



PLASTIC

CONSUMPTION

ON ST. THOMAS

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Abstract

This thesis has the purpose of investigating the extent to which the locals on St. Thomas are willing to abide by the two plastic bans that have been implemented as well as to examine the extent to which they are willing to cut down on their consumption of plastic in general.

The plastic bans that have been implemented prohibit single use plastic bags, straws, and tubular stirrers with the purpose of reducing the amount of plastic waste on the islands and in the surrounding ocean as well as in the nature in general. But, a Facebook post and its comments on the Facebook page “What’s Going on St. Thomas?” indicates that a part of the local population on St. Thomas are against these bans as these types of plastic is such a small part of the plastic problem that it almost does not make any difference banning them. The comments, however, also show that a big part of the people who have commented on the Facebook post think that the bans are a good start to reverse local people’s mindsets into consuming less plastic in general.

This widespread between the local population’s opinions on the bans and consumption of plastic have sparked the interest of investigating the locals on St. Thomas’s behavior regarding plastic consumption.

To investigate this, the aforementioned Facebook post has been selected as empirical data alongside with a survey that has been conducted, asking the local population about their opinions on plastic consumption, the plastic bans, etc. These types of data are found relevant to gain a broad knowledge of a big group of people, to understand many different viewpoints of the same topic.

To support the findings, theories on habits and sustainable consumption and gender and identity salience effect on sustainable consumption have been applied in the analysis. In short, these theories suggest that a habit is easiest changed if the intention of breaking it is stronger than the habit itself, that women are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption than men, and that people who identify themselves as a part of a group, rather than as an individual, are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption.

The result of the analysis showed that the majority of the locals on St. Thomas are in favor of the plastic bans as well as they wish to reduce their consumption of plastic in general. However, several of the locals think that the plastic bans do not include enough types of plastic to make a noticeable impact and some are also of the opinion that reducing plastic is great, but on St. Thomas there are bigger problems than plastic that should be solved first. Also, even though the majority of the locals

wish to reduce their consumption of plastic, the locals have indicated that products with no or reduced use of plastic is not available in the supermarkets for the locals to buy, making it difficult or maybe even impossible to change this habit, no matter how strong the intention is. This means that the majority of the locals want to abide by the plastic bans and reduce their consumption of plastic, however, the supermarkets do not make this possible.

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1.0 Introduction

Planet earth is made out of 70% water, and it should, therefore, not be necessary to make a case about why we should keep our oceans healthy. The oceans' temperature, chemistry, currents, and living resources make life possible for human beings and animals, as well as they regulate the world's climate and the climate regulates life. All of our planet's 7.5 billion people depend on the oceans in fundamental ways, not to mention the 3 billion people who live near a coastal area, who have an even closer link to the ocean, relying on them for their livelihood and diets (Diez, et al. 2019, 19).

The Caribbean countries are among those countries that depend deeply on the oceans as the Caribbean Ocean supports 37 distinct economies that are most dependent on tourism in the world. Tourists flock to the Caribbean because of its beauty, biodiversity, and rich marine ecosystems which are now imperiled. The sea and marine ecosystems are being degraded by wastewater, urban and solid waste, agricultural runoff, and hazardous pollutants from oil and mining. The Caribbean countries are very exposed and vulnerable to the increased damage from marine pollution, and the cost of inaction will be a major drop in revenue from the tourism and fishing industries (Diez, et al. 2019, 12).

On St. Thomas, which is one of the three U.S. Virgin Islands, the government has implemented a ban against single-use plastic bags starting on April 1, 2017, as a start to minimize plastic pollution on the island, the surrounding islands, and the oceans (Thirty-first Legislature of the Virgin Islands 2016). And on October 1, 2019, the ban was expanded to also include single-use plastic straws and single-use plastic tubular stirrers (Thirty-Second Legislature of the Virgin Islands 2018).

These bans were implemented because the majority of the local economy on St. Thomas drives on the beauty of the island, which is tourism, and many locals rely on the waters for sustenance. Therefore, this ban is the start of a greater mindset shift that has to occur to preserve the waters both for leisure, food, and economic reasons, but also because of the overall impact that our environmental footprint has on climate change (St. Thomas Source 2019).

Despite these two bans on plastic, it seems that the local population and the local businesses are not enforcing these laws. In the Facebook group "What's Going on St. Thomas?", which is a group for everyone with an interest in the island, a picture from the fast-food restaurant Wendy's was posted on October 12, 2019, showing that they, despite the bans, still had plastic straws available for the customers. The text above the picture encourages the local population and the local businesses to enforce the law, which is also quoted in the Facebook post (Budsan 2019)(Appendix 10.1, page 2-3).

The Facebook post received 227 comments within 5 days, where the members of the Facebook group discussed their different viewpoints of the specific incident and the plastic ban on the island in general. Some expressed how they feel that the ban is ridiculous because plastic straws are such a small part of the plastic problem, that banning them will not make any difference. And others expressed that banning plastic bags, straws, and stirrers is a great start to reverse local people's mindsets into using less plastic in general (Appendix 10.1).

This widespread between the locals' opinions on the plastic bans makes it interesting to investigate whether the locals on St. Thomas are willing to enforce the plastic bans that have been implemented and interested in sustainable solutions in general to be part of the mindset shift that is essential to preserve the waters, the island, and the environment.

This has led to the following problem statement:

“To what extent is the local population on St. Thomas willing to enforce the plastic bans that have already been implemented and cut down on plastic in general?”

To answer the problem statement, data will be collected on behavior concerning plastic consumption, i.e. the locals on St. Thomas's behavior and habits concerning plastic consumption, both in relation to the plastic bans and plastic in general. Only by understanding the locals' behaviors and habits is it possible to investigate whether these can be changed, if needed, into a more sustainable way of consuming.

The purpose of addressing the issue of plastic consumption is that cutting down on plastic is not only essential on St. Thomas or in the Caribbean, but in the entire world. And, therefore, it is important to investigate how unsustainable habits can be changed into sustainable consumption. The term *sustainable consumption* does not only address the consumption of plastic but consumption in general, however, this thesis will only address sustainable consumption in regard to plastic consumption.

To address this, the structure, which will be provided in chapter 2, of the thesis has been chosen.

2.0 Structure

In this chapter, the structure of the chapters of this thesis is accounted for. Each chapter will begin with a short introduction of the content to the chapter.

Chapter 3, the literature review, contains relevant concepts in relation to this thesis, and these will be presented. The three concepts that have been found relevant is sustainable consumption, consumer habits and sustainable consumption, gender and identity and sustainable consumption, and consumer culture theory. The concepts will be elaborated, and it will be explained why these concepts are found relevant to include in this thesis.

In chapter 4, an account of the theoretical framework will be provided. This chapter contains two theories: A theory on consumer habits and sustainable consumption by Bas Verplanken and Deborah Roy and a theory on gender and identity salience effect on sustainable consumption by Diego Costa Pinto. Moreover, this chapter will include accounts for the relevance of the theories.

In chapter 5, an account of the research design will be provided. This includes the applied philosophy of science, choice of methods, data collection, and analysis method. This chapter is found relevant in order to account for the choices that have been made throughout this thesis and to create an overview of how this thesis has been composed.

In chapter 6, the analysis will be provided, starting with the analysis of a Facebook post, its comments, and sub-comments that have been chosen as empirical data for this thesis, followed by an analysis of a conducted survey. In these analyzes, aspects from the theories in chapter 4 will be connected with the empirical data to support the findings.

Chapter 7 will serve as a discussion chapter which will discuss the findings of the two analyzes in chapter 6. In this chapter the findings in chapter 6 will be compared and discussed, to find an answer to the problem statement.

Chapter 8, which is the conclusion, will gather the findings from chapter 6 and 7, which is what will end up as the final answer to the problem statement.

3.0 Literature Review

This chapter will include an account for concepts that are found relevant to understand in order to gain general knowledge about related topics to this thesis. The topics that are found relevant to investigate are sustainable consumption, consumer behavior, and gender and identity and sustainable consumption. These topics are found relevant in order to understand how consumers behave and which factors affect them into behaving a certain way and to understand what sustainable consumption is and why it is important to engage with. Lastly, an account for consumer culture theory will be provided as this theory provides important aspects of consumer culture and how it can be studied.

These concepts are found relevant based on the problem statement, as the concepts are all relevant in order to answer the problem statement. This chapter will function as an overview of the relevant literature to this study and in chapter 4 a few of the concepts will be elaborated further as these will function as the theoretical framework of this thesis.

3.1 Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption can be defined in many ways that may adopt various approaches. For example, a broad definition of sustainable consumption is that sustainable consumption contributes to, or at least does not jeopardize, the survival of future generations. This definition is implied in the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, where sustainable development is defined as:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (WCED 1987)

This definition, being very broad, does not include any specific actions but only surrounds the overall goal of sustainable consumption, namely, the survival of future generations. Therefore, this thesis will revolve around the following definition provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

“the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations.” (UNEP n.d.)

The above definition from UNEP is more specific than the definition from WCED, as it provides information about the goal of sustainable consumption: *“better quality of life”*, as well as it encourages behavior in a certain direction: *“minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emission of waste and pollutants”* (UNEP n.d.).

The solution to creating sustainable consumption is often said to be driven by product innovation, meaning, that if all products and services became sustainable, sustainability would no longer be an issue. However, there are several issues with this point of view, for instance, sustainability often requires high levels of investment, political support, consumer acceptance, and last but not least willingness to pay. The study of consumer behavior is, therefore, essential in the direction of product design and policy measures intended to encourage sustainable behavior (Antonides 2017, 1).

3.2 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior has been given a lot of attention for several decades and it can be defined as: *“the process involved when individual or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires”* (Solomon 2017, 31). Thus, there are many perspectives and different approaches within the field of consumer behavior. The research of consumer behavior has mainly focused on two approaches; the internal and external factors that affect the consumer. The internal factors are such as consumers’ attitudes, values, habits, personal norms, and how this type of variables can help predict potential behavior in regard to specific brands or products. The external factors are such as how family and friends, environment, and institutional constraint can affect the consumer (Solomon 2017, 23-24).

Consumer behavior involves both the use and disposal of products as well as the study of how they are purchased. The consumer behavior process, thereby, forms the perspectives from the what, when, how, from whom, and how often to purchase products and services. As a business, it is very important to know how consumers are affected in different directions as this can help them to best position a product and encourage increased consumption. If, for instance, the consumers on St. Thomas are affected by internal and/or external factors to purchase products that contain no or reduced use of plastic, the businesses on St. Thomas should know this to be able to sell this type of products and to position them in the best way (Kumra 2006, 2).

Consumer behavior’s impact on society is also important to mention. This means that businesses should not encourage behavior that affects the society negatively (Kumra 2006, 2). For instance, on St. Thomas plastic straws have been banned to protect the environment and reduce the amount of

plastic waste on the island and in the surrounding ocean, and, therefore, the businesses need to end the sale of straws in order to prevent the locals of buying and using plastic straws.

3.2.1 Consumer Habits and Sustainable Consumption

Most behavior that individuals engage with can be related to sustainability. What is important is whether or not we choose to act in sustainable ways when standing in front of different options (Verplanken and Wood 2006, 90). When given a choice between products, which vary in several attributes, one strategy of reaching a decision is to weigh each attribute by its importance or impact and consider the values of each choice considering each attribute. The values will then be combined with the attributes and the product chosen will be the one with the highest weighted value. The attributes differ from person to person, but if sustainability is one of one's the attributes, the decision making will take sustainability into account, even if it weighted large or small. More often than not, this decision making strategy is not used to the fullest as there is a large number of short cuts to reach a decision when choosing between products (Payne, Bettman and Johnson 1993).

Also, it is important to mention, that it is not whether or not one decides to take an occasional leisure trip by car that makes the difference in the bigger picture. In this case, it is whether or not the person drives to work every single morning instead of a more sustainable way of commuting. When unsustainable behavior becomes a habit, e.g. if a person uses plastic straws every time a beverage is consumed, the unsustainable behavior is repeated and it then becomes a bigger problem (Verplanken and Wood 2006, 90).

3.4 Gender and Identity and Sustainable Consumption

Gender is one of the most common forms of segmentation used by marketers in general, as there can be big differences in how men and women process information, judge products, and behave in the marketplace in general. To this, it is important to mention that, this thesis takes on the social constructivist approach, which will be accounted for in section 5.2, and, therefore, the two genders are perceived as social constructions and, therefore, what separates the genders are not the biological and physiological differences but on the other hand the differences are socially constructed and have been culturally determined (Collin and K ppe 2015, 419-420). Gender segmentation is consistent with the ascribing of specific personality traits to men and women and the observation that the unique interest and knowledge associated with genders' social roles guide their respective judgments. As an example, women do better at decoding nonverbal cues than men and, also, it seems that women and

men give a different value to salient attributes and information sources when evaluating products. And in general, women's self-transcending values tend to be at a higher level than men's, which means that women are more motivated to promote the welfare of others as well as transcending selfish concerns. And also, men tend to attach more importance to self-enhancement values, i.e. motivated to enhance their own personal interest, than women (Putrevu 2001, 1). Likewise, studies have shown, that women tend to attach less importance to power and more importance to universalism and benevolence than men (Lindeman and Verkasalo 2005, 174).

According to Oyserman, people's choices are identity-based, which means that even choices that may not benefit them and maybe even undermine their wellbeing are still being made (Oyserman 2009, 250). Identity can be divided into personal identity and social identity. Personal identity deals with who a person is as an individual, e.g. being sustainably responsible, and social identity, on the other hand, deals with the social role or social group a person is a member of, e.g. being a St. Thomian. All self-concepts are assumed to contain both personal and social identities, but people differ in whether it is the personal or social identity that is central. And within cultural psychology, the terms individual and collective or independent and interdependent are used to describe the individuals who are most likely to use personal vs. social identities just as they are used to describe societies that are more likely to prioritize personal vs. social identities (Oyserman 2009, 250).

Some identities are more likely to be situationally cued than others, for instance, a broad identity, such as being female, is more likely to be cued than a narrower identity, such as being a professor. Some identities that are broad, and, therefore, also more likely to be cued, are gender and race (Oyserman 2009, 251).

3.5 Consumer Culture Theory

Many theorists have worked with consumer culture theory, but the theory that is found relevant for this thesis is called "Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): 20 Years of Research" by Eric J. Arnould and Craig J. Thompson from 2005 (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

Eric J. Arnould is the E. J. Faulkner Professor of Marketing and Director CBA Agribusiness Programs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Craig J. Thompson is the Gilbert and Helen Churchill Professor of Marketing at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 868).

Consumer culture theory is a field that seeks to untangle the complexities of consumer culture. Broadly, consumer culture theory explores how consumers change and transform symbolic meanings

that are encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings, or material goods to clarify their own particular personal and social situations as well as their identity and lifestyle goals. In short, this means that consumer culture theory is the study of consumption choices and behaviors seen from a social and cultural point of view (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 871).

According to consumer culture theory, culture cannot be seen as a homogenous system of collectively shared meanings, ways of life, and unifying values that are shared by a member of a society, but on the contrary, it explores the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the multiplicity of overlapping cultural groupings (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 869).

With this in mind, the marketplace offers the consumers with an expansive and heterogeneous palette of resources that can be used to construct both individual and collective identities (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 871).

Consumer culture theory transcends the 4Ps framework (product, price, place, and promotion) but works with four domains: (1) consumer identity projects, (2) marketplace cultures, (3) the sociohistoric patterning of consumption, and (4) mass mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies.

This theory could have been applied to this thesis in order to investigate the consumer culture on St. Thomas, however, it was deselected. The choice of deselected this theory was made because it would have required a different type of method like, for instance, interviews of locals on St. Thomas. However, this method was deselected as this thesis seeks to investigate a broader target group in order to get an overview of the average consumer on St. Thomas, instead of gaining a thorough knowledge of only a few consumers on St. Thomas. This means, that as interviews were deselected so was this theory.

4.0 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter an account of the relevant theories within the field of sustainable consumption will be presented, which will assist in providing an answer to the problem statement. To provide a thorough answer to the problem statement two theories will be applied, namely a theory on consumer habits and sustainable consumption and a theory on gender and identity salience effect on sustainable consumption. The two theories are found relevant as they provide assumptions of factors that can be crucial to why a person is inclined to engage with sustainable consumption

Each theory will be elaborated individually, beginning with Bas Verplanken and Deborah Roy's theory on consumer habits and sustainable consumption (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015), followed by Diego Costa Pinto et al.'s theory on gender and identity salience effect on sustainable consumption (Pinto, et al. 2014).

4.1 Consumer Habits and Sustainable Consumption

The chosen theory regarding consumer habits and sustainable consumption is developed by Bas Verplanken and Deborah Roy (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015).

Bas Verplanken is a professor of social psychology at the University of Bath in the UK. He researches social, health, consumer, and environmental psychology including topics such as attitude-behavior relations, behavior change, values, the self, environmental concern, and impulsive buying. His primary interest is found within habitual behavior, habitual thinking, and the strength of habits (Reisch and Thøgersen 2015, xviii).

Deborah Roy is a Research Associate at the University of Bath in the UK. With a doctorate in psychology from the University of Ulster in the UK, she researches the psychological determinants of environmental and socially responsible behavior change, mostly concerning ecological values, identity, and temporal discounting (Reisch and Thøgersen 2015, xiv).

The theory of the two aforementioned psychologists deals with consumer habits, consumer behavior, and behavior change. This theory is found relevant to examine the locals on St. Thomas' consumption behavior, look into whether their behavior is sustainable or not, study if the behavior is habitual, and last but not least, if their behavior is not sustainable, investigate if or how their behavior can be changed into a more sustainable way of consuming.

4.1.1 Sustainable Consumption

There is no doubt that sustainable consumption is a good thing, however, there is still a long way to go. Looking at sustainable consumption in an optimistic view, shows that most people show some interest in making truly sustainable choices, nevertheless, tend to follow their natural tendency and focus on short-term benefits and tangible outcomes, which, unfortunately, simply rarely comes with a sustainable lifestyle (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 243).

As mentioned in chapter 3, this thesis will revolve around the following definition of sustainable consumption, provided by the United Nations Environment Programme:

“the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations.” (UNEP n.d.)

4.1.2 To Think or Not to Think about Sustainability?

To change behavior in a more sustainable direction, an important matter is whether or not people consider sustainability as an attribute of their choices. This means, that just as the price and quality of a product can help determine which product to purchase, sustainability can also be an attribute to consider when deciding between products (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 244-245). When deciding between products, each of one's attributes is weighted in importance or impact, e.g. is the price more important than the product being sustainably produced? Or is the quality of the product what is most important? If sustainability is part of one's attributes, this factor will be taken into account whether or not it is the most important attribute. However, there are found many other, more effortless strategies for decision-making. For example, the elimination-by-aspect rule, which suggests that alternatives that do not meet a set criterion on the most important attribute is dropped, and then the process continues with the second most important attribute. Or, the lexicographic decision rule, which first established the most important attribute and then chooses the product that scores best on that attribute. Or, the even simpler rule, the sacrificing rule, which considers all products one at a time in the order they occur, and then settles for the first product that meets the certain need, which is, “doing the job” (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 245).

Unfortunately, what these more effortless rules have in common is, that even if one of one's attributes is sustainability or sustainability-related, if this attribute is not considered as the top priority, as compared with, for example, price and quality often are, the attribute may not feature at all in consumers' decision-making process (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 245).

These easier rules for decision making, are more likely when in busy or otherwise pressing choice environments. For instance, if a product has an energy label, this may have an effect on making a sustainable choice, but if the decision is made under time pressure, this label may quickly vanish, due to an effortless rule of decision-making. If, however, sustainability is considered as one of the most important attributes, it may still play a role in decision-making even if the decision is made under time pressure (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 245-246).

It is found, that if sustainable or environmental-friendly values are central to one's self-concept, one is more likely to make sustainable choices when deciding between products. In this case, this would also place sustainability as one of the most important attributes when decision-making. However, this is fairly rare, and can only be found amongst people who are genuinely committed to the sustainability agenda. Though, under some conditions, as when sustainability features are significantly displayed, sustainability may play a more significant role in decision-making (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 246).

Another viewpoint on whether or not people will consider sustainability in a decision-making situation is the so-called dual process. These models describe two operating systems that can direct behavior, one being motivation, also called intention or willpower, the other being a more spontaneous and schema-based impulses, also called habits, which will be elaborated in the next section.

4.1.3 The Case of Habit

Sustainability is relevant to almost all behavior in which we engage with on a daily basis. The dual process, as mentioned above, suggests that past behavior can guide our future choices through our intentions or when our behaviors have been repeated and have become a habit (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 246-247).

There are three different "pillars" to how habits can be characterized. The first one is repetition, which is the key feature when defining habit. And not only is repetition key to defining habit, but it is also

how a habit is created, meaning, that when a behavior is repeated, the chance is, that it becomes a habit. And according to Verplanken and Roy in the following citation, this is what creates a problem:

“Repetition is not only a key feature of habit, it is also what makes a habit significant with respect to its impact: the cumulative effect of repetitive behaviours performed by large numbers of people is what creates problematic levels of unsustainability.”
(Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247)

For instance, there is no harm for the environment in making an occasional leisure trip by car, however, it has a big impact on the environment when a large population commutes habitually by car instead of using more environmentally friendly ways of travel (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247).

The second pillar is automaticity, which can be broken down into several features, which is a lack of awareness and conscious intent, mental efficiency, and limited feelings of control. This pillar represents how our habits can make up our everyday experience of behavior as being fluent and not consisting of discrete decisions, which we are constantly making. This pillar is usually discovered when we are not able to perform our usual behavior, as, for instance, if we are shopping at a different supermarket than we usually do, and discover that we have to “work” to find the products that we usually grab without thinking about it. In other words, habits can give us “tunnel vision”, which makes individuals less likely to obtain new information, even if this new information may lead to better and more sustainable choices (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247).

A habit that occurs frequently is more likely to be a strong habit, and the strong habits will in most cases be the ones that are hardest to change. Habits and intentions are often in competition, for example, a habit of consuming big amounts of plastic and the intention of consuming less plastic in the future. But if the habit occurs frequently and is strong, the intention is found to be weak but if the habit occurs rarely and is weak, the intention is often found to be strong (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247-248).

Also, human beings are creatures of habit. Meaning that many of their goal-directed behaviors are executed because they have become a habit (Danner, Aarts and de Vries 2008, 245). To be able to enforce sustainable consumption it is the unsustainable habits that need changing. And when dealing with policy interventions, such as, in this case, consumption of less plastic, to change behavior, these interventions are, according to Verplanken and Wood, more likely to be successful when designed

with the consumer's habits in mind. This means, that to change a consumer's plastic consumption habits, the consumer needs to have some interest in sustainable consumption regarding plastic, to actually change the habits and create new and more sustainable consumption behavior (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 248).

4.2 Gender and Identity Salience Effect on Sustainable Consumption

The author behind this theory is, amongst others, Diego Costa Pinto who has a Ph.D. in philosophy in management from the Neoma Business School in France. He researches within the fields of retail and distribution management, consumer studies, brand management, consumer behavior, etc (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa nd).

This theory is based on research that explores gender and identity salience on sustainable consumption. It, therefore, holds assumptions on how gender effects on sustainable consumption can be dependent on the identity that is salient to the consumer during a decision-making process (Pinto, et al. 2014, 540).

4.2.1 Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption is a big concern for both societies and businesses. We are all being encouraged to include sustainable consumption in our everyday lives, and at the same time, businesses are leveraging this sustainable consumption trend by developing environmentally friendly products for the consumers (Pinto, et al. 2014, 540). As a result, many consumers have changed their consumption behavior and are now choosing more sustainable products. Even though the concerns within environmental issues have been increasing, all consumers will not necessarily change their behavior and engage with sustainable consumption. Persuading the consumers to engage in sustainable consumption is difficult, as doing so, does not necessarily benefit the consumer as an individual. However, taking part in sustainable consumption, like, for instance, choosing products without or with reduced content of plastic, requires some personal sacrifice, which can result in reduced motivation to engage in sustainable consumption (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541).

4.2.2 Gender and Sustainable Consumption

Gender has a significant impact on how people think and behave. Men and women tend to have many dissimilarities regarding attitudes, behavior, and values. For example, women tend to attach more importance to self-transcendence values, such as being more concerned about social justice, unity

with nature, and environmental protection. Where, on the other hand, men tend to attach more importance to self-enhancement values, worrying more about their success, capability, and ambition. To this, it is important to mention that, with the social constructivist approach, which will be accounted for in section 5.2, the two genders are perceived as social constructions and, therefore, what separates the genders are not the biological and physiological differences but on the other hand the differences are socially constructed and have been culturally determined (Collin and K ppe 2015, 419-420).

Gender also has an impact on how people tend to pursue their goals. In this case, women often highlight social goals, such as developing relations and maintaining connectedness with group associations, and community, where men tend to emphasize ego-centered goals and be less concerned with social associations. Women also often adopt tender, communal, and unselfish behavior, where in contrast, men tend to behave in a tough, competitive, and dominant manner. For instance, women are inclined to spend more money and time on charity than men (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541).

According to the above and the entire research by Pinto et al. (Pinto, et al. 2014), gender, therefore, also has a great effect on sustainable consumption. As mentioned above, women tend to adopt a more communal and unselfish behavior, which also means, that women are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption as they hold stronger attitudes towards the environment than men, as well as they tend to be more socially responsible than men. In addition, women, therefore, also tend to consider the impacts of their consumption may cause others, more than men (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541-542).

4.2.3 The Role of Identities

As mentioned in chapter 3, how people think about themselves can be divided into “as an individual” and “as group members” or personal and social. How people think about themselves has a big influence on which strategies and goals they will have and use. All personalities are assumed to contain both personal and social identities, however, one of the two will often be salient. The two identities can be dynamically salient, however, one of the identities is often dominant depending on the situation. For instance, if a person is in a situation where the personal identity is salient, the strategies and goals may be different than if the person is in a situation where the social identity is salient (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542)

According to Pinto et al., when people feel like part of a group and the social identity is salient, they are more likely to make ethical decisions and encourage sustainable behavior. And with this identity salient, the consumers tend to have more positive attitudes and purchase intentions when it comes to sustainable products. Moreover, this shows that when people feel like part of a group or society and with the social identity salient, they are more likely to modify their decisions to purchase more environmentally friendly products, like, for instance, with no or with reduced content of plastic, than when people identify themselves as individuals with the personal identity salient (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542).

In continuation of these findings, the research shows that the two identities can moderate the effect of gender on sustainable consumption. According to the research, the personal identity highlights the importance of a person's personal values in a given situation. With the personal identity salient, judgment and behavior will be congruent with the consumer's own values (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542).

In sum, when the social identity is salient, and the consumers feel like part of a group, they are more likely to make sustainable choices than if their identity were to be personal salient. However, if the personal identity is salient, and sustainability is an important value to the consumer, sustainable choices are still likely to be made (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542).

4.2.4 Gender and Identity on Sustainable Consumption

As mentioned above, women are more likely to engage in sustainable consumption than men, because women tend to have a higher level of self-transcendence values than men, where, on the other hand, men tend to have a higher level of self-enhancement values than women (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541-542).

But, as it was mentioned above, it is not only gender that is vital to whether a person chooses to engage in sustainable consumption, it is also their identity. With the social identity salient, people are more likely to make environmentally friendly choices, as this is a strategy to achieve social goals. According to the research, the salience of social identity can increase the consumer's sustainable consumption, because people tend to look for social recognition when acting as a sustainable consumer (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542).

The relationship between gender and identity in relation to sustainable consumption is visualized in Figure 1 below.

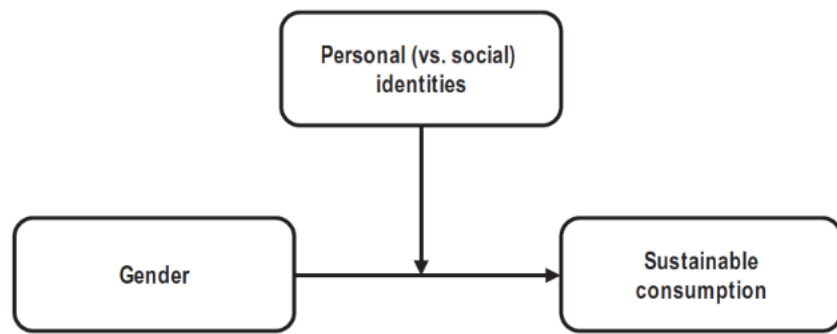


Figure 1 (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542)

According to the research, the ones that are most likely to engage with sustainable consumption are women with the social identity salient. But even though this is the case, it is important to mention that both men and women with either the personal or social identity salient, can engage with sustainable consumption, if it is part of their personal values (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542).

5.0 Research Design

This chapter will consist of a presentation of the methodological framework. The methodological framework will be used as a guideline of this thesis, in relation to how the thesis is constructed and how the data has been collected.

First, an account of the overall social science paradigms and their components will be provided, followed by an account of the selected philosophy of science. Afterwards an account of the chosen methods will be provided followed by an account of the collected data, and lastly, an account of the chosen analysis method.

5.1 Paradigms

In 1962, Thomas Kuhn introduced, for the first time, a new approach to science, where he argued that science develops in paradigms (Kuhn 1962). According to Bryman, the definition of a paradigm is:

“a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done [and] how results should be interpreted” (Bryman 2012, 630)

There are many different paradigms in science, but within the field of social science, we often distinguish between four overall paradigms, namely positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism. Positivism, fundamentally, revolves around natural science models of explanation and within social science, the positivistic paradigm, therefore, wishes to use methods within natural science, such as observations and statistics. Post-positivism, on the other hand, does not believe that humans and society can be studied as natural scientific objects, if anything, humans are creatures that must be studied culturally and historically. Critical theory stands out by insisting that science needs to be critical towards society institutions and take part in promoting a just society. Constructivism is characterized by being critical towards the social sciences' objectivity and existing scientific methods in general, instead, it underlines that humans, as well as science, live in a world of subjective and socially created constructions (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 26).

Considering the above, the paradigms function as approaches to how reality is understood and the paradigm, or the philosophy of science, in which the researcher finds oneself within, is, therefore, vital to understand, to be able to know which kind of reality the researcher investigates. Hence, with

the given philosophy of science in mind, the reader will gain a greater understanding of how and with which purpose the subject is investigated (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 38).

It can be hard to distinguish between the four paradigms without investigating their components (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 26-27). Therefore, the following section will provide an overview of the components of the four overall paradigms within social science.

5.1.1 The Components of Paradigms

A way to distinguish between the four paradigms is to ask questions regarding the choices of the overall components of paradigms, namely *ontology*, *epistemology*, *methodology*, and *method*.

In Greek, “ontology” means “the doctrine of being” and, therefore, revolves around *what* exists in the world, in *which way* it exists, and what the nature of the things is. In relation to paradigms, the ontological question says something about how science relates to the subject (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 27).

“Episteme” means “knowledge”, but the epistemological question does not revolve around *what* there is to know about the world but rather *how* this knowledge can be achieved (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 27).

The third question, the question on methodology and method, is based on the answers of the two first questions, as it asks: When the world has this structure (ontology), and it is possible to achieve this knowledge (epistemology) how can a scientific study best examine its subject (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 27)?

When answering these three questions it may seem as methodology and method are two terms that mean the same, however, it is important to underline that these are two different terms. Methodology revolves around how the reality is best investigated, for instance in relation to whether the empirical data that best investigate the subject is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodology. Whereas method revolves around which method is used to collect the data, for instance via interview, survey, critical discourse analysis, observation, etc (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013). The chosen methodology and method for this thesis will be described and accounted for in section 5.1.2 and 5.3.

5.1.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Methodology

Within social science methodology, we distinguish between two approaches when working empirically, namely the quantitative and the qualitative approach (Justesen and Mik-Meyer 2010, 15).

The quantitative approach suggests a methodology that in one way or another generates numbered data which makes it possible to analyze on the base of quantification. Hence, the quantitative approach deals with data that can be counted and treated quantitatively by means of different types of calculations and typically by means of statistics. When working with the quantitative methodology a method that can be applied is, for instance, surveys. This methodology is typically applied to provide a snapshot of a specific social study as well as to give an explanation of how social studies are connected and intertwined. This approach presupposes that the phenomenon in question can be defined and outlined somewhat precisely and thereafter counted in order to present the data in diagrams, charts, etc (Justesen and Mik-Meyer 2010, 16-17).

The qualitative approach applies methods that, on the contrary to the quantitative approach, are suitable when describing a phenomenon in its context and provide an interpretation that gives an increased understanding of the phenomenon. A qualitative method is, for instance, interviews of a smaller group of people, focus group interviews, observations, etc. The qualitative approach, therefore, has a more narrow focus than the quantitative approach, as fewer people or a very specific topic is studied, which makes it possible to study them more thoroughly (Justesen and Mik-Meyer 2010, 17-18).

In this thesis both quantitative and qualitative data are found essential in order to answer the problem statement, and, therefore, the mixed methodology is applied. This is essential as it is necessary to study a broad group of people and their habits and intentions concerning consumption, hence the quantitative methodology, and because it is necessary to investigate the locals on St. Thomas' opinions on the plastic bans and plastic pollution, hence the qualitative methodology. The exact methods found relevant to collect the necessary data are a survey (quantitative) and netnography, which has been used to select a relevant Facebook post from the Facebook group "What's Going on St. Thomas?". Both methods and the collected empirical data will be accounted for in section 5.3 and 5.4.

5.2 Philosophy of Science

As mentioned earlier, there are, within social science, four overall paradigms that we distinguish between. This thesis takes the social constructivist approach and, therefore, the respective paradigms of positivism, post-positivism, and critical theory have been deselected. The following section will clarify the paradigm, or philosophy of science, selected for this thesis which, as mentioned, is social constructivism.

5.2.1 Social Constructivism

As mentioned above, the social constructivist approach is applied to this thesis. Social constructivism is a term for a group of scientific approaches, which suggest that everything is socially constructed. This includes signs, language, and even the value of money. For instance, money is a piece of paper to which we add value, meaning, that without the socially constructed value we have added, it does not have any value (Collin and K ppe 2015, 419). The reason that we have added value to money is that it was in our interest to have something we could buy things with, which is basically the concept of money. And in order to show interest in something, most would use their language, and this makes language one of the key elements of social constructivism. Language can, thus, be used to agree on different truths and, thereby, be used to the construction of the social reality (Collin and K ppe 2015, 424).

With the social constructivist perspective, reality is what we, for some reason, have agreed on within a specific social community. This means that what we call reality can vary a great deal depending on which social community or culture we find ourselves in. It also means, that the objects, which social constructivism engage with, do not have an objective character but instead it is emphasized that one must primarily regard scientific objects as social constructions. This leads to a subjective epistemology in which the concept of interpretation is given a central position (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013, 36).

The social constructivist approach, therefore, states that reality is created and agreed upon, as well as it is a mindset of how to understand the world (Collin and K ppe 2015, 421). An example of social constructivism that is closely related to the topic of this thesis is how most people are able to consume a beverage without the use of a straw, however, on St. Thomas, it has become a basic need for some to use a straw when consuming a beverage from a restaurant or a bar. Thus, the perception of needing a straw is socially constructed and agreed upon which makes it true in this community.

The fact that this thesis takes on the social constructivist approach, affects the final result a great deal, as it allows us to interpret and gain our own understanding of the subject in general but also our understanding of the chosen theory. But it also means that the results of the thesis provided in the conclusion are not the final truth since one truth does not exist, it depends on the perspective. This also means that the findings can never be objective, instead, they are subjective as this research is interpreted on by the researcher. By applying this philosophy of science, the final findings are only one perspective of the whole truth. This can both function as an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is that no matter what answers that are found to the problem statement, the answer will always be part of the truth as the truth is subjective. The disadvantage, on the other hand, is that the thesis can become abstract as well as the answer found to the problem statement will never serve as the one and only truth. Even though one final truth cannot be found with the approach it is still found essential for this thesis as it makes it possible to investigate multiples people's viewpoints deeply and it promotes critical thinking, analysis evaluation, and creation (Collin and K ppe 2015).

As mentioned earlier, this thesis applies the mixed methodology approach, meaning that both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and analyzed. However, when applying the social constructivist approach, one would usually only apply the qualitative methodology. This is because quantitative data, which consists of somewhat numbered data, does not allow for interpretation. When using quantitative data, this data functions as the only truth and there is, therefore, only one objective perspective, which do not correlate with the social constructivist approach (Justesen and Mik-Meyer 2010, 16-17).

Even though this thesis takes on the social constructivist approach, both the qualitative and quantitative methodology is found relevant, however, the qualitative data is dominating. The quantitative data will, therefore, not be interpreted as the qualitative data will. This will be elaborated further, in section 5.4 and 5.5.

5.3 Choice of Methods

In this section, an account of the chosen methods, found relevant for this thesis, will be provided.

5.3.1 Data Collection Methods

As mentioned, the mixed methodology has been selected for this thesis as both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected. This also calls for two different methods of collecting data,

namely netnography and survey. The two methods will be accounted for individually as well as it will be described why and how these methods have been applied to the thesis.

5.3.1.1 Netnography

Netnography is a term that has been developed by Robert V. Kozinets, who is a professor of marketing (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 61). It derives from ethnography, which is the study of the distinctive meaning, practice, and artifacts of specific social groups and is based on participation and observation in cultural situations (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 62).

Netnography is ethnography online and it was developed because marketers recognized that there was an increasing importance of the internet and the consumers who are active in online communities. In online communities, consumers take part in discussions with the goal to inform and influence other consumers. The purpose of developing netnography was to identify and understand the tastes, symbols, desires, decision making influences, and consumer groups in online communities (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 61).

This method will be used to outline the criteria that have been established when selecting parts of the empirical data as well as it will help to understand and interpret the selected data (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 61).

The first step of netnography is *entrée*. In this step, the communities that will be investigated are selected. As this thesis investigates the locals on St. Thomas, this is also where the empirical data will be collected from (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 63). On Facebook, there is a group named “What’s Going on St. Thomas?” which is for everybody with interest in the island. Even though this group has members who do not live on St. Thomas, it is still a community where the locals are active. It is a public group, which means that everyone can see, who is a member of the group and what they post. This makes it possible as a non-St. Thomian to get access and collect data from the group. And even though the members of the group may not all live on St. Thomas, a common factor for all the members is that they have a shared interest in the island. Therefore, the community that has been chosen to investigate by means of netnography, is the group “What’s Going on St. Thomas?”.

The next step of netnography is *data collection and analysis*. Within this step, there are two important elements to the data. This is the data that is directly copied from the community and the data the researcher inscribes regarding their observations of the members of the community, interactions, and meanings (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 63). In the Facebook group “What’s Going on St. Thomas?”, both businesses, locals, tourists, etc. can post news, questions, recommendations and so on. When searching this group, a post by Jason Budsan, who is a local on St. Thomas, concerning Wendy’s, a fast food restaurant not abiding the ban against plastic straws, was found very relevant. Not only does the post say and show that Wendy’s is not abiding the ban, many other members of the group decide to take part in the debate, discussing the ban and whether or not the ban is helpful to cut down on plastic on the island.

An advantage of netnography is that most data collected on the internet can be automatically transcribed (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 63). And even though the Facebook groups allows everyone to see the content of the group, for the purpose of this thesis, the Facebook post, its comments, and sub-comments are attached in appendix 10.1, allowing the readers to see it (Appendix 10.1).

The entire Facebook post, its comments, and sub-comments have been chosen as empirical data, however, there may be parts of it that are not relevant to use in the analysis, as they may be off topic. Therefore, the data is categorized primarily as on-topic or off-topic, making it possible to only analyze on the data found relevant for the problem statement. But it is not only possible to categorize the topics of the comments, the posters of the comments can also be categorized based on their level of involvement if it is found necessary or relevant. According to Kozinets, there are four types of posters’ involvement levels; tourists, minglers, devotees, and insiders. The tourists do not have any social ties or deep interest in the community, minglers have strong social ties but slight interest in the consumption activity, devotees have non or little social ties but strong consumption interest, and finally insiders have both strong social ties to the community and big interest in the consumption activity as well as they tend to have long standing and often references members of the community. The step of determining the types of posters in the Facebook post have been omitted as it is both not possible to investigate each person who have commented on the Facebook post and because it is not found relevant for this thesis. This is due to the fact that the majority of people who have participated in the Facebook post are private on Facebook and because this thesis seeks to investigate the opinions

of the locals on St. Thomas and not who the locals are (Kozinets, The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities 2002, 64).

The third step of netnography is *providing trustworthy interpretation*. This step engages with how we can ensure that the data that have been collected is actually trustworthy. In a community, like in the group “What’s Going on St. Thomas?”, some of the participants to the debate may be presenting a more carefully cultivated and controlled self-image. If this is the case, we cannot make sure that every participant to the debate is being totally honest, however, it can be assumed that the opinion they present is their own. This can be assumed as the reason for participating in a debate is to present one’s opinion and discover others’ opinions (Kozinets, The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities 2002, 64-65).

As this thesis takes on the social constructivist approach, the collected data will be interpreted and the final answer to the problem statement will, therefore, be subjective. This means that the answer to the problem statement is only one perspective on the truth and, therefore, not the final and only truth (Collin and K ppe 2015).

The fourth step is *research ethics*. This step deals with the fact that the data that is collected online have not been given specifically to the researcher as if the data were collected through an interview. This means that the consumers who originally created the data do not necessarily welcome the data being used for research. And if a researcher uses the data in an unacceptable manner, they may end up damaging the community in which the data was collected. This step also deals with whether an online community is considered a private or public site (Kozinets, The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities 2002, 65). As mentioned, everyone can see the content of the Facebook group, and the group is, therefore, considered as a public site. As the group has more than 16,000 members and everybody can see the content of the group, the community is in this thesis looked at as a public site and the participants in the collected data are, therefore, aware that the Facebook post, its comments, and sub-comments are not private but public.

The fifth and last step of netnography is *member check*. This step is the procedure where the final findings are presented to all or some people who have been studied. To complete this step is an advantage if the research is to continue afterward, as the researcher can obtain and elicit more insights into consumer meanings. However, when this research is complete, the research will not necessarily continue, and because of this, the people studied will not be presented to its findings. If at some point, the research was to continue, this step could be completed and a more thorough research could

continue (Kozinets, *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities* 2002, 66).

With these five steps, with only four of them being applied, the majority of the qualitative data for this thesis is collected and categorized as well as it has been established why it is found trustworthy and ethical to investigate and interpret on. The collected data will be accounted for in section 5.4.

5.3.1.2 Survey

As mentioned earlier, a survey has been chosen as a method to collect a part of the empirical data which is found relevant to answer the problem statement. This method is found relevant to investigate the behavior, opinions, and knowledge of the locals in St. Thomas. This method makes it possible to collect data from a big group and understand the tendencies of the locals when it comes to consumption habits and intentions (Sue and Ritter 2015).

A survey is a measuring tool used to discover the respondents' opinions, knowledge, and behavior. A good survey consists of well-constructed questions which all share some characteristics. The questions in a survey should be short, unambiguous, and meaningful to the respondent. If the questions are poorly constructed, if they for instance are wordy or double barreled and confuse or frustrate the respondent, this often cause increasing nonresponse and the respondents may leave the survey without finishing (Sue and Ritter 2015, 2).

When constructing the questions for the survey, each question should be written with relation to the problem statement, meaning that only questions that actually help answer the problem statement should be in the survey. Therefore, questions should not be asked just because the survey is conducted anyway, every question should have a purpose. This will also help keeping the survey short as well as it reduces the risk of confusion because of lack of coherence in the survey (Sue and Ritter 2015, 2).

When writing the survey questions, it is important to ask the question to which you want the answer. Meaning that the questions need to be precise, so that the respondents know how to answer the questions in order to keep both the questions and the answers valid. Validity is the link between each individual question and what they seek to measure and how groups of questions is combined to measure multidimensional concepts (Sue and Ritter 2015, 3).

A threat to validity can also be if the respondents provide inaccurate answers to the questions in the survey. They may do so to avoid embarrassment or to fit in with what they believe is the social norm

for the situation (Sue and Ritter 2015, 3). For instance, in the survey constructed for this thesis, the respondents are asked about how important sustainability is to them when choosing between products. And to this question, there is risk that the respondents respond that it is very important because this is how they think the social norm is, however this may not necessarily be the truth. To avoid this, in every new section of the survey the sentence “*All your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential.*”(Appendix 10.2) is inserted, to assure the respondents that the survey is anonymous and that there, therefore, is no reason to be embarrassed when providing one’s opinion (Sue and Ritter 2015, 3). Another threat to validity is that the respondents may not have access to the to the information needed to answer the question (Sue and Ritter 2015, 3). To avoid this, the constructed survey is equipped with short explanations, for instance of why St. Thomas is dependent on tourism and what the plastic bans on St. Thomas are. Lastly, a threat on validity is, that the respondents provide an opinion on a survey simply because they are asked for one, not because they actually have one (Sue and Ritter 2015, 3).

As mentioned, the respondents of any survey may leave the survey without finishing, if the survey is poorly constructed or confusing. But they may also leave if the survey is too time consuming and difficult to answer (Sue and Ritter 2015, 7). When constructing the survey for this thesis, open ended questions have been used, even though these may cause that the respondents leave the survey. To avoid that the respondents leave the survey when they discover these questions, these questions are not mandatory to answer. This means, that if the respondents do not want to type in their own response, they can simply continue to the next question. A disadvantage of this is of course that these questions may not get as many responses as the mandatory questions, however, few answers to this type of questions is preferred over respondents leaving the survey.

Another disadvantage of applying this method is that it can never be guaranteed that the survey will gain a satisfactory number of respondents. The satisfactory number of respondents will also differ from survey to survey, for some surveys 1000 respondents are necessary to gain a valid result and for others 10 may be adequate. And also, the researcher may want to get the same number of male and female respondents to fill out the survey which can also not be guaranteed. These disadvantages are difficult to overcome, and it is, therefore, possible that these are factors that may cause bias (Sue and Ritter 2015).

This method is often found to be just quantitative as it provides data that can be measured and counted (Justesen and Mik-Meyer 2010, 16). However, the survey constructed for this thesis is also partly

qualitative as it does not only consist of measurable data, but also questions that should be answered by typing in their response. The answers to these questions are found to be qualitative as these cannot be counted or measured. And with the social constructivist approach in mind, this also means, that these answers can be interpreted in the analysis.

In section 5.4.2 the questions of the survey and why these are asked will be elaborated.

5.4 Data Collection

This section will provide an account of the collected data that is found relevant to answer the problem statement. As mentioned earlier, both qualitative and quantitative data is found essential to provide a thorough answer to the problem statement as it is important to look deeper into the locals on St. Thomas' thoughts on the plastic bans that has been implemented as well as it is important to investigate the opinions and habits of the locals on St. Thomas as widely as possible.

The qualitative data for this thesis is a Facebook post, its comments, and sub-comments from the Facebook group "What's Going on St. Thomas?", and the open-ended questions of the survey where the respondents are to type in their response. The Facebook post deals with the plastic ban on plastic straws not being abided by, by the fast-food restaurant Wendy's. The Facebook group "What's Going on St. Thomas?" is a group for everyone who have interest in the island, including both locals, tourists etc. It is a public group which means that everyone can see the content of the Facebook group.

The quantitative data is collected through a survey which is shared in the Facebook group "What's Going on St. Thomas?".

The two pieces of data are of equal importance; however, it was the Facebook post that first sparked this thesis and the Facebook post has also served as inspiration to the questions asked in the survey. Therefore, it is natural that the Facebook post will be elaborated first followed by the survey.

5.4.1 Facebook Post

The Facebook post, its comments, and sub-comments (Budsan 2019) that have been selected as empirical data through netnography is attached in the appendix (Appendix 10.1). It was posted on October 12, 2019 in the Facebook group "What's Going on St. Thomas?" and the ban against single-use plastic straws, as well as single-use plastic tubular stirrers went into effect on October 1, 2019.

The Facebook post consists of a text and pictures saying and illustrating that the fast-food restaurant Wendy's is not abiding the ban on single-use plastic straw. The Facebook post reads:

“Enforcement needed, #plasticstrawban #Wendys #Tutu and any other business that break the law.

Please remove your plastic straws, you had plenty of time to remove them from your inventory.

Now if only the ban on single use #plasticbags was enforced. Tired of doing so many clean ups with so many lawbreakers out there. Please we need #Enforcement

READ this, it went into effect in October.

“This bill (Now Act # 8133) amends title 29 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 8 to extend the ban on plastic bags to disposable, plastic, drinking straws and plastic tubular stirrers. The bill exempts hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, medical supply and retailers from the ban on disposable, plastic drinking straws and also exempts from the ban the importation, sale, purchase and distribution of disposable plastic drinking straws for use by persons with disabilities. The bill further exempts plastic straws and stirrers that are part of a product packaged outside the Territory and sold or distributed within the Territory.

BR18-1057/June 29, 2008/“ #Wendys” (Appendix 10.1, page 2-3)

Within a week after the Facebook post was posted it gained 227 comments and it was shared 14 times. Members of the Facebook group “What’s Going on St. Thomas?” commented fiercely on the post, sharing their own opinion on Wendy’s not abiding the law as well as the plastic bans in general. Some saying how they feel that the types of plastic that are banned are such a small part of the plastic issue that it does not make any difference whether or not they are banned. Others saying that the plastic ban is a small step in the right direction to a bigger mindset change regarding plastic consumption.

The Facebook post and comments consists of three types of elements: The original post, comments, and sub-comments. The original post is the text which is quoted above alongside with the pictures (Appendix 10.1, page 2-3), the comments are those comments that comment on the original post, and the sub-comments are comments which comment on the comments. This means, that the participants have commented both on the original post but also on each other’s comments. This is visualized in the appendix (Appendix 10.1).

This piece of data is what first sparked the interest of the subject of this thesis as in consists of a wide variety of opinions which are interesting to investigate and gain an understanding of.

5.4.2 Survey

The survey that has been conducted for this thesis is regarding the locals on St. Thomas' consumption habits especially concerning their consumption of plastic and the plastic bans that were implemented on the island. The survey is shared in the Facebook group "What's Going on St. Thomas?" which is a group for everyone with interest in the island. The survey consists of 24 questions whereof 20 of them are mandatory. The survey has gained 52 responses which for this thesis is found to be satisfactory to ensure valid data. However, the survey would become more valid if it had gained even more responses.

The questions asked in this survey is partly inspired from the Facebook post (Appendix 10.1) in the above section as well as knowledge and wonderings gained during the research process.

When the survey was shared in the Facebook group a short text was added, saying:

"Hi everybody!

I'm writing my master's thesis about sustainable consumption on St. Thomas. Therefore, I would very much appreciate it if those of you who live on St. Thomas or spend at least half of your time there would fill out this survey. It should not take more than 2 minutes and it is totally anonymous." (Appendix 10.2, page 41)

The entire Facebook post is also added in the appendix (Appendix 10.2, page 41). This text is added to the Facebook post to persuade the members of the group into filling out the survey and to make sure that it is only the people who either live on the island or spend at least half of their time there, which is the target group, that fills out the survey.

Even though it is stated in the text shared with the survey that it is only people who live on St. Thomas or spend at least half of their time on the island who are the target group for the survey, the first question of the survey is "*Do you live on St. Thomas?*" (Appendix 10.2, page 41). This question is found relevant to make sure that no one from outside the target group fills out the survey, if they for instance did not read the entire text added to the Facebook post. Therefore, should anyone who are outside the target group have started to fill out the survey, these will be sorted out in the first question.

The second question of the survey can only be answered by those who checked "no" to the first question. This means that only the ones who checked that they do not live on St. Thomas will get to respond to this question, which is "*Do you spend at least half of your time on St. Thomas?*". This question is found relevant as the people who do spend at least half of their time on St. Thomas are

also a part of the target group. However, all the respondents who filled out the survey except one checked that they do live on St. Thomas and, therefore, only one has answered the second question (Appendix 10.2, page 42).

The next questions are regarding demography, asking questions about gender, age, and occupation (Appendix 10.2, page 42-43). These questions are found relevant as the chosen theories chosen for this thesis suggest that these factors can be crucial when it comes to peoples' consumption habits. One of the chosen theories suggest that women are more inclined to engage in sustainable consumption and to confirm or deny whether this is the case on St. Thomas would be easier if there were about the same amount of male and female respondents to the survey. However, the majority of the respondents are female, as 39 of the respondents are female and only 12 are male, and this may cause bias in the final result (Appendix 10.2, page 42).

The next questions are regarding the respondents' shopping habits both regarding which factors are most important when deciding between products, their current level of engagement with sustainable consumption, and to which extent they wish to engage more with sustainable consumption in the future (Appendix 10.2, page 44-50). These questions are found necessary to understand the respondents' mindsets regarding sustainable consumption which is essential to answer the problem statement.

Thereafter, questions regarding the plastic bans are asked. These are questions such as: "*Are you aware of any initiatives, that has been put into action to cut down on plastic on St. Thomas?*" (Appendix 10.2, page 51-53). This question is asked before informing the respondent about the plastic bans regarding single-use plastic bags, plastic straws, and plastic tubular stirrers. This is done to investigate if the respondents are aware of the plastic bans as well as to learn if there are more initiatives on the island regarding reducing plastic pollution.

Next, questions about the level of plastic pollution on St. Thomas are asked. This include the question: "*Do you think there is a lot of plastic waste in the nature on St. Thomas as well as in the surrounding ocean?*" (Appendix 10.2, page 54). This question is very relative, as it depends on every single respondent how much "a lot" is. However, it provides the thesis with an idea of the respondents' point of view of the amount of plastic waste on St. Thomas and in the surrounding ocean.

Another question regarding the plastic bans is asked: "*To what extent do you think the plastic bans are helpful?*" (Appendix 10.2, page 55-58). This is asked because the Facebook post, which is also chosen as empirical data, suggests that there is a huge variety in the locals' opinions on the plastic

bans. And to investigate whether or not the locals are for or against the ban it is interesting to look at the opinions stated in the Facebook post as well as in the survey. Additionally, questions about whether or not the bans are being abided by are asked: *“To what extent do you think the plastic bans are being abided by the locals?”* and *“To what extent are you abiding the plastic bans?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 58-59). These questions are asked to investigate whether or not the locals are abiding the bans as well as to learn if the respondents are abiding them themselves. Before the last question regarding the plastic ban is asked, the respondents are informed about the fact that St. Thomas’ economy is very dependent on tourism, and the fact that tourists are attracted mostly because of the island’s beauty and rich ecosystems which is counteracted by plastic waste. Therefore, the following question is asked: *“Do you think those who are abiding the plastic bans, are doing it mostly because of the local economy or mostly because of the environment?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 60). This question is asked as it is interesting to examine if the locals are abiding the bans because of the environment and the greater good for St. Thomas but also the entire planet, or if the reason for abiding the bans is only in favor of St. Thomas.

The next question is regarding barriers to cutting down on plastic on St. Thomas: *“If any, which barriers do you think there are to cut down on plastic on St. Thomas? (e.g. products with no or reduced use of plastic are not available)”* (Appendix 10.2, page 61-63). This question is asked to learn if it is even possible for the locals on St. Thomas to reduce their plastic consumption. Some may have great intentions to reduce their plastic consumption but if, for instance, products without or with reduced content of plastic is not available for the consumers, this may simply not be possible.

The last question of the survey is: *“Any last comments?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 64-65). This question is asked to gain any last information or opinions the respondents may have on the subject. The question is not mandatory but those respondents who want to share information or opinions on the subject can. Therefore, the answers to this question may not be useful for the thesis, however, they may provide the thesis with useful data.

As mentioned, the data collected in this survey is dominantly quantitative, but the questions answered by typing in one’s own response is in this thesis perceived as qualitative data which, with the social constructivist approach in mind, can be interpreted (Collin and K ppe 2015).

5.5 Analysis Method

In order to analyze the collected data, analysis methods are necessary. For this thesis, netnographic thematic analysis is found relevant to analyze the data collected by means of netnography. This will be accounted for in the following sections.

5.5.1 Netnographic Thematic Analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data yielded by netnography proceeds in a way that is very similar to other comparable types of qualitative data. As it was mentioned in sections 5.4.1.1 on netnography, the data and research participants are within easy access of the researcher and the data is, therefore, easily collected. The Facebook post that has been collected for this thesis is constructed chronologically, meaning that each comment is placed under the original depending on when the comment is shared. Therefore, the analysis of the data, without an analysis method, is very likely to become blurred into a single ongoing process. To avoid this, the netnographic thematic analysis method has been selected to categorize the data into themes, making the data more transparent both for the researcher and the reader (Kozinets, Dolbec and Earley, *Netnographic Analysis: Understanding Culture through Social Media Data 2014*, 269). The goal of this method is to reach a theoretical relevant understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Kozinets, Dolbec and Earley, *Netnographic Analysis: Understanding Culture through Social Media Data 2014*, 270).

5.5.1.1 Facebook Post

When applying the netnographic thematic analysis to the Facebook post, the researcher approaches the data in the same way as the participants of the data and, therefore, the interpretations of the online communications and communities will emerge gradually as they build up the cultural codes and the data is understood. This means that there may be bias to what the participants of the Facebook post are communicating and what the researcher understands. This factor is taken into account in the way that if there is uncertainty to what is meant in the data, the piece of data will either be left out of the analysis or it will be discussed how each specific piece of data can be understood and how it is understood and interpreted in this thesis (Kozinets, Dolbec and Earley, *Netnographic Analysis: Understanding Culture through Social Media Data 2014*, 270).

When applying the analysis method of netnographic thematic analysis, this is done in order to identify, analyze, and report patterns, or themes, within a piece of data. This method organizes and describes a piece of data in rich detail and can interpret many different aspects of the subject in question. This method consists of six steps that have been followed when categorizing the Facebook post into themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79).

The first step is *familiarizing yourself with your data*. Within this step, the data is transcribed, if necessary, the data is read and re-read, and initial ideas are noted. In relation to the Facebook post, in this step, the Facebook post was saved as a PDF file, making it easily accessible both for the researcher and the reader. Afterwards, the data was read multiple times and at the same time notes were taken about which specific pieces of the data were especially useful and interesting (Braun and Clarke 2006, 87-88).

The second step is *generating initial codes*. Within this step the data is categorized into codes to understand which different information is found in the data. In relation to the Facebook post, the Facebook post was first divided into two codes, those comments and sub-comments that are positive towards the plastic bans and those comments and sub-comments that are negative towards the plastic bans (Braun and Clarke 2006, 88-89).

The third step is *searching for themes*. In this step the codes are collated into potential themes and all the data that is found relevant to each theme is categorized into the themes. In relation to the Facebook post, this is where all five themes, which will be elaborated below, are found and each comment and sub-comment is categorized into these themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 89-91).

The fourth step is *reviewing themes*. In this step it is checked that each theme is actually relevant. Some themes generated in step three may not have enough data to support them whilst other themes may need to be broken down into separate themes. In relation to the Facebook post, all the themes that were found relevant in step three were relevant and did not need to be either removed or separated into more themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 91-92).

The fifth step is *defining and naming the themes*. In this step the themes are defined, to identify what the content of the theme actually is. In this step the themes are also named after what kind of data they consist of. In relation to the Facebook post the themes that the data is categorized into is as follows: (1) Positive towards the plastic bans, (2) negative towards the plastic bans, (3) solution-oriented, (4) other problems should be solved first, and (5) irrelevant. As the themes imply theme (1) are all the comments and sub-comments that are positive towards the bans, theme (2) are all the comments and sub-comments that are negative towards the bans, theme (3) are all the comments and sub-comments that suggest a solution to the bans, for instance suggesting alternatives to the banned products, theme (4) are all the comments and sub-comments that imply that the ban is fine, however, they find that there are bigger problems that should be solved first, and theme (5) are all the comments and sub-comments that are not found relevant for this thesis. The comments and sub-comments that

are not found relevant for this thesis are comments and sub-comments that deal with other topics than the ones in question of this thesis. Every comment and sub-comment in the data has been categorized into at least one of the five themes and this is shown in the appendix as the numbers 1-5 are inserted to the right of each comment and sub-comment making it clear both for the researcher and the reader. A few of the comments and sub-comments fit into more than one theme and these comments and sub-comments, therefore, have more than one number to the right in the appendix (Appendix 10.1).

The sixth step is *producing the report*. This step is, in this thesis, what is called the analysis. In this step, the different themes are analyzed by means of the chosen theories which were elaborated in chapter 4 (Braun and Clarke 2006, 93). This analysis will be provided in chapter 6.

5.5.1.2 Survey

The data collected through the survey cannot be categorized into the same themes as the Facebook post, as the themes will cross each other, for instance, a question asked in the survey is “*To what extent do you think the plastic bans are helpful?*” there are both answers that indicate that they are positive and negative towards the bans and, therefore, two themes have crossed each other. However, the data collected through the survey is categorized into other themes, but these themes are predetermined as each question functions as a theme. This means that the data collected through the survey already is categorized into each their theme, which is shown in the appendix (Appendix 10.2).

6.0 Analysis

This chapter will consist of the analysis of the collected data, which is accounted for in chapter 5.0.

The analysis will consist of two separate analyzes, one for each piece of collected empirical data, starting with an analysis of the Facebook post followed by an analysis of the survey. In chapter 7, a discussion of the two analysis will be provided in order to discuss and compare the results of each analysis to find an answer to the problem statement.

The two analyzes are of equal importance and will be analyzed employing the same theories which were presented in chapter 4. Both analyzes will seek to examine the extent to which the locals on St. Thomas are willing to enforce the plastic bans that have been implemented as well as they will examine the extent to which the locals are interested in cutting down on their plastic consumption in general. The chapter will begin with an analysis of the Facebook post as this piece of data is what first sparked this thesis and because the questions asked in the survey are partly inspired by the Facebook post. Therefore, it is natural that this chapter begins with the analysis of this piece of data.

6.1 Facebook Post

This analysis will be divided into the themes that were determined in section 5.6.1.1, on netnographic thematic analysis, which are (1) positive towards the plastic bans, (2) negative towards the plastic bans, (3) solution-oriented, (4) other problems should be solved first, and (5) irrelevant. However, the fifth theme (5) irrelevant is, as the name indicates, irrelevant for this thesis, as this data is of different topics than this thesis, and this theme will, therefore, not be a part of the analysis which means that this analysis will be divided into four sections, one for each relevant theme. The categorization of the themes is made visual in the appendix (Appendix 10.1). In the analysis, aspects from the theories, that were elaborated in chapter 4, will be connected with the empirical data to support the findings.

6.1.1 Positive Towards the Plastic Bans

This analysis will consist of the theme that, as mentioned, are those parts of the data that are positive towards the plastic bans that have been implemented and relevant theory from chapter 4 will be implemented. The comments and sub-comments that fall under this theme is marked in appendix 10.1 with the number “1” to the right of the comments and sub-comments (Appendix 10.1).

Several of the comments and sub-comments that are found to fall under this theme, are comments and sub-comments that are indicating that the author behind is agreeing with the author of the original Facebook post. But when indicating agreement with the statement that enforcement of the plastic bans is needed, the comments and sub-comments are also indicating that they are positive towards the plastic bans (Appendix 10.1).

The original Facebook post is about how Wendy's, a fast-food restaurant, is not abiding the bans, and how the author, Jason Budsan, indicates that enforcement is needed. It is, therefore, clear that he is in favor of the plastic bans and that he is of the opinion that everybody on St. Thomas should abide by the plastic bans. Also, as this person chooses to take pictures of straws at the restaurant and write the Facebook post about enhancement of the plastic ban, it can be assumed that this person feels strongly about reducing the consumption and emission of plastic (Appendix 10.1, page 2).

Another person who is in favor of reducing plastic is Linda, who is quoted below:

Linda Marie Gingrich:

“It's important that plastic waste be regulated. Those ignorant of the problem need to do some research. Personally if people make the choice to use their phones while driving or not wearing seat belts, that's a personal choice. Anything that hastens the destruction of our environment affects all of us. Yes there are great causes out there but don't discount the importance of environmental issues.” (Appendix 10.1, page 6-7)

Linda does not specifically say that she is in favor of the plastic bans, however, she does indicate that she thinks that plastic waste should be regulated. She compares the plastic bans to other laws, such as wearing a seatbelt but says that not wearing a seatbelt only affects oneself and plastic waste affects the environment which affects us all. She also agrees that there are many causes that should be dealt with, however, the cause of preserving the environment is very important. The fact that Linda does not specifically write about the plastic bans but plastic waste in general also indicates that she has a great interest in reducing plastic waste and, thereby, also her consumption of plastic (Appendix 10.1, page 6-7). The theory on consumer habits and sustainable consumption suggests that if an intention is stronger than a habit the intention is more likely to become successful (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247-248). For instance, if the intention of reducing one's consumption of plastic is stronger than the habits of consuming a bigger amount of plastic there is a greater chance that the person will be successful and actually reduce the consumption of plastic. And in the above quotation, Linda seems very interested in sustainable consumption and,

therefore, she also has a greater chance of actually reducing her consumption of plastic (Appendix 10.1, page 6-7).

In the following quote, the author of the comment is referring to the plastic bans as “doing the right thing”:

Bambi McDougald:

“Only in the VI people does get cussed out and shunned for trying to do right by the island. Smh...Ignorance steady prevailing.” (Appendix 10.1, page 8)

In this quotation the person is, again, not directly saying that she is in favor of the plastic bans, however, she does express how she thinks that Jason Budsan, who is the author of the original Facebook post, is trying to do right, and that he does not deserve to be “*cussed out and shunned*”. Indirectly, this can be interpreted into meaning that she thinks that the work Jason does is good for St. Thomas and, therefore, she also implies that she is in favor of the plastic bans (Appendix 10.1, page 8).

In the next quote, the author of the comment is clearly in favor of the plastic bans, however, she feels that some businesses are not taking the bans seriously as they try to get around them.

Zezlie DQ:

“One of my problems with this plastic law is K Mart and other stores are selling the same plastic bags to the customers that the law states not to use.” (Appendix 10.1, page 8)

In the quotation the person expresses that K Mart is abiding the ban by not giving plastic bags away for free, however, now the same plastic bags are being sold to the customer. In this quotation, the author is implicitly expressing that the plastic bags should not be sold at all, and it can be argued that she is alluding to that other alternatives to plastic bags could be sold instead (Appendix 10.1, page 8).

In the two following quotes, the authors are shortly indicating that they are in favor of the plastic bans.

Kristin Elizabeth:

“So needed!!!!” (Appendix 10.1, page 9)

Paul Grybowski:

“It’s called, a beginning. If you need an explanation on that, you are too far gone.”
(Appendix 10.1, page 16)

The first quote of the two above is shortly saying that she agrees with the author of the original post, that enforcement of the plastic bans is needed. By agreeing with this, she is also implying that she is positive towards the plastic bans and, therefore, it can be assumed that she, at least to some extent, is abiding them herself, as well as she wants everybody on St. Thomas to abide by them as well (Appendix 10.1, page 9). The second of the two quotes above states that “*you are too far gone*” if you do not understand why the plastic bans are a good initiative. By stating this, the author of the comment is showing that he is uncomprehending about the fact that some people are against the plastic bans. By sharing this opinion, he also makes it clear that he is in favor of the plastic bans and that he wants them to be abided by (Appendix 10.1, page 16).

In the following quote, which is a sub-comment, the author is not only indicating that he is in favor of the plastic bans, he also states one of the reasons why others should also be in favor of them. The sub-comment is commenting on a comment from a person who is not in favor of the bans, trying to explain why reducing plastic is a good thing.

Genevieve Szegi:

“Jay Drew plastic kills marine life so you can drink from a plastic stick. Lips to cup, that works too!” (Appendix 10.1, page 10)

And in the above quotation, he is saying that plastic straws, and plastic in general, should be avoided because it is hazardous to marine life. By encouraging others to reduce their use of plastic, it can also be assumed that he is abiding the bans himself. And also, in the sub-comment he is both referring to abiding by the ban by not using single-use plastic straws and reducing plastic in general. Therefore, it can be argued that he is interested in reducing his own plastic consumption and maybe engaging with sustainable consumption in general.

In the quotation below, the author is not directly saying that she is in favor of the plastic ban, however, she does state that plastic straws are not actually a necessity when consuming a beverage.

Jennifer Singer:

“The average person doesn’t even need a straw.” (Appendix 10.1, page 20)

In the above quotation the author argues that an average person does not need a straw to consume a beverage. It can be argued that she expresses herself with this wording as the bill exempts hospitals,

nursing homes, hospices, medical supply, and retailers from the ban on disposable, plastic drinking straws. By phrasing her comment in this way, she is making it clear that some people may need straws, and that that is okay, however, people who do not need them should not use them. This also means that she is of the opinion that everyone who is physically able to consume a beverage without a straw should do so and by implying this, it can be assumed that this also applies for herself.

In addition to the comment above, a similar comment which is quoted below, was made.

Eric Kirchoff:

“I ask the ppl who usually ask for a straw if they use a straw at home !?!?! The answer is always no - So why do you need a straw now !!!” (Appendix 10.1, page 20)

This author is also arguing that the use of a straw is not a physical necessity to consuming a beverage, however, when people are at a bar or restaurant etc., they still ask for one. As the person who has written the comment argues that straws are not necessary, it can also be assumed that this includes him as well and, therefore, it appears that he is in favor of the bans and that he has an interest in reducing the consumption of plastic on St. Thomas.

In the Facebook post there are many more comments that are positive towards the plastic ban, but in the above a number of these have been selected and analyzed upon.

According to the theory on gender and sustainable consumption, women are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption than men (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541-542). In the theme in question in this section, namely those who are positive towards that plastic bans, in the Facebook post there are 227 comments and sub-comments, and adding the original post there are 228. 121 of these have been categorized into the theme of those who are positive towards the ban. Of these 121, 87 of them are women and only 34 are men, which is approximately 72% women and 28% men, which confirms the theory that women are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption than men. However, it should be mentioned that it often is the same authors who are commenting throughout the Facebook post, and, therefore, it may not necessarily be 87 different women and 34 different men that have commented with positivity towards the bans. Nonetheless, the statistics confirm that women are more noticeable in the engagement with sustainable consumption (Appendix 10.1).

In the next section, the comments and sub-comments that are negative towards the plastic bans will be analyzed.

6.1.2 Negative Towards the Plastic Bans

In the section above, section 6.1.1, it was made clear that many of the participant of the Facebook post are positive towards the plastic bans, however, several are also negative towards them. The negative comments and sub-comments will be analyzed in this section and relevant theory from chapter 4 will be applied. The comments and sub-comments that fall under this theme is marked in the appendix with the number “2” to the right of the comments and sub-comments (Appendix 10.1).

Several of the comments and sub-comments that are negative towards the plastic bans are very alike, like the ones below.

Monique Brown:

“*Lmfao*” (Appendix 10.1, page 3)

Mike Whitten:

““*Lawbreakers*”” (Appendix 10.1, page 3)

Greg Watts:

“*Really??*” (Appendix 10.1, page 3)

The three comments above all indicate how careless the three people are toward the bans. The first comment is slang, which in this context means that the person thinks that the plastic bans and the encouragement for enhancement is only to laugh about. The person who wrote it, thereby, makes it clear that she is not in favor of the bans and that she thinks that the original Facebook post is ridiculous (Appendix 10.1, page 3). The second comment is putting the word “*lawbreakers*” (Appendix 10.1, page 3) in quotation marks, which is also indicating that he thinks that the fact that Wendy’s is not abiding the bans is making them lawbreakers is an exaggeration. By this he implies that making a law about banning straws etc. is unnecessary and maybe even stupid. The comment, thus, makes it clear that he is not in favor of the plastic bans (Appendix 10.1, page 3). The third comment of the three above saying “*Really??*” (Appendix 10.1, page 3), indicates that the author is not in favor of the bans as well as he is implying that enforcing the ban in question of the original Facebook post is a waste of time or trouble. Posting this comment also shows that this person may not be interested in engaging with sustainable consumption at all, or it at least shows that the person thinks that the ban against single use plastic straws is too small a change to even bother the trouble (Appendix 10.1, page 3).

In the quotation below, the author clearly indicates that he is not in favor of the plastic bans, yet this person explains why he does not want plastic straws to be banned.

Jay Dior Drew:

“While yall worried about plastic straws y'all should also be worried about them cardboard piece of shit they trying replace the plastic straws with. That shit gets soggy n crumble so easily. Who wants to swallow pieces of cardboard while tryin to enjoy their drink imagine wa that gonna do to ur insides over time. Take the bags leave out straws” (Appendix 10.1, page 9)

This person does not want plastic straws to be banned as he does not feel that the alternative provided, in this case straws made out of cardboard, is satisfactory. This person does not directly indicate that he thinks that reducing the emission of plastic is a bad idea, he simply wants a better alternative to plastic straws than cardboard straws before he wants to abide by the ban. In the end of the quote he does state that he is in favor of the plastic bag ban and he is, thus, in favor of the one ban and against the other. This person makes a sub-comment to his own comment, which is quoted below, that indicates that he thinks that banning plastic straws makes such a small difference that it is immaterial.

Jay Dior Drew:

“Linda Marie Gingrich u think I really care I'd rather not put cardboard into my body millions of items are made with plastic u really thing straws make a difference” (Appendix 10.1, page 9)

Therefore, it is hard to determine whether or not this person would be interested in engaging with reducing his consumption of plastic in general, but it is clear that good alternatives to plastic is an essential factor for this person if he were to reduce his consumption of plastic (Appendix 10.1, page 9). The theory on habits and sustainable consumption suggests that a change of habits is most likely to become successful if the intention of breaking the habit is stronger than the habit itself (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247-248). However, this person does not seem to have an intention of breaking his habit of using plastic straws and it is, therefore, very unlikely that the habit will be broken, at least until he is introduced to a better alternative than cardboard straws (Appendix 10.1, page 9).

Several of the comments that are against the plastic bans indicates that this is because they feel that the restrictions are of such a small part of plastic that it does not make any difference, which is shown below.

Peggy Elliott:

“Look what’s right next to the straws. Oh my little plastic cups. Do you brush your teeth—what’s your toothbrush made of. How about you milk bottles, soda bottle, and juice bottles. Too many things to mention.” (Appendix 10.1, page 12)

The above quotation does not directly state that the person is against the plastic bans, however, it does indicate the opinion that there is so much plastic being consumed that banning plastic bags, straws, and stirrers will not have an impact. The comment lists that some item that are used every day by most people are made of plastic, and it seems like the person feels that reducing the consumption of plastic is overwhelming. The comment does, therefore, not state whether or not the author would be interested in reducing her consumption of plastic, but only the opinion that the impact of banning plastic straws is next to nothing (Appendix 10.1, page 12).

In total, 40 negative comments and sub-comments were made on the original Facebook post, whereof 28 were made by women, 70%, and 12 were made by men, 30%. The theory on gender and sustainability suggests that women are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption than men (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541-542). But if this were to be true in the Facebook post, there should have been more negative comments from men than from women, which is not the case. Therefore, in this theme, consisting of those comments and sub-comments that are negative towards the plastic bans, the theory does not comply. However, it should be mentioned that there are more comments and sub-comments written by women in general in the Facebook post and this may explain why there are few comments from men in this theme (Appendix 10.1).

6.1.3 Solution-Oriented

Several of the comments and sub-comments that have been made to the original Facebook post provides some sort of solution that makes it possible to abide by the plastic bans. The comments and sub-comments that fall under this theme is marked in the appendix with the number “3” to the right of the comments and sub-comments (Appendix 10.1). This analysis will implement relevant theory from chapter 4.

The comments and sub-comments that fall into this theme, can also be said to be positive towards the plastic bans, however, not only are they positive they also serve a solution that may help other to become positive towards the plastic bans. Some are simple and do not require any additional items and others suggest alternatives that can be purchased. The comment below suggest that straws can simply be omitted:

Genevieve Szegi:

“Jay Drew plastic kills marine life so you can drink from a plastic stick. Lips to cup, that works too!” (Appendix 10.1, page 10)

This comment simply states that straws are not necessary when consuming a beverage and it should, therefore, be omitted without any trouble.

Several of those comments and sub-comments, made by the same person, suggest an alternative to plastic straw, namely, a product called “Hay Straws” which, as the name indicate is a straw made out of hay. Examples of these comments and sub-comments are quoted below:

Khalil Al-Arefi:

“They need Hay Straws VI” (Appendix 10.1, page 3)

Khalil Al-Arefi:

”<https://www.facebook.com/haystrawsvi/>” (Appendix 10.1, page 6)

Khalil Al-Arefi:

“Jay Drew , Hay Straws VI doesn ’t get soggy. And it’s 100 percent natural !” (Appendix 10.1, page 10)

Khalil Al-Arefi:

“Hay Straws VI is a much better alternative !” (Appendix 10.1, page 29)

This person has made several comments about Hay Straws encouraging people to abide by the plastic bans by using these straws instead of single use plastic straws. He replies to people who are complaining about cardboard straws and how they get soggy when wet, telling them about how Hay Straws is a great alternative to plastic straws. By encouraging people to use this type of straw instead of those of plastic, he is also indicating that he is in favor of the ban (Appendix 10.1, page 29). Also, by suggesting an alternative to plastic straws, people do not need to change their habit of using a straw, it simply changes the habit into using a different type of straw. According to the theory on

habits and sustainable consumption, a strong intention is essential when breaking a habit, but in this case, the change of habit is minimal, and there is, therefore, a greater chance for success (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247-248).

Even though the original Facebook post is only regarding the ban on plastic straws, a person is also suggesting solutions to how to reduce one's consumption of plastic in general:

Lauren River:

"I bought this set over 2 years ago and love them. Cost me about \$10" (Appendix 10.1, page 19)

Lauren River:

"you can also get these sets on Amazon. <https://www.amazon.com/s...>" (Appendix 10.1, page 19)

"this set" in the first quotation, is referring to the picture she posted along side with the comment, showing a set of cutleries made out of wood. She is, thereby, suggesting using more sustainable cutlery than plastic. In the second quotation *"these set"* refers to an article with the heading *"Amazon.com: reusable eating utensils with case"*, which also suggests other alternatives to plastic. By making these comments, encouraging other to consume less plastic, it can also be assumed that this person is in favor of the plastic bans as well as she wants to cut down on plastic in general. She also implies that she has a great intention of reducing her own consumption of plastic, and as the theory on habits and sustainable consumption suggests, there is a greater chance for successfully changing a habit when the intention is strong. Therefore, when her intention to reduce her consumption of plastic is strong, she is more likely to be successful with her intention (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247-248).

A person who is against banning plastic straws because she thinks the alternative cardboard straws are *"nasty"* (Appendix 10.1, page 26) is contradicted with plenty of other alternatives to plastic and cardboard straws, in the following quotation:

Adrienne Poe

"Chara Queen please. You have google at your fingertips. There's PLENTY of options. Google it." (Appendix 10.1, page 27)

Adrienne Poe

“Here’s TEN.

<https://www.diffordsguide.com/.../straws-10-alternatives...>” (Appendix 10.1, page 27)

The alternatives provided in the link above suggests 10 alternatives to plastic straws which contradicts the person who believes that cardboard straws are the only alternative. By suggesting other alternatives this person is clearly in favor of the plastic bans and by suggesting alternatives she is also encouraging others into abiding by them as well. By putting the word “PLENTY” (Appendix 10.1, page 27) in block letters, it also seems as she thinks that it is easy to abide by the bans by using the alternatives instead and, therefore, she may also be interested in reducing her plastic consumption in general (Appendix 10.1, page 27).

Another person also has a suggestion for an alternative to plastic straws:

Cassandra D Watson:

“Chara Queen get metal straws.” (Appendix 10.1, page 27)

This comments simply suggests another type of straw. And as mentioned above, an encouragement to abide the bans and use other alternatives also indicate that this person is in favor of the bans as well as she may be inclined to reduce her plastic consumption in general (Appendix 10.1, page 27).

One person also has a suggestion to how some businesses can reduce their consumption of plastic:

Adrienne Poe:

“Michelle Ballwanz Wolven also in the states there are a lot of places that will give you a discount if you bring a reusable cup. I’d love to see that implemented here in the Virgin Islands!” (Appendix 10.1, page 38)

This comment suggests that restaurants, such as Wendy’s, should implement a discount for those customers who bring their own reusable cup, instead of the single use cups many restaurants provide. Making a suggesting like this, implies that this person is very interested in reducing plastic and maybe sustainable consumption in general.

In the original Facebook post 13 comments and sub-comments were made within this theme, whereof 9 were made by women, 69%, and 4 were made by men, 31%. This confirms the theory on gender and sustainable consumption, as the theory suggests that women are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption than men. And also, the 4 comments made by men are all written by the same person, which confirms the theory even further (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541-542).

6.1.4 Other Problems Should be Solved First

The comments and sub-comments that fall under this theme are those that suggest that the plastic bans are a good initiative, however, they are of the opinion that there are bigger problems that should be solved first. The comments and sub-comments that fall under this theme is marked in the appendix with the number “4” to the right of the comments and sub-comments (Appendix 10.1).

Common for all the comments and sub-comments of this theme, is that it is hard to determine whether or not the authors of the comments and sub-comments are for or against the plastic bans. This is because they all think that bigger issues are more important than plastic bags, straws, and stirrers. But just because other issues are more important does not mean that the authors are directly against the bans, they just think that they should be given a low priority compared with other issues. And as it cannot be determined whether or not the authors of the comments and sub-comments are in favor of the bans or not, the theories from chapter 4 cannot be applied to this theme.

The comment below suggests that there are other things that the author of the comment thinks is more important than banning single use plastic bags, straws, and stirrers.

Christina Anna Basick:

*“Imagine this is a large corporation that is purchased millions of straws in advance okay that's a financial loss unless someone is reimbursing them.
they may take a little time to get to get that all under control and switch out.
Although Your Enthusiasm is great.....can you also direct that
same enthusiasm to help other amazing causes..
.for example
Family Resource Center
The old folks home
Humane Society
And much more just ask ...the Facebook will definitely give u more than enough
ideas...”* (Appendix 10.1, page 4)

The quotation above states that “Your Enthusiasm is great....”, meaning that encouraging others to enforcing the plastic bans is great, however, the author of this comments thinks that there are more important matters that should be dealt with first. Therefore, the author of the comment is not either

for or against the bans, as she is in favor of good causes, but she thinks other causes are more important than the one in question (Appendix 10.1, page 4).

All the comments and sub-comments of this theme share the opinion that plastic bag, straws, and stirrers is a small issue compared with other problem on St. Thomas. The two quotes below suggest that it is a matter of priorities, and their opinion is that straws, which the original Facebook post revolves around, is of minor priority.

Ahmad Abdallah:

“Let’s fix bigger issues like Wapa, cost of living, roads and schools. Then we can deal with straw issue!” (Appendix 10.1, page 14)

Ben Stout:

“Continued plastic straw use in the VI means very little to the poor bastard waiting on an ambulance or the police to show up.

Priorities, tree-hugger, priorities....” (Appendix 10.1, page 20)

The authors of the two comments above do clearly not think that banning plastic bags, straws, and stirrers is important, not necessarily because they do not think that plastic waste is an issue on St. Thomas, but because they think that other issues should be dealt with first (Appendix 10.1, page 14 and 20).

In the comment below, the author of the comment wrote her comment in block letters, which emphasize how important she thinks it is.

Karen Querrard-Ramirez:

“WOW YOU REALLY HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO RIGHT NOW? SO MANY OTHER ISSUES THAT ARE SO MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS.” (Appendix 10.1, page 21)

The comment above expresses frustration of the topic in question in the original Facebook post, because she strongly disagrees with the importance of banning plastic straws. As for the other comments and sub-comments of this theme, the author of this comment does not explicitly state that she is against the plastic bans, however, she thinks that it should not become effective until the bigger issues have been solved.

6.2 Survey

This analysis will, as mentioned, analyze the survey that has been conducted, and, with the analysis above on the Facebook post, seek to find an answer to the problem statement. In chapter 7, the two analyzes will be discussed and the results will be compared in order to provide an answer the problem statement.

In this analysis, aspects from the theories, that were elaborated in chapter 4, will be connected with the empirical data to support the findings, and it will become clear whether the theories also apply for the locals in St. Thomas.

The general idea of the theory on habits and sustainable consumption is that there is a greater chance for breaking an unsustainable habit if the intention of breaking it is stronger than the habit itself (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 247-248). And the general idea of the theory on gender and identity and sustainable consumption is that women are more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption than men (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541-542) and that people with the social identity salient is more inclined to engage with sustainable consumption than people with the personal identity salient (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542). These two theories will be applied when relevant to either confirm or deny that the theory applies for the locals in St. Thomas.

Question 1 and 2 of the survey were asked to ensure that the respondents of the survey either live on St. Thomas or spend at least half of their time there, as this is the target group for this thesis. Therefore, the questions were asked to sort out those respondents who may not have read the text that was added to the survey when it was shared in the group “What’s Going on St. Thomas?” (Appendix 10.2, page 41-42).

Question 3, 4, and, 5 are regarding demography, or rather gender, age, and occupation. These questions will be taken into account throughout this analysis in order to investigate whether these factors have an influence on how the respondents have responded to the questions (Appendix 10.2, page 42-43).

To question 6, which is “*When choosing between products, how important are the following factors to you? (1 being irrelevant, 5 being very important)*” (Appendix 10.2, page 44), the average of the responses to each factor have been calculated, which is shown in the appendix. These calculations show that the respondents have responded that the factors level of importance is as follows, beginning with the most important and ending with the least important: quality (4.3), price (3.9), sustainability

(3.5), quantity (3.4), and brand (2.4) (Appendix 10.2, page 43). By looking at these responses it is very clear that sustainability is not what the respondents think is most important of the five factors. To investigate whether there is difference to how male and female respondents have answered this question, the average of each gender has also been calculated and it was found that the level of importance is the same, but in general, the male respondents think that the factors are less important than the female respondents. A table showing the average responses is provided in the appendix (Appendix 10.2, page 44). The male respondents think that all of the factors except quantity is less important than the female respondents. The male and female respondents agree on the importance of quantity. The female respondents have, in average, rated sustainability to 3.6 on the scale, where the male respondents have rated it to 3.3. This confirms the theory on gender and sustainable consumption, as the female respondents think that sustainability is more important than the male respondents (Appendix 10.2, page 44). The fact that sustainability is rated at 3.5, which is considered relatively high, also shows that sustainability is an attribute or factor that many of the respondents consider when choosing between products. This means, that even though this attribute is not the most important one, it is still considered and, therefore, there is a chance that respondents chooses sustainable products over other products (Verplanken and Roy, Consumer habits and sustainable consumption 2015, 244-245).

To question 7, which is *“To what extent is the amount of plastic in a product or its packaging a factor when choosing between products?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 45), the average response is 3.1 on a scale from 1-5. The average response is 3.2 from the female respondents and 2.8 from the male respondents making it clear that women is a bit more aware of reducing their plastic consumption, which, again, confirms the theory on gender and sustainable consumption (Appendix 10.2, page 45).

To question 8, which is *“To what extent do you wish to reduce your own consumption of plastic?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 46), most of the respondents are in agreement that they wish to reduce their consumption of plastic. In fact, on a scale from 1-5 the average response is 4.2 whereof the female respondents responded 4.3 and the male respondents responded 4.1. This question, thereby, also confirms the theory on gender and sustainable consumption, however, the difference between men and women is small (Appendix 10.2, page 46). The responses to this question also show that the respondents in general have an intention to reduce their consumption of plastic, however, as the theory on habits and sustainable consumption suggests, the intention of reducing their consumption of plastic needs to be stronger than the habit of consuming a bigger amount of plastic, to be successful. Whether

or not this is the case cannot be determined by this question and its responses, however, this theory will also be applied later in this analysis.

To question 9, which is “*To what extent is sustainability important to you?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 47), the average response is 4.1 on a scale from 1-5, whereof the average response from the female respondents is on 4.2 and the average response from the male respondents is 3.8. The respondents are, therefore, in agreement with that sustainability is important, but yet again, the female respondents think it is more important than the male respondents (Appendix 10.2, page 47). By responding that sustainability is important, the respondents are also implying an interest with sustainability, and maybe even an intention of wanting to engage with sustainability, but as argued above, the intention has a greater chance for success if the intention of engaging with sustainability is stronger than the habit of not engaging with sustainability. Therefore, the intention of wanting to engage with sustainability does not necessarily mean that the respondents are actually doing so.

To question 10, which is “*How often do you use a straw when consuming a beverage?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 47), the average response is 2.0 on a scale from 1-5, 1 being *never*, 5 being *always*. The average response from the female respondents is 2.1 and the average response from the male respondents is 1.8 (Appendix 10.2, page 47-48). This means that there is actually fewer men who use straws when consuming a beverage than women. This can have something to do with the assumption that females consume more beverages that are served with a straw than men. However, the responses to this question show that beverages in general are rarely consumed with a straw, and whether this is because of personal interests in reducing one’s plastic consumption or it is because they rarely occur after the ban on plastic straws, is hard to tell. But, as mentioned, the responses to this question show that men use less straws than women, and the theory on gender and sustainable consumption is, thus, not applicable in this case.

To question 11, which is “*When grocery shopping, how often do you bring your own shopping bag(s)?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 48), the average response is 4.3 on a scale from 1-5, 1 being *never*, 5 being *always*. The average response from the female respondents is 4.4 and the average response from the male respondents is 3.9. This means that the female respondents almost always bring their own shopping bag(s) where men do so a bit more rarely. This correlate with the responses to question 9 on how important sustainability is to the respondents. To both questions the average response is quite high, but the female respondents have responded a bit higher than the male respondents. These questions correlate with each other as they clearly show that those respondents who thinks that

sustainability is very important also brings their own shopping bag(s) when grocery shopping, instead of purchasing a plastic bag. Thereby, those who think that sustainability is important are also acting sustainable by reusing a bag instead a buying a new plastic bag when grocery chopping (Appendix 10.2, page 47-48).

To question 12, which is “*When considering sustainability, to what extent do you think you can make a positive impact by yourself?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 49), the average response is 3.5 on a scale from 1-5, 1 being *no impact*, 5 being *big impact*. The average response from the female respondents is 3.5 and the average response from the male respondents is 3.2. And to question 13, which is “*When considering sustainability, to what extent do you think everyone on St. Thomas can make a positive impact together?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 50), the average response is 4.3 on a scale from 1-5, 1 being *no impact*, 4 being *big impact*. The average response from the female respondents is 4.5 and the average response from the male respondents is 3.9. The theory on identity and sustainable consumption suggests that a person is more inclined to engage with sustainability when identifying oneself as a part of a community than when identifying oneself as an individual (Pinto, et al. 2014, 542). This is clearly also the case with the respondents of this survey, as they feel like they can make a bigger impact when they are together than when they are alone. Also, the female respondents have responded with a higher response than the male respondents, and as the theory on gender and sustainable consumption suggests, women are generally more inclined to engage with sustainability (Pinto, et al. 2014, 541-542), and apparently, the female respondents also seem to think that they can make a bigger positive impact, both alone and with everyone on St. Thomas, than male respondents think.

Question 14 and 15, which are “*Are you aware of any initiatives, that have been put into action to cut down on plastic on St. Thomas?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 51) and “*What are the initiatives?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 51-53), were asked to learn if the respondent know of the two plastic bans, banning single use plastic bags, straws, and stirrers, and to learn if there are other initiatives that are put into action. Several of the respondents who put in their own response, responded that they know about the ban on single use plastic bags and straws, which makes it clear that the locals in general are aware that the plastic bans have been put into action. This also eliminates the risk that some are not abiding the bans because they do not know about them. Some of the respondents mention an initiative that involves plastic recycling at a place called Plaza Tutu or Tutu Park Plaza Extra. A few respondents have also mentioned cleanups at beaches and roadsides (Appendix 10.2, page 51-52). The ban on single use plastic bags, straws, and stirrers are, thus, not the only initiatives that have been put into

action, however, it is the first initiative that actually reduces the consumption of plastic by simply not using it. Recycling is a great initiative to reuse old plastic to make new products instead of producing new plastic for every new product. In comparison the plastic bans are an initiative that simply stops the production of plastic bags, straws, and stirrers for St. Thomas, which is reducing the consumption of plastic.

Before question 16 and 17 were asked, the respondents were introduced to the following text:

“St. Thomas is economically dependent on tourism. And one of the main reasons the tourists visit St. Thomas is because of its beauty and rich marine ecosystems.”
(Appendix 10.2, page 53)

This text was added to provide the respondents with information about how and why St. Thomas is dependent on tourists, making them think about this when responding to the questions.

To question 16, which is *“Do you think there is a lot of plastic waste in the nature on St. Thomas as well as in the surrounding ocean?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 54), the average response is 4.3 from a scale from 1-5, 1 being *no plastic waste*, 5 being *a lot of plastic waste*. The average response from the female respondents is 4.4 and the average response from the male respondents is 4.0 (Appendix 10.2, page 54). The scale for this question is very subjective as it depends on each of the respondents how much *“a lot of plastic waste”* is. It is clear that all of the respondents agree that there is a big amount of plastic waste on St. Thomas and in the surrounding ocean, however, the female respondents think that it is worse than the male respondents. There can be several reasons for this, for instance the female respondents may be more aware of the plastic waste than the male respondents and, therefore, the male respondents may not notice every piece of plastic waste. Or the male respondents simply have a different opinion on how much *“a lot of plastic waste”* is.

To question 17, which is *“Do you think plastic waste can scare off tourists?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 54), 49% of the respondents have responded “Yes”, 35.3 % responded “Maybe”, and 15.7% responded “No”. This shows that almost half of the respondents think that plastic waste can scare of tourists which, consequently, can harm the local economy. The respondents who responded “Maybe” think that there is a risk that plastic waste can scare of tourists, and if these are added to the ones who checked “Yes”, this is 84%. Most of the respondents are, therefore, in agreement that plastic waste can scare off tourists and consequently, be harmful for the local economy (Appendix 10.2, page 54).

Before question 18 and 19, the respondents were introduced to the following text:

“On April 1 2017 a ban towards single-use plastic bags was implemented. And on October 1 2019 the ban was expanded to also include single-use plastic straws and single-use tubular stirrers.” (Appendix 10.2, page 55)

This text was added to ensure that all respondents know of the plastic bans and to make it clear that it is these bans that are being referred to in the following questions.

To question 18, which is *“To what extent do you think the plastic bans are helpful?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 55), the average response is 3.7 on a scale from 1-5, 1 being “Not helpful”, 5 being “Very helpful”. The average response from the female respondents is 3.9 and the average response from the male respondents is 3.2, making it clear that the female respondents think that the plastic bans are more helpful than the male respondents (Appendix 10.2, page 55). It can also be argued that those who think the plastic bans are helpful, also are in favor of them. If this is assumed, the responses to this question correlates with the theory on gender and sustainability, as the female respondents are more in favor of the plastic bans than the male respondents.

Question 19, which is *“Do you want to explain why this is your opinion?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 56-58), is asked in continuation of question 18, to learn why the respondents either think the plastic bans are helpful or not. This question is not mandatory, and yet 36 of the respondents have chosen to respond to it. Several of the respondents imply that the idea of the plastic bans is good, however, when not enforced, it does not make much of a difference, like the response below:

“Neither are significant waste streams as a proportion of all plastic waste on island. There is no noticeable difference in litter since the bans we’re implemented. Also, like many laws here, they are not strenuously enforced.” (Appendix 10.2, page 56)

The respondent who made this response is not necessarily against the plastic bans, however, the person states that he or she has not noticed any difference in the amount of litter since the bans were implemented and the bans, therefore, seem unnecessary.

Some of the respondents who are positive towards the bans, indicate that they want the bans to be enforced:

“Only helpful if enforced” (Appendix 10.2, page 56)

“Stores are still using plastic bags. However, their has been a good cutback in straws”
(Appendix 10.2, page 57)

These two responses indicate that they think that the plastic bans can have a great impact if they are enforced, however, according to these responses, it seems like they are not (Appendix 10.2, page 56-57).

The response below indicates how the respondent thinks that the plastic bans are a good initiative, however, the respondent does not think that banning plastic bags, straws, and stirrers is enough.

“I think these bans are a good start, but there is so much more that needs to be done. Ban ALL single-use plastics, ban styrofoam containers, begin real recycling program on the island (Saturday recycling at Plaza Extra was also a good start), get rid of all plastic grocery bags in stores and require shoppers to bring their own bags, bars and restaurants should give discounts to patrons who bring their reusable cups and straws. More education is also needed as I have seen many Virgin Islanders complain that the bag ban is inconveniencing them – they clearly do not know (or care?) how harmful these bags are to the environment, wildlife, and marine life. Also, the plastic straw ban is useless when coffee shops still give people coffee in single-use plastic cups even when the straws are compostable or paper.” (Appendix 10.2, page 57)

The above response provides several suggestions to initiatives that could be implemented in order to reduce the consumption of plastic even further. These include banning more types of plastic, beginning a “real” recycling program, and educating the locals about the impact of plastic. This respondent is clearly in favor of reducing the consumption of plastic on the island and indicates that he or she is willing to engage with reducing the consumption of plastic further (Appendix 10.2, page 57).

There are also respondents who are very positive towards the plastic bans, who also thinks that they are making a difference:

“They work” (Appendix 10.2, page 57)

“Every effort counts towards taking care of the planet & ending pollution” (Appendix 10.2, page 57)

“Every little bit helps” (Appendix 10.2, page 58)

The three responses above, indicates that the respondents are positive towards the plastic bans, as they think they are making a difference. They do also state that the difference they are making may

be small, but these respondents states that even a small difference is a difference (Appendix 10.2, page 57-58).

Question 20 and 21, which are “*To what extent do you think the plastic bans are being abided by the locals?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 58) and “*To what extent are you abiding the bans?*” (Appendix 10.2, page 59), are asked to learn the difference, if any, between the extent to which the respondents think the locals are abiding by the bans and the extent to which themselves are abiding the bans. To these questions there are a surprisingly big difference. To question 20, the average response is 2.9 on a scale from 1-5, 1 being *abided by few*, 5 being *abided by most*. The average response from the female respondents is 2.7 and the average response from the male respondents is 3.4. This makes it clear that the female respondents think that the plastic bans are being abided by less by the locals than the male respondents (Appendix 10.2, page 58). To question 21, the average response is 4.2 on a scale from 1-5, 1 being *not at all*, 5 being *very much*. The average response from the female respondents is 4.4 and the average response from the male respondents is 3.8, which suggest that the female respondents are abiding by the bans to a greater extent than the male respondents (Appendix 10.2, page 59). There is a surprisingly big difference between the responses of these two questions. This difference is surprising because the respondents in average have responded that they are all abiding the bans to a greater extent than the rest of the locals on St. Thomas. This means that they in general think that each other are abiding by them to a small extent but themselves are abiding them to a great extent. But as the average response to question 21 is that almost all are abiding by the bans, then who are all of those who are not abiding by them, as according to question 21. This can be because those on St. Thomas who are not abiding by the bans, simply have not responded to the survey, it can be because the questions are not answered truthfully, or maybe the respondents think that the bans are being abided by to a smaller extent than they actually are.

Question 22, which is “*Do you think those who are enforcing the bans are enforcing the plastic bans, are doing it mostly because of the local economy or mostly because of the environment? (3 being both)*” (Appendix 10.2, page 60) was asked to learn whether the locals are most interested in preserving the environment or in the local economy. The average response is 3.2, meaning that the environment is a bit more important than the local economy. However, the average female response is 3.2 and the average male response is 2.8. This means, that the female respondents think that the environment is most important, and the male respondents thinks that the local economy is most important. Again, this confirms the theory on gender and sustainable consumption, as the women are more concerned with the environment than the men.

Question 23, which is *“If any, which barriers do you think there are to cut down on plastic on St. Thomas? (e.g. products with no or reduced use of plastic are not available)”* (Appendix 10.2, page 61) was asked to learn if it is even possible for the locals to easily cut down on their own consumption of plastic. Several of the respondents have responded that many products are sold in plastic packaging, which makes it hard to avoid plastic:

“A lot of products at the grocery stores are still being sold in plastic, especially the stores that sell in bulk. I think this is a barrier because people want things in bulk and also it is hard for the stores to control if the products they are getting to sell are using plastic. If they were to not order the products that use plastic I think a lot of people would be mad that they can’t get the products they want to eat or use.” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

“That’s hard. Most stuff comes here in plastic” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

“Lack of products with no or less plastic.” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

These three responses all indicate that it is close to impossible to avoid plastic when grocery shopping, even if you wanted to. The barrier, therefore, is that many products are packaged in plastic and that products with no or reduced content of plastic are not available.

Some respondents responded that there is not enough plastic being recycled:

“Having recycling plants available all over the island several days a week” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

“Recycling is not readily available despite efforts” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

“Lack of recycling” (Appendix 10.2, page 62)

The three responses above indicate that implementing more options for recycling could help to reduce the amount of plastic on the islands (Appendix 10.2, page 61-62). Therefore, a barrier is that not enough recycling is available.

One of the respondents also claims that specific groups of people are a barrier:

“Tourism” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

“Older generations” (Appendix 10.2, page 62)

The responses above is implying that the older generations on St. Thomas and the tourists care less about consuming less plastic than the rest of the locals on St. Thomas.

Another barrier that is listed in the responses is that people are not educated well enough to know about the consequences of plastic:

“Lack of education and willingness by the population to make a change in lifestyle”
(Appendix 10.2, page 62)

This response both indicate that the local population needs more education to become aware of how harmful plastic is and if they become aware of this, they may become more willing to make a change in lifestyle and consume less plastic (Appendix 10.2, page 62).

The last barrier that is found within the responses to question 23 is economy:

“There is only one meaningful barrier to better environmental stewardship: economic. Everything else is marketing and window dressing. If people can afford to do better, they will. If they can’t afford it they won’t prioritize it in their life” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

“Knowledge, income, access” (Appendix 10.2, page 61)

“Alternatives tend to be more expensive and not as widely available.” (Appendix 10.2, page 62)

The three responses above indicate that those few alternatives there are to plastic is too expensive and that many of the locals on St. Thomas cannot afford them. Therefore, even if more products with no or less content of plastic were available, many may not be able to afford them. This also makes economy a barrier to reducing the consumption of plastic on St. Thomas.

The last question, question 24, which is *“Any last comments?”* (Appendix 10.2, page 64) was asked to gain any last knowledge, suggestion, or information from the respondents, that the survey may not have asked about.

One of the respondents responded:

“The use of “single use plastic” is not a matter of choice between products. The only choice is to buy whats on the shelf or do without.” (Appendix 10.2, page 65)

This response indicates that products with no or reduced use of plastic are not being offered, and it is, therefore, hard or even close to impossible to reduce one’s own consumption of plastic. This response also indicates that if it was made possible to purchase products that are produced with no or

reduced content of plastic, and the consumers were actually given a choice between products, chance is that at least some consumers would make the sustainable choice (Appendix 10.2, page 65).

Other respondents have responded how they wish that the “*situation with plastic*” will get better and how they think that big changes are needed. These responses also indicate that the respondents want to engage in reducing their plastic consumption but how it is hard when products with no or reduced use of plastic are not being offered. The responses to this question are generally very positive towards reducing plastic but negative towards how plastic is being handled on St. Thomas. There are, clearly, many of the respondent who wishes to engage with reducing their consumption of plastic, but as some of them states, big changes are needed to make it possible (Appendix 10.2, page 64-65).

7.0 Discussion

In this chapter, the two analyzes in chapter 6 will be discussed and the results will be compared. This chapter is found relevant in order to integrate the two analyzes and their results in order to find a joint answer to the problem statement in the conclusion.

In section 6.1.1, the comments and sub-comments to the Facebook post that were found to be positive towards the plastic bans, were analyzed and with 121 comments and sub-comments out of 228, it is clear that many of the comments and sub-comments are in favor of the plastic bans and sustainable consumption. In the survey, the respondents were, to some extent, found to be positive towards the idea of sustainable consumption. When the respondents, in question 8, were asked if they wanted to reduce their own consumption of plastic, the average response was very positive, meaning that most of the respondents want to reduce their consumption of plastic. This is also the case with the responses to question 9, where the respondents were asked about the extent to which sustainability is important to them. To this question, the average response was very positive, which means that sustainability in average is very important to the respondents. The respondents also responded that they rarely use a straw when consuming a beverage and that they often bring their own shopping bag(s) when grocery shopping, which also indicates a positive attitude towards sustainability. Comparing the two analyzes, it is clear that a big part of the local population on St. Thomas has a great intention of abiding the plastic bans and engaging with sustainable consumption. However, there are more women than men throughout the theme “Positive towards the plastic bans” in the Facebook post, and in the survey the women have also replied in a manner that indicate that they are more positive both towards the plastic bans and sustainable consumption in general, which confirms the theory on gender and sustainable consumption.

Some of the responses to the survey indicates both positive and negative attitudes towards the plastic bans and sustainable consumption in general. For instance, to question 18 and 19, some of the respondents responded that they do think that the plastic bans, to some extent, are helpful, as they think that every little bit helps, however, some respondents are also of the opinion that the plastic bans are not being abided, and, therefore, they are not very helpful. And also, when the respondents were asked about the importance of five different factors when deciding between products, the respondents responded that quality and price is more important than sustainability, however, sustainability is more important than quantity and brand. Also, it was found that many of the locals on St. Thomas have a great intention to abide by the plastic bans and engage with sustainable

consumption, however, both the quality and price of a product is more important. This can also mean, that if a product that is more sustainably produced is more expensive than a product that is not sustainably produced, the choice between the products will probably fall on the one with the lowest price.

In section 6.1.2, the comments and sub-comments to the Facebook post that were found to be negative towards the plastic bans, were analyzed. Many of these comments indicate how the authors of the comments and sub-comments are careless towards the plastic bans and how they feel that the plastic bans and the encouragement for enhancement is only to laugh about. There are also responses to the survey that indicate a negative attitude towards sustainable consumption, as for instance the responses to question 7, where the respondents have replied that the amount of plastic in a product or its packaging is not an important factor when choosing between products. And to question 18 and 19, several of the respondents have responded how they think that the plastic bans are only helpful if they are being abided, which they do not think they are. Throughout the analysis of the survey, the male respondents have responded with a more negative attitude towards sustainable consumption than the female respondents, which also confirms the theory on gender and sustainable consumption.

Earlier it was found, that the locals on St. Thomas in general have a great intention to engage with sustainable consumption, but according to the above, this is clearly not the case for everyone on the island. Even though the majority of the locals on St. Thomas have a great intention to reduce their consumption of plastic and engage with sustainable consumption, it seems that when deciding between products, the amount of plastic in a product or in its packaging is not a factor after all.

Both of the analyzes of the data have shown that several of the participants and respondents are solution-oriented when it comes to abiding the plastic bans and reducing plastic waste on St. Thomas. In the Facebook post other alternatives to plastic straws are being suggested and in the survey the respondents are suggesting that it should become possible to recycle more plastic waste. Also, in the survey, some of the respondents' state that it is hard to reduce one's personal consumption of plastic as most of the products that are available at the supermarkets are packaged in plastic. This also indicates that the locals on St. Thomas have a great intention to reduce their consumption of plastic, but as it was found above, this may not be an important factor when deciding between products.

Several of the responses of the survey and the comments and sub-comments of the Facebook post indicate how the locals think that the plastic bans are a good idea, however, there are bigger problems that should be solved first. For instance, in the Facebook post, it is suggested that other causes such

as schools, nursing homes, humane society, and roads should be given more attention. This is also the case with the survey as a respondent has responded that the plastic bans are a good idea, however, much more should be done, such as banning styrofoam and recycle to a greater extent. Again, this indicate a great intention to reduce the consumption of plastic, however, it is impossible to predict how new initiatives like these would be received.

Lastly, the participants to the Facebook post and the respondents of the survey indicate that products with no or reduced plastic are not available in the supermarkets and it can, therefore, be very hard, or even impossible to reduce one's consumption of plastic. If the supermarkets in St. Thomas started making sustainable choices available for the consumers, chance is that at least some of consumers would make sustainable choices.

8.0 Conclusion

As mentioned in chapter 1, the islands in Caribbean, including St. Thomas, are deeply dependent on the oceans as they support economies that are very dependent on tourism. Tourists visit St. Thomas and the rest of Caribbean because of its beauty, biodiversity, and rich marine ecosystems. However, the oceans are now being degraded by waste, which is endangering the ocean and ecosystems and, thereby, tourism. To protect the oceans and the islands, two plastic bans were implemented on St. Thomas, banning single use plastic bags, plastic straws, and plastic tubular stirrers. However, a Facebook post in the group “What’s Going on St. Thomas?” showed that the locals on St. Thomas have very different opinions on the bans. Some think it is a great start to reduce the amount of plastic waste on the island and in the oceans, and some think that the bans are ridiculous.

Therefore, it is found interesting to investigate to which extent the locals on St. Thomas are willing to enforce these bans and cut down on plastic in general. This led to the following problem statement:

“To what extent is the local population on St. Thomas willing to enforce the plastic bans that has already been implemented and cut down on plastic in general?”

Several of the locals on St. Thomas have indicated that they are positive towards the plastic bans as they think it is a great start to minimize the amount of plastic waste on the island and in the ocean. The locals have also indicated that sustainability is important to them and that they wish to reduce their own consumption of plastic in general. The locals, thereby, have a great intention of wanting to engage with sustainable consumption. However, it is also very clear, that the women on St. Thomas think that sustainability is more important than the men do and that the women also are engaging with sustainable consumption to a greater extent than the men.

Even though many of the locals are in favor of the plastic bans and wishes to reduce their consumption of plastic, some of the locals are also negative towards the plastic bans, as they think that plastic bags, straws, and stirrers are such a small part of the plastic waste on St. Thomas, that banning them does only make a tiny difference. Also, some of these locals are of the opinion that the bans are not being abided by, and they, therefore, think that the bans have not made any difference at all. Also, the locals have indicated, that even though they think sustainability is important, the quality and price of a product is more important, which means, that when choosing between products, whether or not a product is sustainably produced is not as important as the quality and price of the product. And also,

the locals have indicated that the amount of plastic in a product or its packaging is not an important factor when choosing between products.

Some of the locals are also of the opinion that the plastic bans are a good idea, however, there are other, more important, matters that should be dealt with first, or at the same time.

This means, that in general, the locals think that sustainability is important as well as they wish to reduce their consumption of plastic, hence, they have a great intention of behaving sustainably, but when they have the opportunity to make sustainable choices, they only make them if the quality and price also suits them.

In conclusion, the locals on St. Thomas are in favor of the plastic bans and are enforcing them to some extent, as well as they have a great intention of reducing their plastic consumption in general. In average it has also become clear that the women on St. Thomas thinks that plastic waste is a bigger problem on the islands than the men thinks, and the women are also more inclined to both abide by the plastic bans, to cut down on their consumption of plastic, and engage with sustainability in general. However, when it comes down to making choices between products, sustainability is not the most important factor. So even though the locals have a great intention, the sustainable choice is more often than not, not being made after all. And also, even if some of the locals did want to purchase sustainable products, they are, according to the survey, not being offered at the supermarkets.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the idea of implementing the plastic bans was to start a greater mindset shift to reverse local people's mindsets into using less plastic in general. But even though the locals' mindsets may have shifted to some extent, and they want to reduce their consumption of plastic, products that comply with this, need to be offered to the consumers.

But to really reduce one's consumption of plastic, products without or with less plastic needs to be offered to the consumers. Therefore, if the supermarkets offered products with no or reduced plastic, chance is that at least some of the consumers would make the sustainable choice.

9.0 References

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