

Norwegian School of Economics

Bergen, Spring, 2023

Managing Cross-Functional Collaboration

*An exploratory case study examining cross-functional
collaboration between sustainability manager and marketing
department*

Mikko Lantto & Alina Makslahti

Supervisors: Vidya Oruganti & Berit Sund

Master's thesis in Economics and Business Administration

Major in Marketing and Brand Management

NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

This thesis was written as a part of the Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration at NHH. Please note that neither the institution nor the examiners are responsible – through the approval of this thesis – for the theories and methods used or results and conclusions drawn in this work.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the final component of our Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration program at the Norwegian School of Economics. Our research topic was centred around sustainability and marketing, a subject of mutual interest that is closely related to our Marketing and Brand Management major.

We want to express our profound appreciation to our supervisors, Vidya Oruganti and Berit Sund. Thank you for your continuous support and guidance throughout the whole process. Our thesis was greatly enhanced by their valuable feedback, which contributed to the improvement of our work. They were consistently available to answer our questions and always had our best interests in mind. We would also like to thank the interviewees who dedicated their time to participate in our research. Without them, we would not have been able to complete our thesis. Lastly, we want to thank our friends and families for their support throughout our master's studies.

The Norwegian School of Economics

Bergen, May 2023

Mikko Lantto

Alina Makslahti

Abstract

Sustainability has become increasingly important in our society, with new regulations and trends emerging regularly. In response, several firms have hired sustainability managers to meet present and future needs regarding sustainability. Greenwashing is a risk faced by marketing departments when communicating sustainability. However, collaborating with a sustainability manager can help the marketing department navigate the complex world of sustainability while effectively communicating sustainability to consumers.

Our thesis explores the nature of collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department, and examines what can be done to promote efficient collaboration between the two. We conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with sustainability managers across different Nordic firms and our research was guided by four themes from existing literature: management support, shared goals and values, shared information, and team training.

After analysing the data, we discovered four key elements that might impact the cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. These four elements are top management support, joint projects, common language, and giving training a purpose. Our research found that these elements can enhance collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department, and that top management support could be particularly critical for enabling cross-functional collaboration. Implementing these elements can enhance cross-functional collaboration and increase the likelihood of success.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
1. INTRODUCTION.....	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.1 SUSTAINABILITY IN BUSINESSES	9
2.2 SUSTAINABILITY IN MARKETING.....	12
2.3 CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION.....	13
2.3.1 <i>Management Support</i>	14
2.3.2 <i>Shared Goals and Values</i>	16
2.3.3 <i>Shared Information</i>	17
2.3.4 <i>Team Training and Knowledge</i>	19
2.3.5 <i>Tension in Cross-Functional Collaboration</i>	20
3. METHODOLOGY.....	21
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN	21
3.1.1 <i>Research Approach</i>	22
3.1.2 <i>Purpose and Strategy</i>	23
3.2 DATA COLLECTION.....	23
3.2.1 <i>Data Sources</i>	23
3.2.2 <i>Case Selection</i>	25
3.2.3 <i>Semi-Structured Interviews</i>	26
3.2.4 <i>Interview Plan and Process</i>	26
3.3 DATA ANALYSIS.....	27
3.3.1 <i>Thematic Analyses</i>	27

3.3.2	<i>Transcription</i>	28
3.3.3	<i>Coding</i>	29
3.4	RESEARCH QUALITY.....	31
3.4.1	<i>Credibility</i>	31
3.4.2	<i>Transferability</i>	32
3.4.3	<i>Dependability</i>	32
3.4.4	<i>Confirmability</i>	33
3.4.5	<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	34
4.	FINDINGS	35
4.1	SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	35
4.2	DRIVERS FOR MANAGEMENT SUPPORT.....	35
4.2.1	<i>Strategy From the Top Management</i>	36
4.2.2	<i>Engaged CEO</i>	36
4.2.3	<i>Integration to Firm's Overall Strategy</i>	37
4.3	PROMOTING COLLABORATION THROUGH SHARED GOALS AND VALUES.....	37
4.3.1	<i>Cross-Functional Communication</i>	38
4.3.2	<i>Planning Together</i>	39
4.3.3	<i>Different Viewpoints</i>	39
4.4	STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION THROUGH SHARED INFORMATION.....	41
4.4.1	<i>Frequency of Information Sharing</i>	41
4.4.2	<i>An Environment of Trust and Easiness of Communication</i>	42
4.4.3	<i>Focused Group and Tasks</i>	43
4.5	TRAINING AND SHARED KNOWLEDGE.....	45
4.5.1	<i>Relevancy of Shared Knowledge</i>	45

4.5.2	<i>Up-to-date Topics</i>	46
4.5.3	<i>Regularity of Training</i>	47
5.	DISCUSSION	49
5.1	THE ROLE OF TOP MANAGEMENT SUPPORT.....	50
5.2	MUTUAL PROJECTS: ENABLERS FOR INFORMATION SHARING & SHARED GOALS.....	52
5.3	COMMON LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF CONCEPTS	53
5.4	THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION AND PURPOSE	54
6.	CONCLUSIONS	56
6.1	SUMMARY.....	56
6.2	FUTURE RESEARCH.....	57
6.3	LIMITATIONS	57
6.4	MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS.....	58
7.	REFERENCES	60
8.	APPENDIX	65
8.1	APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE	65

1. Introduction

Firms contribute significantly to the worsening global challenges, such as climate change, inequality, and poverty, yet they are also key in solving these problems (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018). Notably, many firms have redirected their attention from solely generating profits to tackling these societal issues (Serafeim, 2022). For example, many giant firms are switching their business models from linear to circular (Lahti et al., 2018). Additionally, Sroufe (2018) states that sustainability is not just the right thing to do but the right business thing to do, as purpose-driven brands tend to experience growth. Given this, many firms have hired a sustainability professional to tackle the sustainability challenges (Kanashiro & Rivera, 2017).

Because marketing can influence cultural change, it can be a crucial tool for promoting sustainability (Thapar, 2021; Tollin et al., 2014). Therefore, it may be vital to incorporate sustainable practices into marketing strategies (Thapar, 2021). Marketers who deeply understand sustainability can help firms become more socially and ethically responsible (Tollin et al., 2014). This highlights the importance of the sustainability manager and the marketing department working together in cross-functional collaboration. Cross-functional collaboration is when different departments voluntarily work together towards a common goal (Ellinger, 2000).

Research on cross-functional collaboration has shown the importance of integrating R&D and marketing (Griffin & Hauser, 1996), the relationship between cross-functional collaboration and innovativeness (De Clercq et al., 2011), and how cross-functional collaboration impacts the performance of different departments (Ellinger, 2000). Moreover, Garner (2015) states that a collaborative approach can shape the business structure, strategy, vision, culture, and policy. However, there is an existing gap in the literature regarding cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department in a firm. In this thesis, we seek to address this gap by pursuing the research question:

"What is the nature of collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department, and what can be done to promote an efficient collaboration?"

In doing so, we delve deeper into understanding the nature of collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department, the challenges they may face, and the likely responses to address them. In our thesis, we discuss cross-functional collaboration

through four key constituent themes found in the literature: management support, shared goals and values, shared information, and team training.

Our research project is a qualitative study which focuses on sustainability and cross-functional collaboration. For this study, we interviewed 12 sustainability managers from various Nordic firms to gain insight into their experiences in cross-functional collaboration with the marketing department. In our research, we identified four key elements impacting the collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department. These elements are top management support, joint projects, common language, and giving training a purpose. These elements tie together the previously mentioned four themes found in existing literature. Furthermore, we argue that the success of the collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department largely depends on support from top management. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings in our thesis.

Our research begins with a thorough literature review covering sustainability in businesses and marketing. We also present relevant literature regarding cross-functional collaboration. Following this review, we discuss the methodology used in our research, which outlines the chosen research design, data collection, data analysis, and research quality. The fourth chapter explores the findings of the study. In the discussion chapter, we delve deeper into the findings and examine how they support, contribute, and extend the existing literature. In the final chapter of our thesis, we summarise the study, provide ideas for future research, discuss the limitations, and present the managerial implications.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the existing literature on sustainability, marketing, and cross-functional collaboration. In the first section, we focus on sustainability in businesses, including the importance of sustainability for firms to remain relevant and competitive, as well as the role of sustainability managers. During the second section, we delve into sustainability in marketing and explain why the marketing department should be aware of the firm's sustainability practices. We also highlight the negative consequences of miscommunicating sustainability topics. Finally, we discuss the significance of cross-functional collaboration and present four central themes for successful collaboration as identified by researchers.

2.1 Sustainability in Businesses

When discussing the sustainability efforts of firms, it is common to consider environmental concerns, such as water and energy usage. However, more firms are taking sustainability efforts much further by, for example, improving working conditions and creating better safety procedures. Weybrecht (2014) argues that although many firms start operating more sustainably to impact the environment positively, different business benefits are also involved. These benefits include reduced costs, better service quality, higher customer satisfaction, and improved corporate image (Weybrecht, 2014). Hence, many managers and other employees emphasise bringing sustainability culture and tools into business operations (Weybrecht 2014).

Today, over 90% of CEOs say that sustainability is vital to their firm's profit and success, and considering the worsening problems such as climate change, water scarcity, and species extinction, it looks like the sustainability trend will not be over anytime soon (Hoffman, 2018). An increasing number of firms are putting sustainability on their agenda as they realise it is possible to be sustainable and profitable simultaneously (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018). Additionally, global firms see a reputation of being socially responsible and supporting "good" causes as essential, as customers and other key stakeholders demand these things (Lahti et al., 2018). One example of a firm that changed its business model to be more sustainable and profitable is an international flooring and carpet company, Interface (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018). According to Jørgensen and Pedersen (2018), the firm's customers and collaborative

partners started questioning its manufacturing processes' influence on society and the environment, making Interface realise they have no environmental vision. Interface started changing how they operate to become more sustainable, the biggest being a change in its business model (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018). Instead of selling carpets, the firm started leasing them for their customers, which means it was responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the carpets (ibid). This enabled increased sales of services while driving down the cost of input factors for the carpets (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018).

The example above shows that addressing sustainability issues can lead to new business opportunities and long-term success (Parida & Wincent, 2019; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Sustainable business practices also positively impact a firm's reputation (Nguyen et al., 2019). Similarly, Eccles et al. (2014) state that including sustainability issues in a firm's business model and strategy can be seen as a competitive advantage. Additionally, a sustainable relationship with all stakeholders can help a firm create long-term value (Bodhanwala & Bodhanwala, 2018). Adopting sustainability in business practices can offer various benefits, such as providing a strategy for market entry, leading to brand differentiation, and enhancing business strategies (Lowitt & Sarni, 2011). On the other hand, noticing sustainability problems can also be considered an obligation for firms as they contribute to environmental issues and can play a significant role in resolving them (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018).

Sustainable investment performance is found to be heterogeneous, but investors can achieve superior risk-adjusted returns by incorporating sustainable investment practices (De Souza Cunha et al., 2020). Ritala et al. (2018) declare that the frequency of sustainable activities in firms has increased strongly after 2006. Currently, the largest sustainability practices in multinational corporations are based on energy and material efficiency, circular economy (creating value from waste), and renewable energy sources (Ritala et al., 2018). In their book, Jørgensen and Pedersen (2018) give different examples of firms that have integrated a sustainable business model or taken a sustainable strategic approach. For example, Apple has developed a robot that can dismantle old phones, LEGO has used one billion Danish kroner to find an alternative to the plastic used in their blocks, and Renault entered a long-term relationship with a firm that recycles steel (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018).

In addition to seeing sustainability as a strategic opportunity, firms face high external pressures to incorporate sustainability into their practices (Grant, 2020; Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018; Lahti et al., 2018). One example of external pressure is the Paris Agreement, which makes

firms review their sustainability actions and, for example, think about ways of reducing their carbon emissions (Grant, 2020). The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change adopted by 196 Parties in 2015 at the UN Climate Change Conference (United Nations, n.d.). The goal of the agreement is to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (United Nations, n.d.) According to the United Nations (n.d.), to limit global warming to 1.5°C, greenhouse gas emissions must decline by 43% by the year 2030. The external pressure firms face has led them to shift their main objectives from maximising profit to increasing shareholder wealth (Rezaee, 2021). Rezaee (2021) states that shareholder wealth can be increased by paying more attention to the firm's social, environmental, and governance responsibilities. Besides the operational changes in practices and products, firms have faced pressure from a strategic perspective, and one way of responding to this pressure has been through structural changes in the top management team (Wiengarten et al., 2015). This has led to the appointment of the Chief Officer of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in firms (Wiengarten et al., 2015). According to Wiengarten et al. (2015), this move can positively impact the firm's image by demonstrating its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility to its stakeholders.

The Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) is a top executive manager responsible for the firm's environmental strategy (Kanashiro & Rivera, 2017). Rezaee & Rezaee (2021) state that some of the main tasks of a CSO include participating in preparing a "statement of purpose" communicating effectively to other officers and employees about the best sustainability practices, discussing and shaping long-term business strategies, managing risks, and implementing high ESG/CSR standards into strategic and operational plans. According to Kanashiro and Riviera (2017), the CSO is positioned at the C-suite level and reports directly to the firm's CEO or the board of directors.

Other examples of sustainability-related roles in a firm are sustainability managers and environmental managers. These might operate in the top management team but can also work in other parts of the firm (Carollo & Guerci, 2017) or be responsible for specific regions or production lines (Kanashiro & Rivera, 2017). Although there is no standardised job description for a sustainability manager, Miller and Serafeim (2014) discovered that most of them carry out a set of general tasks. These include formulating and executing sustainability strategies, identifying material sustainability issues, learning from external sources, reporting sustainability data, managing stakeholder relations, and educating employees on

sustainability. However, sustainability managers hold the highest position in the firm, with specific responsibility for sustainability (Carollo & Guerci, 2017). Fu et al. (2019) found that the presence of a Chief Sustainability Officer increases the firm's socially responsible activities while decreasing its socially irresponsible activities. Bodhanwala and Bodhanwala (2018) have also found a significant positive relationship between sustainability and return on invested capital, return on equity, return on assets, and earnings per share in their study about Indian firms.

2.2 Sustainability in Marketing

Marketing plays a significant role in promoting sustainability and shaping cultural change (Thapar, 2021; Tollin et al., 2014). Therefore, it is essential to apply sustainability practices to marketing strategies. One way to do this is by informing customers about the sustainability initiatives the firm is implementing (Thapar, 2021). If the integration is not done well, it can damage brand equity (Thapar, 2021). Marketers who understand sustainability can make a difference and drive firms' engagement in social and product responsibility issues (Tollin et al., 2014).

According to Polonsky's (1994) definition, green marketing encompasses more than promoting eco-friendly products. It includes various actions like modifying products, production processes, packaging, and advertising. The roots of green marketing go back to the 1970s and the wave of environmental concern (Baker, 2003 & Grant, 2020). Green marketing emphasises the physical sustainability of the marketing process, its social acceptability, and a more holistic and interdependent perspective of the relationship between the economy, society, and the environment (Baker, 2003). In short, green marketing differs from societal marketing by focusing on global concerns instead of those of societies (Baker, 2003). In addition, Baker (2003) addresses that green marketing treats the environment as something with a fundamental value above its usefulness to society.

Today, green marketing plays a key role in businesses as customers' concerns for the environment and the demand for sustainable products keep increasing (Nguyen et al., 2019). The increased demand for green solutions has led to more greenwashing, which has made consumers concerned and sceptical about marketers' false or deceptive advertisements (Nguyen et al., 2019). According to Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.b), greenwashing means behaviour or activities that make people believe that the firm is doing more to protect the

environment than it is. The term "greenwash" was invented in the 1980s by Jay Westerveld, who discovered that the hotel industry did not promote the reuse of towels for sustainability reasons and as part of an environmental strategy as they advertised, but for cost-saving reasons (Grant, 2020). According to Grant (2020), greenwashing can be intentional or unintentional.

The marketing department must have credibility when they do green marketing, as due to greenwashing issues, consumers are getting more sceptical (Nguyen et al., 2019). Some environmentalists wish that marketers would stop doing what they do, as they see that the role of marketers is to sell products and fuel lifestyle aspirations that end up destroying the planet we live on (Grant, 2020). Therefore, the marketing department's role is to use credible green claims to improve the business and promote the firm's sustainability efforts (Nguyen et al., 2019).

As mentioned earlier, the importance of sustainability has increased for firms. Sustainability Hub Norway's (2021) report shows that sustainability is a highly integrated part of firms' marketing, branding, and communications. This indicates that the importance of sustainability is highlighted within marketing. Therefore, firms need to incorporate sustainability into their marketing strategies and future investments. To achieve this, cross-functional collaboration must be efficient, and any tension between departments should be minimised.

The last 100 years have been transformational for marketing due to the growth of marketing in scope, impact, significance, and application (Kourdi, 2011). According to Kourdi's (2011) research, relying solely on past successful marketing strategies can limit business growth opportunities. To effectively develop products that meet consumer needs and convince customers of their benefits, all business functions must collaborate and share marketing insights (Kourdi, 2011).

2.3 Cross-functional Collaboration

Societal forces are challenging new business practices, workplace organisations, and external relations to evolve, and innovation is needed to future-proof businesses (Garner, 2015). To build a culture of innovation, firms must work toward one important principle: collaboration (Garner, 2015). Garner (2015) states that a collaborative approach is needed in business structure, strategy, vision, culture, and policy, as responding to market demands of continuous innovation and invention can only be done with teamwork.

To understand cross-functional collaboration, knowing the term's origins is beneficial. The word 'collaboration' derives from the French and Latin term "collaborare" which means "to work with" and refers to working together or united labour (Etymonline, 2018). Cross-functionality refers to the cooperation between different departments and functional areas, and it involves sharing information and being aware of the interdependencies of various organisational units (Amrani et al., 2006). In short, cross-functional collaboration refers to the degree of cooperation and the extent of the representation of different organisational departments working together (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007).

Many researchers have studied cross-functional collaboration between different departments throughout the years. For example, Griffin and Hauser (1996) studied the integration of R&D and marketing, De Luca and Atuahene-Gima (2007) investigated the different routes to product innovation performance, De Clercq et al. (2011) studied cross-functional collaboration and innovativeness, and Ellinger (2000) examined the effect of cross-functional collaboration on improving marketing and logistics. Numerous studies have been conducted on cross-functional collaboration, including collaboration between the marketing team and other departments. However, there is a lack of information in the current literature regarding collaboration between sustainability managers and other business units. This may be due to the fairly new role of sustainability manager and the fact that the job description has not yet been fully established or standardised.

Cross-functional collaboration is a broad term consisting of many different factors. Our study focuses on four key themes related to cross-functional collaboration, as identified in the literature. These themes include management support, shared goals and values, shared information, and team training. Each of these themes is discussed in detail in the following chapters.

2.3.1 Management Support

Management support is key in enabling cross-functional collaboration to achieve its full potential (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007). According to Ellinger (2000), management support is essential in promoting collaboration and communication among employees from different departments. De Luca and Atuahene-Gima (2007) argue that management support can help create a collaborative culture and provide the necessary resources to facilitate cross-functional collaboration.

Management support can take various forms, including providing financial and human resources, establishing cross-functional teams, and creating incentives for collaboration (De Clercq et al., 2011; Ellinger, 2000; Griffin & Hauser, 1996). Management support can provide necessary resources and incentives to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing, between R&D and marketing (Griffin & Hauser, 1996), in the innovation process (De Clercq et al., 2011) and help marketing adaptiveness (Mohsen & Eng, 2016). Furthermore, De Clercq et al. (2011) argue that cross-functional collaboration can benefit from management support, the support might help reduce the barriers for the collaboration. In addition, top management can establish clear communication channels and protocols to ensure efficient and effective communication (Mohsen & Eng, 2016).

In their research, Mohsen and Eng (2016) discovered that management support is crucial in facilitating cross-functional collaboration. Specifically, they looked at three factors: resource dependency, multifunctional training, and cross-functional teams. The authors combined these factors in two highly effective configurations for promoting marketing adaptability and cross-functional collaboration. The study suggests that businesses can become more adaptable by sharing information and resources across different departments and functions (Mohsen & Eng, 2016).

According to a study by Young and Jordan (2008), having support from top management is crucial for the success of a project. The study analysed five Australian firms and their project outcomes, highlighting the significance of top management support. In all cases examined, top management support played a critical role. The absence of such support resulted in project failure, while partial support led to delays (Young & Jordan, 2008). In comparison, a project with outstanding support from top management helped the project to reach outstanding success (Young & Jordan, 2008). This shows that top management has a significant role in making a project successful if support is provided throughout the project. The study shows that the role of management support is to help teams solve unanticipated problems, authorise changes and accept risks that fall outside the project team's authority (Young & Jordan, 2008).

Worley and Doolen (2006) state that employee frustration can be reduced through management support. The study focused on implementing lean manufacturing and found that some employees were frustrated due to a lack of information and reasoning behind the implementation. To address this, the researchers suggest that management should communicate the reasons behind implementing changes and provide resources to facilitate the

process (Worley & Doolen, 2006). In addition, a designated project from the management, that includes various departments supports coherent development towards a common goal (Worley & Doolen, 2006). They should also offer education and training to ensure that employees have the necessary tools and resources. Furthermore, communication channels should be established between departments, and common goals should be created to encourage progress (Worley & Doolen, 2006). Encouraging an informal and comfortable work environment in a company can improve collaboration between various departments. The firm's management can facilitate this as part of the organisation's overall culture (Priyono, 2016).

Lee and Joo (2020) found that management support plays a crucial role in enhancing collaboration within the green supply chain. This, in turn, positively affects a firm's environmental performance. Hence, when assessing the collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department in a firm, management support should be considered. When discussing the collaboration between these two departments, management support might take form by following up on the projects, forming shared goals, giving teams time and other resources for the collaboration, and being part of solving unexpected challenges. While management support is crucial to facilitate cross-functional collaboration, it alone might not guarantee effective collaboration.

2.3.2 Shared Goals and Values

Effective collaboration between departments can be challenging and requires mutual goals, values, and cultures (Mohsen & Eng, 2016). Therefore, it is important to understand the impact of shared goals and values on cross-functional collaboration and how these can be implemented.

One of the critical themes facilitating cross-functional collaboration is the establishment of shared goals and values. According to Griffin and Hauser (1996), shared goals and values are crucial in integrating the R&D and marketing departments, as they help the two groups build mutual trust and respect, facilitate effective communication, and create shared ownership of the product development process. They argue that to ensure that R&D activities and marketing goals are in sync, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of the market environment and customer needs (Griffin & Hauser, 1996). Additionally, R&D capabilities should support marketing efforts. Using performance evaluation could decrease the barriers coming from

different goals and responsibilities of the departments (Griffin & Hauser, 1996). Similarly, Kahn and Mentzer (1998) argue that marketing's integration with other departments can be improved by developing shared goals and objectives aligned with the overall corporate strategy. Shared goals and values enable employees to share a sense of purpose and align their efforts toward achieving the organisation's objectives (Kahn & Mentzer, 1998).

According to De Clercq et al. (2011), effective collaboration and innovative product ideas are linked to shared goals and values, as well as a strong relational context. Their research showed that cross-functional teams with common goals and values are better able to work together and come up with creative ideas. Rather than setting goals tailored to the performance of a particular department within a firm, it is better to establish goals that evaluate the overall performance of a project. Griffin and Hauser (1996) found that concentrating on ultimate product-development profits instead of measuring marketing and R&D performance separately can increase cross-functional decision-making and task completion (Griffin & Hauser, 1996).

Introducing sustainability into an organisation is unique compared to other strategies because it aims to achieve high standards in social, environmental, and financial performance all at once (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014). Epstein and Buhovac (2014) mention that focusing on broader objectives than just profit alone is needed, and firms must have measurable targets and goals incorporating sustainability. Firms should, for example, implement social and environmental indicators in addition to their financial performance measures (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014).

Having shared goals and values and building strong relationships among cross-functional teams can help organisations achieve greater product innovativeness, which can help in building more sustainable business models (Jørgensen & Pedersen, 2018). Shared goals can enhance openness between functions, encourage information sharing across departments and break language barriers created by different cultures and backgrounds (De Clercq et al., 2011).

2.3.3 Shared Information

Effective communication and knowledge sharing are essential in establishing a common language and understanding between departments. Ellinger (2000) states that collaboration and communication among employees from different departments is critical in setting shared goals and values. Moreover, Chernetsky et al. (2022) argue that cultivating a sense of shared

ownership and responsibility of a project is crucial in building a culture of trust and mutual respect in an organisational environment.

According to De Luca and Atuahene-Gima (2007), a high level of market knowledge sharing between different departments positively relates to product innovation performance. By sharing knowledge and information, departments can better understand each other's needs and work together to achieve common goals (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007). It seems that shared information can help avoid redundancies, streamline processes, and save resources.

A study by Griffin and Hauser (1996) found that integrating R&D and marketing requires information and knowledge sharing between the two departments. Their study suggests that cross-functional collaboration can lead to better product innovation and higher profits for the firm (Griffin & Hauser, 1996). In addition, Griffin and Hauser (1996) discovered that when R&D and marketing teams collaborate and exchange information on market trends, customer preferences, and technological advancements, they can create products that meet the firm's objectives and satisfy customer needs.

According to Mohsen and Eng (2016), a high level of information sharing in a cross-functional setting positively relates to market adaptability. They argue that sharing information across departments enables organisations to adapt to constantly changing market conditions and customer needs more quickly and effectively (Mohsen & Eng, 2016). In addition, De Clercq et al. (2011) found that the relationship between cross-functional collaboration and product innovativeness is contingent on the presence of shared information.

According to the literature, it is recommended that firms set up methods and tools for exchanging information and knowledge across different departments. This can involve scheduling regular meetings, establishing communication channels, utilising shared databases, and implementing knowledge management systems. Firms can improve their collaboration across departments by enabling effective information sharing. De Clercq et al. (2011) discovered that having a common language and understanding of terms among teams encourages collaboration. To achieve this, it is necessary to educate and train the teams on relevant topics. In the context of our study, this would involve providing sustainability training to marketing experts and vice versa. Departments with employees from different backgrounds may use varying terminologies, leading to complexities in collaboration and an increased risk of misunderstandings.

2.3.4 Team Training and Knowledge

Practical team training and shared knowledge between different departments in a firm is essential for achieving organisational goals. Due to the growing emphasis on corporate social responsibility, the cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability and marketing teams has become increasingly important in many businesses.

A critical theme in promoting effective cross-functional collaboration is team training. A study by Chernetsky et al. (2022) discovered that collaboration between marketing and sales departments can be improved through training. To enhance collaboration, it is recommended to train each department on the work of the other and share knowledge. Training is important because employees in these two departments often come from different backgrounds and have different areas of expertise (Chernetsky et al., 2022). Similarly, Ellinger (2000) suggests that training is necessary to improve cross-functional collaboration in the supply chain. De Clercq et al. (2011) argue that training can improve collaboration when combined with solid relational ties between team members. When departments solely focus on their assigned tasks without showing interest in the objectives of other departments, it can hinder their ability to respond to the knowledge of other departments (De Clercq et al., 2011).

Promoting knowledge sharing can be challenging. Griffin and Hauser (1996) found that integrating R&D and marketing teams can be complex due to differences in goals and priorities. Thus, it is essential to develop strategies to facilitate knowledge sharing. Amrani et al. (2006) discovered that different implementation strategies for enterprise resource planning systems can affect cross-functionality.

It is helpful to encourage collaboration across different departments and to use consistent terminology and definitions when collaborating. According to Rosen and Beaver (1978), researchers who work together often share a common language. Additionally, Saunders et al. (2019) emphasise the need for clear and precise terminology in research to prevent confusion. This is particularly important when working with cross-functional teams.

Team training and knowledge sharing are important factors in promoting effective cross-functional collaboration. Training can effectively improve collaboration when combined with strong relational ties, and knowledge sharing can lead to more significant innovation and marketing adaptiveness. For example, one way of improving collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department is by educating the marketing team on

the terminology and language used in sustainability. This may create a shared language pool that both departments can use to work towards common goals. However, integrating teams with different priorities can be difficult, which is why establishing clear strategies for teamwork and knowledge sharing is essential.

2.3.5 Tension in Cross-Functional Collaboration

In addition to the four common themes of cross-functional collaboration, we want to address the potential conflicts between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. To ensure successful collaboration, it is important to recognise and manage any tension that may arise. In this chapter, we will explore the various sources of tension found in the literature.

According to a study by Priyono (2016), a relaxed and informal environment at work can enhance cross-functional collaboration, particularly in small businesses. The culture of informality fosters communication and teamwork, leading to better collaboration outcomes (Priyono, 2016). However, informality might also cause misunderstandings in firms where employees have multiple roles (Priyono, 2016). According to Priyono (2016), unclear roles and responsibilities in a project can cause confusion and tension within the team, making it difficult to collaborate effectively.

The outside pressure has forced governments to introduce industry standards and policies that affect all industries (United Nations, n.d.). This pressure can cause tensions between departments, including marketing and sustainability, as they might have different goals and objectives. Griffin and Hauser (1996) found that the structure of goals and incentives of R&D and marketing leads to barriers to effective collaboration between the departments. Their study also found that different departments have different reward systems, making working toward a mutual goal more difficult (Griffin & Hauser, 1996). Similarly, friction between two departments was found in a study by Kahn and Mentzer (1998), who studied the collaboration between the marketing and manufacturing departments. According to Kahn and Mentzer (1998), there can be tension between marketing and manufacturing departments due to conflicting objectives. For example, when it comes to measuring success, sales are the primary focus for marketing, while manufacturing success is determined by meeting cost goals.

3. Methodology

In the following section, we provide the methodological choices that best address the themes contributing to the cross-functional collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department and what can be done to promote an efficient collaboration. We divided the text into three parts. In the first part, we explain the research design, while in the second part, we detail the data collection process and methods used for data analysis. Lastly, we delve into the ethical considerations and quality of the study.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a plan that outlines how a researcher intends to answer their research question. In other words, the research design provides information on what type of research the researcher has conducted (e.g., exploratory, descriptive, or causal) and the researcher's priorities (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). According to Vogt et al. (2012), everything in a study ultimately flows from the design choice, which is closely tied to the research question and theories. The objective of our study is to identify how a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department work together and find ways to improve their collaboration.

There are three primary types of research design: exploratory, descriptive, and causal (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) suggest that exploratory design is suitable for unstructured problems, while structured problems can be addressed through descriptive and causal methods. According to Saunders et al. (2019), using an exploratory approach can lead to discovering unexpected findings that have not yet been considered in the existing literature. We decided to use an exploratory design due to the lack of existing research on the collaboration between sustainability managers and marketing departments and the relatively new role of sustainability managers. During exploratory research, the researcher observes, collects information, and creates explanations, as outlined by Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005). The method is adaptable, meaning the research question and methodologies can be modified as new insights become available (Saunders et al., 2019). It also allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions like "why" and "what," which can help in gaining a better understanding of the topic studied (Saunders et al., 2019).

As the nature of the study is exploratory, and we are interested in a "what" question, we decided to use a qualitative approach for data collection. According to Bogdan and Biklen

(1998), qualitative research is a term used to describe several research strategies that share specific characteristics. Qualitative research collects and analyses data that involves non-numeric information (Saunders et al., 2019). This data type is typically based on meanings conveyed through language and actions. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand the topic from the subjective perspective of individuals, which is not possible by using quantitative methods (Bell, 2010 & Rowley, 2002).

3.1.1 Research Approach

It is crucial to establish a research strategy and select the most appropriate method for a research project. Research approaches can be classified as inductive, deductive, or abductive based on the level of theory used at the beginning of the research, as stated by Saunders et al. (2019). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), qualitative researchers usually analyse their data inductively. An inductive approach begins by collecting data, and the theory develops from the bottom up, which means the direction of the theory arises from data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Alternatively, a deductive approach involves studying academic literature beforehand and devising a plan to examine established theoretical perspectives through qualitative methods (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Saunders et al. (2019), a deductive method is more appropriate for studying previously explored topics, while an inductive approach is better for learning about new issues. An abductive approach involves gathering data to investigate phenomena, identifying recurring themes and patterns, organising them within a conceptual framework, and testing this framework with additional data to generate a new theory or modify the existing ones (Saunders et al., 2019).

Our research approach combines deductive and inductive methods, with a stronger inclination towards the latter. First, we used a deductive approach to review relevant literature on sustainability managers, sustainability in businesses and marketing, and cross-functional collaboration. However, as we did not find extensive literature on the topic, we collected data to gain new insights. As a result, we used an inductive approach to answer our research question and a deductive approach to compare our findings to the existing literature. Even though our thesis incorporates both inductive and deductive approaches, we would not consider it entirely abductive. This is because we did not put the data analysis findings to the test.

3.1.2 Purpose and Strategy

Our goal for this qualitative master's thesis is to investigate the nature of a firm's organisational cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. Specifically, our aim is to find what affects the collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department and what can be done to promote an efficient collaboration. Our thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of the cross-functional collaboration between these two departments, as the current literature does not provide a comprehensive overview of the topic. The findings might benefit sustainability professionals, marketing professionals, and firms looking to better their sustainability and marketing initiatives. In addition, the study provides insight for scholars interested in the ties between sustainability and marketing.

3.2 Data Collection

The objective of our thesis is to provide insight into the cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department in a firm. This section describes the data collection process in detail. We go through what kind of data sources we used, how we collected it and what analyses technique we used to analyse it.

3.2.1 Data Sources

Different methods of collecting data are used for different research styles and approaches (Bell, 2010). According to Saunders et al. (2019), primary data refers to the information collected to investigate a research topic. Our study examines the cross-functional collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and the marketing department. This thesis's primary data is transcribed interviews collected from sustainability managers from different Nordic firms. Bell (2010) states that one prime advantage of interviews is their adaptability. According to Saunders et al. (2019), semi-structured interviews can be valuable for collecting data in qualitative studies. They are particularly suitable for exploratory projects and do not follow a standardised approach. To investigate the cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department of a firm, we believed that speaking directly with informants would be the most effective approach. As a result, we collected primary data for our thesis through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Before conducting the interviews, we created an interview guide including the key themes and a list of open-ended

questions to guarantee consistency. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 1. The semi-structured style of data collection enabled us to tailor each interview by asking follow-up questions and encouraging interviewees to elaborate on specific topics. This provided us with a more in-depth insight into informants' perspectives on various topics.

In March and April of 2023, we interviewed 12 sustainability professionals from multiple companies in the Nordics. Our aim was to select interviewees who held similar hierarchical positions. However, some hierarchical differences can be found in respondents' job titles, e.g., Head of Sustainability versus Sustainability & Corporate Affairs Manager. According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), including several firms in a study can help present the phenomenon from various perspectives. Furthermore, by interviewing people from different firms and industries, we ensure the diversity of our data and reduce bias. Bias means supporting or opposing a specific person or a thing unfairly or preferring a particular subject or a thing (Cambridge, n.d.a). In this case, choosing respondents from different firms ensures versatile insight and aspects. We present an overview of the interviewees in Table 1.

Table 1. List of informants

Interview number	Role	Industry
Interview 1.	Sustainability & Corporate Affairs Manager	Computers and Electronics Manufacturing
Interview 2.	Head of Sustainability	Paper and Forest Product Manufacturing
Interview 3.	Lead Sustainability Officer	IT Services and IT Consulting
Interview 4.	Chief Sustainability Officer	Strategic Management Services
Interview 5.	Head of Sustainability	Food Production
Interview 6.	Head of Sustainability	Design Services
Interview 7.	Sustainability Officer	Business Consulting and Services
Interview 8.	Chief Sustainability Officer	Maritime Transportation

Interview 9.	Head of Sustainability	Construction
Interview 10.	Chief Sustainability Officer	IT Services and IT Consulting
Interview 11.	Head of Sustainability	Media Production
Interview 12.	Head of Sustainability	Food Production

3.2.2 Case Selection

When conducting research, selecting the right sampling method is crucial (Bell, 2010). For our thesis, we determined that theoretical sampling was the best option. This method falls under non-probability and purposive sampling, as described by Saunders et al. (2019). In theoretical sampling, sample selection is based on subjective judgment (Saunders et al., 2019). While many people believe that a sample population should be randomly chosen to be representative, theoretical sampling is appropriate in qualitative studies where the main goal is to develop a theory rather than test it (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). As we planned to study sustainability managers in the Nordics, we selected participants who could provide insights into how they collaborate with the marketing department in their firm.

The potential interviewees were identified and contacted through LinkedIn, and messages were sent to multiple sustainability managers from different Nordic countries. To be considered for the interview, the applicant had to meet specific criteria. They needed to be a sustainability manager, preferably in a top management position, working in a Nordic company with a marketing department or employees responsible for marketing activities. This limitation ensured that participants were well-suited to answer the questions in the interview and give insight into the topic of cross-functional collaboration between sustainability managers and the marketing department.

When discussing a suitable sample size for a study, it is crucial to consider the number of interviewees needed to obtain enough data to answer the research question effectively. Data saturation happens when collecting additional data provides only a little new or no additional information (Saunders et al., 2019). Initially, we conducted 12 interviews to examine the collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department of a firm. These 12 interviews were used for this thesis, but we anticipate that conducting more interviews could yield more in-depth insight into the topic.

3.2.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

We found that by conducting semi-structured interviews, we were able to gain a better understanding of complex situations and gather more in-depth data. Semi-structured interviews aim to gather subjective responses regarding a particular situation or phenomenon the interviewees have experienced (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). According to McIntosh and Morse (2015), semi-structured interviews involve themes and key questions, but the specific questions and their order may differ between interviews. The researcher will also ask additional questions based on the respondent's answers (Saunders et al., 2019). While structured interviews involve using the same questions for each interviewee, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions to further explore or elaborate on the interviewee's answers (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Saunders et al. (2019), allowing for additional questions can open up new areas of discussion that the researcher may not have thought about. This can be helpful in gaining a better understanding and addressing the research question and objectives. Saunders et al. (2019) argue that by using semi-structured interviews, the researcher should be able to collect a rich and detailed set of data. The collected data is analysed by themes instead of individual items (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

We conducted 12 qualitative semi-structured interviews to gather primary data for this study. We conducted all of the interviews using Microsoft Teams, which was the most familiar platform for us. Each interview lasted between 32 to 57 minutes, with a median duration of 46 minutes. To ensure all important topics were covered, and the interviews were consistent, we used the interview guide. All of the interviews were recorded.

3.2.4 Interview Plan and Process

Like in all research methods, preparation is the key to a successful semi-structured interview. According to Saunders et al. (2019), the interview preparation should include specific measures to guarantee the quality of data. These measures include the researcher's level of knowledge, developed interview themes, supplied information to the interviewee beforehand, and the appropriateness of the interview location.

For this research, the level of knowledge was ensured through the information found online from different research databases and online libraries, such as Ebook Central, EBSCO, and JSTOR. In addition to online sources, we also gathered information from physical books. To establish credibility, interviewees were given an interview guide including the interview

topics, as well as information about the research purpose, data collection, and anonymity assurance prior to the interviews. During the creation of the interview guide, we made sure that the questions were arranged in a logical order and that the language used was easy to understand. As the interviews took place online and the interviewers and the interviewees did not meet physically, the interviewees were guided to choose a place where the discussion would likely not get disturbed.

We started the interviews by ensuring that each interviewee knew about the interview recording. After that, we asked general questions to get knowledge of the interviewee's background. Once we covered the essential details, we shifted the discussion towards the collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing team. Following the interviews, we gave the interviewees the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or concerns to ensure that all relevant topics were addressed. As the semi-structured interview gives researchers flexibility, not all the questions in the interview guide were covered in each interview. Nevertheless, the interview guide was valuable in guiding the discussions in the right direction.

3.3 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis brings meaning to the data set and is used to support the process of getting a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Lester et al., 2020). Analysing qualitative data is labour-intensive and time-consuming because the data consists of contextual, subjective, and detailed information (Ngulube, 2015). In this thesis, we are using a thematic approach. Ngulube (2015) divides the process of thematic analysis into seven phases, Table 2 shows the process of thematic analysis. In this chapter, we will cover the topics of thematic analyses, the transcription process, and data coding.

3.3.1 Thematic Analyses

During the thematic analysis, we went through seven phases of the analysis process. We began by collecting video recordings of the 12 interviews and organizing them on one computer. We also gave each file a name to make it easy to identify the recordings. This helped us to be more organised during the next phases. In the second phase, we transcribed the interviews. We used a transcription tool called Otter.ai that helped us be more efficient with the transcription process. After the AI tool had done the transcription, we reviewed the recordings to make sure

that all information was accurate, and nothing was missed. During the third phase, we went through all the transcriptions to become more familiar with the data set. The third phase helped us to identify the initial codes and form the ideas of what is important in each interview. As part of phase four, we recorded our initial thoughts and observations. These reflection memos proved useful in phase five, where we began assigning codes to our data set. During this phase, we carefully reviewed all the interview transcriptions and coded key details in the text.

After this, in the sixth phase, we formed categories from the codes and themes found. In the final phase, we created a map that shows the process of going from codes to categories and from categories to themes. We used the Gioia method, which is a commonly used method to show the axial coding. We used this method to showcase how we went from initial codes to categories and finally to our four themes. We based our model on the structure used in the paper from Corley and Gioia (2004). Our model can be seen in Figure 1.

Table 2. Phases of the thematic analyses (Ngulube, 2015)

Phase	Process
Phase 1: Preparing and organising the data for analysis	Gathering all 12 video recordings to one place and naming all the recordings to make identification easier.
Phase 2: Transcribing the data	Transcribing the data from word to word. We used transcription tool called Otter.ai in the process.
Phase 3: Becoming familiar with the data	Reading through the transcribed interviews and forming the initial ideas that help with further analysis.
Phase 4: Memoing the data	Having memos of the initial reflections and discussing the data with each other.
Phase 5: Coding the data	Assigning initial codes to the whole data set.
Phase 6: Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes	Forming categories from codes, and from categories to themes.
Phase 7: Making the analytic process transparent	Creating a map showing the road from codes to categories to themes. This helps the transparency of the process. Creating a model based on axial and selective coding.

3.3.2 Transcription

Transcription is a crucial process for researchers to become familiar with the interview data. In order to gain a deep understanding of the data, it is essential to carefully listen to each word of the interview and ensure accurate transcription. According to Flick (2022), transcription is

necessary to interpret the data correctly. We recorded and transcribed all of the interviews with an AI tool called Otter.ai. Once the tool transcribed the interviews, we carefully reviewed the transcriptions to guarantee accuracy and avoid errors. For accuracy and efficiency, we transcribed all interviews shortly after they were conducted. In addition, we received more detailed information about the data by taking note of how certain things were expressed, like if the interviewee laughed while speaking. Saunders (2019) stresses the significance of such contextual details, like the tone of voice used by the interviewee while saying something. These details are crucial to accurately interpret the data.

3.3.3 Coding

After we transcribed the interviews, we moved to coding the data. Coding in qualitative research involves compressing statements into shorter sentences or phrases. Coding is used to transform the data into meaningful findings (Boeije, 2010). During the initial coding phase, we created codes by reviewing our notes taken during the interviews. These codes helped us to identify important points from the transcribed interviews. To create the codes, we combined interesting themes from the interviews with the literature we had read. This stage was flexible, and we aimed to create as many codes as possible based on our initial thoughts. We also attempted to identify connections between the different themes. One benefit of having multiple researchers on a project is the ability to analyse interview data separately, leading to a broader perspective of the data. After analysing the data separately, we met to discuss and combine our findings.

Once the initial coding is completed, the next step in the process is to identify the significant categories and themes within the data, referred to as axial coding (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019). We used axial coding to split, merge, and compare the codes to identify the significant aspects of the data. In the final step of the process, selective coding is used to create a cohesive structure by integrating different categories. This structure can then be discussed in the discussion section along with the findings from existing literature, according to Vollstedt & Rezat (2019). We present our axial coding in Figure 1.

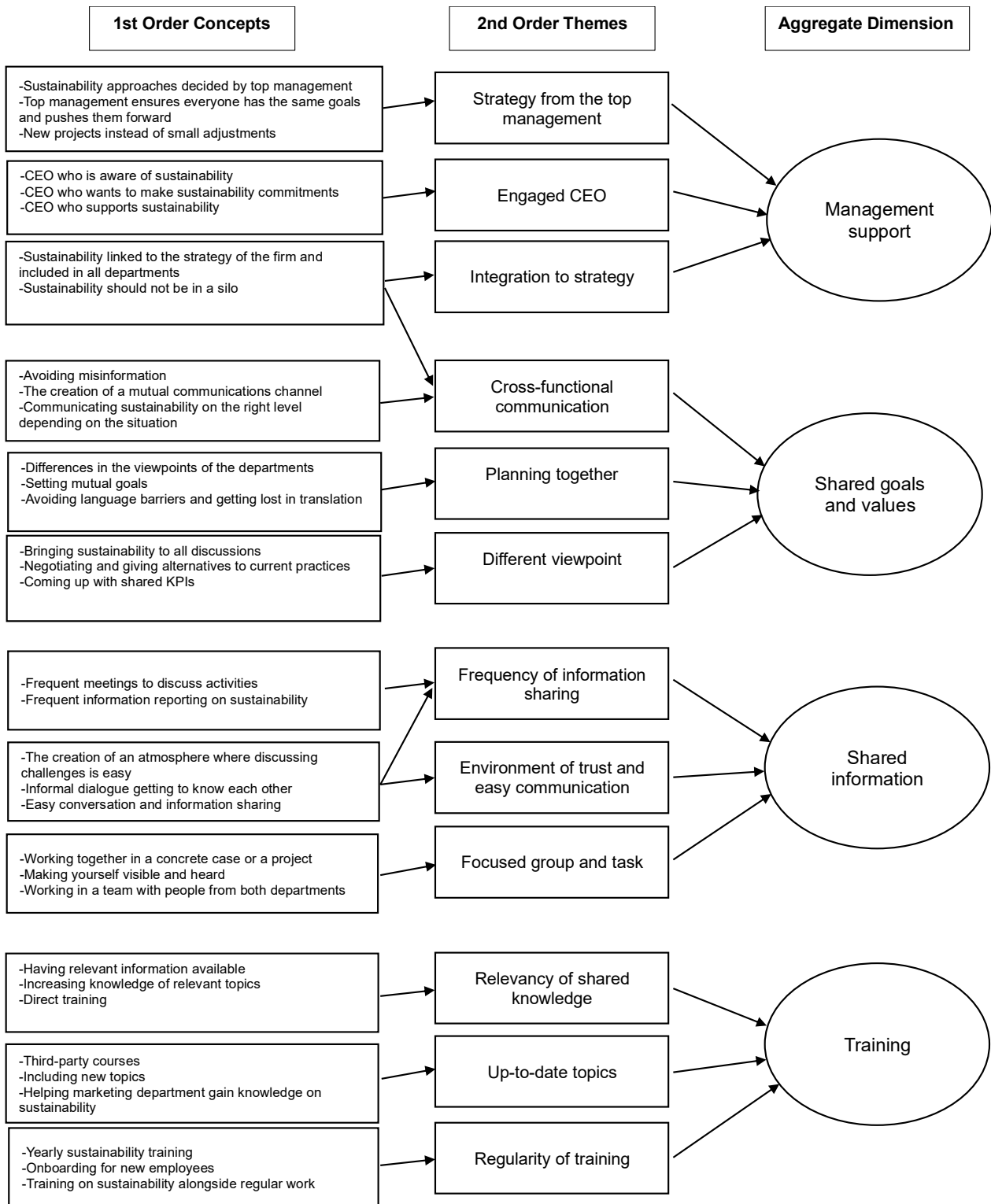


Figure 1. Coding of the data using the model from Corley and Gioia (2004)

3.4 Research Quality

In the following sections, we address an assessment of the research quality. One of the main concerns in research is ensuring the quality and trustworthiness of the findings. When conducting quantitative research, it is important to prioritise reliability and validity, as stated by Saunders et al. (2019). However, when it comes to assessing the quality of qualitative research, alternative criteria such as credibility, transferability, and dependability are more appropriate (Saunders et al., 2019). In addition to these three, we decided to incorporate confirmability to further enhance our quality assessment.

3.4.1 Credibility

When collecting data, it is important to ensure that the data accurately reflects what the interviewees meant to say (Saunders et al., 2019). This involves verifying the data and ensuring it aligns with the interviewees' socially constructed realities. To achieve this, we ensured that the interviewees fully understood the questions by clarifying anything they were unsure about. We also asked additional questions to gain a more thorough understanding of their responses, which helped to enhance the reliability and plausibility of the data.

One area that could be improved in the study is that we only conducted interviews with sustainability professionals. By interviewing marketing people, we could have gotten a different perspective on the research and some insight we could not get by only interviewing sustainability managers. However, based on the consistency of the findings and the fact that we interviewed professionals from various firms and countries, we are confident that the interviewees provided us with a reliable overview of their collaboration with the marketing department, even without the input of marketing employees. Furthermore, we used investigator triangulation to strengthen the creditability of our study. Investigator triangulation means using two or more researchers in coding, analysis, and interpretation decisions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Although efforts were made to ensure the study's credibility, there is no way to guarantee that all interview participants had the same comprehension of the questions, themes, and concepts. Variations in experience, roles, backgrounds, and firms could explain differences in understanding the questions.

3.4.2 Transferability

Transferability means the extent to which the research findings can be generalised (Saunders et al., 2019). Since our thesis is a qualitative case study, the findings are not supposed to be as generalisable as in quantitative studies. However, when aiming for credibility, the findings should be transferable (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Our study allows other researchers to judge the transferability of the study by giving a complete description of the research, including the research question, design, context, findings, and interpretations (Saunders et al., 2019).

We gathered data from one occupation across various industries. By examining the interaction between two departments in different sectors, it can be argued that the findings apply to an even broader range of industries. If we only would have looked at a particular industry, the results might not be as transferable to different applications and scenarios. When it comes to the collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department, it is worth noting that the role of sustainability manager is fairly new, as stated in the literature review section. We conducted and analysed 12 interviews, which can be seen as a limited amount. In order to enhance transferability, we have given a clear description of the existing literature on the topic of collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. Moreover, we have explained the methods used, how we analysed the data, formed the findings and contributed to the existing literature. This clear description of an exploratory study aims to help the reader determine if the research is relevant to their own study by providing a deeper understanding of the situation.

3.4.3 Dependability

Dependability is the parallel criteria to reliability and refers to the replication and consistency of the research (Saunders et al., 2019). Dependability can also refer to the criteria that examine how stable the findings are over time (Anney, 2014). Since we opted to conduct an exploratory study, we were able to make modifications as the thesis progressed. This affects the reliability of the study since it is rather difficult to conduct the same research again. During semi-structured interviews, researchers may encounter similar issues as they are allowed to ask additional questions during the interview. This could lead to some concerns regarding the dependability of the research. However, the benefits of the flexibility provided by this type of research are more significant, even considering the concerns.

To ensure the credibility of our thesis, two students conducted the interviews and analysed the data. This method reduces the chance of interviewer bias, as the data will be reviewed and evaluated by multiple researchers to confirm their agreement with the findings (Saunders et al., 2019). Similar to interviewer bias, it is important to consider informant bias during interviews. Informant bias can occur when the interviewee withholds information or provides false responses. There are various reasons why an interviewee might provide false answers, one of which could be related to the interview location. This could happen, for instance, if the person providing information feels unable to speak truthfully in their workplace. In order to minimise bias, we opted for digital interviews, which enabled the interviewees to participate from any location they preferred. This way, we were able to ensure that the interviewees felt at ease during the discussion.

To increase the dependability of our research, we received feedback and comments from our supervisors. In addition, we used stepwise replication to increase the reliability by using two researchers to analyse the same data and compare the results after the analysis (Anney, 2014). Lastly, we used peer examination by discussions our findings and methods used with our fellow students who were also conducting qualitative research (Anney, 2014).

3.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability means making sure that the interpretations of the results are based on facts and not influenced by the researcher's opinions (Anney, 2014). To guarantee confirmability, we stuck to a transparent research plan and supported all our conclusions with direct quotes from the interviewees. We maintained neutrality and uniformity in our interviews by creating an interview guide and revising it with feedback from our supervisors. In addition, our supervisors offered valuable insights and feedback based on their expertise, which helped us identify potential biases and areas requiring clarification. Their suggestions were incorporated into the interview guide, resulting in clear, concise, and unbiased questions. This approach helped ensure the collected data was objective and reliable.

The primary strategy employed in this thesis to ensure confirmability was objectivity, which involved ensuring that the conclusions were interpreted based on the data. Cross-referencing the interview transcripts during the analysis and findings phase was crucial because it reduced subjectivity and upheld objectivity. In addition, we have included direct quotes from interviews to back up our findings, as outlined by Saunders et al. (2019). This ensures that the

perspectives of the interviewees are accurately represented in our research results. Lastly, we have provided clear descriptions of all the methods utilised in this thesis to aid other researchers in conducting similar studies in the future.

3.4.5 Ethical Considerations

Considering ethics when conducting research is essential and will affect the study's quality (Saunders et al., 2019). Ethics in research refers to the standards of managing the rights of the individuals who participate in the research or are affected by the study (Saunders et al., 2019). Since our research data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, we need to consider the ethical considerations related to the interview process and the interview data. We followed the ethical considerations from the paper by Arifin (2018), where ethics are considered from the perspective of qualitative research.

From the start of the interview process, the interviewees were given a description of the process and the background of our thesis. We wanted to make sure the interviewees were aware of what the information they gave us was going to be used for. There are four main things we need to consider in the ethical considerations. These are anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation (Arifin, 2018). The anonymity of the participants is ensured by not using their names or the names of the firms they work at in the thesis (Arifin, 2018). The participants were reassured that their anonymity would be maintained throughout the entire process and that no identifying information would be included in the published paper. The voluntary aspect of the study is significant, as pointed out by Arifin (2018). Participants must give their consent freely, and no one can be compelled to take part (Arifin, 2018). During the interviews, we made it clear that the participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so.

All the collected data was stored in a safely secured private computer, and the informants were told that the interview recordings would be deleted as soon as the thesis process was completed. This ensured that no unauthorised persons accessed the interview recordings, transcriptions, or list of interviewees with their contact information. Furthermore, to comply with the requirements of Norwegian laws regarding the use of personal data, we applied for approval for our research from the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research. On top of that, we followed the ethical rules set by the institution we are studying at, the Norwegian School of Economics.

4. Findings

In this chapter, we discuss our findings from data analysis, which also forms the basis for the discussion in Chapter 5. In the following section, we present a short summary of the findings, followed by a more in-depth presentation of each one.

4.1 Summary of Empirical Findings

Our thesis is a qualitative study of cross-functional collaboration between sustainability managers and the marketing department. We conducted 12 semi-structured interviews, with sustainability managers from various Nordic firms to collect the data. These interviews provided information on the nature of the collaboration between sustainability managers and the marketing department but also revealed what can be done to promote an efficient collaboration.

The literature on cross-functional collaboration highlights the importance of management support, shared goals and values, shared information, and team training and knowledge to achieve goals set by the firm. Cross-functional collaboration is crucial between the sustainability manager and the marketing department, as the sustainability manager needs the support of the marketing department when promoting sustainability and ensuring the firm is following given sustainability practices. We found that the sustainability managers also recognised the importance of these themes with more emphasis on management support and shared goals and values. In the sections below, we will discuss and give more details on these four themes.

4.2 Drivers for Management Support

The importance of management support was highlighted in almost every interview. Seven interviewees argued that sustainability should be embedded into the firm's strategy to ensure smooth cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. Five sustainability managers said they receive top management support for sustainability by applying sustainability into strategy or encouraging collaboration between sustainability and the marketing department.

4.2.1 Strategy From the Top Management

According to five interviewees, the sustainability strategy should be initiated by top management as a way of demonstrating their support. These interviewees said that the top management is capable of making sure that everyone in the firm knows what they should be doing. Top management can also make the decision about which sustainability approach to take.

"It's basically up to the company and maybe the company's top management to decide what approach they have when it comes to sustainability." (Interview 1)

" [...] I think it is very important to have the top management level support, to also push towards it (collaboration). So, it is not just the Sustainability Team asking that [...] we want this kind of messaging to be on the package [...] but it must come from the very top level and be linked to the strategy." (Interview 5)

One of the interviewees mentioned that the top management should come up with new projects and ideas instead of making small adjustments.

" [...] Making (top management) real new projects or real new ideas instead of [...]you know, making small adjustments." (Interview 6)

4.2.2 Engaged CEO

During the interviews, four sustainability managers mentioned the importance of having a CEO who is committed to sustainability. According to our data, an engaged CEO is aware of sustainability, wants to make sustainability commitments and fully supports sustainability. The findings suggest that a CEO who is engaged in sustainability is likely to encourage sustainability collaboration between different departments and incorporate sustainability into the firm's overall strategy.

"If the CEO really is [...] I mean, it's the tone from the top. So, if the CEO thinks about sustainability and believes in responsibility and the wider responsibility for sustainability, you will see that drizzle down into the organisation." (Interview 8)

"Our CEO is very aware and engaged in sustainability, and wants us to communicate more sustainability" (Interview 1)

"The founders of the company give their full support for the collaboration." (Interview 2)

According to one interviewee, many top leaders claim that sustainability is important when in reality, they prioritise the financial performance of the firm. This type of CEO is not likely to encourage collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department, which might lead to some tension between the departments.

"And I think a lot of top leaders always say, [...], "yes, this is super important." but that's [...]because you have to say that, and when [...] shit hits the fan, everyone is looking mostly into creating economically and financially sound and healthy company before they look into the green aspects." (Interview 3)

4.2.3 Integration to Firm's Overall Strategy

Five respondents emphasised the importance of integrating sustainability into a firm's overall strategy. This means that sustainability should be considered in every department and discussion within the firm, allowing sustainability managers to bring up relevant topics easily.

"I think that sustainability is above communication, and that's something that should be integrated into the business." (Interview 1)

"It (sustainability) has to come from the very top level and be linked to [...] the strategy and the portfolio roadmap." (Interview 5)

However, one sustainability manager felt like some top management teams lack visions of how sustainability can be part of the DNA of the organisation.

"How do you give tools into the organisation to actually then have good processes and good methods for working together across silos. [...] They (top management) lack visions for how this could really, really be as a core and then part of the DNA in the organisation." (Interview 6)

4.3 Promoting Collaboration Through Shared Goals and Values

Shared goals and values rose as a big theme when discussing the collaboration between sustainability managers and the marketing department. Based on what the interviewees said, shared goals and values can be achieved through effective cross-functional communication and collaborative planning. The presence of differing viewpoints was identified as a source of tension. Based on the interviews, the main source of tension arises from conflicting goals with

the marketing department. The sustainability managers stated that better collaboration could be achieved through mutual planning sessions and effective cross-functional communication.

4.3.1 Cross-Functional Communication

Clear communication across sustainability and marketing departments becomes crucial when integrating sustainability into a firm's strategy. Collaboration between these departments requires seamless cross-functional communication, which the sustainability managers recognised as a critical component of working with the marketing team.

"We have to keep in mind and remember to communicate, update, and keep updating between the teams." (Interview 2)

Effective communication between sustainability managers and the marketing department can help prevent misinformation and reduce the risk of greenwashing in marketing.

"They (sustainability professionals) see between the lines of the most relevant facts, figures, numbers, and shares and can see if they are missing. And that is the trap. [...] When companies are not committed to providing [...] the whole information in some communications channel." (Interview 2)

"[...] Previously, sometimes they (the marketing department) would do some advertisement or [...] some kind of paid content with some green messages that I didn't even know about and all of a sudden [...] I was like, is it actually right, the things they're saying?" (Interview 3)

One sustainability manager mentioned the importance of being harsh with the marketing department when making sure they do not use sustainability words incorrectly. Another one mentioned the importance of communicating and updating, and a third one said that it is crucial for the marketing team to understand what they are communicating, which means gaining an understanding of sustainability.

"You shouldn't just say that for saying it. So, you have to be thorough when it comes to you know, watching them not just putting in sustainability words around so then you have to be kind of harsh with them." (Interview 6)

"[...] And I think it's important that they will understand [...] what they're communicating to avoid greenwashing, [...] so they need to know at least something and work closely together with the sustainability manager." (Interview 9)

4.3.2 Planning Together

When discussing planning together, the sustainability managers mentioned doing yearly planning with the marketing department, bringing sustainability to all discussions, negotiating, and coming up with shared KPIs.

One of the interviewees said that the marketing department does their yearly strategy planning with the sustainability team so that both departments understand what is going on in sustainability and marketing. This type of yearly planning helps form mutual goals and values, which drive cross-functional collaboration.

"And when we do our yearly strategy, planning and so on. We do it together and we look into what are they doing and where can I and my things pitch into and vice versa." (Interview 3)

One of the sustainability managers mentioned sustainability-related KPIs and stated that they could motivate marketing people to deliver results.

"Bringing sustainability to all discussions that we have, it's always a big part of our strategy discussions. [...] When sustainability is part of the business as usual and you have KPIs attached to it, then people are motivated to actually deliver." (Interview 7)

Another interviewee shared that their firm has monthly or bi-weekly meetings with the marketing team. In these meetings, these two departments share plans and updates. The respondent mentioned that the collaboration with the marketing team is close, so planning together can be seen as an enabling factor in cross-functional collaboration between sustainability managers and the marketing department.

"And then we also have monthly or bi-weekly meetings [...] where updates and plans are shared regarding sustainability marketing. [...] So I would say that we have quite regular and close collaboration with the marketing teams." (Interview 1)

4.3.3 Different Viewpoints

Based on the interviews, different goals between the sustainability managers and the marketing department can cause tension in the cross-functional collaboration between the two departments. One sustainability manager mentioned that one difference between the two departments is the viewpoints, meaning that while the marketing team is focused on marketing, the sustainability team focuses on different topics and ensures no greenwashing is happening.

"So we want to be sure that everything we communicate is okay to say and we don't want to risk greenwashing for instance, whereas the marketing team, of course, have more of a marketing point of view." (Interview 1)

One of the sustainability managers mentioned the importance of giving an alternative to the marketing department if they cannot say something that could potentially be greenwashing. Otherwise, according to the respondent, the marketing department is at risk of getting frustrated and might stop talking about sustainability.

"The problem there is that when you tell them no, that they're not able to do it, and you don't give them an option for what they can say or an alternative. They get frustrated and then they stop talking about sustainability." (Interview 6)

To ensure seamless cross-functional collaboration, one interviewee suggested making your own goals somebody else's goals. Creating these mutual goals helps with making things happen and motivates people to perform toward the set targets.

"Sometimes you need to sell your goals to somebody else to make sure that they own them and make them their goals. I think that's sort of the role, or if you really want things to happen, make sure that other people perform them." (Interview 4)

Having clear mutual goals can prevent departments from getting lost in translation and ensure effective communication about sustainability. Mutual goals can also tie different departments together and provide value to shareholders and stakeholders.

"Unless like lost in translation, you have then lost certain shades, maybe some information if you are like just making a shortcut always. Maybe even important messages are left out." (Interview 2)

"The values and the principles tie us together. The whole of the company. [...] It's making sure that we are more together, we are more than the sum of the parts and [...] the sustainability also comes in. We say that we are creating value not only to shareholders that we used to do but to all our stakeholders and [...] we are very considerable to trust and transparency." (Interview 11)

4.4 Strengthening Collaboration Through Shared Information

During the interviews, the sustainability managers mentioned information sharing as a factor that positively impacts the cross-functional collaboration between them and the marketing department. According to one interviewee, sharing information helps the sustainability department to stay aware of the work of the marketing department and vice versa.

"[...] I'm well aware of, for example, the marketing department's annual clock, which is very familiar to me. We know what the obligatory requirements when it comes to marketing [...] I would say that both company marketing and also the product marketing activities are quite familiar to me." (Interview 2)

"[...] They know what is the annual clock of sustainability, and what kind of roadmap we have in place. They are fully aware of, for example, in what kind of networks the firm is in, because we are in quite many of them together." (Interview 2)

Another sustainability manager stated that sharing information is crucial, as sustainability managers can be seen as catalysts in spreading information and helping other employees understand the topic of sustainability.

"And I think sustainability manager is sort of key here as a catalyst in helping different parts of the company to understand (the topic of sustainability)." (Interview 4)

4.4.1 Frequency of Information Sharing

The interviewees expressed the importance of having frequent meetings to exchange information about sustainability and marketing objectives.

"[...] we also have like monthly or bi-weekly steering committee meetings as we call them, where we managers meet the task force and they can share updates on plans for sustainability marketing, and we get to share our input. [...] I would say that we have quite regular and close collaboration with the marketing teams." (Interview 1)

Consistent meetings between the sustainability and marketing departments provide an opportunity for both parties to understand each other's priorities and discuss departmental activities.

"And we have the bi-weekly meetings where everyone in marketing goes through the biggest topics we're working on right now. I know their yearly plans. I know what their priorities are within the different markets and things like that. So, I would say I'm quite close." (Interview 3)

One manager said their team reports quarterly to inform everyone about sustainability activities and measures. It is important to have frequent information sharing to make sure that employees are aware of targets and changes.

"I have started doing a quarterly report on the main sustainability targets and just like you know, reminding people that is where we go with this and what we're measuring." (Interview 10)

According to one informant, it is crucial to maintain continuous communication and information sharing.

"We have to keep in mind and remember to communicate, update, keep updating, between the teams." (Interview 2)

Regularly discussing the firm's sustainability through meetings and reports improves collaboration between departments. Creating a work environment where employees feel comfortable contributing ideas and discussing problems can also lead to more frequent conversations and further improve collaboration. Having a low threshold for the conversations with the sustainability managers increases the frequency of the conversations since the marketing employees feel that they can come to talk to the sustainability manager easier, their problem does not need to be significant.

4.4.2 An Environment of Trust and Easiness of Communication

It was observed that discussing sustainability issues and topics with sustainability managers at a low threshold positively impacted the sharing of information and overall collaboration between the marketing department and sustainability.

One interviewee felt like the frequent meetings between departments made it easier for the marketing team to approach the sustainability team regarding various matters.

"I think it's important that we have these trainings and dialogues regularly because then they also feel like we have this connection and they (the marketing department) have sustainability

on top of minds, but also that they can easily come up to me and discuss things (concerns and challenges)." (Interview 1)

Additionally, one of the interviewees pointed out that having sustainability and marketing in one department creates an environment of trust and makes it easier to share challenges and frustrations as they occur.

"I also think that just because we are in the same department and you know, we have lunch together every day and we have a good dialogue and they know what I'm doing and we can share, you know, challenges and frustrations and vice versa." (Interview 3)

According to one respondent, creating an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas and suggestions is crucial for successful collaboration. This allows for a broader discussion of topics and promotes creativity. The interviewee emphasised the importance of setting aside time for these types of conversations rather than solely focusing on formal meetings.

"And I think, again the kind of process we have for creating ideas around quite freely around these topics, [...] So, it's an open process. Anyone that has the interest to think about what we want to do with sustainability, can be a part of that. So, the structured approach helps and then you kind of also get the feeling that even though you're not working with the topic (sustainability), you still can present your ideas and you still can be a part of that. So, I think it helps the discussions also go forward. And then that's also a structured way to reserve time for those discussions. Not just limited to "okay, now I'm working on this text on the pack, and I need your comments", but then maybe thinking about the issue in a bit broader sense as well." (Interview 12)

4.4.3 Focused Group and Tasks

During the discussion on collaboration and information sharing, the importance of having a clear objective and a dedicated team for a specific project or task was emphasised. The sustainability managers brought up the necessity of having a specific case to collaborate with the marketing department and working with a team of members from both departments.

One interviewee stated that having a concrete project makes information sharing easier and collaboration more successful. According to this respondent, these concrete projects make integrating sustainability easier for marketing people.

"The knowledge is in a way different level and that's why it's always good if you get to be working on a concrete case quite quickly. [...] because sometimes I feel like the marketing folks are a bit struggling with how to start to talk about this (sustainability) for the first time around." (Interview 5)

Another interviewee mentioned that they have started a task force with members from both the sustainability and marketing departments. This task force was created to encourage productive collaboration between the two departments.

"We actually started a task force that consists of one person from my team, and person from our brand team and social media team. And the point of this task force is for our teams to have a close and transparent collaboration." (Interview 1)

Sharing relevant sustainability information with the appropriate group was beneficial for cross-functional collaboration. To undertake specific projects, it is important to identify the relevant information that will be useful for the marketing department. One of the sustainability managers noted that because sustainability is a broad topic, it is not necessary for every department to have extensive knowledge about it to incorporate it into their work.

"I would say it is still the capability building in a way, sustainability is such a broad topic and a lot is happening, so then how to get the relevant level of information through to all of the people working in that, in a way they don't need to know everything that's not relevant for their job, but then they need to understand a bit the context and what's the magnitude of things and what is important and what is not." (Interview 12)

A sustainability manager discussed the importance of being visible and not relying solely on working in the same office to share information. Marketing people need to know who sustainability managers are and what they can do to help the marketing team. The respondent mentioned that having an easy flow of information makes it easier to approach the sustainability manager of the firm.

"You can't only sit in your office space and do your thing, you need to go out and communicate and so on." (Interview 4)

"And make yourself visible, I think that's a step to make sure you visit different departments." (Interview 4)

4.5 Training and Shared Knowledge

During our interviews, the topic of training the marketing department in sustainability matters was discussed. After analysing the data, we identified three main categories: relevancy of the shared information, staying informed on current matters, and training frequency. The findings of each category will be discussed in the following chapters.

4.5.1 Relevancy of Shared Knowledge

As mentioned above, sharing relevant information with the right department is important, but so is the relevancy of the training. One of the sustainability managers pointed out the importance of increasing knowledge on relevant matters such as sustainable marketing.

"Not really formal trainings. We have had trainings together for our colleagues. So, we have had some joint trainings, internal trainings, about sustainable marketing, where both me and my marketing colleague held the training. And it was held for marketing and sales teams." (Interview 1)

Another respondent said that training marketing employees on the different sustainability terms is essential. According to the interviewee, more training is needed since sustainability is a broad and complex world.

"But definitely what comes to the marketing team is very important to kind of train them about the different, you know, words that we use and what they mean, like if we plan different kinds of claims, "climate positive" or "recycled material", that they know what it means. But I would say that in a way more training is needed. Sometimes it feels like, when you do train people internally about this topic, it feels like, you know, the more you know, the more painful it gets when they understand the complexity." (Interview 5)

During the interviews, two people mentioned the importance of accessible training materials for the marketing department. One respondent stated that training materials provide more detailed information, while the other highlighted the significance of relevant materials that are easily accessible to the marketing department.

"I planned already like this kind of yearly sustainability trainings. And now we are actually launching also in our internal competence portal. We are going to launch there this course about sustainability. There is already material of sustainability over there, but now it's going to be more in depth." (Interview 9)

"Now sort of, there is still a section called sustainability, but we've split things up. So, the parts that were rather directed towards things we put in marketing, to make sure that we meet the target group where they are instead of, sitting hands like this (hands open) with all the information "I have, please come and pick yours" so it's really about adapting to the different target groups as well." (Interview 10)

4.5.2 Up-to-date Topics

The sustainability managers mentioned the importance of training the marketing team on new sustainability topics. Two managers mentioned attending third-party courses to further extend their knowledge.

"We are going to Brussels to understand the regulatory development in two weeks." (Interview 2)

"We have participated, for example, the UN Global compacts climate accelerator program together. I was there, and two persons were invited to the program from a company and then I went there with one of the guys in the in the comms and marketing. So, we went there as he expressed that, in addition to doing visualisation of marketing and comms activities, he is also interested in learning more about the climate change mitigation." (Interview 2)

"As an example, all of our marketing managers actually went on a full day course at a governmental institution that actually is in favour of paying out fines to people who do wrong advertising. So, they went on a full day course on greenwashing and on sustainability, how can you use the sustainability words in advertising, what are the rules of documentations and all that kind of things. So, they are also working on actually becoming sustainability experts themselves in order to at least on the communication side, in order to know what you can and cannot do." (Interview 3)

Another interviewee stated that in their firm, the priority is in addressing current pressing concerns, specifically the causes and characteristics of the climate crisis. This helps the marketing employees gain more knowledge on sustainability and use this knowledge in their work.

"Several key issues that we focus on, one thing is general awareness. To give our colleagues an understanding of the climate crisis of nature crisis, what are the drivers? What are the consequences? So that's just two. Enable them to have discussions concerning sustainability with the clients, with their colleagues in their assignments and so on. And another part is our methodology to implement sustainability into our projects, how we work with sustainability,

how we approach sustainability, and what needs to be done in order to succeed with sustainability in projects as a project manager." (Interview 7)

4.5.3 Regularity of Training

The interviewees mentioned that firms are consistently updating their agenda with new topics. This highlights the importance of training on current issues as well as the need for regular sustainability training.

"There are so many new topics coming to the agenda all the time and also new regulation when it comes to the green claims, for the word sustainability. So it's very important to kind of keep informing, and engaging and you know, discussing them through, so everyone knows what's going on and what will likely affect also their work going forward." (Interview 5)

Three managers said the firms they work with hold onboarding training for all new employees, including sustainability training. These trainings are supposed to give the basic knowledge of sustainability and how sustainability practices are implemented within the firm.

"And also, we have these orientation days, a couple of times of the year for all new employees, where we have speakers from all divisions and teams, and including me, so all new colleagues that start at our company have had sustainability training." (Interview 1)

"We have a compulsory basic course that all employees need to attend. And also we have throughout the year, we have both short calls regarding sustainability, and also some themed courses as well." (Interview 7)

"We are geographically dispersed, so they installed this onboarding program for new employees. So, sustainability is part of that, everyone starting at the firm, they go through that. We also send out the code of conduct for everyone to sign also on a very general level, we have specific trainings on anti-corruption." (Interview 10)

One interviewee shared that their marketing department receives sustainability training multiple times a year. During these trainings, the marketing department learns about the firm's sustainability initiatives. The respondent also mentioned that the firm provides more targeted training when specific issues arise that must be addressed.

"We do have sustainability training from the group side, there's a lot of trainings for the marketing related to sustainability. [...] So, I hold trainings at least twice a year, where we go

through our kind of topical sustainability initiatives and why we do that, what are we doing and what is the impact that we expect to achieve? [...] We also have these more ad hoc things, as I mentioned on the green claims, and whenever there's something that comes up that they would need to know so then, regular trainings and ad hoc ones as well." (Interview 12)

One of the sustainability managers had a different approach to having regularity in the training. According to the interview, a good way of teaching sustainability is through practice, meaning having the sustainability manager work alongside the marketing team in their daily tasks and incorporating training in that way.

"I think it's always good to have these kinds of specific courses or webinars or however you're organising the trainings, but I think the best way to learn is kind of through the practice." (Interview 9)

5. Discussion

In this section, we discuss and delve deeper into our findings about the nature of cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. We outline the possible underlying elements affecting the collaboration and their theoretical implications. Based on our findings, the chapter is divided into four sections: management support, mutual projects, common language, and motivation and purpose. These are the elements that tie together the themes found in the literature. We ground our discussion in our research question:

"What is the nature of collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department, and what can be done to promote an efficient collaboration?"

Figure 2 presents how the four different themes we found in the literature (management support, shared goals & values, information sharing and training) are linked by the elements we discovered from our findings (top management support, mutual projects/working together, common language and understanding of concepts, and motivation and purpose). According to our findings, management support is crucial in enabling cross-functional collaboration. Therefore, in Figure 2, it is placed above the other themes.

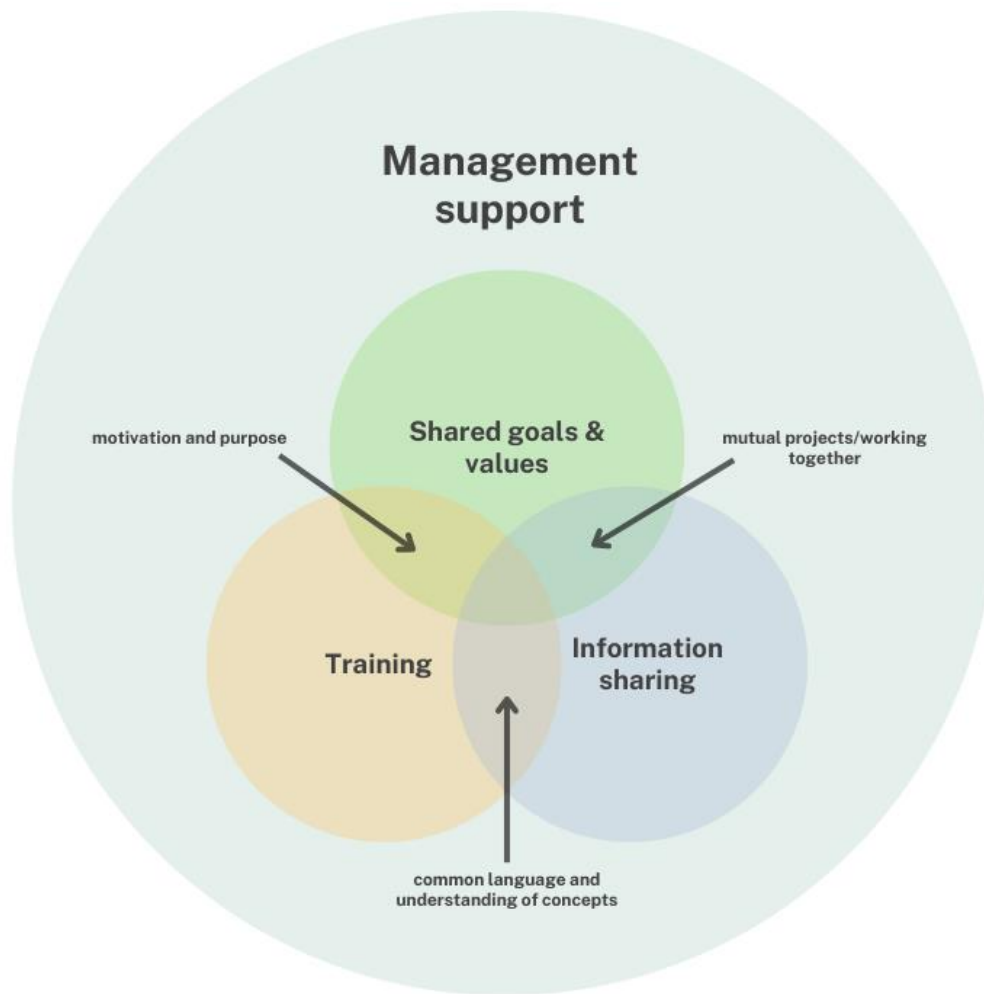


Figure 2. Elements affecting cross-functional collaboration between sustainability manager and marketing department

5.1 The Role of Top Management Support

Our study argues that to ensure seamless cross-functional collaboration between sustainability managers and the marketing department, sustainability needs to be integrated into the firm's overall strategy, and it should receive top management support. This is supported by De Luca & Atuahene-Gima (2007), who found that management support provides the necessary resources to facilitate cross-functional collaboration and ensures it achieves its full potential. Management support can take many forms, for example, providing financial and human resources, establishing cross-functional teams, and creating incentives for collaboration (De Clercq et al., 2011; Ellinger, 2000 & Griffin & Hauser, 1996). Additionally, our findings suggest that top management could provide support by developing a strategy that aligns

everyone in the firm towards common goals and targets. Based on our findings, many sustainability managers feel that top management should develop a strategy that incorporates sustainability. This would ensure that sustainability would be a fundamental part of the firm's operations. Adopting sustainability into the strategy can have various benefits, such as helping with market entry and giving a firm a competitive advantage (Lowitt & Sarni, 2011; Eccles et al., 2014). In addition, we found that collaborating on sustainability seems easier when it is integrated into a firm's strategy and given priority. Effective implementation of sustainability practices can be seen in, for example, sustainability-related goals set by the top management, encouragement from the top management team towards sustainability conversation and collaboration, and regular training on sustainability topics. All these elements help integrate sustainable practices into a firm's daily operations and promote a long-term commitment to environmental responsibility.

Furthermore, support from the top management team can help promote shared values among employees from different departments by encouraging them to communicate, plan together and educate each other (Ellinger, 2000; Worley & Doolen, 2006). Top management can also provide sufficient communication tools, including communication channels between the departments (Worley & Doolen, 2006). We found that top management can also arrange sustainability training for different departments, allowing a mutual understanding of sustainability topics and strengthening cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability managers and the marketing department. To foster information sharing, the top management can create an environment that makes information sharing easy, such as arranging a shared office space or organising mutual meetings between departments.

According to our findings, one key element for successful management support is an engaged CEO who is aware and committed to sustainability, as they are likely to encourage the sustainability collaboration between departments and ensure that sustainability is considered in every part of the organisation. Our study suggests that in some cases, the top management team might claim that sustainability is an essential element in the firm when the focus is, in fact, on financial performance. We found that this attitude, where there is a misalignment between top management's words and actions on sustainability, could negatively impact cross-functional collaboration. Our study argues that management support can be seen as a critical aspect of cross-functional collaboration. The lack of top management support can result in a failure of a project, and in a situation where top management is partial, the project may be delayed or stalled altogether (Young & Jordan, 2008).

5.2 Mutual Projects: Enablers for Information Sharing & Shared Goals

To embed sustainability into the firm's overall strategy, the top management team can set sustainability goals and values for all departments (Rezaee & Rezaee, 2021). Shared goals and values enable employees to share a sense of purpose and align their efforts toward achieving the organisation's objectives (Kahn & Mentzer, 1998). Collaboration between departments can be complex without mutual values, goals, or cultures (Mohsen & Eng, 2016). To work towards mutual goals and promote collaboration, the departments could create joint projects enabling information sharing. Creating mutual projects is also one element in our findings promoting effective cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. Without mutual projects, the departments might end up working in individual silos, which weakens the likelihood of success in cross-functional collaboration between the departments. Joint projects also allow frequent information sharing by giving structure and enabling efficient communication.

In addition to the mutual goals and values transferred from the top management, we discovered that the sustainability manager and the marketing department could strengthen their collaboration by planning together. This planning can take the form of holding meetings and setting mutual sustainability-related key performance indicators (KPIs), such as carbon footprint. Frequent information sharing in consistent meetings between the sustainability and marketing departments allows both parties to understand each other's priorities and discuss departmental activities. Collective or collaborative planning between teams enhances their ability to set shared goals and values (Ellinger, 2000). Cultivating a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for a project is crucial in building a culture of trust and mutual respect within a firm (Chernetsky et al., 2022).

Effective communication helps departments to plan effectively and work towards shared goals (De Clercq et al., 2011). We argue that seamless communication is essential, as it helps prevent misinformation and reduces the risk of greenwashing. For example, if the marketing department lacks a proper understanding of sustainability, there is a risk of engaging in deceptive advertising. By keeping the marketing department informed about the sustainability practices in the firm and ensuring that sustainability messaging is accurately conveyed, the sustainability manager can ensure that marketing efforts are aligned with the firm's sustainability goals.

5.3 Common Language and Understanding of Concepts

Information sharing and effective communication are critical for cross-functional collaboration between departments, ensuring efficient collaboration and aligned efforts (De Clercq, 2011; Ellinger, 2000). Based on our findings, we have discovered that effective information sharing between the sustainability manager and the marketing department can be achieved through a common language and understanding of sustainability concepts, which can be attained through sustainability training. It is beneficial for the marketing team to have a shared understanding of sustainability-related terms to communicate effectively with the sustainability manager. This common language can improve their knowledge of sustainability concepts and facilitate information sharing between departments.

Training is vital in improving collaboration and strengthening the cross-functional relations between departments (Chernetsky et al., 2022; De Clercq, 2011; Ellinger, 2000). During our interviews, we discovered that the marketing employees might require targeted training to improve their understanding of the complex topic of sustainability. Additionally, the marketing team may need to be encouraged to learn about sustainability topics since they may be outside their job description. Our study has found that a significant number of marketing employees find sustainability to be a complex and challenging subject. This is mainly due to the use of various terminologies and the constantly evolving nature of the field. Therefore, providing specific training could help develop a solid understanding of sustainability, enabling the marketing department to incorporate it into their work and helping them avoid greenwashing. In addition, providing training may help foster an environment where the marketing team feels comfortable expressing their views on sustainability. This type of atmosphere can facilitate communication and lead to more frequent information sharing.

In cross-functional collaboration, shared language can reduce misunderstandings (Santa et al., 2010). Based on our analysis, the marketing department could benefit from having a basic understanding of sustainability without delving into details. This will simplify the topic and minimise the risk of misunderstandings. Equipping marketing employees with the necessary knowledge and tools, such as a clear understanding of sustainability terms, can boost their motivation to communicate effectively.

Frequent sustainability training is crucial to ensure employees' understanding and commitment to sustainable practices (Cop et al., 2020). According to our study, frequent training and

sharing of relevant information are vital to sustaining effective understanding and communication of sustainability. Therefore, we argue that it is crucial to effectively manage and organise focused training sessions to ensure successful collaboration between the marketing department and the sustainability manager. Furthermore, we believe that the marketing department may benefit from regular training since there are new regulations and trends within sustainability regularly, and the topic constantly evolves.

Our findings suggest that the sustainability manager should avoid going too deep into details to ensure that sustainability topics are easily understood. However, starting with the basics, learning about various sustainability terms and concepts can provide many tools for the marketing department and help them understand sustainability better. Furthermore, this knowledge will enable them to effectively discuss sustainability and increase awareness. These sustainability discussions and increased awareness might, in turn, facilitate shared projects and collaborations around sustainability.

5.4 The Importance of Motivation and Purpose

Having shared goals and values is essential, and incorporating sustainability into the firm's training program is crucial for boosting the marketing department's knowledge. To motivate employees to learn about sustainability, it is imperative to provide a clear purpose for the training. Having a clear purpose can enhance the effectiveness of sustainability training (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). The responsibility of achieving the firm's sustainability goals should not be solely placed on the sustainability department, considering that the sustainability manager cannot achieve the goals alone. The informants stated that sustainability is a collective effort that requires the participation of all employees.

The successful integration of sustainability in a firm requires the motivation and enthusiasm of the employees to learn (Haugh & Talwar, 2010). Additionally, our research indicates that when top management sets goals and values related to sustainability, it inspires the marketing team to participate in and engage with sustainability initiatives. This approach also helps sustainability managers by avoiding the need to explain the importance of sustainability. Instead, they can focus on providing education and necessary tools to different departments.

When sustainability is not just promoted by the sustainability department and is integrated into the firm's culture and structure, employees are more likely to embrace sustainability in their

work (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Furthermore, our research has revealed that it might be a mistake to treat sustainability as a separate silo within the firm's structure instead of including it in the whole firm. This could make it difficult for the sustainability managers to convince other departments to adopt and communicate sustainability practices. However, if sustainability is considered a strategic component of the firm, this could increase the significance of sustainability for each department.

We suggest that firms should give sustainability training a purpose and motivate employees to learn about the organisation's sustainability practices. Our analysis suggests that when a firm incorporates sustainability into its strategy, there might be less resistance from employees, as they recognise that it affects everyone and that it could be beneficial to take it seriously and integrate into their work.

6. Conclusions

In the final section of our thesis, we will summarise our key findings and theoretical contributions from our research. Furthermore, we will propose future research ideas to encourage further exploration in the field. We will also address the limitations we encountered during our study, acknowledging their impact on the research outcomes. Lastly, we will present the managerial implications based on our research findings.

6.1 Summary

Our thesis was conducted with the purpose of exploring our research question: *"What is the nature of collaboration between a firm's sustainability manager and marketing department, and what can be done to promote an efficient collaboration?"*

To answer our research question, we conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature. This involved examining academic articles and research related to sustainability in business and marketing, as well as literature on cross-functional collaboration. Through this process, we gathered information to understand the current knowledge on the topic. After conducting our review, we came to the realisation that there is a lack of research regarding the subject. This could be due to the fairly new and unstandardised role of the sustainability manager. Therefore, to explore the relationship between the two departments, we conducted 12 semi-structured interviews to get more insight into how the collaboration works and how it could be managed. To guide our interviews, we relied on the existing literature, which helped us identify the four main themes for our research.

In addition to the themes found from the literature, our research indicates that there are four main elements that impact the collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department: top management support, mutual projects, common language and giving a purpose for the training. We discovered that these four elements connect the four themes. Moreover, our research suggests that the collaboration between the two departments is being facilitated and enabled by the support of top management. Without sufficient support from top management, the collaboration may be challenging. The firm's management is responsible for assigning resources, approving budgets, and establishing strategies. Our findings indicate that the shared goals and values established by top management play a significant role in fostering collaboration between the sustainability manager and the

marketing department. Additionally, the top management is capable of giving the sustainability training purpose and motivating the marketing employees to participate in the training. The training, on the other hand, ensures the common language and understanding of concepts of sustainability. This enables effective information sharing between sustainability managers and marketing department. Finally, to achieve the shared goals and objectives, the two departments may benefit from having shared projects and teams. We found that this may have an impact on the level of shared information between the departments.

6.2 Future Research

While there has been research on collaborations between marketing departments and other departments, there is a lack of literature that explores the relationship between the sustainability manager and the marketing. For more thorough research, we recommend conducting interviews on a larger scale. It would also be beneficial to focus on specific industries for further investigation, such as food or clothing, which have already made notable progress in sustainability. Moreover, interviewing marketing managers in these sectors can provide a more complete analysis of the situation.

In our thesis, we have discovered four key elements for cross-functional collaboration that we think would be interesting to investigate further. We suggest conducting a study where a company implements our recommended methods for managing collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing team. This research would provide additional proof of the effectiveness of our suggestions for enhancing collaboration.

Finally, to gain a deeper understanding of the strategic choices on collaboration, it would be beneficial to conduct more extensive research on a single firm over a longer period of time. Examining the different strategic choices of the firm and how they affect the collaboration would provide valuable insights and demonstrate the development of the collaboration.

6.3 Limitations

It is important that we acknowledge the limitations of our research. To begin with, the number of interviews conducted was relatively small, which means the study may not represent all sustainability managers, and therefore the findings may not be fully generalised. While the current number of interviewees is sufficient for the purpose of our thesis, we would suggest

increasing the number of interviews to gather more data and increase the study's credibility and generalisability.

The data we collected was based solely on the perceptions, thoughts, and experiences of our interviewees in relation to their collaboration with the marketing department. Due to the subjective nature of these responses, we cannot guarantee their complete accuracy or whether they may have presented their firm in a favourable light. In order to prevent bias, we structured the interview questions in a manner that avoids influencing the answers of the interviewees. Additionally, to ensure truthful responses, we made sure to let the interviewees know that their responses would be anonymous and confidential.

Our research focuses on the collaboration between sustainability managers and the marketing department, which is an area that has not been extensively studied. As a result, there is a limited amount of prior research for us to compare our findings with. Therefore, it is challenging to assess how our findings compare to similar studies or research conducted.

Finally, we identified four elements that affect the collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department. It is worth noting that there could be other variables that could also have an impact on the topic. However, due to the scope and purpose of the thesis, we were unable to explore every possibility.

6.4 Managerial Implications

From our findings, we split the managerial implications into two main parts, top management implications and sustainability manager implications. The first part suggests what firms' top management can consider when managing the cross-functional collaboration between the sustainability managers and the marketing department. The second part looks at what the sustainability manager should consider when working with the marketing department. It explores how they can ensure effective collaboration the two departments.

For the top management, providing the resources for collaboration is vital. The teams may need budget, time, workforce, and a joint project to work together successfully in cross-functional collaboration. As we mentioned in the discussion part of our thesis, the top management could discuss sustainability and make it a strategic part of the firm. This would encourage sustainability related discussions and show the firm that the sustainability manager

should not be the only one who sees sustainability practises as important. Lastly, the top management could establish cross-functional teams, such as task forces, comprising both the sustainability manager and marketing employees. Our findings indicate that this arrangement might play a significant role in facilitating information sharing concerning sustainability.

To improve collaboration between the sustainability manager and the marketing department, it may be beneficial for the sustainability manager to be physically present in the office and engage in open dialogue. Our research indicates that sustainability managers can use informal conversations, in addition to formal meetings, to maintain constant communication. In addition, regular sustainability training may be needed to ensure that the marketing team is well-informed and equipped with valuable insights. However, it is important to avoid getting too detailed to avoid disengagement and making sustainability seem overly complicated.

7. References

- Amrani, R. E., Rowe, F., & Geffroy-Maronnat, B. (2006). The effects of enterprise resource planning implementation strategy on cross-functionality. *Information Systems Journal*, 16(1), 79–104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2575.2006.00206.x>
- Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of qualitative research: Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of emerging trends in educational research and policy studies*, 5(2), 272-281.
- Arifin, S. R. M. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International journal of care scholars*, 1(2), 30-33.
- Baker, M. J. (2003). *The marketing book*. Butterworth Heinemann.
- Bell, J. (2010). *Doing your research project*. Open University Press.
- Bodhanwala, S., & Bodhanwala, R. (2018). Does corporate sustainability impact firm profitability? evidence from India. *Management Decision*, 56(8), 1734–1747. <https://doi.org/10.1108/md-04-2017-0381>
- Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative Research for Education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Allyn and Bacon.
- Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.a). Bias. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bias>
- Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.b). Greenwashing. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/greenwashing>
- Carollo, L., & Guerci, M. (2017). ‘activists in a suit’: Paradoxes and metaphors in sustainability managers’ identity work. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148(2), 249–268. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3582-7>
- Chernetsky, V. V., Hughes, D. E., & Schrock, W. A. (2022). A synthesis of research on the marketing-sales interface (1984–2020). *Industrial Marketing Management*, 105, 159–181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.05.014>
- Cop, S., Alola, U. V., & Alola, A. A. (2020). Perceived behavioral control as a mediator of hotels' green training, environmental commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior: A sustainable environmental practice. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 29(8), 3495-3508.
- Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2004). Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off. *Administrative science quarterly*, 49(2), 173-208.

-
- Curtin, M., & Fossey, E. (2007). Appraising the trustworthiness of qualitative studies: Guidelines for occupational therapists. *Australian occupational therapy journal*, 54(2), 88-94.
- De Clercq, D., Thongpapanl, N., & Dimov, D. (2011). A Closer Look at Cross-Functional Collaboration and Product Innovativeness: Contingency Effects of Structural and Relational Context. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, no. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2011.00830.x>
- De Luca, L. M., & Atuahene-Gima, K. (2007). Market Knowledge Dimensions and Cross-Functional Collaboration: Examining the Different Routes to Product Innovation Performance. *Journal of Marketing*, 71(1), 95–112. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.71.1.95>
- De Souza Cunha, F. a. F., De Oliveira, E. P., Orsato, R. J., Klotzle, M. C., Bozza, F. A., & Caiado, R. G. G. (2020). Can sustainable investments outperform traditional benchmarks? Evidence from global stock markets. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 29(2), 682–697. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2397>
- Eccles, R. G., Ioannou, I., & Serafeim, G. (2014). The impact of corporate sustainability on organizational processes and performance. *Management Science*, 60(11), 2835–2857. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2014.1984>
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of management journal*, 50(1), 25-32.
- Ellinger, A. E. (2000). Improving Marketing/Logistics Cross-Functional Collaboration in the Supply Chain. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 29(1), 85–96. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0019-8501\(99\)00114-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0019-8501(99)00114-5)
- Epstein, M. J., & Buhovac, A. R. (2014). *Making sustainability work: Best practices in managing and measuring corporate social, environmental, and economic impacts*. Berrett-koeher publishers.
- Etymonline. (2018). Etymonline. <https://etymonline.com/word/collaboration>
- Flick, U. (2022). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Sage.
- Fu, R., Tang, Y., & Chen, G. (2019). Chief sustainability officers and corporate social (ir)responsibility. *Strategic Management Journal*, 41(4), 656–680. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3113>
- Garner, J. (2015). *From me to we: Why commercial collaboration will future-proof business, leaders and personal success*. Wiley.
- Ghauri, P. N., & Grønhaug, K. (2005). *Research methods in business studies* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Grant, J. (2020). *Greener marketing*. Wiley.

- Griffin, A., & Hauser, J. (1996). Integrating R&D and Marketing: A Review and Analysis of the Literature. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 13(3), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5885.1330191>
- Haugh, H. M., & Talwar, A. (2010). How do corporations embed sustainability across the organization?. *Academy of Management learning & education*, 9(3), 384-396.
- Hoffman, A. J. (2018). The next phase of Business Sustainability. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3191035>
- Jørgensen, S., & Pedersen, L. (2018) *RESTART Sustainable Business Model Innovation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kahn, K. B., & Mentzer, J. T. (1998). Marketing's Integration with Other Departments. *Journal of Business Research*, 42(1), 53–62. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0148-2963\(97\)00068-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0148-2963(97)00068-4)
- Kanashiro, P., & Rivera, J. (2017). Do chief sustainability officers make companies greener? the moderating role of regulatory pressures. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 155(3), 687–701. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3461-2>
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124.
- Kourdi, J. (2011). *The marketing century how marketing drives business and Shapes Society: The Chartered Institute of Marketing*. Wiley.
- Lahti, T., Wincent, J., & Parida, V. (2018). A definition and theoretical review of the circular economy, value creation, and sustainable business models: Where are we now and where should research move in the future? *Sustainability*, 10(8), 2799. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10082799>
- Lee, J. E., & Joo, H. (2020). The Impact of Top Management's Support on the Collaboration of Green Supply Chain Participants and Environmental Performance. *Sustainability*, 12(21), 9090. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12219090>
- Lester, J. N., Cho, Y., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2020). Learning to Do Qualitative Data Analysis: A Starting Point. *Human Resource Development Review*, 19(1), 94–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320903890>
- Linnenluecke, M. K., & Griffiths, A. (2010). Corporate sustainability and organizational culture. *Journal of world business*, 45(4), 357-366.
- Lowitt, E., & Sarni, W. (2011). *The future of value how sustainability creates value through competitive differentiation*. Jossey-Bass.
- McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 2, 233339361559767. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674>

-
- Miller, K. P., & Serafeim, G. (2014). Chief sustainability officers: Who are they and what do they do? *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2411976>
- Mohsen, K., & Eng, T. (2016). The antecedents of cross-functional coordination and their implications for marketing adaptiveness. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5946–5955. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.05.007>
- Ngulube, P. (2015). Qualitative data analysis and interpretation: systematic search for meaning. *Addressing research challenges: making headway for developing researchers*, 131, 156.
- Nguyen, T. T., Yang, Z., Nguyen, N., Johnson, L. W., & Cao, T. K. (2019). Greenwash and green purchase intention: The mediating role of green skepticism. *Sustainability*, 11(9), 2653. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11092653>
- Parida, V., & Wincent, J. (2019). Why and how to compete through sustainability: A review and outline of trends influencing firm and network-level transformation. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 15(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11365-019-00558-9>
- Polonsky, M. J. (1994). An introduction to green marketing. *Electronic Green Journal*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.5070/g31210177>
- Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). Creating shared value: How to reinvent capitalism—And unleash a wave of innovation and growth. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1–2)
- Priyono, A. (2016). Cross-functional collaboration in sustainability contexts: exploratory studies in remanufacturing firms. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 35, 553-562.
- Rezaee, Z. (2021). *Business sustainability*. Business Expert Press.
- Rezaee, Z., & Rezaee, N. J. (2021). *Business sustainability: Investor, Board, and Management Perspective*. Business Expert Press.
- Ritala, P., Huotari, P., Bocken, N., Albareda, L., & Puumalainen, K. (2018). Sustainable business model adoption among S&P 500 firms: A longitudinal content analysis study. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 170, 216–226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.09.159>
- Rosen, R., & Beaver, D. (1978). PART I. THE PROFESSIONAL ORIGINS OF SCIENTIFIC CO-AUTHORSHIP. *Scientometrics*.
- Rowley, J. (2002). Using Case Studies in Research. *Management research news*, 25(1), 16-27.
- Santa, R., Ferrer, M., Bretherton, P., & Hyland, P. (2010). Contribution of cross-functional teams to the improvement in operational performance. *Team Performance Management: An international Journal*, 16(3/4), 148-168.

- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th ed.) Pearson.
- Serafeim, G. (2022). *Purpose and profit: How business can lift up the world*. HarperCollins Leadership.
- Sroufe, R. P. (2018). *Integrated management: How sustainability creates value for any business*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Sustainability hub Norway. (2021). State of sustainability in Norway 2021. In <https://www.sustainabilityhub.no/stateofsustainability2021.html>.
- Thapar, N. (2021). Effects of Sustainability as a Marketing Strategy on the Brand Equity of Selected Indian Firms. *Journal of IMS Group*, 18(01).
- Tollin, K., Christensen, L. B., & Wilke, R. (2014). Sustainability in business from a marketing perspective. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 23(6), 471–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254x.2014.991348>
- United Nations. (n.d.). The Paris Agreement. [unfccc.int](https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement). Retrieved April 1, 2023, from <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>
- Vogt, W. P., Haefele, L. M., & Gardner, D. C. (2012). *When to use what research design*. Guilford Press.
- Vollstedt, M., & Rezat, S. (2019). An introduction to grounded theory with a special focus on axial coding and the coding paradigm. *Compendium for early career researchers in mathematics education*, 13(1), 81-100.
- Weybrecht, G. (2014). *The sustainable Mba: A Business Guide to sustainability*. Wiley.
- Wiengarten, F., Lo, C. K., & Lam, J. Y. (2015). “How does sustainability leadership affect firm performance? the choices associated with appointing a chief officer of corporate social responsibility.” *Journal of Business Ethics*, 140(3), 477–493. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2666-5>
- Worley, J. M., & Doolen, T. L. (2006). The role of communication and management support in a lean manufacturing implementation. *Management decision*.
- Young, R., & Jordan, E. (2008). Top management support: Mantra or necessity?. *International journal of project management*, 26(7), 713-725.

8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

Introduction

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview
- Explain that the names of the companies or respondents are not going to be revealed in the report.
- Ask for consent to record the interview
- Ask if the participant has any questions before you start

1. Background questions

- Can you tell us about yourself, your background, and your current role in the company, and how long have you been working with sustainability?
- In your own words, can you describe how you collaborate with the marketing team?

2. Shared goals and values

- How aligned are the values and goals of the sustainability team and marketing team in your company?

3. Shared information

- How familiar are you with your company's marketing practices?
- What about the other way around? Are the marketing people familiar with sustainability practices?

4. Cooperation/communication

- Can you tell us about the work you do with the marketing department?
- Do you face any challenges when interacting or collaborating with them?
 - If yes, can you give an example of a situation where cooperation between the two departments was challenging and how was it resolved?

5. Teamwork and training

- Have you undergone any joint training or team-building activities with the marketing department?
 - If yes, can you describe the nature and outcomes of these activities?

6. Management support

- To what extent does senior management support and encourage cooperation between you and the marketing department?
- And to the end, what in your opinion has made the collaboration successful or to fail if it has not worked? What are the most important parts of collaboration in your experience?

7. Closing questions

- Is there anything else you would like to share about the cooperation between the sustainability manager and the marketing department?
- Thank the participant for their time and insights
- Ask if they have any questions or comments for you before ending the interview.