



University of
Stavanger

How can companies communicate the positive environmental impact of a product to increase consumers' willingness to purchase green products?

A study on storytelling and consumer behaviour in regards of products made from upcycled ocean plastic.

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*Master in Energy, Environment and Society
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Spring 2021*

MASTER'S DEGREE IN
Energy, Environment and Society

CANDIDATE NUMBER: 4828

SEMESTER: Spring 2021

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MASTER THESIS TITLE: How can companies communicate the positive environmental impact of a product to increase consumers' willingness to purchase green products?

SUBJECT WORDS/KEY WORDS: Consumer behaviour, circular economy, plastic pollution, ocean plastic, upcycling, green product, green marketing, storytelling, resource degradation, climate change.

PAGES: 59

STAVANGER: 15.06.2021

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ope AS for giving me the opportunity to work on their research project dealing with ocean plastic. I would like to give special thanks to co-founders Lars Urheim and Eirik Helgesen, for assisting me with the survey and for giving thorough answers during the interviews.

I would also like to give special thanks to my supervisor Anders Riel Müller for giving me valuable feedback and always pointing me in the right direction.

Finally, I would like to thank the MEES class of 2021 for two great years together.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of storytelling in relation to a product made from upcycled ocean plastic. A quantitative survey was performed in cooperation with Ope AS which is leading a research project on upcycling ocean plastic. Through the project, Ope has produced their first product made out of 100% ownerless ocean plastic, and the survey was based on consumers' willingness to pay that product. Two in-depth interviews of the founders of Ope were performed to get an insight into the idea behind using ocean plastic as material. This thesis takes a critical look at how we can replace the take-make waste practice with a closed loop. In a closed loop there is minimal waste and resources are used again and again. This thesis provides an overview of current literature on consumer on Circular Economy, green marketing and value creation, as well as theories on storytelling and consumer behaviour. Consumption is a big contributor to many environmental issues such as resource degradation, Co2 emissions and water shortage. Recycled material is available but is at a disadvantage when competing with cheap virgin material. The aim of this project was to see whether a non-material value can be added to a product through its positive environmental impact, and whether this added value can be communicated to consumers through storytelling. Environmental concern is rising among consumers, and this thesis argues that consumers can be part of the solution instead of the problem.

Based on the data and analysis presented, this thesis argues that there is a positive correlation between awareness and concern for the environment to green purchases. Storytelling proved to be an effective way of communicating a story, but only a certain group of respondents were influenced by the message. The data showed clear tendencies where those who expressed concerns for plastic pollution also displayed the highest increase in willingness to pay for the product. Based on the analysis, those who did not express an increased willingness to pay can be placed in two groups. Those who seem to be aware and concerned but did not trust that this product or this company would do anything to fix the problem, and those who did not seem to acknowledge that plastic in the ocean as a big problem. More research on what creates value, and how companies can communicate to consumers the added value that comes with a green product is required. When we buy products that are not "green", nature is paying the price. If we include the benefits of the environment into the calculation, we can finally talk about the actual value of a product.

1.0 Introduction

The current use of natural resources is not sustainable and concern for the consequences of economic growth and exploitation of the world's resources is increasing. Humans are consuming the world's resources faster than nature can replenish them, and an increasing amount of people, companies and policy makers are starting to connect consumption to resource depletion, issues of climate change and extensive water and energy use (Bridgens et al., 2018). As this concern for the environment is rising, companies have the ability to combine their marketing strategies with environmental issues. There is little disagreement in the literature on marketing that consumption is a big contributor to many of the environmental issues we see today (Rahnama & Rajabpour, 2017). How we can accomplish to change this is however, disputed. Green marketing strategies often fail to understand consumer behaviour and there is an attitude-behaviour gap. Research lacks focus on value creation from upcycled products, and how storytelling can be part of the solution. There is also a gap in the literature on the non-material value of recycled products. There are several aspects to why green products are not gaining sufficient attraction. Price, quality, knowledge, availability and trust are important factors. As environmental concern is increasing among consumers, research on consumer behaviour should address how storytelling can assure that the value of green products can reach consumers and how companies can focus on the added value instead of the negative aspects of recycled products. When consumers are not able to recognize the added value that comes from an upcycled product, sales are not increasing. Furthermore, companies are not investing in sustainable sourcing of resources and not investing in energy and water conserving productions. A clean and healthy planet should be calculated into the total value of a product, and this could happen by communicating the value of a healthier planet to the consumers.

The objective of this thesis is to study whether products made from upcycled material has an added value and whether this value can be recognized by consumers through storytelling. This recognition is measured through consumers' willingness to pay for a product made from ocean plastic. Through an online survey and two in-depth interviews this research will investigate how value can be added by telling a truthful story of the positive environmental impact of a product. This project will discuss specific issues within the broader question of how to create new value for upcycled ocean plastics through storytelling. In addition, this project will contribute to the broader discussion on transitioning to a Circular Economy (CE) and creating value chains for upcycled ocean plastic. Ultimately, this thesis will provide deeper knowledge

on the correlation between a product made from upcycled ocean plastic, the value of a genuine story, and how to ensure that the added value is accepted and appreciated by consumers.

Every day large amounts of plastic ends up in nature and especially in the ocean. At the same time, plastic production is expected to double in the next 20 years (Ministry of Climate and the Environment 2020). According to Miljøstatus, 8-12 tons of plastic enter the ocean each year (2020). Plastic is a durable material and takes a long time to degrade. Most of the plastic which has ended up in the ocean, is therefore still there unless it has been physically removed (Miljøstatus 2020). Removing the plastic from the ocean would improve the life of those living in the ocean as the plastic threatens the entire eco-system (Miljøstatus, 2020). Removing the plastic from the ocean and using it in products could have effects on people's awareness of the plastic problem, thus contributing to decreasing plastic pollution in the first place.

The Norwegian Parliament, The United Nations, The European Union and many other important actors, private and public, are working nationally and internationally to tackle the growing plastic problem. The UN has been asked to form a global agreement to stop the plastic pollution and the EU has worked intensely on the plastic issue and published "A European Strategy for plastics in a circular economy" (European Commission, 2018).

1.1. Clarification of concepts

Ocean plastic – plastic waste that has ended up in the ocean, either by accident or by dumping. Often labelled ownerless because the waste knows no owner nor borders, and no one claims responsibility to clean it up.

Ocean plastic from the fishing industry – recycled plastic from fishing gear, such as nets and ropes. This plastic has never been lost, but the industry makes sure it is recycled and sells it as "ocean plastic".

Virgin plastic – direct material produced from oil and gas, which is being processed for the first time.

Clean-up – the act of picking up plastic waste along the coast, often performed by volunteers. This often includes using boats to get to less accessible locations. In this thesis it does not include using technology to remove the waste directly from the ocean.

Upcycled material – waste that has been processed and used in a way that gives it higher value.

1.2 The case of Ope

Ope AS was founded in 2011 with the goal of becoming the best in the world on sustainable solutions for furniture. The idea was that the furniture could easily be changed when the consumers had different needs, and would therefore not need to be replaced (Ope 2021). The two founders designed and patented a shelf system that customers could adjust according to their own needs. In 2018 they took their sustainable thinking one step further and decided to use ocean plastic as material in their furniture. VRI Rogaland which is a support system for sustainable research, helped Ope get started with their first project (Bore 2019). Ope went on to a second research project, called From Beach to Boardroom, and furniture company Vestre became partners in that project. Handelens Miljøfond (Trade industry's environmental fund) which receives their money from the fee consumers pay on plastic bags, partially funded this project. The project proved that ocean plastic could be used as a material in new products (Urheim 2019). Because the results were so good, Ope and Vestre wanted to expand the project and applied for funding from the Research Council of Norway. They received funding from 2020-2022 and the aim of that research project is to build a value chain for upcycled ocean plastic, and to research whether there is added value in the products that comes out of the project. Vestre has launched their first bench made out of ocean plastic and Ope has launched a focus tool that can be used to differentiate between work and leisure (Beall 2020; Theexplorer 2020).

1.3 Ocean plastic

The objective of this thesis is to study whether products made from upcycled material has an added value and whether this value can be recognized by consumers through storytelling. The focus on upcycled ocean plastic as a material comes from the research project Ope has initiated, where their aim is to create an economically viable value chain for upcycling ocean plastic. Plastic pollution in the ocean is a huge problem worldwide, and although there are large efforts

to clean it up, there are few commercial solutions. In Norway, the fishing industry has started recycling ropes and nets, which is also labelled ocean plastic. There are however no other actors that does this with ownerless ocean plastic (NOPREC 2021; Ogoori 2020). For the remainder of this thesis, I will only talk about the ocean plastic that is ownerless and has been lost and I will refer to it as ocean plastic

Ocean plastic is in the plastic industry viewed as useless because it consists of various types of plastic and often unknown additives. Because ocean plastic has no value, there is a lack of funds to do the clean ups. Clean ups are expensive, and today cleaners depend on public funds or goodwill from companies to perform the task. If a company was able to create a non-material value in a product that is a result of cleaning up nature, then such a product could potentially fund the clean ups, meaning that for every product sold, more nature would be cleaned. Instead of consumption being a part of the problem, it would be a part of the solution.

Europe is increasingly focusing their efforts on turning to a CE, and since a large fraction of the waste constitutes plastic, plastic also gains increased attention. Plastic is a durable material and has the potential of being recycled over and over again. According to Plastics Europe (2017) only 30 % of the plastic in Europe is recycled. The remaining 70% ends up in landfills or is burned. One of the main goals in the EU Circular Economy is decoupling, meaning economic growth does not equal the increase in resource use (Milios, Holm, McKinnon, Christensen, Rasch & Hallstrøm, 2018). Milios et al. writes that although the Commission in the CE action plan has high ambitions, the fact is that current systems of recycling are far from circular. A big obstacle is the quality of the material which leads to loss of material (2018). Because recycled material often is deemed useless, it ends up in landfills or being incinerated. Milios et al. writes that market inconsistencies delay a functioning flow of recycled materials which can be put back into the loop by manufacturing industries in Europe (2018). A major reason for this lies in the way products and packaging are designed. Another obstacle for a functioning flow of recycled material is the lack of a steady demand. The price of virgin plastic is low, and the quality good, resulting in recycled plastic having a relatively high price with worse quality (Milios et al., 2018). Milios et al. concludes that a well-functioning market in addition to a demand for recycled plastic is a necessity for succeeding with an increase in recycled plastic (2018).

In the linear economic model, when a product is no longer needed, it is discarded as waste. In

some industries this “waste” is used again, but in most industries the waste ends up being burned or dumped in landfills (Plastics Europe, 2017). As the earth’s resources are finite, this way of using and disposing of resources is not sustainable. It simply goes beyond the planets limits and if humankind continues with business as usual, the planet will not be able to restore these resources (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013). Moving towards CE can therefore be an alternative to the linear economy that respects the boundaries of nature.

1.4 Problem statement

The problem statement of this thesis will be the following:

How can we turn non-material value into economic value through telling the story of the product’s positive environmental impact? A study of consumers’ willingness to pay for a product made from upcycled ocean plastic.

To research this problem statement, three research questions have been designed. Research question one is linked to the expressed increased willingness to purchase the product after receiving a story about the positive environmental impact of the material. The second research question seeks to understand for whom the story has value and what part of the story was most efficient in creating value. The first and second research questions will be investigated by conducting an online survey. The third research question is concerned with how knowledge derived from research questions one and two together with two in-depth interviews can contribute to the field of CE, consumer behaviour and green marketing.

Research Questions

1. Does the perceived value of a product increase after the consumer has received the story about the positive environmental impact?
2. Is there a correlation between awareness and concerns about the plastic problem in the ocean to how the story affects the perceived value?
3. How can knowledge on green consumer behaviour aid companies wanting to shift their activities to fit with circular principles?

This thesis investigates how a story about the environmental impact of the product can influence the consumer. More specifically, the researcher looks at how the value of a clean nature can be

communicated to the consumer through storytelling, ensuring a higher willingness to pay for the product. The scope of the thesis is limited to looking at how telling a story can influence consumer behaviour and how companies can implement this knowledge in their market strategies. Further research should investigate how information and knowledge on environmental issues together with honest and clear marketing can enable consumers to make more environmentally conscious purchases.

To go from a linear economy to a circular economy is challenging for both consumers, companies and policy makers. When a company is going from using virgin material to recycled material the company is faced with a plethora of challenges. There are technical challenges such as efficiency and worse material quality and social and psychological challenges, such as consumers not trusting the quality or benefits of the product are important. There are also economic obstacles for a company wishing to use recycled materials, and especially using upcycled ocean plastic. There is not an existing value chain for upcycling “ownerless” waste and the cheapest option today is to send it to landfill or incineration. Thus, companies wishing to move towards CE is in need of empirical data about consumer behaviour, and how they can be influence by companies.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

To answer the problem statement and the three research questions, the thesis is structured as follows.

In chapter two, I will discuss current literature on CE as a way to eliminate waste and create a closed-loop system where the waste is instead used. Literature on green marketing and value creation will also be presented. In the chapter, I investigate the relationship between the establishment of circular economic principles, and the importance of storytelling to communicate the value of an upcycled product. A critical assessment of current literature is presented, and gaps in literature is highlighted.

Chapter three outlines the theoretical framework which includes theories on storytelling and consumption values. Theories on storytelling provides information on how consumers are affected by a story compared to only facts. It outlines what characterises a good story and how we as humans receive a message in a story. The theory on consumption values provides a good

basis for understanding what influences purchases and I have focused on what influences purchases of green products. Consumer value theory outlines different factors that influences green purchasing behaviour and proved useful in analysing the findings in this project.

In chapter four I describe why a mixed method approach has been chosen as the methodology to investigate the research questions. A quantitative method was used to conduct and analyse an online survey, which were answered and completed by 250 respondents. A qualitative analysis of three open ended questions in the survey was conducted in order to get a deeper insight into why the respondents answered the way they did. After completing the survey, two in-depth interviews were conducted in order to get the view of the founders of Ope, both on the role of storytelling in green marketing, and on their interpretations of the results of the survey.

In chapter 5, the results of the survey and the two in-depth interviews is outlined and discussed. In the survey, the respondents were asked about their willingness to pay for a product before and after receiving a story about the origin of the material. An increased willingness to pay after receiving the story was found and this chapter therefore goes into details of who the story affected the most and relates it to theory on consumer behaviour and storytelling. This chapter also reflects on the input from the two founders of Ope and how this project can contribute to literature on consumer behaviour and upcycled products.

In the last chapter I summarize and discuss the implications of the findings in this project. I argue that awareness and concern for the environment is an important driver for green purchasing. Companies should include this knowledge in their green marketing strategies and consider how they can influence consumers through making them more aware of different environmental issues. I reflect on how this study can contribute to the broader academic discussion on value creation in upcycled products. Limitations of this study is outlined, and I make suggestions for further research.

2.0 Literature review

This project is investigating how companies can use storytelling and knowledge on consumer behaviour to successfully promote green products to consumers. This chapter will therefore present literature on CE, green marketing and value creation. A critical assessment of current literature and an overview of different viewpoints on the topics will be presented.

2.1 Shifting from a Linear to a Circular Economy

In a linear economic model, a company extracts raw material from nature and turns it into a product that is used by people all over the world who have a need or desire for this product. The product is put into the market by traditional marketing and the consumer may or may not be concerned about the environment. When the product is no longer needed, it might be recycled, but usually ends up as waste, as shown in figure 1. During their short lifetime the products have had a negative impact on the environment (Beaulieu, Durme & Arpin, 2016; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013; Ledsham, 2020). In a circular economic model, a company would use either raw material (when absolutely necessary) or recycled material, using an energy efficient and water conserving processes in production to create a “green product”. The company would reach consumers through green marketing, and the consumers who purchase the product would ideally be all consumers but is at this time usually limited to a small group of concerned and informed consumers. At the end-of-life, the product (which is also designed for recycling) would be recycled and go into a new product as shown in figure 2. This product would then have a had less negative environmental impact (Beaulieu et al. 2016; Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2013; Ledsham 2020).

Figure 1: Linear Economy

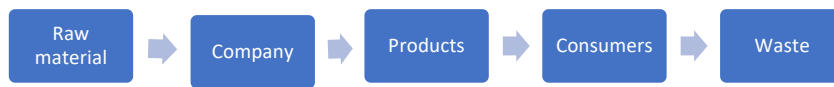
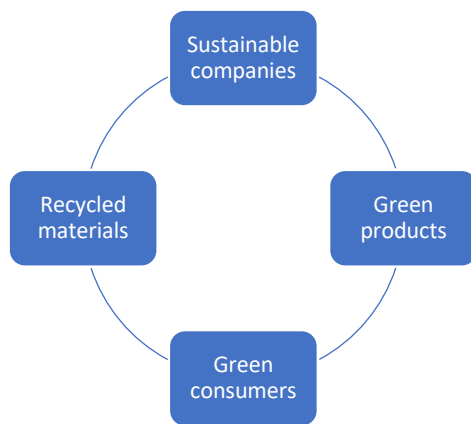


Figure 2: Circular Economy



CE is an economic model, which, unlike the linear economic model is achieved when “*resourcing, purchasing, production, reprocessing are designed to consider environmental performance and human well-being*” (Liu, Feng, Zhu & Sarkis., 2018, p. 796). A circular model considers the boundaries of the earth with the goal to use as little of the earth’s resources as possible. Geng, Sarkis, Ulgiati & Zhang (2013) states that CE is a system that focuses on material flow, and closing the loop. CE is also concerned with conserving energy, water and resources in the production stage, while discharging minimal waste at the end-of-life. Resources should be used in such a way that they can be re-used at the end-of-life, which is how you close the loop (Geng et al. 2013). Sustainability, and the thought behind CE is to mimic the circularity of nature. That entails respecting nature’s resource capacity and its ability to renew itself, and using the resources again and again instead of discarding them after being used for a short amount of time (White, Habib & Hardisty, 2019). CE is a holistic concept of sustainability and thriveability for companies and the environment. It is repeatedly presented as an alternative to the linear economy which is characterized as “take-make-waste” and that it fails to stay inside of the planet’s boundaries (Beaulieu et al. 2016).

CE can be considered a paradigm shift that is a multi-level, socio-constructed concept. The concept is under development with vague boundaries and multiple moving parts (Beaulieu et al., 2016). CE can be seen as a response to an overuse of resources and environmental problems which offers a framework for sustainability that respect nature's boundaries. By decoupling economic growth from resource exhaustion, and by increasing efficiency of the resources used, the negative impact on the environment is reduced, which is what creates value. (Beaulieu et al. 2016). The Ellen MacArthur foundation (EMF) was created in 2010 and is a dominant voice in CE. EMF defines CE as:

an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the 'end-of-life' concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems, and, within this, business models. (Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2013:7)

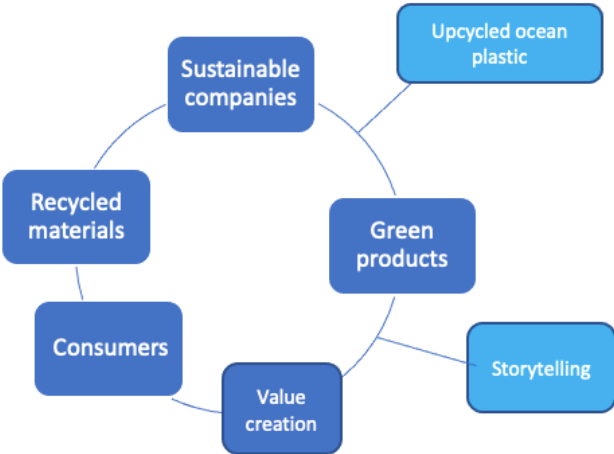
In the circular economic model, normal products should be replaced by "green products". The Commission of the European communities defines environmentally friendly, or green products as those who "use less resources, have lower impacts and risks to the environment and prevent waste generation already at the conception stage" (Comission of the European Communities 2001:3). In recent times, there has been a shift in production, where the aim has been to use more energy efficient machines and to use less water. However, it has happened with continues economic growth and the use of resources has only increased (Ernst & Young 2000). Green products do not only relate to using less resources during production, but also relate to how they are designed and produced. Sustainability must be applied throughout the whole value chain, and the products capability of being re-used at end-of-life is crucial (Khan and Mohsin 2017).

Upcycled products can be characterized as green products. Upcycling is the process of reusing waste material and is a combination between recycling and upgrading. Recycling often includes downgrading, where the material goes into a product with a lower value whereas upgrading and upcycling means that the material goes into a product with a higher value (Yu and Lee 2019). Upcycled products has the ability to protect nature and natural resources in that they reduce waste, conserve energy or reduce greenhouse gasses (Wilson 2016). Several companies, such as FREITAG, Patagonia and Adidas have produced upcycled products. Adidas launched their

first pair of sneakers where parts of the shoe was made from reclaimed fishing net. FREITAG makes new products out of used truck tarps, discarded bicycle inner tubes and car seat belts. Patagonia is known for environmental efforts with marketing campaigns such as “Don’t buy this jacket”. They design their products to last and offer repair of their clothes (Wilson 2016). These are good examples of how companies contribute to moving consumption towards circularity.

Figure 3 shows how the focus of this thesis fits in with the circular economic model. In this figure I have added “Upcycled ocean plastic” because CE have to include using waste as material and there should be more focus on upcycling ocean plastic. “Storytelling” is added because I argue that storytelling can be a strong marketing tool to communicate the value of a healthy planet to consumers. “Value creation” is added on the circle, because I argue there should be more focus on value creation when discussing how to move from a linear to a circular economy.

Figure 3: Circular Economy, storytelling and value creation



Literature on CE has seen a steep rise in the last 10 years and the research performed stems mainly from natural sciences and social sciences (Kirchherr and van Santen 2019). However, the concept of CE seems challenging to implement, and according to The Circularity Gap report only 8,6% of the world is circular (Circular Economy 2021). According to Kirchherr & van der Santen there is not sufficient empirical work on CE (2019). The majority of the research on CE

seeks to define it and to add definitions rather than to propose how to implement and make CE work in practice (Kirchherr and van Santen 2019). Another criticism towards literature on CE is that it is found to most often give advice directed towards academia rather than to companies and policy makers (Kirchherr and van Santen 2019). 114 definitions on CE have been found in the literature, which indicates that academics do not necessarily agree on how to define or implement it (Corvellec, Bohm, Stowell & Valenzuela, 2020). Criticism also includes that literature on CE is too focused on waste, and eliminating waste rather than covering the broad picture of resource depletion (Corvellec et al. 2020).

2.2 Green marketing

There are two reasons for why we should understand drivers for sustainable consumption. The first is that traditional marketing and the way it has promoted consumption is a big contributor to the environmental issues, and the second is that businesses who are able to adopt true sustainability will likely thrive in the long run (White et al. 2019). Sustainability is an increasingly important subject and is receiving more attention in the public debate (Hopkins, Townend, Khayat, Balagopal, Reeves & Berns, 2009). One could argue that marketing goals are conflicting with goals of sustainability. The way that marketing has been carried out has encouraged economic growth and has an endless want for products that require large amounts of resources (White et al. 2019).

In recent times, more and more businesses realize that they need to adapt sustainability into their business model. One way to do this is to incorporate remanufactured or recycled products into the company's portfolio (Abbey, Meloy, Guide & Atalay, 2015). The economic growth has unfortunately resulted in overusing resources leading to deterioration of the planet's resources (Khan and Mohsin 2017). While the world's population has gotten an increase in wealth and living standard, this has contributed to negative effects on the environment. The result of this is global warming, water and air pollution and natural habitats being damaged (Khan and Mohsin 2017).

Consumption is a big contributor to these issues, but the effects on the climate has not always been at the forefront of people's mind. Today's consumers are however, increasingly paying attention to the impact of consumption on nature and are now, according to Khan & Mohsin more likely to opt for environmentally friendly products than before. Chen and Chang also

states that the public is becoming more aware and have started noticing environmental issues (2012). This has led to companies accepting that taking care of the environment is part of their social responsibility. As environmental concerns have become more important, more and more companies are looking at how to take advantage of green opportunities (Chen and Chang 2012). As more and more consumers are concerned about the environment it seems crucial and essential for companies to implement green marketing approaches (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017).

