiativer som et vigtigt led i at skabe en konkurrencemæssig fordel?
 - a. Kan du uddybe, hvilken værdi det skaber for jeres virksomhed fra et forretningsmæssigt perspektiv?
 - b. Vi kan se, at nogle initiativer ender i besparelser, mens vi kan forestille os at andre ender i øgede omkostninger. Hvem kommer til at betale for eventuelle ekstraomkostninger i forbindelse med ændringer af emballage?
5. Kan du uddybe jeres målsætning for jeres plastikstrategi?
 - a. Hvad kræver det, for at kunne opnå dette?

Forbrugerne:

1. Hvordan har reaktionen været fra jeres kunder ift. de initiativer, som I på nuværende tidspunkt har igangsat?
2. Vi har læst, at I vil indføre sorteringsanvisninger på jeres produkter, som skal gøre det lettere for forbrugerne at sortere emballage i hjemmet.
 - a. Kan du beskrive lidt mere om, hvad I gør for at for jeres kunder til at deltage aktivt i øget genanvendelse af plast?

Samarbejdspartnere herunder leverandører:

Vi har læst, at I har indgået samarbejde med forskellige aktører heriblandt Københavns Kommune og plastproducenter, og I beskriver, at plastudfordringen ikke kan løses alene.

1. Kan du beskrive lidt mere om jeres samarbejde på plastområdet?
2. Kan du beskrive vigtigheden af et samarbejde både med producenter og leverandører men også med kommuner for at opnå jeres ambitioner på plastområdet?

<p>Kommunikation af plastikstrategi:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hvilken rolle spiller kommunikation af jeres plastikstrategi til blandt andet jeres kunder? 2. Hvordan har I valgt at kommunikere jeres initiativer om genanvendelse af plastikemballage?
<p>Udfordringer</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hvilke udfordringer er I stødt på i forbindelse med jeres initiativer på plastområdet? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hvordan har I forsøgt at overkomme disse?
<p>Erfaringer</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kan du beskrive nogle af de erfaringer, som I på nuværende tidspunkt tager med i forhold det øgede fokus på plastikområdet? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hvad har fungeret? b. Hvad ville I have gjort anderledes?
<p>Afslutningsvis</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Er der noget, som du ønsker at tilføje, som vi endnu ikke har talt om/belyst?

Appendix E: Interviewguide

Firma: H&M
Dato: 11-03-2019 kl. 13:00
Interview Participant and Position:

Mia Møgelgaard, Sustainability Manager Danmark

Indledende spørgsmål
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Kan du indledningsvis fortælle lidt om dine arbejdsområder?2. Hvad har din rolle været i udarbejdelsen og/eller implementeringen H&M's initiativer på plastområdet?
Motivation
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hvad ser du som H&Ms primære motivation for jeres øgede fokus på plastområdet?<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Opfølgende: nødvendigt for eksistensgrundlag/konkurrenter? Lovgivning? CSR? forbrugere? Forventning?b. Mærker I et holdningsskift hos forbrugerne ift. plastik i jeres produkter (mikroplastik i tøj, plastik accessories, bæreposer)?c. Vi kan se, at flere virksomheder har fokus på at nedbringe eller genanvende plastik. Forsøger I at differentiere jeres initiativer på plastområdet fra jeres konkurrenters?2. Ser I det - qua jeres størrelse - som jeres job at drive tøjindustrien i en mere bæredygtig retning?<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Notat: flere hensyn
Specifikke H&M initiativer
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Vi har læst, at I benytter plastik fra PET plastikflasker, plastikposer, shampooflasker samt diverse plastbeholdere til jeres poser og accessories. Notat: In 2017, we used the equivalent of over 100 million plastic PET bottles in recycled polyester.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Hvordan påbegyndte I processen med at genanvende plastik til jeres poser og accessories?b. Kommer genanvendt plastik til at spille en større rolle i jeres overordnede

strategi fremover?

