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Independent Institute of Education Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management

Stakeholder theory: A qualitative, cross-sectional study describing customer perceptions of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies' sustainability involvement in minimising plastic pollution in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the IIE Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Elizabeth Thom 28/10/2018

Abstract:

Studies from the World Wide Fund (2018) illustrate that only 16% of plastic waste is recycled in South Africa. According to research, globally eight million metric tons, a year of plastic waste ends up in the ocean from careless mismanaged waste. The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry is said to be one of the largest contributors to the production of plastic (WWF, 2018). A growing awareness from society surrounding the detrimental effects plastic has on the environment is putting immense pressure on companies to implement the necessary strategies to curb the problem (Fourie, 2014). For CSR initiatives to help build positive relationships between companies and their stakeholders, effective CSR communication is indispensable. Therefore, understanding customer perceptions of FMCG companies' sustainability involvement could encourage companies to become more involved within the community to solve the problem.

A qualitative, in-depth interview questionnaire was utilised to gather the information from seven random individuals, providing the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the perceptions, experiences and attitudes of customers on FMCGs' plastic pollution involvements. Findings suggest that customers perceive FMCGs to be unsustainable as customers demonstrated they were unaware of any marketing strategies made by FMCGs on their involvement. Affordability and convenience are motivating factors for consumers during the decision-making process of sustainability.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Contextualisation:

Plastic is "without question the biggest environmental issue of our time and how we respond to it today will dictate our planet's health in the future" (O'Sullivan, 2018, p. 1).

A million bottles a minute; world's plastic binge 'as dangerous as climate change'

– The Guardian 2017

Plastic is a substance the earth cannot digest

– Eco Watch 2016

By 2050, the oceans will contain more plastic than fish by weight

– *DAPP* 2016

The above are just some of the headlines society reads every day regarding the concern for the environment and marine life (Armstrong & Kotler, 2015).

Plastic packaging serves several important functions and value in achieving its purpose of protection, preservation, transportation and marketing (Federation, 2018). Plastic is lightweight, durable, secure, and versatile and one of the most important contributors to protecting food from waste, without plastic society would use two to three times more resources (Federation, 2018). For example, bananas in a plastic bag will extend their shelf life by three more days (ibid). Through years of careless plastic waste mismanagement and it's slow degrading process – it takes one plastic bag 20 years to break down into micro-plastics (see Figure 6) – the ecosystem is reaching its full capacity to absorb waste (WWF, 2018). As a result, natural feedback cycles in the form of climate change and extinctions are accelerating as harmful chemicals are released into the environment and animals such as birds, whales and turtles mistake micro-plastics for food (Roser, 2018).

Globally, eight million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year. WWF (2018) argues out of the top 20 offenders, South Africa is the 11th worst offender in the world when it comes to releasing plastic waste into the sea and 94% of all beach litter in the country is made from plastic of which 77% is packaging.

According to WWF *(*2018*),* single-use plastics are most common in the FMCG industry as plastic is typically cheap, produced in bulk and carelessly discarded without being reused or recycled. Furthermore, due to South Africa's poor economic state the probability of non-recyclability is high and the adopting rate of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability activities within companies remain in the infancy stage (Corrigan, 2014). Research has suggested that only 16% of plastic in South Africa is recycled (WWF, 2018). Large corporations, such as FMCGs, are an important link in the plastic pollution chain and fulfil a large role in helping the issue (WWF, 2018). Society's growing awareness and pressures from social media and consumers have predominately influenced organisations' sustainability initiatives. Fourie (2014) explains consumers are making more sustainable decisions within their purchasing behaviour and are known to prefer purchasing products from companies which are actively involved in corporate sustainable responsibilities.

Plastic pollution has become one of the most critical issues pertaining to the ecosystem. This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by providing an in-depth understanding of customer perceptions of Durban-based FMCGs' involvement in minimising plastic pollution. This qualitative cross-sectional study will measure customer perceptions around key concepts through in-depth interviews to form the criteria to measure their perceptions. The key concepts derive from Stakeholder Theory and include stakeholder engagement, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability management (SM).

FMCGs are one of the biggest contributors to manufacturing plastic packaging materials such as shampoo bottles and home appliances (see Figure 7) (WWF, 2018). Certain South African FMCGs are making strides in working to alleviate the crisis by reusing plastic waste and helping to clean and pick up plastic, however it does not seem to be enough as plastic pollution still remains a critical issue (see Figure 8 for an example of the efforts being made) (DICEY, 2018). As a result, this study focuses on how customers perceive FMCGs' participation in minimising the plastic pollution crisis to emphasise customers are an important stakeholder to include when making sustainable decisions.

The study will provide consumers and companies with an in-depth understanding of how customers perceive South African FMCGs' CSR initiatives and management of their stakeholders and sustainability actions towards minimising plastic pollution.

1.2 Rationale and Relevance

1.2.1 Rationale:

The fundamental reason for this research paper was to gain a further understanding of FMCG companies' sustainability efforts in minimising plastic pollution. Plastic pollution has become one of the most heated topics of the 21st century as it is a current prominent environmental concern (Ana Catarino, 2018).

The rationale for this study emerged from a particular social media video of a turtle found with a plastic straw caught in its nose and a picture of a bird wrapped in a plastic bag (please refer to figure 9 and 10 for images). Furthermore, witnessing plastic pollution along Durban's beaches and discussing people's perceptions of the reasons and sources behind the issue also prompted this study. Research by WWF (2018) has shown that only 16% of plastic is recycled in South Africa and remaining debris is found in landfills, discarded within cities or floating in the ocean harming many animals in the process. Plastic has become a way of life, fulfilling many roles and benefits for companies and people since the 1950s where it all began, but the accumulation of careless mismanaged waste has caused severe damage to the ecosystem by leaking polluting chemicals (Makower, 2018).

The researcher, an environmental enthusiast, wanted to understand the involvement of FMCGs' sustainability in reducing the use of plastic. According to Freeman (2014), sustainability interests are represented by human stakeholders. Fourie (2014) further explained that a company's CSR strategies have an essential impact on stakeholders' commitment to and involvement in CSR. As a result, the study focuses on the perceptions of customers about FMCGs' involvement in reducing the use of plastic to illustrate they are not engaging with their stakeholders enough during the decision-making process of sustainability.

This study aims to provide Durban companies and consumers with an in-depth understanding of how customers perceive FMCGs' sustainability strategies in minimising plastic pollution.

1.2.2 Relevance:

Garvare and Johannson (2010) mention that the "relation between sustainability, stakeholder theory and quality management can still be developed" (Hörisch, 2014, p. 329). Toby Corbin (2018) suggests while awareness of the impact of single-use plastics on the environment has been raised by media coverage, it has not led to a shift in consumer behaviour. Another study by Smith (2018) argues that consumers often have little choice to refuse plastic, illustrating the absence of companies' participation in reducing the use of plastic or providing alternative options. The study provides a valid contribution to the body of knowledge in sustainability management and leads to a further understanding of people's perceptions of FMCGs' corporate social responsibility and involvement within the plastic pollution issue. This study contributes towards minimising the plastic pollution problem by encouraging people and companies to become more involved. Furthermore, the study will offer surrounding KwaZulu-Natal companies market perceptions of the application of FMCGs' sustainable strategies.

1.3 Problem statement:

As the world's population continues to grow so does the amount of waste people produce and the growth of plastic production has far outstripped the ability of waste management (Parker, 2018). It is clear from the rationale that plastic is silently distressing the ecosystem and only 16% of plastic waste is being recycled (WWF, 2018). Companies such as FMCGs within Durban continue to remain within the infancy stage of their sustainability involvement as discussed by Smith (2018). The actions we take now will depict our future. Consumers play a critical role in an organisation's CSR and sustainability decisions and effective stakeholder engagement can contribute to successful sustainable implementation (Fourie 2014). Frynas and Yamahaki (2013) emphasise the importance of multilevel and multi-stakeholder perspectives and stress the need for a broader perspective that examines not just corporations' social responsibility, but also stakeholder perspectives, keeping corporations accountable for their actions.

Therefore, in response to the problem identified, there is a gap in knowledge to determine customers' perceptions of FMCGs' current sustainability involvement to help reduce plastic pollution. Research has predominately focused on the relationship between stakeholder engagement, CSR and sustainability but not customers' perceptions of FMCGs' current sustainability efforts in reducing plastic pollution. The problem is that customer perceptions need to be addressed to provide companies with market perceptions regarding their involvement with the view of motivating them to get more involved in reducing the use of plastic and to involve their customers more.

1.4 Purpose statement:

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to describe the perceptions of consumers about the involvement of FMCGs' sustainability strategies in minimising the use of plastic to reduce plastic pollution. Through in-depth interviews (see Appendix D for an example of the questionnaire), a thorough understanding of customer perceptions were developed based on the three themes of stakeholder engagement, CSR and sustainability management. Findings presented in this descriptive research study were analysed through the use of qualitative thematic analysis as it looks at different themes or focuses areas on the perceptions of customers to test the contribution of the stakeholder theory to a company's sustainability involvement (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The suggested proposal for FMCGs and related companies based on the interpretation of the findings could be utilised as a foundation for driving plastic pollution and future sustainability initiatives as it encompasses the importance of engaging with stakeholders during the sustainability process. This proposed initiative has the aim to understand customer opinions, awareness, consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions based on FMCGs' corporate social responsiveness and sustainability involvement.

1.5 Research question:

1. How do customers perceive Durban FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution?

1.2 How do customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability efforts in minimising the use of plastic influence their brand loyalty?

1.6 Research Objectives:

1. To describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution.
2. To describe, if FMCGs' plastic pollution efforts affect customer loyalty.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction:

To strengthen the findings in this chapter relating concepts to the stakeholder theory is analysed according to relevance and applied further in the analysis as well as a literature review to assess the relevance of previous sources on the research topic.

The theoretical foundation follows the guidelines of the stakeholder theory as the management of multi-stakeholder relationships and stakeholder engagement contributes to a company's sustainability initiatives. Freeman (2010) argues the core idea of stakeholder theory is for companies to meet their stakeholder requirements and ensure continued participation. Including customer perceptions and views on sustainability can assist companies during the decision-making process and also fuel innovation (Fourie 2014).

Garvare and Johannson (2010) mention the relation between sustainability and stakeholder theory can still be developed, thus this study will include relating core concepts of the stakeholder theory, sustainability management and corporate social responsibility (CSR) as they are inextricably interlinked concepts (Hörisch, 2014). Sustainability is a core component of CSR and is the main focus of this study. Review of previous literature is structured according to three themes – stakeholder engagement, CSR and sustainability management. It is analysed based on the themes relating to plastic pollution, customer perceptions and companies sustainability involvement.