Sustainability has been on the agenda of many companies for decades, and Peattie (2001) outlines three periods of green marketing. The first age evolved in the 60's and 70's, and were mainly concerned with environmental problems such as air and water pollution from oil and synthetic pesticides (Peattie 2001). This age did not affect most companies in a positive way in terms of branding, as most companies only complied with new laws and regulations. A few companies took advantage of the environmental concerns and became pioneers in the green business movement. The second age Peattie labels "environmental" green marketing. It was dominated by several disastrous events such as Chernobyl, the Exxon-Valdez oil spill, and the discovery of the hole in ozone layer in 1985. This led to the boycott of chlorofluorocarbons (CFSs) that had caused the hole, and consumers showed that they could stand together in the fight for the environment (Peattie 2001). It became evident that environmental concern could have an effect on consumer behaviour, and this led to the thought that companies could use this in their favour. The idea was that if an increasing amount of consumers became concerned about the environment, companies running a green business could obtain a competitive advantage (Peattie 2001).

However promising using environmental concerns as a competitive advantage seemed, reality hit a "green wall" towards the end of the 1990's. Companies who had taken a lead in greening their industries were outperformed by companies discounting their own products and attacking the technical quality and the credibility of green products. Consumer behaviour was not consistent, consumers did not seem willing to pay for green products and it seemed that marketing strategies had failed to understand consumer behaviour (Peattie 2001).

According to Groening, Sarkis & Zhu, green marketing involves different strategies than marketing non green products (2018). According to his research, when all other things are equal, consumers are shown to purchase environmentally friendly products over non-

environmentally friendly products. However, much research and findings shows that consumers are less willing to pay more for the green product (Groening et al. 2018). There are many factors that affect the choices of consumers and switching to a green product requires the consumer to trust the company and trust that the product has good quality. Green marketing faces the challenge of providing quality products that meets the needs and wants of the consumer while also convincing the consumer that meeting the needs of the planet should be considered (Groening et al. 2018). On top of convincing the consumer that the product meets quality requirements while having a less negative impact, it seems that it should not cost much more than original products.

Much research has been done on green marketing, and marketing plays a vital role when it comes to influencing consumers and how they view the relationship between products and environmental problems. Green marketing therefore has great potential to change consumer behaviour (Groening et al. 2018). Shabbir, Bait, Hasan, Mahmood & Abbas argue that green marketing has the ability to have a positive influence on consumers' behaviour when it comes to green products and urges businesses to consider the value creation that is possible from environmentally friendly strategies (2020).

The consumers have an important role in marketing strategies, and the idea of a green consumer emerged together with green marketing. Kardash (1974) characterized "green consumer" as those who faced with two identical products, except the environmental factors, would chose the product that favours the environment. Peattie (2001) suggest that that if we accept this idea, we can understand the lack of environmental purchases better. If two products are not seen as equal, we can focus on the purchase, not the consumer. It is not the consumer's fault that they do not consume the product per se. There is often focus on the poorer quality of the green product without sufficient focus on the added value. Green products can often include a trade-off, such as a green premium and a lower level of technical performance (Peattie, 2001). When posed with these trade-offs, the level of confidence in actual environmental benefit is crucial. It is important that the consumers believe that the product takes into account real environmental problems, and that buying the product will make a difference for the environment. If there is any doubt in the company's trustworthiness, that will greatly impact the outcome of the purchase (Peattie, 2001). Understanding the consumers and why they make the choices they do when it comes to green products is crucial in order to succeed with green marketing.

Companies have been seen to benefit from taking their environmental responsibility seriously, and that bringing it in as a core element of their strategy can be beneficial (Hillestad, Xie & Haugland, 2010). Having green products for example, has shown to positively impact the image of the brand (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandakula, 2014). Literature and research on green marketing strongly supports the perception that environmental concern is more and more important, and an important driver for consumer behaviour (Hillestad et al. 2010; Lin and Huang 2012; Olsen et al. 2014; Wilson 2016). By promoting awareness among consumers and giving consumers a chance to contribute to clean nature through purchasing upcycled products companies can have a strong market strategy (Yu and Lee 2019). Yu and Lee also found that emotional and aesthetic values were important and suggests that marketing strategies should focus on that. Through storytelling, the company could promote both the functional value and the environmental value of the product (Yu and Lee 2019).

Research on green marketing also has gaps when it comes to green marketing's impact on consumer behaviour (Shabbir et al. 2020). As was seen in the criticism against CE, findings from research on green marketing often do not contain sufficient empirical evidence. Another issue with the literature on green marketing is that the result of research is often contradicting and location dependent which makes it difficult to talk about green marketing in universal or general terms. Some find that price, quality and technical attributes are more important than the environmental impact of the product (Bukhari 2011) while others find that the environmental impact can be more important than quality and technical attributes (Khan and Mohsin 2017). However, research seems to reach the same conclusion when it comes to price and willingness to pay for a product. If the environmental product has a green premium, consumers are less likely to purchase it (Groening et al. 2018; Khan and Mohsin 2017; Peattie 2001; Sweeney and Soutar 2001). From this there does not seem to be an added value in green products, or the consumers are unable to see the added value of an environmentally friendly product.

2.3 Value creation

There is extensive literature on value in the economic and marketing field, but there is not a universally accepted value measure and there has been little focus on the actual construction of value (Sweeney and Soutar 2001). Much literature on value creation has emphasized that value is a trade-off between quality and price, but several authors have stated that this view is too simple (Bolton and Drew 1991). Adding value through product quality, special additions or

features or after-sale services has been addressed by Porter (1990). Value can be measured on quality of a product, but it can also be so much more than that. In this section I will outline literature on perceived value which proposes alternatives to the thinking that value is consistent with a certain type of quality.

As there is no world-wide agreement on the definition of value, the term perceived value proves more useful. Perceived value is a person's or customer's perception of a product's attraction to them. Perceived value can be measured by looking at what the customer is willing to pay for a product (Zeithaml 1998). Zeithaml suggests that perceived value is "consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (1998, p 14). Zeithaml addresses the challenging issue of defining concepts of price, quality and value in the perspective of the customer. She digs into what is meant by quality and value and how the perceptions of value and quality are created (Zeithaml 1998). Zeithaml defines quality as superior or excellence, and that perceived value is a person's evaluation of a product's superiority or excellence. Zeithaml writes that perceived quality is not objective or "actual quality". When talking about actual quality of a product one often refers to specific technical attributes or meeting a service standard. Japanese philosophy describes it as "zero defects- doing it right the first time" (Zeithaml 1998:4). Corfman (1985) suggests that "quality is a relatively global value judgement" (Zeithaml 1998:5).

Patterson & Spreng (1997) defines perceived value as "a consumer's overall appraisal of the net benefit of a product or service between what is received and what is given based on the consumer's environmental desires, sustainable expectations, and green needs"(1997:445). Thus, perceived value is based on what the consumer is willing to pay for a product and is not necessarily connected to the actual "quality" of the product. Yu and Lee write about added value in upcycled products, and state that when consumers receive the story about the "rebirthing" of a product, that story might stimulate consumer awareness and lead to positive emotions, making them willing to pay more for the product (Yu and Lee 2019). When looking at value from a different perspective, we are able to think of the value of a product as more than just quality that comes from using expensive raw material. Thus, money could be generated without having to extract new resources.

2.4 Literature's relevance to this thesis

It is important to study the role of consumers in tackling environmental problems because consumption has much of the blame when it comes to the root of these problems (Khan and Mohsin 2017). Much of the existing literature on green marketing seeks to outline possibilities of using environmental concerns as a competitive advantage. Much of the literature on consumption behaviour looks at how consumers make purchasing choices and what factors influence consumer behaviour. Much research has been done on consumers and their environmental awareness, however, there is still a gap between stated attitude and actual behaviour (Kilbourne and Pickett 2008). If we are able to tighten this gap through increased knowledge on consumer behaviour and environmental awareness, this could be a proper guidance for companies interested in having a positive impact on the environment. In literature on CE, green marketing and value creation there is little focus on what exactly creates value, and how companies can strive to construct products or services that have a non-material added value because of the inherent positive environmental effect. Sweeney and Soutar state that there has been little emphasis on addressing the actual value creation and there is no one accepted measure of value (2001). Understanding how green products are perceived and how consumers behave is an important step for businesses wanting to succeed with green products. Wilson writes that as environmental concern is increasing, this can greatly influence what type of products consumers choose to use (2016).

In order for the circular economy to be implemented, the consumers have to see the value from it. Circular economic principles can be promoted through a series of facts, such as less waste generated and reduced Co2 emissions. However, it can also be presented through a compelling story that appeal to consumers' values. By appealing to emotions and presenting a story where the individual can relate, a non-material value can be created on top of the economic value of an upcycled product. Theories on storytelling and consumer behaviour will therefore be presented in the following chapter.

3.0 Theoretical framework

In this section theories on storytelling and consumer behaviour will be outlined. The chapter provides a theoretical overview, and the theories presented will be used in the analysis of the findings. The objective of this project is investigating the willingness to pay for products made from upcycled plastic and whether there is a higher willingness to pay for these products after receiving a story about the environmental impact. To be able to research this I find it crucial to understand consumer behaviour. How do consumers make their choices? What influences their behaviour, and is there information or knowledge that can change the way consumers behave? This thesis is specifically looking at the effect environmental issues have on consumer behaviour and will therefore draw on these theories with a focus on sustainable consumer behaviour.

3.1 Storytelling

Stories are very important to how our experiences are made meaningful and Polkinghorne (1991) writes that storytelling allows us to make sense of our lives. Shankar et al., writes that stories can help us understand how consumers act the way they do (2010). Stories can also contribute in making sense of who you are as a person, or to understand social processes or representations of cultures (Shankar et al. 2010). Consumption is increasingly viewed as contributing to constructing identity. What consumers buy becomes part of their identity and consumption is contributing to creating the “you”. Therefore, stories are more likely to be attractive to a consumer when there is a match between the story and the consumers ideal narrative (Shankar et al. 2010). If the consumer can identify with individuals in a story, it is likely that the consumer connects with the story and is affected by it.

One benefit of using a story is that it has proven a more successful way of delivering a message. Sammer writes that there are two ways of delivering a message; rational, just listing the facts, and emotional, delivering the message through a story (2015, as cited in Mucundorfeanu, 2018). It is important that the receiver of a rational message is open and focused, and especially that they are willing to accept the message. Sammer writes that very often, the receiver is not, and that there are great limits to this technique. According to Sammer the second technique has proven far more efficient (2015, as cited in Mucundorfeanu, 2018). Storytelling can therefore be an efficient tool in delivering a message about a product to consumers.

Storytelling has been part of many companies' branding strategy and can be an effective tool. Mucundorfeanu describes branding as a process which is ever evolving and that this process will adapt to the changes in the market (2018). Much research has been done on the effects of storytelling and some claim that people remember a story 22 times better than just plain facts (Mucundorfeanu, 2018). It is important that the story reflects core values that are in tune with the company's activities. Telling a superficial story will not have a long impact, as it is "just another story", whereas an authentic story about the product and the company can have a lasting impact on the consumer and their view of the company and their products (Mucundorfeanu, 2018).

Mucundorfeanu writes that stories are good for assuring that people get a connection with a brand or a product (2018). She also writes that brands which have a good story can differentiate themselves from other similar brands. If the company is able to tell a unique story, it is likely that people will connect to that story. According to Mucundorfeanu extraordinary or unexpected facts about a product, for example how they were produced, the origin of the material, how the product has an impact, is one of many starting points for successful storytelling (2018). The right story can put value into a product because it can offer experiences and identification possibilities (Mucundorfeanu 2018). Companies can therefore use storytelling to turn facts about their unique product into value because the message is delivered in a way that consumers connect with it.

Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & van Riel, writes that stories have a special effect on stimulation of the human brain (2013). In the article "The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story" the authors write that a good story influences the behaviour of the consumer and the consumers emotions towards the company. Lundqvist et al. performed an experiment where they had two groups (2013). One group were exposed to a story about the brand, the other group did not receive the story. The experiment showed clear results outlined below.

In the experiment a group of people who had never heard of the brand were divided into two groups. One group were given 3 pages where the story of the brand was told. The other group was not exposed to the story. The participants were then given a selection of 15 products and asked to comment on the products. They were also asked how they felt about the brand with three adjectives. The person interviewing the participants picked out one of the 15 products and

asked the participants how much they thought it cost, from 10€ to 50€. Finally, the price of the product was revealed, and the participants were asked if they were willing to pay that price. The results were clear. Those who had been exposed to the story of the brand answered with more positive words and the group that had not read the story described the brand with only negative words. The participants that were exposed to the story explains how much the story impacted their feelings and understanding of the company in a positive way. They express gratitude because of the honesty of the company and feel like the company is interacting with the customer, much more than what an ad would do. Finally, on the question of whether the participants were willing to pay the price of the product, 100% of the participants who had been exposed to the story said yes, while only 50% of the ones who had not been expose to the story said yes. The researchers conclude that a well told story increase the participants willingness to pay. The story changed the way the participants viewed the brand and raised the perceived value of the product (Lundquist et al., 2013).

Some of the literature on storytelling states that whether or not the story will sell, depends on whether or not the person buying can relate to the story, due to own experiences or expectations. According to Mossberg & Johansen the story has to be authentic and believable (2006). Twitchell (2004) writes that the story should be simple and communicated in short. There should be a clear message that can be told in a sentence or two (Twitchell 2004). Stern (1994) writes that a story should be written in a way that is valued by the consumer, and that it should contain a certain message. That message should include a conflict and an action, while being credible (Stern 1994). Lundqvist et al, writes that when a brand uses a story correctly, that story can become a value adding asset (2013). This is because storytelling can appeal to people's values in ways that are different from plain facts. From the literature on storytelling, there seems to be an agreement that telling a story is very effective in communicating and connecting with the consumers, and that companies can use this as a part of their branding. It is important that the story is told in a way that allows the consumer to connect with it and believe in it.

3.2 Consumption values theory and utility theory

The theory of consumption values was first described and developed by Sheth, Newman and Gross in the article "*Why we buy what we buy: A theory of Consumption Values*" published in 1991. Sheth et al., used extensive research in sociology, psychology, economics and consumer behaviour to develop the theory. The theory identifies different values that have an effect on

the choices consumers make. Functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value and a conditional value are the five values identified in the theory (Sheth, Newman, and Gross 1991). The theory has been used extensively since then, and in connection with looking at green products, a sixth value has been added. The sixth value is environmental value and has been described as one of the most important factors for consumers' attention on green products. The six values will be outlined below.

Sheth et al., describes functional value as the most important driver for the choices of the consumer. Quality and price are important functional values and the functional value is defined as "perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity for functional, utilitarian, or physical performance and is thought to be generated by a product's salient attributes" (Sheth et al. 1991:161). Consumers seem to be able to take into account both the quality and the price, and evaluate the two against each other when making a purchase (Ritter, Borchardt, Vaccaro, Pereira & Almida, 2015). Green products are often more expensive, because some of the processes making the product "green" are more costly. However, some research shows that consumers are becoming more value oriented, and are therefore willing to pay a higher price for a green product (Ritter et al. 2015). Rahnama & Rajabpour state that consumers have to trust and understand that paying a little more for a green product makes a difference (2017).

Social value is perceived utility associated with the person's background and stems from the consumer's association with a social group, or where the consumer comes from (Sheth et al. 1991). Pressure from that social group is an important driver for consumer choices. Research shows that environmental behaviours are highly affected by social value (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017). What those around you do has a big impact on what you do, and if those around you start using more environmentally friendly products, there is a higher chance that you will too.

Emotional value is defined by Sheth et al., as "the perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity to arouse feelings or effective states" (1991:161). Emotional value plays an important role in the experiences of the consumer. Emotions are key components of attitude and influence consumers' choices and preferences (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017). This type of value is very important when it comes to consuming green products. It can influence to such a degree that the functional value (price and quality) actually matters less (Kim & Choi, 2005). Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between emotional value and

environmental value in terms of purchasing green products (Lin and Huang 2012). If information about a product's positive environmental impact is able to "arouse feelings" in the consumer, it can have a big influence on the purchasing choice.

Conditional value is defined as "perceived utility acquired by an alternative as a result of a specific set of circumstances facing the choice maker" (Sheth et al. 1991:165). Examples are products that are connected to a certain holiday, like Christmas cards, or to happenings, such as a wedding dress. Consumer research point to situational factors as contributes in affecting consumers adopting green products, but several researchers have not been able to find a correlation between conditional value and behaviour of the consumer regarding green products (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017).

Epistemic value is "the perceived utility derived from an alternative capacity to arouse curiosity, provide novelty, or satisfy a desire for knowledge" (Sheth et al. 1991:165). Thus, epistemic value means the desire of knowledge, and researchers acknowledge that knowledge affects all phases of a decision. Knowledge about the environment then plays an important role when customers are deciding whether to purchase a green product (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017). Ritter et al., (2015) also found that consumers who had more knowledge about environmental problems were more likely to purchase green products. It seems that the epistemic value of sustainable products considerably impacts the buying behaviour of consumers (Lin and Huang 2012; Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017).

Environmental value was added a sixth value in addition to the five values in the original consumption values theory by Sheth et al., (1991). In recent research (Biswas and Roy 2015; Urien and Kilbourne 2011) the environmental value has been characterized as one of the most important causes for people's willingness to purchase green products. The environmental value looks at the consumers view on environmental problems such as climate change, pollution and resource depletion (Kim and Choi 2005). Straughan and Robert found a positive correlation between consumers who are concerned about the environment and environmentally friendly consumption (1999, as cited in Khan & Mohsin, 2017). This link has been found in a number of studies looking at consumer behaviour in regards of green products (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Lin & Huang, 2012; Rahnama & Rajabpour, 2017; Yoo, Divita & Kim, 2013).

The consumption theory, including the environmental value gives a framework for analysing

what influences consumers behaviour. Khan & Mohsin found that people who are informed and aware of the potential damage of a product, are more likely to purchase a green alternative (2017). However, there exists a gap between attitudes towards the environment and actual behaviour (Kilbourne and Pickett 2008). Extensive research has been done on the consumption theory, and different studies in different continents conclude differently. Lin and Huang concludes that factors that affects green product consumption are “desire for knowledge, novelty seeking, and specific conditions, and do not include functional values, price, and quality” (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017:914). Yoo et al., concludes that awareness of the environment is an important influence on green purchases (2013). Biswas and Roy found that social value was the most influential factor on purchasing behaviour (2015), in addition, Suki & Suki also found that social value had the most effect (2015). Gonçalves, Lourenco & Silva found that functional value is extremely important but is not sufficient alone for determining the purchase of green products. Social, emotional and conditional combined with functional value proved useful in foreseeing purchases of green products (Gonçalves, Lourenço, and Silva 2016).

Utility theory is a theory from economics which seeks to explain how individuals behave, and how they rank the choices they make based on their likings. The theory attempts to explain how individuals behave and how they make their choices (Khan and Mohsin 2017). According to this theory, consumers make rational decisions in the process of selecting a product. The consumer will assess the product based on several aspects, such as benefits, need, use and importance. During the assessment, one of these conditions will be dominant over the others, and this is highly dependent on the consumers individual preferences and priorities (Khan and Mohsin 2017). Consumers who are concerned about the environment can “go green”, meaning they will purchase more environmentally friendly products in order to feel that they are tackling environmental problems. When posed with products that are produced with less emissions or come from recycled material the product could provoke emotions in the consumer, and the consumer can feel protective of the environment (Lin and Huang 2012). These individual priorities and feelings can lead to the consumer making a thoughtful choice, opting for the product that is more environmentally friendly, aligning their consumption with their values. According to Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Forleo, consumers are increasingly willing to pay more for a green product, although they still consider price and quality (2001).

From this, one can say that choices made by consumers are influenced by consumption values, and Sheth et al, suggests that for marketing communications to be effective, they must recognize the link between motivation and the values of the consumer (1991). The theory of consumption values can contribute to a better understanding of how consumers behave and how they make their choices, which can support companies in developing successful strategies for green products.

4. Methodology

In this chapter the methods used in collecting and analysing the data will be outlined. I have chosen to use a mixed method approach in order to answer the research questions in this thesis. Using a mixed method allowed me to get a representative sample of respondents' willingness to purchase a product before and after receiving a story, while at the same time giving me the ability to look into why there is an expressed increased willingness to pay and what part of the story creates the most value. The main data collection was done through a quantitative online survey, which was complimented by a qualitative analysis of three open-ended questions in the survey, followed by two in-depth interviews.

When one starts the process of doing research, and writing a master thesis, the question of whether to do a qualitative or quantitative method quickly arises. Blaikie and Priest explains the difference as “quantitative methods are generally concerned with counting and measuring aspects of social life, while qualitative methods are more concerned with producing discursive descriptions and exploring social actors 'meaning and interpretations” (Blaikie and Priest 2019:200). A quantitative method therefore allowed me to measure the willingness to pay for green products, while a qualitative method allowed me to explore people's way of thinking around this purchase. Combining the two provided a greater basis to get a broader overall picture towards people making decision around paying for green products and what influences their decision.

In cooperation with Ope, a quantitative online survey was conducted. A survey was found useful when I wanted to answer the first research question, “is there added value in a product made from upcycled ocean plastic?”. A large number of respondents gave me representable data on the issue. The qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions also helped to answer why and how there is added value, and which part of the story affects the willingness to pay for the product, which leads to the second research question. The third research question was answered through combining the close-ended and open-ended questions in the survey with two in-depth interviews with the founders of Ope. The interviews took place after the survey, and the founders were given the chance to explain the idea behind using ocean plastic in a product, and to express their thoughts on the findings of the survey.

4.1 Using a mixed method

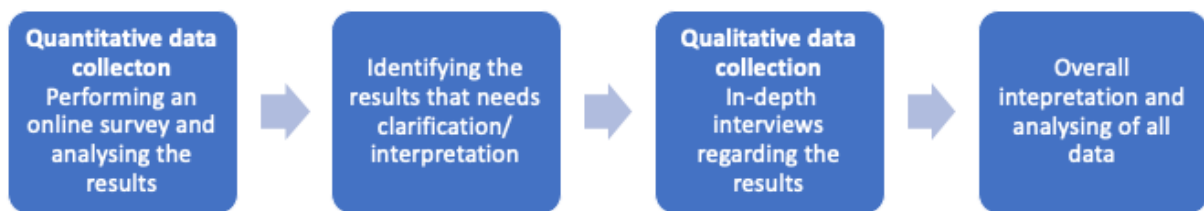
A quantitative survey was chosen in order to collect representative and generalizable data in an effective way. Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece writes that a web-based survey is an efficient way to distribute and collect data that is easily stored in online databases (2003). This allowed me to draw conclusions that are general, and that can add interesting points to the literature on consumer behaviour. I wanted to say something general about green products, environmentalism and how environmental issues can affect consumer behaviour. To get a deeper understanding of how the willingness to pay is influenced by a story, and what part of the story was the most effective, open-ended questions were added to the quantitative survey. These questions were not coded so that they could be analysed quantitatively but were instead coded to be analysed qualitatively to get a deeper insight in addition to a general insight. Instead of presenting numbers and percentage I went more into detail of what exactly was said, and how it correlated with what was previously answered in the survey. In addition to the survey, two in-depth interviews were performed in order to get a better insight into the mindset of the founders of the company who designed the product. Understanding the thinking behind the product from the founder's point of view adds valuable insight to the literature on green marketing, and how companies can shift to CE. Blaikie and Priest writes that a mixed method "involves the collection, analysis and mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a series of studies"(Blaikie and Priest 2019:213).

According to Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, the author of the book *"Mixed Methods Research, merging theory with practice"*, using what in later times has been labelled mixed methods can be a good thing if done correctly (Hesse-Biber 2010). Hesse-Biber argues that using qualitative methods in mixed methods can be very useful giving the researcher a better understanding of the issue at hand. Hesse-Biber writes about different reasons to perform a mixed method research, and one of them is "initiation". She emphasizes that some findings will need clarification which initiates further research on the issue. Including interviews after a qualitative survey could add new insight into the issue.

Hesse-Biber interviewed David Karp about what he thought about using a mixed method. He expressed that these methods should be used when they are able to forward our understanding of something theoretically. He also states that using this method when it does not forward our understanding is highly problematic and that it could weaken the research (Hesse-Biber

2010:23). It is important to think about whether adding another method will strengthen or weaken your research. For this research, and due to the different angles of the research questions, a mixed method was considered to strengthen the research. Deciding this, I was cautious of Hesse Biber's point that there can be potential unintended negative consequences of including different research methods in your work. One problem is that a researcher uses two different methods, but isn't necessarily skilled in both of them.