2. Forår/sommer 2017-initiativ: En bæredygtig badetøjskollektion lavet af blandt andet gamle fiskenet, gulvtæpper og genanvendt polyester from gamle PET-flasker, og at I har en "Conscious Exclusive collection", hvor I kombinerer bæredygtigt og innovativt design.
 - a. Hvordan får I ideer til at udvikle nye kollektioner med fokus på bæredygtighed inkl. genanvendt plastik?
3. Vi har læst, at I i nogle lande er begyndt at tage penge for jeres plastikposer, mens I i andre lande har udskiftet jeres plastikposer med papirposer. Omsætningen heraf bliver doneret til velgørende formål (blandt andet WWF og Unicef)
 - a. Notat: Bærepose → et initiativ som flere virksomheder er begyndt på.
 - b. Hvad har jeres overvejelser været for at anvende papirposer frem for andet materiale?
 - c. Hvad er effekten af dette tiltag?
 - d. Er det noget, I har tænkt jer at udbrede i alle jeres butikker?
 - e. Har det haft en omkostning, at I er begyndt på disse initiativer?
 - i. Notat: Hhv. papir vs plastik og forbrugerbetalte poser.
 - f. Er det en prioritet, at initiativer på plastområdet har en omkostningsmæssig gevinst?
4. Arbejder I på andre initiativer for at reducere brugen af plastik eller øge andelen af genanvendeligt plast?

Strategiske muligheder

Plastikstrategien:

Vi kan godt tænke os at blive lidt klogere på jeres strategiske overvejelser. Vi har læst om jeres initiativer og jeres ambition om 100 % bæredygtig materialer i 2030 og klimavenlig værdikæde i 2040.

1. Kan du uddybe de vigtigste initiativer/punkter, når vi taler om plastik?
 - a. Notat: Er det primært accessories, nye kollektioner, etc.
2. Ser I jeres initiativer som et vigtigt led i at skabe en konkurrencemæssig fordel?
 - a. Ser I disse initiativer som en mulighed for at differentiere jer fra jeres konkurrenter?
 - b. Kan du uddybe, hvilken værdi det skaber for jeres virksomhed fra et forretningsmæssigt perspektiv?
 - i. Notat: branding, økonomi, loyalitet.

Forbrugerne:

1. Hvordan har reaktionen været fra jeres kunder ift. de initiativer, som I på nuværende tidspunkt har igangsat?
 - a. Notat: afgift på poser samt mulighed for at aflevere brugt tøj.
2. Vi har læst, at forbrugerne kan genanvende deres tøj i jeres butikker mod at få en voucher på 10 %.

- a. Har I gjort jer nogle tanker om, hvordan I kan få jeres kunder til at deltage aktivt i genanvendelse af plastik?
- b. & other stories initiativ: vi har læst, at forbrugere kan indlevere brugte "beauty packages".
 - i. Vi er nysgerrige - kan du uddybe, hvad dette omfatter?
 - ii. Hvad anvender I de brugte "beauty packages" til?

Samarbejdspartnere herunder leverandører:

Vi har læst, at I har indgået samarbejde med forskellige aktører herunder DANONE.

1. Kan du beskrive lidt mere om jeres samarbejde på plastområdet?
2. Kan du give os et indblik i, hvordan I samarbejder på tværs af jeres supply chain for at opnå mere genanvendt plast?

I har forpligtet jer til et fokus på plastområdet med jeres deltagelse i New Plastic Economy Global Commitment.

1. Hvordan arbejder I hen imod at opnå de mål, som aftalen indebærer?
2. Har I planer om at udvikle en specifik målsætning på plastområdet?

Notat:

The New Plastics Economy Global Commitment seeks to amend the plastic crisis in three major ways:

1. Eliminate problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging and move from single-use to reuse packaging models
2. Innovate to ensure 100% of plastic packaging can be easily and safely reused, recycled, or composted by 2025
3. Circulate the plastic produced, by significantly increasing the amounts of plastics reused or recycled and made into new packaging or products

Kommunikation af initiativer på plastområdet → spørge ind til kommunikation af velgørenhed

1. Hvilken rolle spiller kommunikation af jeres plastikinitiativer til blandt andet jeres kunder?
 - a. Opfølgende spørgsmål: Donationer til Unicef samt WWF.
2. Hvordan har I valgt at kommunikere jeres initiativer om genanvendelse af plastik til forbrugerne?

Udfordringer

1. Hvilke udfordringer er I stødt på i forbindelse med jeres initiativer på plastområdet? a. Hvordan har I forsøgt at overkomme disse?
Erfaringer
1. Kan du beskrive nogle af de erfaringer, som I på nuværende tidspunkt tager med i forhold det øgede fokus på plastikområdet? a. Hvad har fungeret? b. Hvad ville I have gjort anderledes?
Afslutningsvis
1. Er der noget, som du ønsker at tilføje, som vi endnu ikke har talt om/belyst?