The core focus of the theoretical foundation is the link between stakeholder engagement and CSR. Relating concepts will be further conceptualised in the conceptualisation section.

2.1 Theoretical Foundation:

2.1.1 The stakeholder theory:

Edward Freeman is a prominent author of the stakeholder theory, pioneering from the founding's of Ian Mitroff in the 1960s (Schmid, 2006). In 1984, Freeman established the stakeholder approach as focusing on building a framework that was responsive to the concerns of managers who were being confronted with unique levels of environmental turbulence and change (Freeman 1984). This refers to how stakeholders can create new opportunities for a business according to the changes in the environment (Freeman & McVea, 2001). Friedman (2006) identifies main groups of stakeholders – customers, employees, local communities, suppliers and distributors and shareholders. Both Freeman (1984) and Dashpande (2010, p. 102) agree on the definition of a stakeholder as 'any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of organisations' objectives'. His definition has been altered over the years but is the most applicable to this study as it illustrates how customers and the environment are two important stakeholders to a company's sustainability involvement (R. Edward Freeman, 2005).

Freeman (1984) explains the theory is all about value and creation of trade, meaning that incorporating values as a key element of organisations' strategic management process, companies will rank value according to how important or how much influence that stakeholder has to the company. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) addressed this issue by developing a framework for stakeholder identification and debated that the environment is thought to qualify as an actual stakeholder due its power, legitimacy and urgency. Freeman (2014) agrees as in the context of sustainability the environment is considered a valuable stakeholder to a company. The notion of stakeholders or stakeholder management is highly concerned about the active management of the business environment relationships and the promotion of shared interests by acknowledging stakeholders' input in order to develop business strategies (Archie B. Carroll, 2009). Freeman (2004) considers the perspectives of the stakeholders themselves and the importance that stakeholder activities have to the management of the organisation.

Stakeholders may bring an action against the directors for failure to perform the required 'duty of care', illustrating the link between CSR and stakeholder engagement (Schmid, 2006). The importance to engage with consumers is a core concept to this study.

Stakeholder engagement (SE) is the co-creation of value and all stakeholders must be considered in the decision-making process of the organisation, supported by Crowther and Aras (2010) who believes it is morally and ethically right to do so and doing so actually benefits shareholders. Stakeholder feedback, criticism and even praise will help companies build social capital reduce the risk of failure, fuel innovation and creative thinking for future sustainability initiatives (Fourie, 2014).

Freeman's work has been amplified over the years by various researchers to mention a few who are referenced in this study such as Hörisch, Freeman and Schaltegger (2014) who discussed how the stakeholder theory interlinks with social, environmental and sustainability management aspects of an organisation. Donaldson and Preston (1995) create a model based on instrumental, descriptive and normative theories to justify why the stakeholder approach is essential to business and the environment. This model portrays how organisations need stakeholders for business success, illustrating the importance of acquiring a stakeholder mindset, management and creating value. Considering the social demands of stakeholders is an action-orientated variant of CSR (Archie B. Carroll, 2009).

Stakeholder engagement, CSR and sustainability (a principle of CSR) are inextricably intertwined concepts as they have underlying moral and ethical principles. The link between stakeholder theory and CSR stresses the importance of incorporating societal interests into business operations (R. Edward Freeman, 2017). These concepts relate to how an organisation should be socially responsible, ethical, sustainable, transparent and accountable towards their stakeholders; the three pinnacles of CSR (David Crowther, 2010). Stakeholder management enhances corporate social performance and brings a positive relationship between social responsibility and economic performance (Graves, 1997).

Additional concepts are incorporated within the study as stakeholder theory alone is insufficient. Furthermore, the literature review will not only focus on the stakeholder theory but relating concepts.

2.2 Review of previous Literature:

2.2.1 Introduction:

This literature review critically analyses relating past literature research following a thematic review by dividing sources according to the relating three concepts of corporate social responsibility, stakeholder engagement and sustainability management. The review develops a foundation for the direction of this research, to source a division in knowledge and provide further insight on customer perceptions (primary stakeholder) on CSR strategies and sustainability. CSR and sustainability in South African literature have only emerged recently, thus academic research pertinent to this country is under-researched. The review of past literature includes other developing countries such as Brazil and India. These are linked back to a South African context.

The division into three themes will help structure the analysis and enable the researcher to address research questions. The review determines previously discovered literature pertaining to the three themes, by analysing customer perceptions on plastic pollution, relevant models and different research techniques to distinguish the relevance of this study and establishes the niche for the study conducted.

2.2.2 Stakeholder engagement (SE):

A study by Mitchell, Agle and Wood in 1997 developed a framework to identify the ranking of stakeholders in terms of their power, urgency and legitimacy. Even though this study is outdated, it substantiates relevant information on stakeholder theory and accentuates how managers must be aware of the entities in the environment that hold power and have the intent to impose their will upon the firm (Ronald K. Mitchell, 1997). This study relates to the current study as managers of FMCGs need to include customers' (as primary stakeholders) perceptions the company's performance for further business value and relationships.

This framework has been incorporated within literature over the years to assist managers in distinguishing stakeholders according to their power, urgency and legitimacy. In relation to this study customers and the environment are considered urgent, legitimate and powerful stakeholders. The environment is considered time sensitive and critical due to the accumulation of unsustainable behaviour (Ronald K. Mitchell, 1997). Among many other environmental issues, plastic pollution is critically distressing the ecosystem. Companies have an obligation to ensure the welfare of the environment for future generations.

The paper *Stakeholder Management Capability and Performance in Brazilian Cooperatives* (2014) describes a study by Pavão and Rossetto in which data were collected from 26 states and the Federal District of Brazil, and across 13 sectors of Brazil's economy, to test the relationship between Stakeholder Management Capability (SMC) and both social/environmental and economic performance. According to Freeman (2015), this paper was the first empirical test of these relationships within the context of cooperative organisations (Harrison, et al., 2015). This paper identifies an important concept (SMC) where, often in the management of stakeholders of companies such as FMCGs, interests are ignored and potential cooperation is overlooked or not considered. This concept supports this study as it refers to the need for an organisation to manage relationships with stakeholders with specific interest and how businesses should treat stakeholders in order to create value, and even what the meaning of value is. The author mentions that "Stakeholder Capability is an adequate concept for understanding stakeholder welfare" (Pavão & Rossetto, 2015, p. 874).Organisations' such as FMCGs which implement stakeholder relationships and balance their interests to achieve the purpose of the organisation have a high SMC. Companies with a high SMC design and implement communications with multiple stakeholders.

Fourie and Kloppers (2014) is a relevant study of CSR communication conducted in South Africa. The paper argues; for CSR initiatives to foster positive relationships between companies and their stakeholders, effective communication is indispensable (Fourie, 2014).

If stakeholders are not made aware of the company's CSR activities, it is impossible for CSR to be utilised as a strategic tool in building and maintaining positive relationships.

The stakeholder engagement standard defines SE as 'to drive strategic direction and operational excellence for organisations and to contribute to the kind of sustainable development from which organisations, their stakeholder and the wider society can benefit' (Fourie, 2014, p. 309). Stakeholders increasingly expect companies not only to engage in CSR activities but also to communicate their involvement in these activities. Effectively engaging with stakeholders' benefits company's by understanding views on important issues, market conditions, and new technology advances consequently influencing corporate reputation and evoking trust. Consumers are more loyal to organisations that respect the environment they operate in. While the paper focuses on an SA agricultural company in Cape Town posing as a limitation, it explains the relationship between CSR and stakeholder engagement epitomising the role of FMCGs involvement in reducing plastic pollution (Fourie, 2014).

2.2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

Archie Carroll (1991), a pioneer author of CSR describes corporate social responsibility as 'profit is important but businesses have a wider purpose and social responsibility'. Compared to Milton Friedman (1970) who believed that a company's core objective is to maximise profits and 'the social responsibility of business is to increase profit and shouldn't have any other wider responsibilities'. However, companies such as FMCGs can no longer continue to provide products and services without acknowledging their impact on the environment and expect no action by various stakeholders. Simply, CSR is the responsibility FMCGs have towards society and success lies largely with how multi-stakeholder relationships are managed and the continuous engagement of their stakeholders when managing CSR activities (Freeman, 2014). Carroll (2010) states in order for a business to have a healthy climate in which to function in the future, they must take actions now that will ensure their long-term viability.

Carroll (1991) pyramid (see Appendix A) of CSR depicts the fundamental roles played and expected by business in society today and illustrates contemporary perspectives and prescribes organisations to focus on societal issues as fundamental in their business strategy. This model adopts a holistic approach to society's expectations of business responsibilities and defines them into four categories: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic (Archie, 1990).

Ethical and philanthropic responsibilities in relation to this study, FMCGs must make ethical choices by including sustainability within their business models and be a good corporate citizen in the eyes of consumers.

Crowther and Aras (2010) developed the three CSR pinnacles of sustainability, transparency and accountability. These three principles form a criterion to which FMCGs' CSR strategies are based upon.

Transparency is the ability of a company to be open and vulnerable to its stakeholders, necessitating that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who are affected by such enforcement. It is the process of recognition and responsibility on the part of the organisation's external effects of its actions (Crowther, 2016). Accountability is concerned with an organisation recognising its actions affecting the external environment and therefore assuming responsibility for the effects of its actions. It implies the recognition that an organisation is part of a wider societal network and has responsibilities to that entire network (Crowther, 2016). Sustainability is concerned with the effect which an action was taken in the present has upon the options available in the future (Crowther, 2002). Sustainability and stakeholder engagement are interlinked concepts where the growing awareness of stakeholders on the environment is impacting the company's sustainability efforts. The term sustainability is ubiquitous within the discourse of globalisation and within the discourse of corporate performance (Crowther, 2016). The three pinnacles accentuate corporate social responsiveness, implying that FMCGs have an obligation to respond to social demands depicted as an action-orientated variant of CSR (Archie B. Carroll, 2009).

Wayne Visser (2010) argues how CSR as a business, governance and ethics system has failed society. This paper is relevant to the current study as it attempts to justify the significance of FMCGs' current state of CSR. Even though CSR has evolved over time, this paper illustrates the growing perceptions of CSR in relation to FMCGs' current CSR strategies. Visser (2010) argues that a vast majority of companies fail to be 'good' corporate citizens and most sustainability and corporate responsibility programs are about being less bad rather than good.

He shares how a company's CSR is a completely inadequate response to the sometimes devastating impact that multinational companies can have in an ever more globalised world – and it is used only to mask the impact (Visser, 2010). Large companies have failed their social responsibility due to a cancer of greed that has corrupted the business systems, governance and ethics, particularly in Western economies. He argues that the three curses of CSR: peripheral, incremental and uneconomic is why CSR has failed in the Ages of Greed, Philanthropy, Marketing and Management. Greed and marketing are most relevant to the current research as it illustrates how companies remain characterised by defensive CSR in which sustainability responsibilities are only undertaken when a company can show shareholder value is protected and when pollution controls are only seen to fend off regulation or avoid fines or penalties (Visser, 2010). These actions constitute only to enhance the brand, image and reputation of the company otherwise known as 'greenwashing'. Visser (2010) proposes a new method called CSR 2.0 'Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility' with the principles of creativity, scalability, responsiveness, glocality and circularity. The article highlights that companies have the ability to channel innovativeness to helping environmental problems such as plastic pollution (Visser, 2010).

A relevant article by Swathi (2018) defines CSR as ultimately including social demands by being accountable for the social effects the company has on people and refers to the management's obligation to make choices and take actions that will contribute to the welfare and interests of society.

The article, written following a study in India, makes reference to the CSR framework of economic, social and environmental and applies each dimension to key aspects such as maintaining trust with stakeholders, the responsibility of CSR towards customers and environmental management which are important concepts within the current study (Swathi, 2018). An important consideration identified pertaining to this study is that a CSR policy improves a company's profitability and value and benefits public relations as stakeholder awareness promotes building a company's brand image (Swathi, 2018). Companies such as FMCGs have a moral obligation to make choices and take action that contributes to the welfare and interests of society (Swathi, 2018).

Even though this study relates to the company itself and not from customer perspectives (stakeholder), it reassures how business ethics and CSR are intertwined concepts relating to this study. Swathi (2018) illustrates that organisations must behave ethically as they have a social responsibility outside of the firm. The study follows the works of the stakeholder theory conducted through secondary data posing a limitation to the study. To overcome the limitation for the present research, the researcher utilises in-depth interviews which provides insightful information compared to books and articles.The study is based in India, a further limitation to the study.

In addition, this article substantiates the relevance between business ethics and consumers' loyalty and willingness to purchase products when companies are behaving ethically. David Ackah's (2016) study on the effects of applied business ethics on customer perceptions of Greece's FMCG industry strengthens the relationship between stakeholders, business ethics, brand equity and consumer willingness to buy. The study is conducted quantitatively and sampled 167 people through email and social media questionnaires. As much as conducting an online experiment presents certain challenges, the study questioned a larger sample thereby providing a comprehensive result from the general population as a whole. The study found that business ethics does not affect Greek consumer perceptions, however, a positive relationship was found between consumer loyalty and the willingness to buy.

Customer loyalty is the continuation to buy a product regardless of the price that is being offered (David Ackah, 2016). The positive relationship between consumer perceptions and actual willingness to buy emphasises the concurrent relationship between stakeholder engagement and sustainability supported by Freeman (2014) and (David Ackah, 2016). A limitation presented by this study is; the majority of the respondents are Greek nationals between the ages of 18 and 34 whereas the current study does not have an age limitation. The study suggests further research on focussing more on the individual components that eventually construct the way consumers perceived ethicality. Business ethics is a key prerequisite to sustainability.

From perceptual corporate sustainability to customer loyalty, a multi-sectorial investigation in a developing country strengthens the relationship corporate sustainability has on customer loyalty. Moisescu (2018) reiterates that customer perceptions of corporate sustainability significantly and positively impact customer loyalty in the investigated industries. Customers perceive suppliers' environmental friendliness and contribution to local development and quality of life as the most important roles in enhancing customer loyalty (Moisescu, 2018). The paper indicates that companies can enhance their customer loyalty by actively communicating and disclosing their sustainability policies (Moisescu, 2018). The study is based in countries such as Spain, Greece and South Korea within the mobile telecommunications services, retail banking and dairy industries. While this is a limitation to the current study, findings indicate that customer loyalty differs according to the industry. The results will be taken into consideration when determining customer loyalty towards Durban's FMCGs' sustainability involvement (Moisescu, 2018).

People's wasteful habits with plastic bags represent a very powerful example of the global challenge of sustainable change. Most people still don't think they live in 'the environment' but rather see that as 'somewhere else'; therefore they connect to environmental programs in a hypothetical way (Richards, 2016). A relevant article by Richards and Zen (2016) develops and explores a policy concept of CSR as a focus for sustainable development and discusses the distinction between CSR as a marketing strategy and the need for companies to commit to more long-term sustainable changes. The paper demonstrates that companies play a key role in creating awareness on environmental issues which can lead to social learning and hopefully change consumers buying behaviour. The study illustrates that if companies such as FMCGs fail to apply to a deep, rather than surface commitment, of their own CSR policies, they will sooner or later be judged by their customers as well as their external stakeholders (Richards, 2016). The sustainable policy framework proposed in the study illustrates how macro stakeholders such as public, private and civil society participating in 'going green' or sustainability campaigns enhances public awareness and social learning . The researcher states 'going green' campaigns are too subtle and they need to be as effective as anti-smoking campaigns to try shock the public into awareness (Richards, 2016, p. 279).

The paper found that the degree of acceptance on the principle of doing away with plastic bags or using reusable alternatives is not so clear and some people feel that campaigns are only public relations gimmicks. If FMCGs commit to longer-term CSR strategies, it is more likely to be seen as driven by genuine concern for increasing society welfare while short-term campaigns are more likely to be viewed as a way to exploit the cause for the sake of profit (Richards, 2016). Engaging stakeholder's core motivations is a prerequisite to really changing ingrained habits or practices. This study illustrates that for FMCGs to create successful and sustainable public awareness and education campaigns of behavioural change, a deep convergence or collaboration between all stakeholders is required (Richards, 2016)

2.2.4 Sustainability Management

Jacob Hörisch, Edward Freeman, and Stefan Schaltegger (2014) study conducted in Germany discusses the link between stakeholders and sustainability management (SM). For the purpose of this study, the study identifies how the stakeholder theory provides a framework for developing and implementing broad sustainability solutions through a stakeholder mindset. Globalisation resulting in climate change, poverty, inequality and most recently pertinent to this study, plastic pollution, has stimulated the growing consciousness of consumers on social and green environmental matters.

The paper illustrates that if companies such as FMCGs implement corporate sustainability as a vision and sustainability management as an approach, it challenges companies to engage with stakeholders on a multitude of contemporary social and ecological topics, thereby demanding companies to increase awareness by providing customers with more sustainable products and improving supply chains (Hörisch, 2014). The study emphasises the importance of multilevel and multi-stakeholder perspectives and stresses the need for a broader perspective that examines not just corporations' social responsibility, but also society's responsibility in keeping corporations accountable. Furthermore, as stakeholders become more concerned for the environment, it is perceived that organisations fully investing in sustainability reap tremendous benefits; enhanced corporate reputation and driving innovation (Friedman 2017).

A paper by Gupta and Kumar (2013) explains how embedding sustainability into the culture of an organisation leads to identification of new opportunities and superior performance. The research conceptualises that the ability of such green initiatives embedded into sustainability create opportunities such as improving performance, increasing customer base and strengthening business relationships for different functions of an organisations namely management, marketing and operations (Gupta, 2013). Marketing acts as a stimulus for customers to buy green products and it improves long term viability of the business. In relation to the current study, this paper exemplifies how companies need to become more open and transparent in their sustainability operations. Creating awareness surrounding sustainability will provide superior performance and reputation of the business (Gupta, 2013).

A key finding in research suggests that to change customer behaviour in purchasing sustainable products is to create awareness surrounding a company's ecological involvement, supporting Richards and Zen (2016) study. A quantitative study conducted in Romania in 2018 by Gheorghe Orzan found that companies had not informed stakeholders enough about the benefits of their ecological packaging, confirming an absence in purchasing behaviour. The study aims to determine the perception of Romanian consumers regarding the role of eco-packaging in the formation of sustainable behaviour.

The study indicates in relation to this study that people are aware of the environmental issue plastic packaging has to the environment, but if companies do not communicate with their stakeholders about their sustainable products it will not translate into real buying behaviour (Gheorghe Orzan, 2018). This is due to the absence of information about why environmental products are beneficial to the consumer and the environment and why paying a higher price for a 'more sustainable product' will prevent consumers from purchasing. The study found that 50% of people were not willing to pay more for ecological packaging due to the lack of information; 48% was due to a low budget. The purpose of the present study will take the results into consideration when analysing the participant's perceptions regarding sustainability. The study recommends companies to formulate communication campaigns to sensitise consumers and encourage more sustainable consumption habits (Gheorghe Orzan, 2018).

Dr Showkat Hussain Gani conducted a study on the Purchase Intentions and Consumers Attitude towards Environment: A Study of Eco-friendly (EF) Products in FMCG Sector of India (Gani, 2017). In contrast to comparing studies, Gani (2017) utilises the four marketing-mix components (price, promotion, place and product) as well as word of mouth and satisfaction to scrutinise which factors influence consumer attitudes and buying intention of green products. Price and promotion illustrate positive correlations as found in previous studies. However, within this study consumers perceive the quality of sustainable products as insufficient and would rather pay for the traditional products they are familiar with. Furthermore, the study highlighted that people knew where the EF goods are but this information does not influence to buy. Research is gathered quantitatively based on a closed-ended questionnaire for example 'Eco-friendly products are healthy' and 'I believe in such advertising' using the Likert scale (Gani, 2017). Closed-ended questions limit general perceptions of customers whereas the current study tends to explore an in-depth understanding of customer perceptions through open-ended questions. Additionally, customer perceptions vary according to their culture, beliefs and morals which will apply to this current study.

In addition to the previous articles, a relevant study by Hassan and Valenzuela 2016 explores customer perceptions of Green Advertising in the Context of Eco-friendly FMCGs in Australia (Hassan, 2016). The study identifies three; exposure, trust and influence. 27 shoppers are interviewed through an in-depth questionnaire to gather insightful and meaningful information on the respondent's perceptions. In the findings, majority respondents revealed they were not exposed to green advertisements and felt it was only modern-day hype not worth paying attention to. This lack of exposure is attributable to the respondent's lack of interest in eco-friendly products. The study illustrated that 44% of the respondents did not trust green advertisement at all. They believe the claims being made were false, fabricated and not substantiated suggesting that companies must substantiate the claims they make in green advertisements. This finding supports Richards (2016) study about how short-term CSR initiatives are only seen as public relation gimmicks or Visser (2010) study 'greenwashing'.

Furthermore, those who were influenced by green advertisements were aware of environmental issues and believe their actions have an impact on the environment. Additionally, respondents who are not influenced by green advertising on eco-friendly products had little or no trust in the claims made by advertisements (Hassan, 2016). Limitations presented in the study is further studies are required to ensure the validity of the findings. For the purpose of this study will take the results into consideration when analysing customer perceptions of FMCGs sustainability involvement.

2.2.5 Conclusion of Literature Review

In the context of the above studies conducted by different authors across the world, no such studies are conducted particularly about customer's perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement towards plastic pollution. Therefore, the present research will try to bridge this research gap.

2.3 Conceptualisation:

2.3.1 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement states that all stakeholders must be considered in the decision-making process of the organisation. Engaging with stakeholders is vitally important to understand specific issues, to strengthen the goodwill and reputation of the organisation, create opportunities and to generally build more long-term and lasting relationships (Cornelissen, 2014).

2.3.2 Stakeholder Management Capability (SMC):

Stakeholder Management Capability (SMC) is the need for an organisation to manage stakeholder relationships. An organisation that understands and implements relationships and balances the interests of stakeholders achieves a high SMC (Pavão & Rossetto, 2015).

2.3.3 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders (Swathi, 2018). CSR maintains the idea that businesses are members of society and they operate as corporate citizens, therefore, remain accountable to society for their actions.

CSR ensures companies conduct business ethically and responsibly implying the need to consider the impact of the business activities has on the environment (David Crowther, 2010).

2.3.4 Sustainability Management:

Sustainability is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability management is the formulation, implementation and evaluation of both environmental and socioeconomic sustainability-related decisions and actions (Brundtland Report, 1987).

2.3.5 Customer Perception:

Perception is the process through which a consumer selects, organises and interprets into a sensible and coherent image of the world, thereby attaining sensory information awareness. Consumers act and react on the basis of their perceptions that also underline consumer preferences (Gani, 2017).

2.3.6 Plastic:

Plastic has revolutionised modern living for being lightweight, cost-effective and fulfilling many roles of preservation, protection, prevents waste, transportation and marketing, among many more. Plastic is polymers which are long-chain molecules made of repeating links or monomers (AC Vegter, 2014). The chains are strong, light, and durable which makes them useful for many purposes however, it is a non-biodegradable material (AC Vegter, 2014).

2.3.7 Plastic Pollution:

The overuse of plastic is the main cause of plastic pollution. It is the accumulation of plastic waste in an area that has begun to negatively impact the natural environment through the release of toxins and chemicals (AC Vegter, 2014). Plastic never fully decomposes, and the careless management of plastic waste has detrimental effects to the environment, harming the ecosystem and killing many marine animals such as whales and turtles and even making its way through the food chain to humans (AC Vegter, 2014).

2.3.8 Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) Companies:

An FMCG is a manufacturer and retailer producing items that are sold relatively quickly and at low prices from local supermarkets. Products include fruit and vegetables, meat, tobacco, dairy products and much more. The role of FMCGs is to get the product off the shelf as quickly as possible to maximise profits as these goods tend to have low-profit margins (Davis, 2017).

In conclusion, the contextualisation section identified the application of theoretical frameworks with identifying literature sources, creating a foundation for understanding customer perceptions. The analysis of the literature identified three themes to be utilised in the analysis as well as assessing the relevance of the key concepts.

3. METHODOLOGY:

To reiterate, this study aims to gather in-depth information and knowledge to further understand customer perceptions of FMCG's sustainability efforts in minimising the use of plastic to assist with the plastic pollution issue. The following section identifies the research method and strategy applied to strengthen the trustworthiness of the results (Maree, 2016, p. 36). The research paradigm, design, population and sample are presented below as well as how the researcher conducted data collection and analysis. The construction of the interview schedule, trustworthiness and the ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.1 Research Paradigm

A phenomenon is anything that happens in our world that can be experienced or observed. A phenomenon is often used in research to refer to something that is worth investigating such as the very current issue of plastic pollution (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The phenomena that are worth investigating are approached by researchers in different methods or means, known as paradigms. A paradigm is a shared worldview that represents the beliefs and values in a discipline and that guides how problems are solved (Schwandt, 2001).

Interpretivists believe reality is not objectively determined but is socially constructed. Therefore, the main idea of this paradigm is that human beings cannot be studied with the same methods to study objects and aims to provide insight into how people make sense of a particular phenomenon (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2015, p. 27). Kobus Maree (2016) explains that the strength of interpretivist studies is the rich and deep descriptions that it produces In regard to this study; the researcher is interpreting customer perceptions on FMCGs' efforts in reducing the use of plastic to assist with the plastic pollution problem, making the interpretivism paradigm the most appropriate paradigm to adopt for this study. This is a thematic analysis as it analyses similar themes of perceptions and opinions within the data conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The interpretivist paradigm is an anti-positivist paradigm as it was developed as a reaction to positivism because interpretivism looks at the phenomenon in a way that guides the researcher to 'understand and describe the meaningful social actions and experiences' whereas positivism looks at the causal relationship that predicts and controls experience within the phenomenon (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, customers participated in a natural environment to create greater opportunity for sharing opinions and perceptions on FMCGs' sustainability efforts (Maree, 2016). Maree (2016) states that the human mind is a tool to create meaning, thus illustrating how customer perceptions are of innate value to FMCGs. Perceptions are applied to the stakeholder theory and relating core concepts to interpret and devise an understanding of customer thoughts on FMCGs' plastic pollution involvement. Furthermore, customer behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world. This means that there is no one set of customer perceptions in gaining knowledge, therefore gathering input from different customers will help produce themes to make research decisions (Maree, 2016). A downfall of interpretivism is the abundance of information collected due to the varied perceptions of customers (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

From an interpretivist perspective, the epistemological position is the study of knowledge or common sense that guides people and information dependent on people's interpretation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In this study, participants are dependent on their common knowledge allowing the researcher to gain insightful information and acquire further understanding of customer perspectives of FMCGs' involvement in reducing plastic pollution. The information collected will add to the body of knowledge highlighting the importance stakeholders have to a company's sustainability efforts. The research conducted will not provide a general conception of customer perceptions of FMCGs within South Africa (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Ontology is the study of reality (Maree, 2016). The researcher's view is dependent on the meanings that people ascribe to their own experiences and interactions, meaning customer perceptions will be varied according to their experiences in daily living (Maree, et al., 2016). Assessing the interpretation of multiple perspectives from an ontological position, the researcher looked at a metatheoretical position which involves telling a story (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). During this study, the participant's responses when grouped together form a comprehensive story based on their personal perception from daily experiences.

The methodology is what creates a bridge between customer knowledge and the reality of helping plastic pollution debris. Since the aim of interpretivists is to gain an in-depth understanding through interviews of multiple realities, this research will follow qualitative research. Qualitative advocates the ability to gather insightful comprehensive information that is gathered from current customers as it focuses on the opinion and perception of customers.

Axiology is another position that describes what an interpretivist study values, in this case, the value is how the researcher views the uniqueness of each customer opinion of FMCG sustainability involvement (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

3.2 Design:

The research design of the proposed study will be utilising a qualitative methodology to collect the data through in-depth interviews, with open-ended questions to gain a detailed understanding of how current KwaZulu-Natal customers perceive FMCGs' sustainability involvement in minimising plastic pollution (Maree, 2016). Qualitative methods are facilitated by interpretivist paradigms as it deals with underlying meanings (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014, p. 173). A qualitative study allowed the researcher to gain subjective experiences from a smaller sample for the benefit of an in-depth description of the phenomenon (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

This study followed a cross-sectional design for the duration of the research conducted in 2018, to create an overall picture at one point in time (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The data was collected once from each participant with no repeat collections. A cross-sectional design was a feasible option as the researcher is an Honours student with time constraints, in addition contributing to the aim of interpretivism. To gain an in-depth understanding of customer perceptions, a descriptive design was followed. This design aimed to describe the responses from participants as descriptions provided are dependent on participant's perceptions or inclinations.

The type of reasoning used to describe this phenomenon is deductive in nature as the themes gathered from the results will be linked to the theoretical framework of the stakeholder theory and relating concepts: sustainability and CSR (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The deductive approach is based on literature such as the stakeholder theory and relating concepts of CSR and extracts concepts that could be applied to the proposed study to interpret customer responses within South Africa (Freeman 1984) and (Carroll 1991).

3.3 Research Population:

The population is defined as the total group of entities that information is required from (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). It is necessary for the researcher to identify the population parameters that guide the study and the sample of the population (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The population is identified as customers who are actively involved in purchasing from retail stores that FMCGs distribute to. Ethically, participants must be over the age of 18 to be interviewed. This implies to both men and women. South Africa has a diverse population, thus the study will include all races to give a general representation of South African consumer perceptions.

The target population is all South African retail shoppers, any age, gender or race, whereas the accessible population is people within Durban that will be chosen to be interviewed. The accessible population is accessible to this study as the researcher is located in KwaZulu-Natal and is unable to travel to different provinces across the country to interview current customers as there are time and financial constraints. This will be discussed further under Limitations. The population will be accessible to the research by using convenience non-probability sampling (Maree, 2016).

3.4 Research Sampling:

The unit of analysis in the proposed study are people's responses, as verbal responses provide a far more in-depth perception and information than gathering written documents.

A sample is known as a subset of the population (Maree, 2016). For the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of customer perceptions, the study followed a non-probability method as the researcher conducted qualitative research. Non-probability is a useful sampling method due to the researcher's time constraints, limited financial resources and the difficulty to access the entire population of Durban (Maree, 2016).

3.4.1 Sampling method:

For the purpose of this study and to gain an in-depth understanding of customer perceptions, the study follows a non-probability method. Convenience non-probability sampling was selected because the study is a general representation of Durban's population. Convenience sampling is useful when the researcher is interested in gathering inexpensive approximation of the truth (Maree, 2016). The researcher interviewed random people located within similar localities.

3.4.2 Sampling Size:

Maree (2016) explains the importance for a sample to be drawn in a way that is valid to generalise the results of the population. For the purpose of this study, the researcher randomly selected individuals who were willing to be interviewed, between the ages of 25 and 60 of different genders and race to achieve a demographic representation. Based on time and resource constraints, a sample of seven volunteers was adequate as it provided comprehensive and trustworthiness in the responses for interpretation. However, it was crucial the researcher ensured the questions asked were encouraging, elaborate and detailed. Based on previous studies analysed in the literature review, the sample will gather in-depth information rather than conducted quantitatively through online surveys.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher conducted a pre-test before interviewing the remaining sample to ensure correctness, flow and trustworthiness. The participant of the pre-test was not asked to participate again for the actual study. Conducting a pre-test allowed the researcher to improve or remove questions that did not work or were difficult to understand (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Qualitative Data collection utilised for the purpose of this research study was seven one-on-one in-depth interviews through the use of open-ended questions. Utilising an interviewing setting allowed for more elaborative conversations as it created a safe space for the participants to be open to the questions and feel comfortable when answering. This provided the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions, experiences and attitudes on FMCGs' sustainability involvement (Maree, 2016, p. 96). Interviews conducted took between 20 and 30 minutes per participant.

The researcher had to discuss the topic of the study and explain FMCG to each participant so they had a clear understanding, to build familiarity and make everyone feel comfortable when responding. This study contributes to the plastic pollution debris by accentuating the relationship between a company and its stakeholders during the sustainability process. Interviews were recorded with permission from the participants, as the questions asked were qualitative in nature and the researcher wanted thorough and detailed responses. Audio recording assisted the researcher to transcribe and analyse the findings and ensure all detailed information was gathered. Refer to Appendix F for an example and description of the participant consent forms.

Questions were designed to address the research objectives and research problem. Please refer to Appendix D for an example of the questionnaire provided. Below are two examples from the questionnaire to illustrate the qualitative nature of the study:

Based on your knowledge, can you describe to me how FMCG companies in Durban are trying to minimise plastic pollution? This question forms the foundation of the project answering the main question of the study, indicating whether people are aware of FMCGs' involvement.

Please explain to me your degree of loyalty towards an FMCG company actively engaging in sustainability practices in minimising plastic pollution? This question relates to research objective two i.e. to understand FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing the use of plastic would enhance customer loyalty.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

Analysing the data is one of the most important steps in conducting a research study, as it helps make sense of the data and converts it into relevant information that could be used in further research (Maree, 2016). A deductive, qualitative content analysis was ordered to structure and collect the data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). A thematic content analysis was utilised to identify the unique themes that emerged from segmenting and reconstructing the data collected (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The qualitative content analysis is defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p.191). A content analysis is most beneficial with a qualitative and descriptive study (Maree, 2016). Therefore, this analysis was utilised as it provides detailed insight into complex views of customers by looking at their responses to the questions (Maree, 2016). The researcher followed eight steps to prepare the data in order to be able to interpret the report from the relative participants (Maree, 2016). By following the steps, the researcher is able to focus on the key concepts found as it narrows the information down by coding the data.

Step 1: Involved preparing the data to easily locate the information. The researcher then transcribed the audio recorded interviews. Participants were referred to as participant 1, 2, 3 and so on to ensure confidentiality.

Step 2: This step involved defining the coding unit which can be defined as phrases, words and sentences that are grouped according to the participant responses. This allowed the researcher to organise the data into manageable sections (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Step 3: Entailed developing categories and a coding scheme or conceptual framework. Each code and theme is defined clearly and systematically so that it can be applied to the text as consistently as possible. The codes had to be exhaustive, mutually exclusive and specific (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p.238). For this study a prior coding was followed as codes were established before analysing the data, for example, stakeholder engagement, corporate social responsibility and sustainability management as indicated by the literature review themes.

Step 4: Consisted of testing the coding scheme on a sample text with a participant to ensure the consistency with the coding.

Step 5: This step consisted of coding all text by highlighting relevant ideas. The coding utilised in the study is thematic coding. The process consisted of reducing the data by means of identifying the themes. These themes are derived from the themes in the literature review. The data was identified, isolated and contextualised to inform the research question based on the conceptual framework (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p.241)

Step 6: Involved assessing the consistency of the coding so that nothing was left incomplete. This study required thorough attention to the coding and analysis stage to receive the most optimal results as this study is based on a very relevant issue that society is presented with.

Step 7: Included drawing conclusions by interpreting findings from identified categories (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p.242). The information gathered is based on participants' perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability efforts in reducing the use of plastic to contribute towards helping the environment and for a future sustainable living.

Step 8: This final step focused on reporting the findings based on the perceptions of people using the stakeholder theory and relating core concepts that FMCGs need to involve their customers more within their sustainability efforts, especially regarding plastic pollution.

This section provides an overview of how the researcher assessed the qualitative research approach and the process utilised to collect and analyse the findings to ensure the trustworthiness of results.

4. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Assessing the trustworthiness of the study is of the utmost importance in qualitative research (Maree 2016). (Lincoln and Guba 1985) cited from Du-Plooy (2014) explains that trustworthiness in qualitative research is divided into four sections – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the accuracy with which the researcher interpreted the data that was provided by the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). To enhance credibility, the researcher interacted with the participants before the interview to create a warm and inviting environment so that the participants felt relaxed and comfortable when answering the questions. Credibility was further enhanced through the development of prior familiarity due to participants and researcher occupying similar localities. Credibility was enhanced by providing in-depth descriptions of customer perspectives (Maree 2016).

Transferability is the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation and delivering similar results (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This means that as the study utilised in-depth interviews, and the personal interview questions were made explicitly available, other researchers could reproduce the study with a similar sample and receive similar results (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). To increase transferability, the participants were randomly selected as the researcher wanted raw perceptions and opinions of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher provided in-depth descriptions on research context, participants and research design for a complete understanding of customers' perceptions of FMCGs as an illustrative example for other organisations to consider (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Dependability refers to the quality of the process of integration that takes place between the data collection method, data analysis and the theory generated from the data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The researcher demonstrated dependability by demonstrating an understanding and detailed discussion of research design, collection, analysis and reflective appraisal.

The researcher utilised qualitative thematic analysis in the study and the data is available for any concerns regarding dependability so that another researcher is able to understand the decisions, analysis and interpretation and conduct follow-up studies with the same method (Maree 2016).

Confirmability refers to how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Confirmability is the process of ensuring the findings are shaped by the customer's responses and not according to the researcher's bias interests. To ensure a non-bias influence the researcher disclosed before the interview that he/she cannot include their input as it may have an influence on their perception. Therefore, to improve confirmability the researcher attempted to maintain a professional relationship with the participants and reproduced a large number of quotas in the analysis to allow a reader to decide their own interpretation and understanding of the responses (Maree 2016). The researcher also ensured the content of the questionnaires did not involve any leading or bias questions to ensure confirmability.

In conclusion, the above section interpreted the trustworthiness of the study based on the findings from the in-depth interviews according to four sections.

5. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The thematic analysis process applied to the transcripts stimulated key concepts that were evident in the data. These themes are viewed as essential in determining the understandings of all the participants. The themes have been presented as: consumers perceive plastic as cheap and convenient, FMCGs are more concerned about profit and affordability. Sub-themes under stakeholders have been presented as knowledge through awareness, customers' buying behaviour and the key to sustainability is marketing. The themes identified to illustrate the core concepts of the findings within the study and are in line with the overall research question and objectives such as to describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution (Mojtaba Vaismoradi, 2016).

Theme 1

Consumers perceive plastic as cheap and convenient

Theme one illustrates the perceptions of participants' understanding of plastic and the role plastic packaging has within society. This theme relates to the research objective one; to describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution and answers question one and two of the questionnaire.

Question 1: Please can you describe your views on plastic pollution?

Figure 1: Above is a Word cloud illustrating the words participants used to describe their understanding of plastic pollution.

Table 1:

Question 2: What is your understanding of the role of plastic packaging within FMCG companies?	
Participant 1: P1	Stated that because society has a fast lifestyle, everyone wants something quick, therefore products are packaged in plastic. Society is dependent on plastic and we cannot actually do anything without it. Plastic is a fundamental part of our life.
Participant 2: P2	Stated that the cost to produce plastic is cheaper for companies and it comes down to offering products that are convenient for the consumer.
Participant 3: P3	Stated that plastic is a cheap commodity and a cheap way for FMCG companies to produce, so to use glass or other types of materials, people would, therefore, have to pay more for the product.

Questions one and two were an introduction to the topic. Participants indicate they are highly aware of the plastic pollution problem (see figure 1). Participants expressed negative perceptions of plastic because it is a non-biodegradable substance harming the environment and companies will continue to produce plastic packaging because it is cheap to produce in bulk and fulfills society's fast lifestyle of convenience as stated by P1 and P3. For example, customers would need to rather pick fruit instead of purchasing pre-packed goods which could be seen as time consuming. Plastic is a lightweight, durable and cheap commodity while recyclable materials such as glass would not fulfill the same roles, supported by P3. More so, more sustainable products would result in consumers' paying a higher price which is discussed in the theme Affordability. This theme illustrates awareness and understanding of plastic pollution and the relationship with FMCGs.

Table 2: Theme 2

<u>FMCGs is more concerned about profit</u>

This theme is an overall perception of participants, and relates to the research objective one; to describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution.

Figure 2: A Word Cloud illustrating the words participants used to describe FMCGs.

Participant 1: P1	Stated that FMCG companies are very profit driven. They have to put more money into sustainability and every company that makes products in plastic has to get on board.
Participant 2: P2	Stated that FMCG companies need to put more money into helping the plastic pollution issue, for example, help clean up the landfills and collect items that can be reused. FMCG companies profit is not spent on solving the problem.
Participant 3: P3	Stated they don't need to buy fruit that is pre-packed in a plastic bag. It is just there to make money.

Participants perceive FMCGs to be unsustainable as they felt they are only focused on making money instead of contributing sufficiently to CSR activities resulting in a negative corporate reputation. We found similar findings in Visser's (2010) study where modern companies CSR strategies have failed in the Age of Greed. A negative corporate reputation discussed by Fourie (2014) is the absence of communication and engagement with the company's stakeholders. This theme explains that companies remain focused on making a profit discussed by Friedman (1970) 'organisations' only responsibility is to make a profit' than finding a balance between people, profit and planet. Thus, sustainability needs to be embedded within the corporate culture of the organisation for superior performance (Gupta, 2013).

Theme 3

<u>Affordability</u>

This theme relates to the research objective one; to describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution.

Figure 3: A Word Cloud illustrating the perceptions of participants, describing the theme of affordability

Table 3

Question 8: How could FMCGs play a role in motivating consumers to assist in reducing the use of plastic?	
Participant 1: P1	Stated that if FMCGs tell people they are going to save money by not using plastic, people will purchase from them.
Participant 2: P2	Stated to make sustainability products cheaper so that people can afford to buy the more sustainable product.
Participant 3: P3	Stated they won't go to the shop if they are sustainable but more expensive.
Participant 4: P4	Stated someone living within the lower income bracket is not going to make a more sustainable choice because they cannot afford to.

The price of a product is one of the most important factors of consumers' willingness to buy (David Ackah, 2016). This theme exemplifies objective one: participants perceive sustainable products to be more expensive as stated by P3. Consequently, affordability and cost are strong motivating factors for consumers when making sustainable purchasing decisions. Consumer reactions' regarding the price of the sustainable product shows sensitivity, illustrating a perception of financial risk as demonstrated in Orzan's (2018) study. Studies in Romania found 48% of people did not purchase ecological products due to a low budget. Participants believe if FMCGs makes sustainable products cheaper, people will purchase those products, indicating a strong relationship between sustainability and cost. Engaging stakeholders' core motivations is a prerequisite to really changing ingrained habits or practices (Richards 2017). P4 identified the variation between higher and lower income groups. According to research by Gani (2017), higher income groups are more willing to purchase sustainable products at a greater price than lower income groups due to affordability.

Theme 4: Stakeholder Engagement

Theme four analyses sub-themes of the stakeholder theory, which is the core theory to this study.

Theme 4.1

<u>Knowledge through awareness:</u>

This theme relates to research objective one and questions 3, 5 and 7 of the questionnaire.

Figure 4 is speech bubbles illustrating customer perceptions on the awareness of FMCGs involvement.

Table 4:

Question 3: Based on your knowledge, can you describe to me how FMCG companies in Durban are trying to minimise plastic pollution? ***Question 5:*** Can you explain any branding or marketing activities you have witnessed conducted by FMCGs to increase customer awareness of their efforts in reducing the use of plastic? ***Question 7:*** Based on your knowledge, please can you explain how FMCGs could involve their customers more to minimise plastic pollution?	
Participant 1: P1	Stated that he/she had not seen any sustainability activities made by FMCGs.
Participant 2: P2	Stated that they were only aware of Company A who were selling long-use bags.
Participant 3: P3	Stated its too subtle for them to see
Participant 4: P4	Stated a lot more visible collecting of plastic waste from FMCGs. Get consumers to bring plastic waste from previous purchases to deposit at the retailer so that consumers know FMCGs are involved. Providing bottles and bags so that consumers can refill rather than repurchase. Something consumers can visibly see so they know FMCG's are trying to help.
Participant 5: P5	Stated FMCGs need to get involved by educating millennials; they are the ones going to make the change. FMCG companies need to do more advertising in the press and do more school drives.
Participant 6: P6	Stated to run campaigns and advertise them so that people notice.

Theme 4.1 identifies an important finding to the study illustrating stakeholder awareness and the significance of creating knowledge through awareness. Participants perceive FMCGs to have little or no involvement in reducing plastic pollution as a result of an absence of stakeholder awareness of FMCGs' current sustainable efforts. Participants demonstrate awareness surrounding retailer's involvements such as changing from plastic to paper bags and restaurants excluding plastic straws. P3 expresses how plastic pollution campaigns need to be as effective as animal cruelty campaigns to try shock the public into awareness (Richards, 2016). Consequently, participants expressed FMCGs need to create more awareness of their sustainability efforts through campaigns and events by involving customers more stated by P4. Findings by Hassan, (2016) and Visser (2010) explain without awareness strategies, customers can perceive companies sustainability activities as false or fabricated and only to enhance the brand image otherwise known as

greenwashing. FMCGs must commit to long-term CSR strategies as it can be seen as driven by genuine concern for increasing society welfare. Furthermore, awareness campaigns lead to social learning about the problem and ultimately changes consumer behaviour (Richards, 2016).

Theme 4.2

<u>Customers' buying behaviour:</u>

This theme relates to research objective two; to describe, if FMCGs' plastic pollution efforts affect customer loyalty and question nine and ten of the questionnaire.

Figure 5 is a Word Cloud illustrating words consumers used to describe their loyalty to sustainable companies.

Table 5:

Question 9: Please explain to me your degree of loyalty towards an FMCG company actively engaging in sustainability practices in minimising plastic pollution? **Question 10**: Please describe if the plastic problem has influenced your purchasing decisions from FMCG companies?	
Participant 1: P1	Stated that he/she was a very strong supporter of Company A because they are so open about how much they are doing.
Participant 2: P2	Stated that they would make an extra effort to shop at a store knowing they are more sustainable because they are so conscious about plastic pollution.
Participant 3: P3	Stated that they will always buy the more sustainable product first. It is a conscious choice to buy products that are biodegradable.

Participant 4: P4	Stated that it depends on the day and what they have to do to go shop at a store they know is more sustainable. It comes down to convenience, so it would not be the first option.
Participant 5: P5	Stated they don't make a point of going to certain shops because they don't know any sustainable company's.

Views in this theme are varied and contradictory to findings in the literature review. Participants P1, P2 and P3 illustrated a change in purchasing behaviour in the consumption of sustainable products. These participants explained they support certain companies because they know they are actively involved in sustainability. It is perceived that organisations fully investing in sustainability reap tremendous benefits such as enhanced corporate reputation and customer loyalty substantiating the link between stakeholder engagement and sustainability (Friedman 2017). Participants are willing to purchase products they know will contribute to helping the environment no matter the price (Orzan, 2016). This finding is contradictory to findings by Ackah (2016) and participants within this study. Greek consumer perceptions were not affected by business ethics (David Ackah, 2016). Orzan (2018) study shows that people are aware of the effect plastic has on the environment, however, it does not necessarily translate into real buying behaviour as a result found in this study; affordability and convenience. P4 and P5 indicate no change in behaviour, as purchasing responsibly is often seen as a time-consuming action shown by P4, economically unfavourable and stressful. Moreover, P5 illustrates the link between stakeholder awareness and customer loyalty. If consumers are not aware of a company's' sustainability efforts, they cannot support these strategies. Moisescu (2018) study explains that companies can enhance their customer loyalty by actively communicating and disclosing their sustainability policies.

Table 6: Theme 4.4

The key to sustainability is marketing:

Theme 4.4 relates to research objective one: to describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution and question eleven of the questionnaire.

Figure 5 Word Cloud illustrating customer suggestions for FMCGs

Question 11: In your opinion, what could FMCG companies do more of towards minimising plastic packaging pollution?	
Participant 1: P1	Suggested to start boycotting FMCGs' products and forcing them to change. He/she explains how strong the animal campaigns are regarding animal testing. People are not reminded enough of the plastic issue and it needs to be a similar concept to the animal testing campaign.
Participant 2: P2	Suggested FMCGs need to do more advertising at the point of sale. He/she explains to advertise the sale around making an impact, for example displaying signs that the company is trying to use less plastic.
Participant 3: P3	Suggested FMCGs should have more signage showing the effects plastic pollution has on the environment, some people don't see how harmful plastic is.
Participant 4: P4	Suggested FMCGs to package products less. Don't over design the product. Participant gave an example of a purchased plastic butter container that went into the dishwasher and lasted up to one year.

Participant 5: P5	Suggested FMCGs need to do more research on how to reuse and degrade plastic instead of just changing to paper.
Participant 6: P6	Suggested that FMCGs could offer an incentive to consumers who make the effort to return plastic waste like cash backs or reward systems.

Fourie (2014) describes that taking into consideration stakeholder views and perspectives can fuel a company's sustainability innovations. The final question posed to the participants was a way to discover any suggestions or ideas participants may have concerning FMCGs' involvement. Overall findings suggest that effective marketing strategies should be put in place to inform consumers on FMCGs' efforts in reducing plastic pollution as well as to continuously remind people of the effects plastic has to the environment in order to change behaviour. P4 and P5 explain that companies need to find more biodegradable options rather than changing to paper. P4's example substantiates plastics durable composition.

P1 discusses similar findings to Richards' (2018) study that 'plastic pollution' campaigns need to be as effective as anti-smoking campaigns to try shock the public into awareness. P6 relates to theme three (affordability), if companies offer incentives and cash backs as a reward system when gathering plastic waste, people would be more willing.

Overall Interpretation:

The results detailed above highlight some important findings as to how customers perceive FMCGs' sustainability efforts in reducing plastic pollution. It is particularly clear that consumers are aware of the plastic pollution issue, however, indicate they are unaware or have a poor perception of FMCGs' sustainability contribution regarding the issue. Participants expressed a moderate understanding of the implications of plastic pollution as stipulated through the word cloud in theme 1 and expressed in relation to companies, plastic as a cheap and convenient commodity. Interestingly, participants perceive FMCGs to be completely unsustainable and remain focused on making a profit rather than finding a balance between people, profit and planet affecting their brand image.

Furthermore, cost and affordability are key motivating factors during behaving sustainably and contributing to changes in consumer behaviour. We can say here that some participants make conscious choices to purchase sustainable products when given the option, regardless of the price. However, more often, price, time and convenience dissuade consumers from making sustainable decisions. More so, cash-backs and incentives will motivate consumers to become more involved.

Another interesting finding participant identified, creating awareness will enhance individual knowledge, as discussed in Richards' (2018) study that companies play a key role in creating awareness on environmental issues which can lead to social learning about the problem. Thus, if society is more knowledgeable about FMCGs plastic pollution involvement, customers will not perceive their sustainability involvements as gimmicks or greenwashing.

From the findings, we can depict that the themes identified affect one another, for example, the absence of stakeholder engagement by FMCGs results in the absence of stakeholder awareness, no change in customer behaviour and a negative corporate reputation.

A key finding within this theme from customer perspectives is the need for FMCGs to implement stronger marketing campaigns and focus on affordability and convenience as motivating factors to encourage consumers to change their purchasing behaviours. The participant responses have helped answer the research question and objectives which are discussed in the next section.

The responses had been insightful and have highlighted the key factors of their perceptions of FMCGs' participation in reducing plastic pollution.

6. CONCLUSION

In this section, the appropriate conclusions to address the research objectives, questions and research problem are made. The implications of the findings have been assessed with ethical considerations and limitations. The anticipated contribution was offered as well as the recommendations for future research to develop deeper knowledge.

6.1 Research Objectives and Questions Analysed

The following section will address each research objective and research question.

Research Question 1:

How do customers perceive Durban FMCGs' involvement in reducing plastic pollution?

Research Objective 1:

To describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution

The problem of this study, as mentioned in the literature review, research pertaining to customer perceptions of FMCGs in Durban is under-researched as no such studies particularly included customer perceptions of FMCGs' plastic pollution involvements. In response to this limitation, research question one and objective one were designed. To address this, certain questions were centred on key concepts such as stakeholder engagement, sustainability and CSR. Themes such as consumers perceive plastic as cheap and convenient, FMCGs are more profit-driven, affordability, knowledge through awareness and the key to sustainability is marketing developed. The stakeholder theory identified in the theoretical foundation provided a useful framework to identify customer perceptions. The theory emphasises stakeholder management by incorporating stakeholders' interest in the operational decision making of sustainability. It is evident from the findings; customers have not experienced marketing or awareness strategies by FMCGs on its sustainability involvement in reducing the use of plastic. As a result, customers perceive FMCGs to have little or no involvement in helping the problem and are focused primarily on making money than contributing to CSR initiatives.

Furthermore, customers perceive sustainable products to be more expensive than traditional products and to change consumer behaviour among lower and higher income groups, sustainable products need to be at an affordable price.

Research Sub-Question 1.2:

How do customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability efforts in minimising the use of plastic influence their brand loyalty?

Research Sub- Objective 1.2:

To gain an in-depth understanding on the influence of customer perceptions of FMCGs' plastic pollution involvement and how it affects brand loyalty.

Research sub-question was answered in interview questions nine and ten and the theme of a moderate change in customers buying behaviour formulated. More individuals are deciding their corporate loyalties on how organisations are positively impacting their community (Fourie 2014). The results were mixed as participants who displayed knowledge of the company's sustainability efforts depicted a change in behaviour and they were willing to pay more for an environmentally-friendly product supporting Orzan's (2018) study. These participants also explained they were very cautious about making sustainable choices; they recycled at home and brought their own shopping bags. On the other hand, time, travel, cost and convenience were characteristics that other participants explained prevented them from making more sustainable choices. Moreover, customer loyalty links strongly to stakeholder awareness as customers mentioned they 'did not have any' particular store they knew of that was making a contributing effort and therefore would not go out their way to shop at that store. As a result, participants' perception of a company's sustainability efforts does affect brand loyalty. Similar findings apply to Moisescu (2018) study. Perceptions can be altered through continuous stakeholder engagement and involvement by FMCGs so that customers can visibly see the efforts being made.

6.2 Research Problem Addressed

The research problem identified in the study is FMCGs are not adequately involved in sustainability initiatives to help reduce the use of plastic and contribute to solving the plastic pollution issue. With this being said, FMCGs are failing to effectively involve their customers during their sustainable efforts, “I have not seen any sustainability activities made by FMCGs”. Fourie (2014) states that consumers play a critical role in an organisations’ CSR and sustainability decisions and effective stakeholder engagement can contribute to successful sustainable implementation. Therefore, it is crucial to include stakeholders during this process as participants demonstrated an interest to get involved in FMCGs’ sustainability initiatives. To address this research problem, the study utilised an in-depth interview approach to develop a thorough understanding of the perceptions of customers on FMCGs’ sustainability efforts.

There are many ways in which FMCGs could get more involved in helping the plastic pollution issue, however, participants expressed that awareness campaigns and advertising are crucial elements during the sustainability process, for example, offering refill bags, bottles and recycle boxes where consumers can visibly see the companies involvements. Findings within this study illustrate the absence of awareness in FMCGs involvement has contributed to a poor brand image, “FMCG companies are very profit driven” and low customer loyalty. However, certain participants revealed a positive relationship between sustainability and customer loyalty as they would make extra efforts for companies engaging in sustainability principles. Furthermore, participants expressed affordability and convenience would encourage lower and higher income groups to purchase sustainable products effectively contributing to changing consumer behaviour.

6.3 Ethical Considerations

6.3.1 Participants:

The researcher made it clear the participants were participating in a study, therefore consent forms and audio recording forms were given to sign (please refer to Appendices E for examples of consent forms). With the use of a qualitative questionnaire, the researcher ensured confidentiality that only the researcher and supervisor were able to match the identities and personal information of the participants to their responses during the interview (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). To ensure confidentiality of the audio recording, the researcher referred to participants as 1, 2, 3,4,5,6 and 7. The recordings, together with the data collected, will be kept in a password protected file by the researcher for five years to ensure evidence can be provided at any request.

The researcher provided each participant with a muffin as a thank you for their participation and time and discussed the interview process in detail. The researcher went to the participant's home as this was a safe and comfortable environment for the participant and avoids putting anyone in harm or at risk. The methodology was disclosed as well as explicitly explaining the purpose of the study and its contribution to the participants to uphold their honesty and avoid any form of deception (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

6.3.2 Researcher:

The researcher maintained a professional composition during the interview process by discussing the purpose of the study, explaining the procedure and being open to any questions or concerns they may have and thanking participants. To avoid biasness of the participants and ultimately affecting the results of the in-depth quotas in the analysis, the researcher ensured the participants were aware they were ethically accountable and honest in disclosing information in a transparent manner and to uphold their honesty. The audio recording and transcriptions can be used as evidence if there were any concerns about falsifying or distorting results as the audio recordings can prove they did not occur during the data analysis.

The data collected from the study was utilised for the sole purpose of the study together with providing customers and organisations with the knowledge of consumer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution and as a contribution to society's knowledge of companies' involvement in helping to reduce plastic debris. The researcher did not exploit information or use harmful or unsuited research methods by following the procedure stipulated in the data collection (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher familiarised themselves with the ethical guidelines and methodologies of the IIE Research and Postgraduate Studies Policy (Education, 2016).

6.4 Limitations of the study

The first limitation the researcher encountered was the limited time which restricted the amount of information collected as the study had to be completed by a specified date. Consequently, the researcher had to pay close attention to responses to extract sufficient information. Another limitation was due to limited resources and insufficient funds the researcher could not afford to pay a scribe or coder to assist during the interviews.

A further limitation the researcher encountered was the sample size, even though interviewing seven participants is a good minimum at an honours level. To gather a true body of knowledge on customer perceptions at least 10 participants should be interviewed. However, at this novice level, interviewing seven participants was enough to gain an in-depth understanding and a variety of responses which provided sufficient information. Although having a smaller sample, the researcher ensured all questions included were open-ended and also probed participants to explain or elaborate responses. Another limitation was the researcher utilised convenient sampling and interviewed participants living in the same neighbourhood. Thus, participants responded with similar examples from the experiences they had encountered. To address this issue, the participants were randomly selected and the researcher had no prior relationship which maintained the results of the study. Furthermore, the researcher remained quiet during explanations from participants to avoid bias results.

6.5 Anticipated Contribution

The most important contribution of this study is providing society and companies with an in-depth understanding of market perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvements in reducing plastic pollution. This study contributes to the plastic pollution debate in creating awareness surrounding the severity of the issue and the negative implications it has on the environment. It illustrates that organisations such as FMCGs play a large role in the production of plastic and they have a social responsibility to ensure their operations do not impact on the environment. The study illustrates that customers perceive FMCGs to be unsustainable and not involved in minimising the plastic pollution problem. The findings contribute to creating a statement by influencing FMCGs and relating companies to become more involved within the community in solving the problem.

6.6 Recommendations for Future Research

The following are potential recommendations for future research.

Not many studies on the plastic pollution issue are conducted in South Africa, thus I encourage more studies on the plastic pollution debate. Plastic pollution has become one of the most heated topics of the 21st century and further research could contribute to more awareness about it.

This study only interviewed seven participants, thus a larger sample could strengthen the results and provide a greater understanding of customer perceptions. A larger sample could provide more sufficient results in understanding if South African consumers are willing to change their purchasing behaviours. More so, further research could focus on higher and lower income groups in South Africa and determine if lower-income consumers are willing to purchase sustainable products.

A further study could be conducted to investigate the contribution of South African FMCGs' sustainability efforts in reducing the plastic pollution problem to make society aware of their involvement.

Furthermore, a study could focus on a certain FMCG company such as Nestle or a related company in South Africa to gather in-depth knowledge on their involvement and efforts in reducing the plastic pollution issue.

7. CLOSING STATEMENT

In conclusion, the research study aimed to describe customers' perceptions of FMCGs' involvement in minimising plastic pollution within South Africa. The qualitative nature of the study provided an in-depth analysis of findings collected from in-depth interviews. The purpose of the study was to provide society and companies with market perceptions based on Durban's FMCGs' sustainability efforts in reducing plastic pollution. The stakeholder theory and relating core concepts of sustainability management and CSR was an effective framework strategy. In response to how participants perceived FMCGs' plastic pollution involvement, a participant stated: "A strong no, in terms of their profits- I don't think they are doing enough as they should be." This statement effectively summarises how participants included in the sample perceived FMCGs' plastic pollution involvement as they perceived FMCGs to be unsustainable and making no effort to solve the problem. A key problem that could be addressed by FMCGs is to effectively involve and engage with their stakeholders during their sustainability activities as stakeholder feedback helps companies understand their social and environmental impacts and sustainability risks. Including stakeholder perceptions can spur creative thinking and innovative solutions to reducing the plastic pollution problem.

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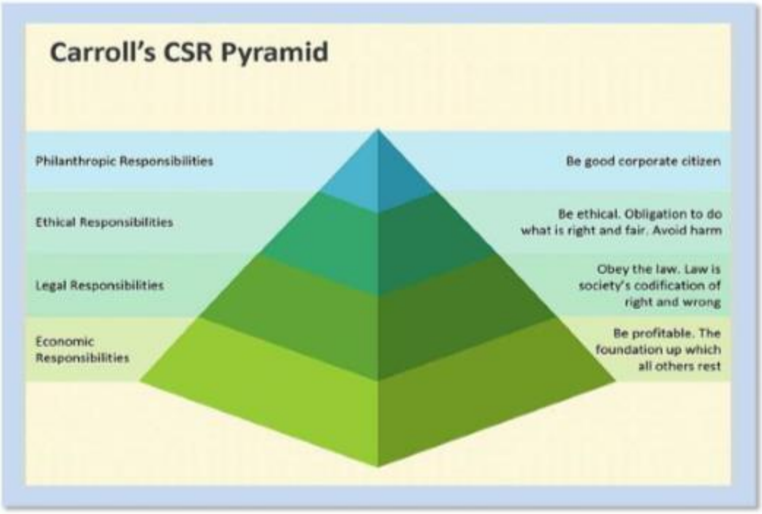
APPENDICES:

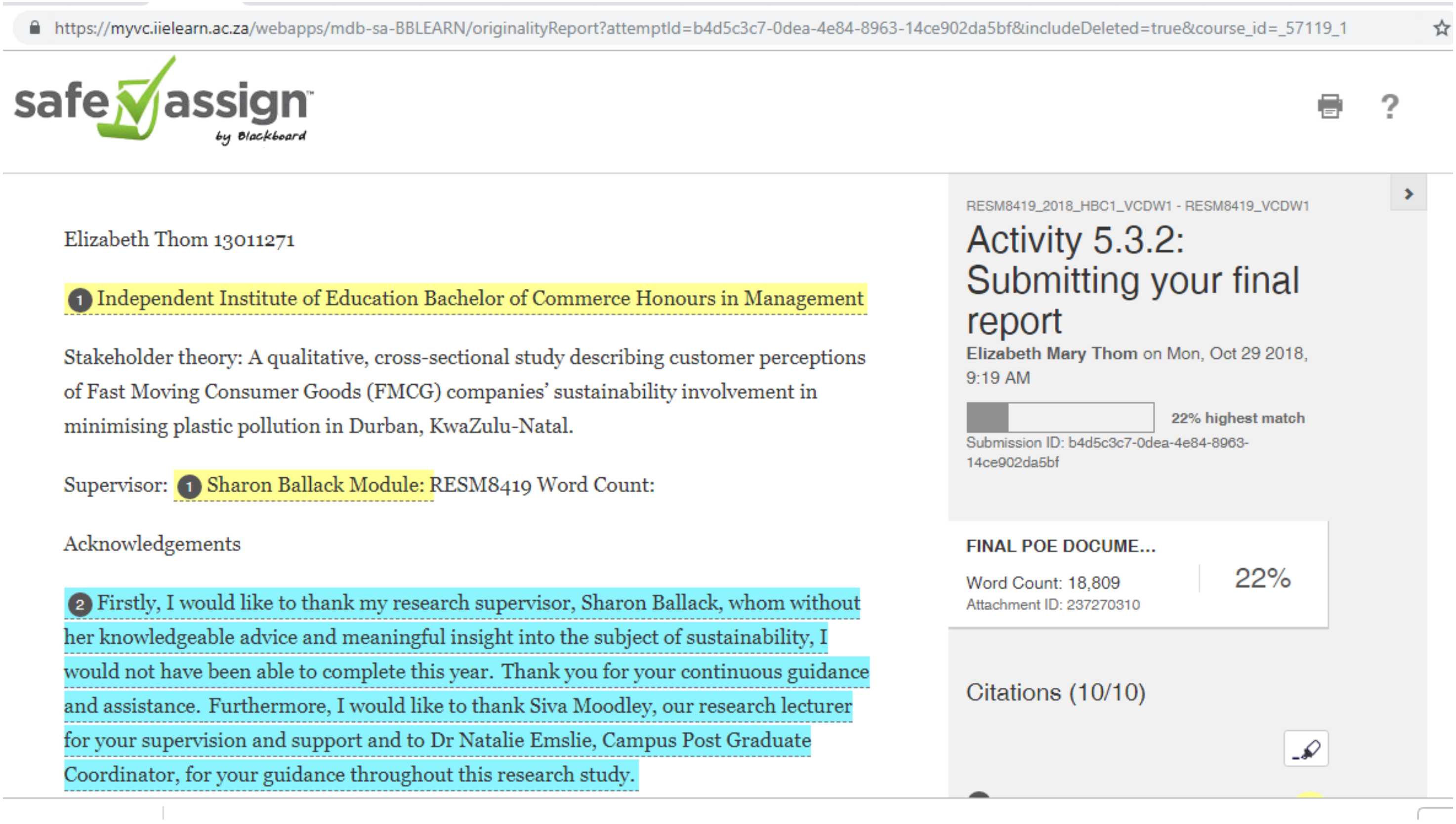
Appendix A: Archie Carroll (1991) CSR Pyramid



Source: *Carroll (1991)*

Source: *The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders* (1991)

Appendix B: Safe Assign screenshot of originality



https://myvc.iielearn.ac.za/webapps/mdb-sa-BBLEARN/originalityReport?attemptId=b4d5c3c7-0dea-4e84-8963-14ce902da5bf&includeDeleted=true&course_id=_57119_1

safe assign by Blackboard

Elizabeth Thom 13011271

1 Independent Institute of Education Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Management

Stakeholder theory: A qualitative, cross-sectional study describing customer perceptions of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies' sustainability involvement in minimising plastic pollution in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

Supervisor: 1 Sharon Ballack Module: RESM8419 Word Count:

Acknowledgements

2 Firstly, I would like to thank my research supervisor, Sharon Ballack, whom without her knowledgeable advice and meaningful insight into the subject of sustainability, I would not have been able to complete this year. Thank you for your continuous guidance and assistance. Furthermore, I would like to thank Siva Moodley, our research lecturer for your supervision and support and to Dr Natalie Emslie, Campus Post Graduate Coordinator, for your guidance throughout this research study.

RESM8419_2018_HBC1_VCDW1 - RESM8419_VCDW1

Activity 5.3.2: Submitting your final report

Elizabeth Mary Thom on Mon, Oct 29 2018, 9:19 AM

22% highest match

Submission ID: b4d5c3c7-0dea-4e84-8963-14ce902da5bf

FINAL POE DOCUME...

Word Count: 18,809

Attachment ID: 237270310

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Citations (10/10)

Appendix C: *Stakeholder theory: A qualitative, cross sectional study describing customer perceptions of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies' sustainability involvement in minimising plastic pollution in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.*

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Lit Review Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
Why do you want to do the study? A foundation for driving plastic pollution and future sustainability initiatives as it encompasses the importance of engaging with stakeholders during the sustainability process. *What do you want to achieve?* To create a statement about how FMCGs have failed to engage with their customers during their sustainability efforts.	*What is the main question you want to answer?* How do customers perceive Durban FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution?	*Why is this study important?* Research has shown that only 16% of plastic waste is recycled. Globally, 8 million metric tons of plastic is dumped into the ocean each year harming the ecosystem. Understanding customer perceptions on FMCGs involvement could help create a statement by encouraging companies to become more involved with the community in helping the problem. *Why do you believe this research is worth conducting?* Plastic pollution is a relevant and heated topic within the 21st century. How society responds to it today will depict our future.	*Who are the seminal authors on the topic?* R Edward Freeman (1984) Archie Carroll (1991)	Theme 1: Stakeholder Engagement Theme 2: Sustainability management Theme 3: Corporate social responsibility Theme 4: plastic pollution Theme 5: Customer perceptions	Paradigm: Interpretivism- interpreting consumer perceptions on FMCGs sustainability involvements Epistemology: It is the ability to discover and interpret different meanings. The research conducted will provide a general conception of customer perceptions of FMCG companies within South Africa Ontology: customer perceptions will be varied according to their experiences in daily living. Axiology value is how the researcher views the uniqueness of each customer opinion on FMCG sustainability involvement	*Qualitative:* qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and meanings associated with the phenomena **Population** Population is identified as customers who are actively involved in purchasing from retail stores that FMCG companies distribute to.	*What tools/ Instruments or methods will you use to collect your data?* In-depth interviews with a series of open ended interviews. Data will be coded and put into themes to analyses.	Consent forms and audio recording forms were given to sign. Participants were referred to as participant 1, 2, 3 to ensure confidentiality. To avoid biasness; ensured the participants were aware they were ethically accountable and honest in disclosing information in a transparent manner and to uphold their honesty	*What do you expect to find?* Customers are unaware of FMCGs sustainability involvement in minimizing plastic pollution.	*What are some of the main sources you will use in your study?* Fourie (2014) Freeman (2014) Archie Carroll (1991) David Ackah's, (2016) Ozcan (2018) Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) Maree (2016)

Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	
What is the problem that you want to solve? Consumers are unaware of FMCGs sustainability involvements in reducing plastic pollution.	*What are the smaller objectives you need to achieve to solve the problem?* 1. To describe customer perceptions of FMCGs' sustainability involvement in reducing plastic pollution. 2. To describe, if FMCGs' plastic pollution efforts affect customer loyalty	*What are the key concepts that you need to conceptualise?* Stakeholder engagement Sustainability management Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) Plastic Plastic Pollution Customer perceptions Stakeholder Management Capability (SMC) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	*What theory or theories will inform the study?* Stakeholder Theory and relating concepts; sustainability and CSR.			In-depth Interviews Non-probability *Sampling method:* Convenience non-probability sampling was selected Random customers were selected Size: seven customers	*Unit of Analysis* *What will you analyse? :* customer perceptions Data Analysis Method(s) deductive, qualitative thematic content analysis	*What are some:* Sample size could be larger to represent the population better. Participants were chosen conveniently-participants gave similar examples as they lived in the same neighborhood	The study illustrates that customers perceive FMCGs to be unsustainable and not involved in minimising the plastic pollution problem. The findings contribute to creating a statement by influencing FMCGs and relating companies to become more involved within the community in solving the problem.	

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Appendix D: Questionnaire Questions:

1. Please can you describe your views on plastic pollution?
2. What is your understanding of the role of plastic packaging within FMCG companies?
3. Based on your knowledge, can you describe to me how FMCG companies in Durban are trying to minimise plastic pollution?
4. In relation to your previous answer, can you explain if you feel their current activities are adequate?
5. Can you explain any branding or marketing activities you have witnessed conducted by FMCGs to increase customer awareness of their efforts in reducing the use of plastic?
6. In your opinion, how could FMCGs create more awareness about their sustainability activities in minimising plastic pollution?
7. Based on your knowledge, please can you explain how FMCGs could involve their customers more to minimise plastic pollution?
8. How could FMCGs play a role in motivating consumers to assist in reducing the use of plastic?
9. Please explain to me your degree of loyalty towards an FMCG company actively engaging in sustainability practices in minimising plastic pollution?
10. Please describe to me if the plastic problem has influenced your purchasing decisions from FMCG companies?
11. In your opinion, what could FMCG companies do more of towards minimising plastic packaging pollution?

Appendix E: Explanatory Sheet

To whom it may concern,

My name is Elizabeth Thom and I am a student at Varsity College Westville. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Sharon Ballack about customer perceptions on FMCGS sustainability involvements in reducing plastic pollution hope that this research will enhance our understanding of plastic pollution debate in creating awareness surrounding the severity of the issue and the negative implications it has on the environment. It illustrates that organisations such as FMCGs play a large role in the production of plastic and they have a social responsibility to ensure their operations do not impact on the environment.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because I feel your perception is valuable. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to ask you a few in-depth questions to gain an in-depth understanding on your perceptions of FMCGs sustainability involvements.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your perception. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;

If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;

Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College Westville will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Bcom Honours in Strategic Management. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

<u>My contact details are as follows:</u> Elizabeth Thom

Cell Number:

Email address:

<u>The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:</u> Sharon Ballack

Cell Number:

Email address:

Appendix F: Consent forms for participants

Consent Form for participant

I, ____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Elizabeth Thom about a study to describe the perceptions of customers about FMCG companies' sustainability initiatives in minimising plastic pollution. This in-depth understanding of customer perceptions will create a foundation for driving plastic pollution and future sustainability initiatives as it encompasses the importance of engaging with stakeholders during the sustainability process.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.

2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.

3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.

4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.

5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, ____, agree to allow Elizabeth Thom to audio record my interviews as part of the research about a study to describe the perceptions of customers about FMCG companies' sustainability initiatives in minimising plastic pollution in Durban, KZN. This in-depth understanding of the motivational factors of volunteers will provide a foundation for driving plastic pollution and future sustainability initiatives as it encompasses the importance of engaging with stakeholders during the sustainability process.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.

2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.

3. Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

Appendix G: Ethical clearance letter

TABLE FIGURES:

Figure 6: Estimated decomposition rates of common marine debris items

Source: *Dpapp.org* (2016)

Figure 7: Examples of FMCG products

Source: Ten Best FMCG companies 2012

Figure 8: Example of a recyclable shampoo bottle

Source: *Dicey*, 2018

Figure 9: Bird Wrapped in Plastic

The photographer took it upon himself to free this stork from a plastic bag at a landfill in Spain

Source: *National Geographic* Jon Lockett (2018)

Figure 10: Turtle found with straw in the nose

Source: *The Telegraph* (Lockhart 2015)