Figure 4: Explanatory sequential design (Adopted from Hesse-Biber, 2010)



This way of using mixed methods, is according to Hesse-Biber called an explanatory sequential design, where you first collect the data through a quantitative method, and then follow up with a qualitative method. This way of using mixed methods “gives priority” to quantitative method (Hesse-Biber 2010). This fit well with the design of this research, as the survey was the initial and primary part of the research. The qualitative elements supplement the data collection and analysis. According to Hesse-Biber this will allow the researcher to get a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the issue at hand while still being able to provide representative findings that can be generalized (2010).

A mixed method sequential research design allows me to investigate the research question because it allows for the use of both quantitative and qualitative collection and analysing methods. The quantitative survey collects data from a representative sample of respondents. The respondents are asked about their willingness to purchase a product before and after receiving a story about the material and its environmental impact. The follow up open-ended questions allows me to get a deeper insight into not only how many have answered what, but why they have answered the way they did and to see the correlation between their answers and their explanation. Was there something in the information that was more important in terms of influencing their willingness to pay? Did they like the product in itself or did they only like the origin of the material? In addition to asking the respondents follow up questions, in-depth interviews of the two founders of the company producing the product were conducted. The in-

depth interviews gave insight into the company's intentions of using ocean plastic in the product, and insight into what they think about the findings from the survey. In the theory chapter, theories on both consumer behaviour and green marketing were presented. Collecting data from both consumers (respondents of the survey) and Ope was therefore important to be able to get the full picture. The theories are used as a framework to analyse the findings from the survey and the interviews.

4.2 Abductive research method

In order to answer the research questions and to find out what the willingness to pay for a product made from ocean plastic, and whether it makes a difference that the product is made from ocean plastic, an abductive research strategy was used. According to Blaikie & Priest, abductive logic can be used to answer both what and why questions. Unlike inductive and deductive, abductive logic looks at interpretations, meaning, motives and intentions that are part of people's everyday lives (Blaikie & Priest, 2019). It was coherent to use an abductive research method, since this research looks at consumer behaviour. Consumption is a big part of people's lives, and this project seeks to understand what lies behind the choices of the consumer. Blaikie & Priest writes that the researcher describes the people's views and give their views a place in social theory. Data from this project can contribute to the existing literature on consumer behaviour and storytelling. In the case of this research, I wished to give an explanation of how consumers behave in regard to green products. Danermark writes that abduction is about re-describing a phenomenon or a case, and to give it new meaning. The researcher can find connections and associations that might not be apparent, and abduction allows the researcher to think about things in new ways (Danermark, 2002). I wished to look at the consumers as part of the solution to environmental problems since modern consumerism has contributed to many of today's environmental issues. I wished to investigate how consumers and companies could instead be part of the shift to sustainable consumption that benefits rather than destroy nature. If an environmentally friendly product has an added value (compared to a similar product) because of its lowered negative impact, understanding how consumers behave and what affects their choices, could have a huge impact on transforming our society to a less harmful one. Dey (2004) writes that in abduction, the researcher uses theory to understand real life phenomenon, and to interpret in the light of that theory, using the abductive research strategy. As mentioned in the previous section, the theory outlined in chapter three will be used to analyse the data collected.

4.3 Survey

I started studying how to design and perform a survey, and especially which dangers to avoid. A test run on both SurveyXact and Survey Monkey was performed, and I decided to use SurveyXact. Survey Monkey was based on a subscription where you had to pay a very high annual fee, and SurveyXact looked and felt very professional. SurveyXact is a software tool for creating, distributing and analysing online surveys. Students at the University of Stavanger has free access to SurveyXact, and the survey can have the University of Stavanger logo on it. SurveyXact proved to be us user friendly both for me while creating the survey and also for the respondents. A professional layout and ease of use led me to choose SurveyXact. These elements were important in the pursuit of a high level of reliability and quality in the data collected.

It was important to me and Ope that the survey was secure, and that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) were followed. The GDPR came into effect on May 25th 2018 in the European union (Georgiadou, de By & Kounadi, 2019). According to SurveyXact the implementation of GDPR meant that the security of personal data was finally more secured and taken seriously. SurveyXact states that personal data “has always been at the forefront of our development of the market’s best do-it-yourself questionnaire system” (SurveyXact 2021).

The survey was also selected because it was possible to have two languages in the same survey. I chose to create the survey in both Norwegian and English as I knew that in many of the companies I was sending the survey to, there would be non-Norwegian speakers. I also did not want to do it only in English. Although most Norwegians understand English very well, that could have caused confusion and tampered with the results. I spent much time on making the Norwegian and English as similar as possible, avoiding that the results could not be used as one. A bi-lingual survey will, however, present problems in terms of translation back and forth. This is a source of discrepancy that is necessary to acknowledge.

The respondents of the survey were chosen based on the network of the company. We had several meetings, the company and I, where we discussed who the respondents should be. We did not want to select out specific sectors and attempted to send the survey out to different types of companies to get broad and representative data. The survey was sent out to selected

companies and private persons that had some kind of relation to the company. These were customers, partners and acquaintances of the company and the research project.

The survey consists of 16 closed-ended questions. Neuman (2014) writes that a close-ended survey can be problematic because it forces the respondents to answer one of the alternatives you have provided. However, doing an open-ended survey is very time consuming to code and analyse. Neuman (2014) suggests the possibility of using a partially open format, where you add alternatives such as “other”. There have been studies showing that not offering an “other”, or a neutral answer such as “not certain”, forces people to answer although they do not actually know the answer or do not know what their opinion is about the issue (Neuman 2014). I chose to use “other” where there was a possibility that none of the alternatives were fitting. For example, one of the questions I asked which sector they work in, and listed sectors such as Oil, gas and energy, IT and HR, communications. Here I added “other” as an alternative in case I had missed a less known sector. On the Likert scale questions I chose to include a neutral alternative to avoid getting a positive or negative answer if the respondent did not feel either negative or positive about the question. On two of the 16 questions the respondents were given the possibility to answer a follow up “why” question by typing, and question number 17 asks their opinion about the product, but these three questions were clearly marked as optional.

The survey was constructed over the period of one month. The questions were carefully considered, and throughout the process many questions were revised or switched out with different questions. It was important to not have too many questions, as I did not want to have respondents drop out because of the survey being too long, irrelevant or repetitive. A danger while doing an online survey is not receiving many answers, and that the respondents become tired of answering surveys (Neuman 2014). I therefore considered whether each question was necessary, and whether I would get relevant information from asking the question. I considered whether the questions were “nice to have” or “need to have”. This led me to delete some questions because they were not deemed necessary. Feedback from others was very valuable at this stage, and issues I had not seen were pointed out.

Neuman (2014) states that it is important to reflect on what you want to learn from each question. He writes that before settling on questions the researcher should consider how the results are going to be used (Neuman 2014). I organized the survey into three sections and while constructing the sections, I kept in mind the hypothesis I wanted to test, the research questions

I wanted to answer, and the knowledge on the issue I wanted to give to the field. This helped me ask relevant question that gave me useful data.

In section A, the respondents were asked to answer six background questions, such as age, gender and which sector they work in. Collecting these types of data gave me the opportunity to go deeper into the data while analysing it. By asking questions in regard to gender, age, role in the company, whether they do all, some or none purchases, and in what sector they work in, I could see if there were any clear tendencies in the different groups. Beyond just looking at whether there is a value creation by using ocean plastic, I wanted to see in which age group there was the biggest increase in willingness to purchase, and for example, if it was clear who had the highest increase between leaders and co-worker. I believed this would allow for a more thorough discussion under research question one and give valuable input for theories on consumer behaviour.

In section B, the respondents were first given basic information about the product and how it is intended to be used together with a picture of the product. They were then asked to rate how much they would pay for the product, and how willing they would be to pay the stated price. The respondents were then given more information about the material of the product through a story and were asked which out of three different information posters would make them more willing to purchase the product. The questions about their willingness to pay for the product, and how much they were willing to pay, was then repeated. The aim of this section was to test the hypothesis “a story about the material and its environmental impact will increase the expressed willingness to purchase the product” and to answer research question one. The information posters were used to give three true statements about the product in a visual way, adding to the flow of information. This data was used to discuss what part of the story creates more value for whom and to answer research question two. Each information poster represented one part of the story.

In section C, the respondents were asked questions related to their opinion about a company’s role in addressing environmental issues. General questions such as “the company uses some of its profit on a good cause, how does it affect how meaningful you experience the job you do” were asked. The respondents were also asked whether they think a company takes an important social responsibility by purchasing products made from ocean plastic. They were asked how these issues would affect how attractive a company is, and what they believe it would do for

the company's reputation. The aim of this section was to test the hypothesis "a company can gain competitive advantage from promoting green products" and to answer the third research question. This information is very valuable to the company, as they can use this information to better understand consumers view on ocean plastic. This section was also designed to give an indication of how concerned and aware of the ocean plastic issue the respondents were, and if this could have an effect on their willingness to pay.

Once I felt that I had captured the intention of the survey, I started sending it out as a pilot to several people in the company and to a few partners of the company that would not be taking the actual survey. Neuman writes about the importance of doing a pilot test and recommends asking the respondents in the test run for feedback (Neuman 2014). Andrews et al., writes that "Question bias introduced through closed questions, skewed frequency scales, reference periods, and rating scales, and leading questions and question placement can be uncovered in piloting" (2003). After the feedback from the test pilot, I spent another week revising and reformulating the questions, especially the informative text and the story to make it as clear as possible. The feedback helped me to avoid asking leading questions and to make the questions clearer.

The survey was sent out with a deadline six days later, and an agreement with some of the company leaders that they would send out a reminder to the employees the day before the deadline. I did not want the survey to be open for a very long period of time, as the company and I thought it would not lead to more answers, actually perhaps less answers, because it is easy to postpone it when the deadline is far away. The survey was mostly completed by respondents in a couple of hours after the link was sent out, and right after the reminder was sent out.

The biggest disadvantage of using an online survey is the danger of getting a low response rate. I avoided this hinder by using the company and their contacts. One representative in the company called a few different companies and told them about the survey. They were then asked to distribute it to their employees. The advantage of using an online survey is that it is not limited by geographic space, which has been beneficial for this survey.

4.4 In-depth interviews

Qualitative in-depth interview with the two founders of Ope were performed after conducting and analysing the survey. I wanted to give the data from the survey a context, and therefore asked questions about the initial idea of the product, and about the idea of using ocean plastic as the material. I wished to gain knowledge on the assumptions they have regarding using ocean plastic to add value to a product and how to succeed using waste as a resource. I also presented relevant findings from the survey and asked them how they interpreted the findings.

In depth interviews is one of the core data collection methods in qualitative research (Belk, Fischer & Kozinets, 2013). Using this method, the researcher is able to gain in-depth knowledge about something that most likely is important in the informant's life, and that only the informant has a lot of information about. The in-depth interviews are often long (up to and over an hour), and has a rather formal structure (Belk et al. 2013).

The interviews were semi-structured, with a list of questions. The interview was performed as a conversation, and the informants were given room to elaborate and explain as they wanted on each question. As I was familiar with the two informants, the nature of the interview was less formal, and a mutual trust allowed for a safe environment for the informants. The interviews were not taped, and the I wrote notes during the interview. Because I had collaborated with the company for six months before commencing this study, the context was familiar, and much of the information was already known.

The reason for performing two in-depth interviews in addition to conducting the survey was, as mentioned, to give the survey a context. I wished to give the research a broader relevance in emerging theory on circular business models, and how companies can use waste as a resource, in this case, ocean plastic. Combining findings from the survey with these interviews allowed me to better answer research question three: "How can knowledge on green consumer behaviour aid companies wanting to shift their activities to fit with circular principles?". It also allowed the thesis to point to a direction for further research. Knowledge on green consumer behaviour, green marketing, and companies' role in turning waste into a resource can greatly lower the negative impact consumerism has on the planet's finite resources and contribute to

reducing climate issues. In the following chapter I will use the methods outlined in this chapter to analyse the results of the survey and the interviews.

5.0 Findings and discussion

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will discuss research questions one “Does the perceived value of a product increase after the consumer has received a story about the positive environmental impact?” and hypothesis one “a story about the material and its environmental impact will increase the expressed willingness to purchase the product”. This section draws on data from the survey, and a quantitative analysis of the answers will be performed. An expressed increased willingness to pay was found. The section therefore goes on to discussing which part of the story had the biggest effect. The findings in this section will be discussed together with theory on storytelling and consumption values.

The second section will discuss research question two “is there a correlation between awareness and concerns about the plastic problem in the ocean to how the information affects the willingness to pay?”. The willingness to pay, shown in question 7-10 will be compared to the answers in questions 12-17 through a qualitative analysis. Consumption value theory and utility will be used to interpret the findings.

The third section will discuss research question three “how can knowledge on green consumer behaviour aid companies wanting to shift their activities to fit with circular principles?” and hypothesis two “a company can gain competitive advantage from promoting green products”. This section will analyse two in-depth interviews of the founders of the company who’s product was used in the survey together with the findings from section one and two.

5.1 Quantitative analysis of the survey

By asking the respondents about their willingness to pay for a product before and after receiving the story about the origin of the material, the results gave indications of whether the story about the product’s positive environmental impact influenced the willingness to pay for the product. As discussed in the literature review, there is no universal agreement on what “value” is. Literature on value also states that if there is added value, we need to look at for whom there is added value (Bolton and Drew 1991; Sweeney and Soutar 2001) For the purpose of this study, value is measured through the willingness to pay and increased willingness to pay after receiving the story indicates that the story creates added value. This will also be investigated more detailed in the qualitative analysis, where the respondents’ comments will be analysed.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	97	33
Male	198	67
Other	2	1
Age		
18-29	44	15
30-39	60	20
40-49	64	22
50+	129	43
Role in company		
Co-worker	214	74
Head of department	32	11
Leader	26	9
All, some or no purchases		
All	12	4
Some	78	26
None	207	70

The survey consisted of 17 questions with 16 close ended questions and one open ended question. The survey also included an additional two optional follow up open-ended questions on question 15 and 16. The respondents were shown a product made of ocean plastic, and asked questions regarding the product, and regarding their view on ocean plastic used in products. The respondents were also asked about their view on a company's role in purchasing products from ocean plastic. In table 1. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents is presented. This information will be used throughout the analysis. There were six background questions,

but only five are presented in table 1. The sixth question was “what type of industry do you work in”, but because so many of the respondents represented only three industries, this question has not been focused on in the analysis.

After six background questions, the respondents were shown the product, and in question seven asked “how much would you be willing to pay for this product?”. In question eight they were asked “petrel is sold for 890 NOK. How likely is it that you would buy this product?”.

The respondents were then given a story about the origin of the material. The story was that the material the product is made of is from ocean plastic that has been cleaned up from the Norwegian coast, and that demand for this material assures more clean-up. It was also stated that the material is tracked and delivered with a journey pass. That way, products made from this material guarantees information about where the plastic comes from. In the last part of the story, the respondents were told that using upcycled ocean plastic prevents emissions from incineration and reduce demand for virgin plastic. Thus, showing that using this material contributes to a cleaner nature and less emissions, while at the same time promoting the re-use of resources.

Figure 5: Volunteers cleaning up ocean plastic



After receiving the story, the respondents were shown three information posters and asked which poster would make them more willing to pay for the product. The first poster said: “Petrel is made from 100% handpicked ocean plastic from voluntary clean-ups.” The second said “Petrel is delivered with certificate of origin stating where on the coast the material has been collected”. The third said “Petrel can help your business achieve its ESG goals”. The first information poster received 53%, the second, 9 % and the third 11%. 27% said none of them would make them more willing to pay for the product. The information posters were matched with the three main points of the story the respondents first received.

Figure 6: Information poster 1



Question seven and eight was then repeated, and the data from the answers before and after the story was given is presented in table 2. The respondents were given a scale from 0-1600 NOK and asked how much they were willing to pay. The respondents were also given the price of the product and asked how likely it is that they would purchase it. Frequency in the table means how many answered the variable to the left. Percentage shows how many of the total respondents answered the variable to the left.

Table 2: Before (1) and after (2) receiving the story

NOK	Frequency	Percentage
Willingness to pay (1)		
0	158	58
200	85	31
400	22	8
600	4	1
800	2	1
Willingness to pay (2)		
0	99	38
200	74	28
400	43	17
600	25	10
800	10	4
1000	8	3
1600	1	0

Likeliness to pay	Frequency	Percentage
How likely (1)		
Very likely	2	1
Quite likely	2	1
Not sure	14	5
Not likely	42	16
Very unlikely	210	78
How likely (2)		
Very likely	7	3
Quite likely	14	5
Not sure	35	13
Not likely	57	22
Very unlikely	147	57

As seen in table 2, the willingness to pay, and the likeliness that they will purchase the product both increase after receiving the story. These findings answers both research question one and hypothesis one. The respondents express an increased willingness to pay after receiving the story about the environmental impact of the product. As discussed in the theory chapter, telling the right story can add value to a product because of the way stories work on consumers (Mucundorfeanu 2018). Good stories make people connect to the product. In this case, the story about ocean plastic connects people to the plastic problem and to the opportunity of contributing to the clean-up. Mucundorfeanu states that how the story effects the consumer also depends on how the consumer is able to relate to the subject of the story (2018). Research performed on storytelling has clear results. Groups who have been exposed to a good story are more likely to have positive thoughts about the product and state that they are willing to pay more compared to those who have not received the story.

Based on research on storytelling, it seems that almost any (good) story makes consumers more likely to pay for the product. From the literature that was presented in chapter three, there were several important aspects to what makes a good story, such as a clear and genuine message (Mucundorfeanu 2018; Shankar et al. 2010). Limitations of this research and the survey performed is that it is not clear as to whether it is the act of storytelling that increased the perceived value, or if it is the subject of the story. Literature on storytelling states that a story with a clear message can add value to a product in the way that consumers are willing to pay more for it (Lundqvist et al. 2013). In order to better understand the effect of storytelling, I draw on the theory of consumption values. As stories can assure that people get a connection with a product (Mucundorfeanu 2018), we need to look at what leads to this connection. The consumer values theory identifies different values that affect consumers choices. Although consumers look at aspects such as function, quality and price, recent studies show that an increasing amount of people are influenced by other values as well. Social value, emotional value, epistemic value and environmental value are increasingly important and could explain why the story told in the survey had a positive effect on the perceived value of the product.

The social value was found to influence consumers in several studies (Lin and Huang 2012; Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017; Yoo et al. 2013). Results from these studies show that what people around you do, will have a big influence on what you chose to do. If enough people around you buy an Electrical Vehicle (EV) because it is better for the environment, driving an EV becomes socially accepted and it is much more likely that you will opt for an EV, compared

to if no one you knew had bought one (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017). We can think of upcycled products in the same way. It is socially accepted that plastics in the ocean is undesired, and therefore it is easy to agree that we should do something about the problem. People might not agree on the best way of removing it from the ocean, but it is not socially accepted to say that it is not a problem. Because the story talks about this socially accepted problem, it is likely that many of the respondents agrees with the message and therefore experiences a connection.

The emotional value works much in the same way. Emotions have a big influence on the experiences of the consumer and influences consumer choices (Kim and Choi 2005; Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017). If the story about the material were able to arouse feeling in the respondents, that could have been a contributor to the expressed increased willingness to pay. As the respondents were given a story about volunteers cleaning up plastic from the ocean, something which is both personal and can give a sense of community feeling, it is possible that the story affected the respondents' emotions.

When creating the survey, it became clear that because I was going to test whether the story about the material would increase the willingness to pay, it would also be interesting to see which part of the story was the most successful in influencing the respondents. The story contained three main points which were: 1. The plastic is cleaned up by volunteers along the coast of Norway, 2. The material is registered and comes with a certificate of origin and 3. Using upcycled instead of virgin plastic "saves" the ocean plastic from being burned, thus reduce the Co2 emissions from both producing new plastic and from not burning the ocean plastic. I created three different information posters that addressed point one, two or three of the story. The respondents were then asked which information poster would make them more willing to pay for the product. This was done in order to find out what part of the story created the most value.

The first information poster received 53%, the second, 9 % and the third 11%. 27% said none of them would make them more willing to pay for the product. This indicates that the story about volunteers picking up the plastic has the biggest influence on the willingness to pay. One reason for why the clean-up part of the story resonated well with the respondents, could be that the plastic problem is concrete and easy to grasp. It is quite socially accepted that plastic waste should not be in the ocean. When it comes to more abstract problems, such as Co2 emissions, it becomes more difficult to grasp the issue and to resonate with it. There are also

personal values that often conflicts with climate change. What we consume, what we eat and how we travel are often a big part of your identity, and it is hard to change in favour of a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. You don't necessarily have to change who you are in order to support removing plastic from the ocean, and there is therefore less of a conflict. Cleaning up plastic from the ocean can also be quite uniting in the otherwise polarized climate debate. Even people that don't believe in climate change can agree that plastic in the ocean is a problem. It is real and visible and there are concrete actions that can fix the problem.

Furthermore, I wished to go into details of what type of respondents were affected by the different points in the story. I looked at both age and gender but found no clear results of that influencing the answers. Both age and gender were quite evenly divided between the four alternatives. Out of the Head of Department respondents, 30 % answered ESG compared to 10% of co-workers and leaders. This could indicate that if one has the company's interest in mind while looking at a product, the story about implications for the companies' ESG goals could increase the willingness to pay. From there I wished to see whether those who answered ESG did most of the purchases in their company. Only 1 % of those answering ESG did all purchases while 26 % of those answering ESG did some purchases. From that it doesn't seem like the Head of Department respondents are more represented in doing all or some purchases and might not have had purchasing on behalf of the company in mind when answering ESG. To get clearer answers on this, follow up interviews could have been performed on the different roles in the company. Out of those doing all purchases, 75% answered clean up, whereas 62% of those doing some purchases, and 59% of those doing no purchases said the same. Based on this analysis, it seems that the story about clean-up is the one that influences the most, regardless of age, gender, role in company and whether you do all, some or no purchases.

In addition, it was found that on question 11 when the respondents were asked about their willingness to pay for the second time, 8% of those who answered clean-up said it is likely they will pay for the product, compared to less than 1% before receiving the story. Those answering certificate of origin went from none saying it was likely they would pay, to 4 % saying it is likely. On ESG, likely went from 3% to 7%. 94% of those who said none of information posters also said it was unlikely that they would purchase the product. This also shows that those answering clean-up were the most affected by the story. Consumers are a big and diverse group and includes people with different backgrounds, family situations, educational level and income (Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017). It is therefore hard to draw conclusions based on age group,

gender or even income. For further research, it would be interesting to look more into what type of people are affected by the different stories and if this is something that companies should be aware of.

The results found in the analysis outlined above are interesting, because it is apparent that the story of volunteers handpicking ocean plastic from the coast is the part of the story that influences the perceived value of the product the most. This could be because that part of the story is the most personal one, and research has shown that a story that can offer an experience and identification possibilities is efficient in creating value (Mucundorfeanu 2018). Research on storytelling also demonstrates that a story should be written in a way that is valued by the consumer. If told in the correct way it is more likely that the story is a value-adding asset (Lundqvist et al. 2013; Stern 1994). The findings from the information poster is therefore a good indication of what creates value. This will be further discussed in the third section of this chapter.

5.2 Qualitative analysis of the survey

In this section, data of those who had an increased willingness to pay will be linked with the answers on question 12-17.

On question 12 the respondents were asked “if the company you work for supports a good cause with part of its profits, how does it affect how meaningful you experience the job you do?” and given the alternatives “more meaningful”, “not affected” and “less meaningful”. On question 13, the respondents were asked “As an employee, would you consider that the company you work for takes an important social responsibility if it buys products made from upcycled marine plastic?” and given the alternatives “important”, “not important” and “no opinion about it”. On question 14 they were asked “if a company communicates externally that it contributes to the clean-up of marine plastic, how do you think it will affect the company's reputation?” and given the alternatives “improved”, “not affected” and “negative”. On question 15 “If a company subscribes to a service that provided continuous clean-up of the same marine plastic that Petrel is made of, would this company be more attractive to you as an employee/jobseeker?” the respondents were given the alternatives “more attractive”, “does not affect attractiveness” and “less attractive”. On question 16 they were asked “If the company you work for had one day a year where the working day consisted of picking plastic in the local marine environment, what

do you personally think about such a day?” and given the alternatives “no opinion”, “positive” and “negative”.

Questions 12,13, 14 and 15 are presented in table 3. On question 16 nearly everyone thought it would be positive to have a beach cleaning day, and there was no clear correlation to saying positive and the willingness to pay or the likeliness to purchase the product. Results of question 16 are therefore not presented in table 3. In table 3, you can see that 62% of those who were willing to pay 0 NOK also answered, “more meaningful”, while 100% of those answering 1600 said “more meaningful”. In table 3 one can see that out of the respondents who exhibit a higher willingness to pay, a higher percentage of them also answered “more meaningful”, “important”, “improved” and “more attractive”. The same can be seen in terms of likeliness in Table 4.

Table 3: Expressed willingness to pay on question 10

NOK	12. More meaningful	13. Important	14. Improved	15. Attractiveness
0	62%	17%	31%	7%
200	69%	11%	31%	11%
400	76%	17%	39%	10%
600	79%	29%	50%	25%
800	70%	30%	80%	50%
1000	88%	50%	63%	50%
1600	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4: Likeliness to purchase on question 11

Likeliness of purchase	12. More meaningful	13. Important	14. Improved	15. Attractiveness
Very unlikely	59%	14%	29%	9%
Unlikely	85%	17%	36%	9%
Not sure	79%	21%	48%	18%
Likely	86%	36%	71%	43%
Very likely	100%	71%	100%	71%

For the analysis of this thesis, I assume that these positive answers on question 12-16 means that the respondents think plastic pollution is important. We can therefore say that what is shown in table 3 and 4 is that the more aware and/or concerned the respondent is about ocean plastic, the higher the expressed willingness to pay is. This is based on the assumption that being concerned about the plastic problem and being aware of it is shown through what was answered in questions 12-16. To dig deeper into this assumption, the comments on question 15, 16 and 17 will now be analysed.

On question 15 the respondents were asked “If a company subscribes to a service that provided continuous clean-up of the same marine plastic that Petrel is made of, would this company be more attractive to you as an employee/jobseeker?”. They were given alternatives, and then there was a follow up question asking “why”. On question 16 they were asked “If the company you work for had one day a year where the working day consisted of picking plastic in the local marine environment, what do you personally think about such a day?” They were given alternatives here as well, and then asked “why”. On question 17 the respondents were asked “With the information you have received in this survey, what do you think about Petrel as a product? (optional to answer)”

A total of 20 respondents commented on question 15, 30 respondents on question 16, and 52 respondents commented on question 17. In order to analyse the comments, the data was

imported to excel. In Excel the comments on question 17 were coded in three different colours. Green for positive comments, orange for comments in between, or comments who were neither positive nor negative and red for negative comments. Once the comments were categorized into colours, they were crossed checked with increased willingness to pay and question 12-16.

Comments

26 of the comments on question 17 were coded as green. The criteria for coding them as green was that they gave a positive explanation of why they answered the way they did on the previous three questions. 12 of the comments were coded as orange and they said something positive and negative or had quite neutral comments. 14 comments were coded as red. The criteria was that they were purely negative and did not say anything positive about the product nor the material.

In table 5, the frequency of increased willingness to pay is presented. There is a much higher percentage of increased willingness to pay by those who also commented positive on question 17. In table 6 the comments are cross checked with how they answered on questions 12-16. Here there is also a clear tendency that those who had positive comments answered more positively on questions 12-16. By positive answers I mean those who answered “more meaningful”, “important”, “improved” and “attractive” as opposed to “less meaningful”, “not important”, “negative” and “less attractive”.

Table 5: Increased willingness to pay

Colour coded	Frequency	Percentage
Green		
26 comments	19	73%
Orange		
12 comments	3	25%
Red		
14 comments	4	28%

Table 6: Positive answers on questions 12-16

Colour coded	Frequency	Percentage
Green		
26 comments	21	81%
Orange		
12 comments	7	58%
Red		
14 comments	7	50%

After cross checking the colour-coded comments on question 17, I looked at the comments on question 15-17 and categorized them based on what most of the comments described. I looked at the comments on question 17 that were colour-coded and looked at what they also answered on question 15 and 16. Out of those coded as green, what was the most important on question 15 was corporate social responsibility, with focus on the company’s responsibility to take care of the environment and tackling ocean plastic as an important part of that. On question 16, sustainable operations and ripple-effects/awareness was the most important. On question 17, the respondents marked as green thought the material in the product was a great measure to tackle an environmental issue, and that using recycled ocean plastic was very positive. On question 17 most comments marked as orange said that the product was useless, but that it was positive to use recycled ocean plastic. Many of the respondents answered that ocean plastic should be recycled, but that it should replace plastic that we already use, and that the company should not “invent” new products. The comments on question 17 marked as red were directed towards the product, and many fell into the category of “no use of the product” and “more plastic waste”. What is general in the negative comments coded as red is that they do not comment on the material being recycled ocean plastic. There were not enough comments marked as orange and red on question 15 and 16 to make categories.

Environmental awareness

From the data outlined above, it seems that those respondents who are more concerned about the ocean plastic issue has been more affected by the story, and those who have an understanding of the plastic problem expressed an increased willingness to pay. Being concerned about the issue is measured through their answers in questions 12-16 and 15-17 where they commented and described the importance of dealing with ocean plastic. It is clear from the analysis that those who answered more positively on questions 12-16 have more positive comments and expressed an increased willingness to pay. Out of those coded as orange and red, fewer respondents have positive answers on questions 12-16 and a lower increase in expressed willingness to pay. One limitation of using question 12-16 as a measurement of awareness and concern, is that the respondents might actually be aware and concerned, but do not necessarily think that a company should deal with the issue. The survey is not entirely able to tell me whether the respondents are environmentally concerned or not. However, based on what they answer on questions 12-16 together with what they answer on the open-ended questions, I believe there are clear indications of how aware and concerned they are. Questions 12-15 mainly asks what the respondents think about a company's role in supporting ocean clean-up. Those answers together with the comments on question 15-17 give a good ground for analysing. Question 16 asks what the respondents personally would feel about a clean-up day, and this question also gives an indication of their concern about the issue, however, this question got a high score of "positive" from all respondents. In hindsight, it could have been better to ask specific questions on their knowledge and concern about the environment.

As outlined in the theory chapter, Sheth et al., writes that consumers are influenced by different values when making decisions of what to purchase (1991). The aim of this thesis was to see whether consumers are willing to pay a higher price once they know the positive environmental impact of the product, thus proving that consumers consider environmental impact as an important value. Ritter et al., writes that consumers are becoming increasingly willing to pay a higher price for a green product (2015). In the consumption values theory, the sixth value which has been added in recent times, is called the environmental value. Research shows that the environmental value is one of the most important reasons for why people chose to purchase green products (Biswas and Roy 2015; Lin and Huang 2012; Rahnama and Rajabpour 2017; Yoo et al. 2013). It is also interesting to connect this to what part of the story had the most effect.

The data outlined above supports the theoretical propositions in consumption values theory. It seems that the more aware and concerned about the environmental issues the respondents are, the bigger effect the story has, and therefore the “added value” is recognized as added value to the respondent. It is clear that what the company believe is added value does not have an effect on everyone, as a large number of respondents did not have an increase in willingness to pay after receiving the story. It is also clear that it was the clean-up part of the story that created the most value. It might be that those who did not have an increase in willingness just did not like the product, however, many of those who had an increase in willingness to pay commented that they did not like the product but supported the idea of using ocean plastic. The story seems to have affected the willingness to pay even though the consumer did not like the product. One of the respondents answered on question 15: “Why should it? I don’t even understand the question” while many others (who had an increased willingness to pay) said that it was important that the businesses they work for take social responsibility and cleaning up nature makes the company more attractive. Another respondent who showed no increase in willingness to pay wrote: “I don’t see why ocean plastic would make the product more attractive”, while a majority of those who expressed an increased willingness to pay applauded using ocean plastic in products. The environmental value proved useful in analysing the data, because it gave an indication of what kind of respondents would be affected by the story, and the environmental impact of the product. This is useful information for companies when deciding how to market their products.

In the analysis of the correlation between environmental awareness and consumer behaviour, it was also useful to draw on the utility theory. The utility theory seeks to explain how consumers behave (Khan and Mohsin 2017). This theory is useful to use in this analysis, as this thesis seeks to understand what makes consumers more likely to purchase a product with a positive environmental impact and whether they are willing to pay a higher price because there is a non-material added value. The theory states that consumers make rational decisions based on aspects such as whether they need it, how they are going to use it, and how it will make them feel. One or some of the conditions will be more dominant and depends on the preferences of the consumer (Khan and Mohsin 2017). In the case of ocean plastic, it could be that those individuals who sees the plastic issue as important are more likely to pay more for a product made from ocean plastic. One of the respondents who had an increase in willingness to pay wrote on question 15 “very important measure to collect ocean plastic, in my opinion of one

the most important climate actions”, while another respondent who showed no increase in willingness to pay answered “I only work for salary” on the same question.

The utility theory also states that the consumer has to acknowledge that there is an environmental problem, and trust that this product actually helps tackle that problem. One comment from a respondent who showed no increase in willingness to pay wrote that this product would only lead to more ocean plastic and that the story was used as a sad market strategy that would only make the company rich. This respondent seemed to acknowledge the problem but did not trust that this company would tackle the ocean plastic problem with this product. The theory also states that consumers can choose to purchase a green product to align their consumption with their values. Many of the respondents who had an increased willingness to pay communicated their values on question 17. “I support environmental actions when possible”, “I choose environmental products when possible” and “we have to take care of the beautiful planet”. It seems that people who show that they know about and think it is important to do something about the ocean plastic are more willing to pay for the product.

Finally, the epistemic value also proves useful in the analysis of the correlation discussed above. The epistemic value is the desire for knowledge, and research has shown that knowledge about the environment affects the choices a consumer makes when it comes to purchases (Lin and Huang 2012; Rahnema and Rajabpour 2017; Ritter et al. 2015). Although using questions 12-17 is not a complete measure for evaluating whether the respondents had knowledge about the plastic pollution, comments on questions 15-17 gives a good indication. This project is not able to say whether those who had no increase in willingness to pay also have a lot of knowledge on the plastic issue. It could be that they know it is an issue, but either does not see it as a priority, or does not think that upcycling the plastic is the best solution. One respondent, who showed no increase in willingness to pay wrote that it is much more important to prevent the plastic entering the ocean in the first place. The respondent writes that upcycling the plastic into new plastic products which will eventually end up back in the ocean is just useless. Another respondent that didn't show an increase in willingness to pay, wrote that the plastic should be incinerated to make it disappear from this world.

Much research has been done on the utility theory and the six values in consumption values theory. One of the weaknesses with using these theories, is that there is a gap between attitude and behaviour, and that it is difficult to measure exactly what will lead to the consumer making

the actual purchase. In this research, it seems that telling a compelling story about ocean plastic as a material will increase the perceived value of the product. Many of the respondents also clearly describe that there is an “added value” by using ocean plastic in the comments of question 17. However, although the data is convincing, it is only showing stated preferences, and is not able to say anything about revealed preferences. This thesis along with more research on recycled products might be able to point companies in the right direction of how consumers act when met with green products.

In the next section, the data and analysis of section one and two will be combined with two in depth-interviews and I will discuss how companies can use the findings from this thesis to succeed with green products.

5.3 In-depth interviews

The third section will discuss research question three “How can knowledge on green consumer behaviour aid companies wanting to shift their activities to fit with circular principles?” and hypothesis two “a company can gain competitive advantage from promoting green products”. This section will combine the findings in section one and two with two in-depth interviews. This section will discuss the findings in the light of literature on CE, green marketing and value creation together with theories on storytelling and consumption values.

The two founders of the company were interviewed separately. They were both asked the same set of questions. Two of the questions were “what assumptions do you have regarding stories as value-adding factors” and “how do you understand and interpret the results of the survey”. I presented the findings of the study and mainly focused on that there is a willingness to pay after receiving the story, and especially that the willingness to pay seems to be a higher from those who are more aware and concerned about the plastic problem. I will address the two founders as informant one and two.

Informant one says that value creation in this case comes from cleaning up nature. They wanted to show that value comes from clean nature, biodiversity, time and experiences which are all things that do not consume non-renewable resources. The starting point and the initial idea behind using ocean plastic was to turn this type of value into economic value in order to finance more clean-up. Informant one asks the question of how we can reverse the consumer economy

by creating value differently. In the linear economy, value is connected to the material, which is seen through our everyday life. It is the products that cost money, because labour, resources and processing has been put into that material. Then there is the service economy, like getting a haircut, where the value is in cutting your hair and not in a material product. This company has tried to bridge these two economies, dealing with physical products but creating value without using non-renewable resources. The idea was to take the labour (the work that is carried out when cleaning up) and tie it together with the material through storytelling, which is what would create value on top of the physical object. The idea was that this added value would increase the amount people are willing to pay, and how much they are willing to pay, which would finance the collection and processing of the ocean plastic. Informant one says he believes that it is that costly act of cleaning up the nature that creates value, and that people would therefore be willing to pay extra for it. In order to show this value creation, telling the story to the end customer is crucial according to informant one. This belief also correlates with the literature on storytelling, and the findings from the information poster, where the part about the clean-up proved to be the most effective in influencing consumers. A personal story, and a story where the consumer can identify themselves with people in the story, creates more value according to much literature (Lundqvist et al. 2013; Stern 1994; Twitchell 2004).

Informant one states that companies and producers are very eager to tell everyone how environmentally friendly their products are, or how they are made of recycled plastic. He says that the problem is that it is often intangible and unverifiable which makes it hard to differentiate those products with the type of product and material that this company is making. In order to overcome that, the company is saving all data about the origin of the plastic, of who picked it and how much it was in block-chain technology. That way, the story about the origin is presented to the end-users almost like social media. Pictures and information about the clean-up follow the material and the product. Informant one says that this gives unique credibility, and the documentation of the value creation reaches the end customer. However, although the certificate of origin is most likely very important in order to differentiate the product from others, and as a control measure, this is not what created the most value with the respondents. Only 9% of the respondents said that the information poster on certificate of origin would make them more willing to pay for the product. As mentioned in the literature review, it is crucial that the consumer trusts the company, and that they believe the product will make a difference to the environment. This is interesting knowledge for companies and for the broader literature

on storytelling. The certificate of origin should probably be communicated in a way that assures the consumer of the legitimacy of the product, but not as the main selling point.

Informant two says that the story has a value creating effect because of what is being told. He says that a few years ago, when the plastic problem became well known to people, it became clear to the two founders that because there was a lot of traction on plastic at the time, it would be wise to do something around that. They assumed that to do something about the ocean plastic at that time would be a good idea because it would resonate well with people. They also believed that the story about using ocean plastic as a material would appeal to people because people would already be concerned and aware of the problem. Informant two also says that an authentic story has an impact on the product. Because the company was going to use 100% ocean plastic picked up along the shore, there would be value in the story. Informant two says that it was important to document the journey of the material to give the story credibility. It seems from the findings that it is the story about volunteers cleaning up the coast from plastic that creates value, and that the story about the certificate of origin is less important. However, I argue that what informant two is saying about documentation is relevant. It is the story about the clean-up that creates value, but literature on consumption values stresses that trust in the company is crucial when it comes to green products (Mossberg and Nissen Johansen 2006), and that way one can argue that the certificate of origin is necessary in order for people to trust that the material comes from hand-picked ocean plastic.

On question two, informant one says that the findings from the survey make sense, and that this is how they initially aimed at taking the product out in the market. Meaning, their strategy was to take such products made from ocean plastic out to companies who had expressed interest in contributing to sustainability, but who might not have many chances of doing so. A service-based company who only have an office building, might not be able do much more about their own environmental impact than encourage their employees to bike to work and make the office building more energy efficient. Informant one says that it would make little sense to create the added value, with all the investment it takes, and take it out to someone who does not experience the added value. According to informant one, those who experience added value are those who have discovered the plastic problem and who might feel powerless in regards of tackling it. Through this product they get the tool to contribute to cleaning nature.

Informant two says that from the findings, he understands that information and knowledge

about the plastic issue is very important in regards of how the value is perceived by the respondents. He believes that the product from the survey could assist people in understanding and be more aware of the plastic issue over time, and that this was partly the idea behind the product. In that way, the findings confirm their belief that those who know about the problem will be more affected by the story than those who do not know much about it or do not have it as a priority. Informant two also says that having a “gatekeeper” in a company for example, who purchases a product made from ocean plastic, can influence those working there, thus increasing the group of people who are aware, and that way, understand and experience the added value. Informant two also says that he is happy that the findings shows that the story has such a good effect on the perceived value of the product.

The findings from these two interviews can be tied to the theories of consumption value and literature on green marketing. Both informants acknowledge that consumers’ awareness and concern about the issue is an important factor in how effective the storytelling is. This aligns with the emotional, epistemic and environmental value in consumption value theory. Informant one said that their initial thought was to bring this product to companies who had already expressed that they wanted to be more sustainable. Informant two believed that focusing on the consumers (in their case companies) who were already concerned about the issue would be the most efficient market strategy, and that through the product, more people would become aware of the issue.

The theory of environmental value says that those who are more concerned about the environment are more likely to purchase green products. Once we start grasping this theory, companies can start marketing their green products to those who are more likely to purchase the product based on different types of information. Those who care about the environment, as seen by the data from the survey performed for this thesis, are more likely to have an increased willingness to pay for the product after receiving the story. The information seems to have affected some respondents more than others, and those who were affected express a willingness to pay.

In order for companies to be profitable, it is important to be able to reach a bigger group than only those who are “environmentalists”. As outlined in the background chapter, much research has been done on green marketing. The research suggests that green marketing has the ability to affect the way consumers behave, and when performed well, can actually change consumer

behaviour in an environmentally friendly direction (Groening et al. 2018). Part of the marketing strategy could be to educate and inform consumers. This can be done through effective storytelling, where the company educates through telling the story of the environmental problem, and how the particular product will deal with that problem. As seen through the literature on storytelling and from comments from the survey, it is essential that the story is authentic and that the company is trustworthy. Truly sustainable products will then be important, and it might be even more important to thoroughly document the environmental impact.

It is interesting to look into how companies can use storytelling and information about the product to reach those who are influenced by the story, but also to those who are not immediately affected by the “save the ocean” strategy. Peattie wrote in 2001, which is 20 years ago at the time of writing this thesis that “there is little hope for the further greening of marketing unless consumers understand the issues involved and are convinced by the green market offerings that companies develop.” (Peattie 2001:145). I therefore argue that companies can use knowledge on consumer behaviour, and green purchasing behaviour specifically, to design their green marketing strategies. To sum up this section and to answer the third research question I argue that companies have to understand that consumers are less likely to purchase the green product if they don't feel a connection to the story, they are not aware or concerned about the problem presented in the story, or they do not trust that the company or product will fix the problem. With this knowledge, companies could use their power to influence, educate and inform consumers about the impact normal consumption has on environmental issues, and how purchasing a green product has a less environmental impact. In addition to providing this information, a compelling and personal story could further help communicate the message so that the consumers understand why there is “added value” to the green product.

In regards of hypothesis two, it is still hard to state that a company will gain competitive advantage from promoting green products. The expressed increased willingness to pay, although present, was quite low, and the majority of respondents still said it was unlikely they would purchase the product after having received the story. As outlined in chapter two and three, companies often face the challenge that consumers state that they will purchase green products but fails to actually do so. Adopting green products into the portfolio often requires huge investments and unless consumers are willing to pay a green premium, companies will not get a return on those investments. As environmental concern increases even more, and as

policy makers, academia and companies gain more knowledge on green purchasing behaviour, we can hope that truly sustainable companies can gain competitive advantage. In the next chapter I will present concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.

6.0 Conclusion

This thesis was performed in cooperation with the Stavanger based company Ope AS. Ope has done innovative work when it comes to utilization of ocean plastic as a material and the founders are pioneers in non-material value thinking. Literature on CE, green marketing and perceived value was outlined to give an overview of the context and on different viewpoints on the theme. Theories on storytelling and consumption values were presented and applied in order to get a better understanding of what influences green purchases. A mixed method was chosen to investigate the objective of the study. A quantitative survey and two qualitative in-depth interviews were performed. In this section, concluding remarks and recommendation for further research is presented.

The first research question was investigated through an online survey. The survey was answered by 250 respondents and provided representative data. There was a distinct tendency showing that the expressed willingness to pay for the product increased after receiving the story, thus answering research question one. This indicates that the perceived value does increase after the consumer has received a story about the positive environmental impact of a product. The limitations of this project's ability to answer research question one is that it is not completely clear as to whether it was the act of telling a story, or the subject of the story that had the effect. I therefore went on to discuss the possible reasons for the increased willingness to pay by drawing on literature on storytelling, consumption value theory and utility theory.

Research question two was designed to get knowledge on whether concern and awareness for environmental issues influences perceived value on green products. I argued that the story had a greater impact on those who were already concerned and/or aware of the plastic issue. Out of those who did not express an increased willingness to pay for the product there were some that stated that they did not trust that this product would fix the problem. Trust in that the company addresses the problem effectively is therefore important. In section two, I discussed the limitations of this study in regards of saying something about the correlation between environmental awareness and consumer behavior. Although the study did not ask specifically about the respondents concerns and awareness of the plastic issue, comments on the open-ended questions provided valuable data that allowed me to build my argument. The argument is also strengthened by similar findings in the research on consumer behavior. The utility theory and

both the epistemic and environmental value in consumption value theory states that there is a positive correlation between environmental awareness and environmental consumer behavior.

The third research question was designed in order to see how knowledge on the effect of storytelling could be of use to companies wanting to shift their activities to fit with circular principles. I argued that it is important for companies to understand that using a story is an effective marketing tool when performed correctly. It is also important to understand that if you utilize a non-material value, it will not be perceived as added value for all consumers. Consumers who are not concerned about plastic pollution in the ocean are most likely not going to be affected by a story claiming that the product will alleviate the pollution issue. It is also crucial for companies to be transparent and truthful in their green marketing strategies, as any doubt in the company or the product will highly affect the willingness to purchase a green product. Marketing strategies also needs to acknowledge what type of value is created, and for whom the product has value.

Based on the data and analysis of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, this thesis was unable to give clear results as to how the profile affects the willingness to pay for an upcycled product. The survey was sent out through the network of Ope to different industries. Almost half of the respondents were 50 years or older, 67 % were men, and 66% worked in industry and production. This skewed representativeness could have affected the result but the change in willingness to pay after receiving the story was however quite evenly divided between the different age groups, gender and type of industry.

This thesis has looked into whether it is possible to argue that a product made from upcycled ocean plastic can have an added value. The hypothesis was that consumers would be willing to pay a “green premium”, because the purchase would ensure more clean-up and less plastic in the ocean. It seems that there is an added value for some of the respondents, but this thesis is not able to provide clear answers or empirical evidence that consumers would pay more for a product made from upcycled ocean plastic, compared to the same product made from virgin plastic. This thesis was designed to provide empirical evidence on stated preference and not on revealed preferences. Because of the scope of the thesis, the respondents were not asked to choose between two similar products, one made from virgin plastic and one made from ocean plastic. This would be beneficial for further research where one might observe consumers’ actual purchasing behavior.

For further research, it would be beneficial to look even more into how those who are aware and concerned about an environmental issue behave. Knowledge on this could guide companies on how to shape their green marketing strategy, and how to communicate with consumers who are aware of the problem, but also with those who are not aware. As informant two said, he hoped that their product could also help to spread the information about the plastic issue, thus creating more aware consumers. One tactic for companies could then be to educate and inform consumers as part of their marketing strategy. Research, literature and findings from this project indicates that the consumer must be aware and concerned about environmental issues to choose environmentally friendly product over similar non-environmentally friendly products.

Based on the aforementioned factors, this thesis argues that knowledge and awareness is key when it comes to green purchases, and that companies and policy makers should inform and educate at the same time as promoting and making green products available. In conclusion, consumers have a large responsibility to change their consumption from today's products to green products but must be informed to do so. Companies also have a huge responsibility to provide green products, and not products which are only claimed to be green. It is challenging for consumers to judge whether consuming a green product will make a difference to the environment. When there is any doubt, it is easy to choose the cheaper, non-green option. Green products should as much as possible be made out of recycled materials, designed for a long life, and allowing for recycling at end-of life. In production one should strive for increasing energy efficiency and decreasing water usage. This way, consumers can be given the choose of shifting their consumption in a green direction that manages to respect the earth's resource boundaries.

Finally, I hope this thesis can contribute to the larger discussion on how to mitigate climate change through changing consumer behaviour. How we value products and recycled/upcycled products will have to change for the world to move in a circular direction. When we can look at waste not at waste, but as a resource waiting to be used, I believe we have come a long way. Policy makers, companies and consumers all have to contribute.

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