Appendix F: Questionnaire and Answers from Helsam

Firma: Helsam
Dato: 11-03-2019
Interview Participant and Position:

Kenneth Guldager, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Motivation
<p>1. Hvad ser du som Helsams primære motivation for jeres øgede fokus på plastområdet?</p> <p>1. Mærker I et øget pres fra forbrugerne for, at I, som virksomhed, går aktivt ind i kampen mod plastik? <i>Ja, en stor del af vores kunder har også en holdning til brugen af plastik, og da emnet er hot topic i medierne, oplever vi også en efterspørgsel efter miljøvenlig emballage.</i></p> <p>i. Har der været et pres fra andre aktører (eks. NGO'er, lovgivning, leverandører)? <i>NEJ</i></p> <p>1. Vi kan se, at flere virksomheder har fokus på at nedbringe eller genanvende plastik. Hvad har det betydet for jeres fokus på plastområdet? <i>Vi er en virksomhed der ønsker at gå forrest og tag ansvar. Vi vil gerne være dem de andre følger efter.</i></p> <p>Hvad har din rolle været i udarbejdelsen og implementeringen Helsams plastikinitiativer? <i>Jeg (Kenneth Guldager) har været initiativtager og stået for kontakten til Plastic Change.</i></p>
Svar:
Helsams plastinitiativer

1. I har indført en ny miljøvenlig bærepose og et indkøbsnet af brugte plastikflasker.
 1. Hvad var jeres grund til at lancere disse initiativer? *At gøre en aktiv indsats sammen med vores kunder om at nedbringe forbruget af plastik og samtidig genbruge noget af alt det plast der allerede er produceret.*
 2. Har I oplevet nogle fordele ved at lancere jeres bæredygtige indkøbspose/indkøbsnet? *Det motiverer kunderne til at genbruge*
 3. Er det en prioritet, at initiativer på plastområdet har en omkostningsmæssig gevinst? *Ja selvfølgelig – det er god CSR og meget bæredygtigt, når det bliver en WIN – WIN – WIN for miljøet, os og kunderne.*
 4. Arbejder I på andre initiativer for at reducere brugen af plastik eller øge andelen af genanvendeligt plast? *Vi er i dialog med producenterne om at anvende genbrugsplast i deres emballager.*

Svar:

Strategiske overvejelser, kunder, samarbejde og kommunikation

1. Ser I det at indføre initiativer på plastområdet som en mulighed for at kunne skabe en konkurrencemæssig fordel? *Som virksomhed vil vi gerne bibeholde vores grønne profil, og derfor er det underforstået et af vores konkurrenceparametre at kigge på, hvordan vi kan passe på miljøet.*
1. Kommer genanvendt plastik til at spille en større rolle i jeres overordnede strategi fremover? *Bæredygtighed generelt er vores fokus - ikke blot plast.*
2. Har I oplevet en reaktion fra jeres kunder efter indførelsen af en miljøvenlige bæreposer og indkøbsnet? *Vi ville gerne have folk til at overveje en ekstra gang, om det var nødvendigt for dem at købe en ny pose. Det er lykkedes i og med, at de nu aktivt bliver spurgt, om de vil købe en pose. Flere af vores kunder medbringer selv bæreposer eller indkøbsnet.*
 1. Vi kan se, at I samarbejder med Plastic Change.
 2. Hvad går samarbejdet ud på? *Vi vil gerne støtte organisationen, der har til formål at belyse "vores" omgang med plast og deres formål ligger i fin tråd med vores CSR. Vi støtter med et fast beløb årligt, hvilket betyder, at når vores kunder køber en pose eller et indkøbsnet, så går det til en del af det beløb vi donerer til Plastic Change.*
3. Hvordan kan det være, at I har valgt at indgå et samarbejde? *Win-win-win*
4. Arbejder I på nye initiativer med andre aktører som eksempelvis leverandører/producenter på plastområdet? *Se ovenstående*
5. Har I valgt aktivt at kommunikere jeres initiativer på plastområdet til jeres kunder?

Vi har sendt pressemeddelelse ud og flere af lokalaviserne har fulgt op på den og bragt artikler med vores butikker, hvor konceptet er forklaret.

Derudover har vi lavet plakater og topskilte til brug i butikkerne, så de ansatte har noget at henvise til, når de taler med kunderne.

Svar:
Udfordringer
<div>1. Hvilke udfordringer er I stødt på i forbindelse med jeres initiativer på plastområdet?<div>1. Hvordan har I forsøgt at overkomme disse? Vi har overvejet om vi skulle indsamle tomme emballager, men har måtte konstatere at det bliver for ressource tungt.</div></div>
Svar: