

# Green Practices in the Grocery Store

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- A case study of Coop's application of green strategies in store

June 2013

**Lund University**

**Department of Service Management**

**Master's thesis 15 credits**

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## Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is getting increasing interest both in theory and practice. Retailers are increasingly integrating their responsibility to environmental, social and economic their business strategies and practices. The focus in this thesis is the environmental aspects of CSR, which are referred to as green strategies and practices. Retailers are argued to have a strategic placing between the customer and the producer, and have the possibility to affect both sides in becoming more environmentally sustainable. Previous research shows that most of retailers communication in responsibility questions seems to take place online and not in the store. In this thesis the focus is on the store level, and in particular the store employees and their involvement in green practices.

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a greater understanding of the relation between green strategies and the store employees' practices. By analysing both the green strategies and practices this thesis aims to see in what way the commitments made in the green strategies of a retailer are involving the store employees' practices.

The result of the study, which builds on a qualitative case study of the Swedish grocery retailer Coop utilizing both document study of green strategies and group interviews with store employees, shows that the green strategies are not very involved in the store employees' practices. The communication of green efforts does not either seem to be done in store or by the store employees, but rather on the web. Despite Coop's public commitments to work with good internal knowledge in the sustainability questions the store employees seems get quite limited education and information in these questions. The findings from this study shows that rather than the green strategies, the store employees sees their most important task as giving customers service and to make money.

*Key Words: CSR, Green retailing, store employees, green strategies, green practices*

## Preface

This thesis would not have been possible without a number of persons. First I would like to thank the store employees who participated in the interviews. Without your participation and honest answers to my questions this thesis would not have been interesting at all. I would also like to thank my supervisor Cecilia Fredriksson for your insightful comments and your inspiring engagement in my thesis. It has been a true privilege to work with you. And, of course, thanks to my fantastic classmates who have made the long days in the library much more fun.

Helsingborg, June 4, 2013

Paulina Sundqvist

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The retailing industry is constantly changing, trends comes and goes. One “trend” which seems to be here to stay is how retailers are increasingly demanded to take responsibility for their impact of their environment and society (PWC, 2011). This is commonly referred to as corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR is increasingly being incorporated into retailers’ business strategies. A study done by PWC reveal that 80 % of the 223 investigated Swedish retailers are working with CSR in some form (PWC, 2011). Retailers concern for sustainable development and environmental questions are increasingly demanded by consumers but also by employees who wants to work for a “reco” organisation (PWC, 2011).

Retailers can be said to have a role as a middle hand between consumers and suppliers. This since they have the possibility to affect both suppliers and consumers in making consumption and production “greener” (Fuentes, 2011). One sector of the retail industry which has gained large interest in terms of CSR is the grocery sector (Anselmsson & Johansson, 2007, p. 836). This since both products and production having considerable effect on the environment (Anselmsson & Johansson, 2007, p. 836).

Commonly these responsibility questions are handled by management, who express their commitment on the web (Grafström et al., 2008, p. 139). One important part of the grocery retail business is the store, where the customer meet the retailer and its personnel. In this thesis the focus for the green strategies is shifted down to the store level and from the point of view of the store employees. When retail companies commit to take responsibility for its impact on the environment, in what way is the store employees involved? Do they need to care? Or is it a task completely detached from the daily running of the store? This is the interest of this thesis.

## 1.2 Background

The question of how corporations of today shall be acting responsible has gained a lot of interest both in theory and practice. The responsibility of corporations has been discussed in all times (Grafström et al. 2008, p. 27). Today, the corporate world is facing the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) wherever it turns (Dahlsrud, 2008, p. 2). CSR can be said to be concerned with the integration of environmental, social and economic considerations into business strategies and practices (Jones et al., 2007, p. 18). The concept CSR has a long and varied history, and it is possible to trace evidences of businesses concern for the society centuries back (Carroll, 1999, p. 268). The formal writing on CSR is however mainly a product of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the last 50 years (Carroll, 1999, p. 268).

Despite the large interest in CSR, there seems to be no universally agreed upon definition of CSR (Jones et al. 2007, p. 18). The question of what responsibility corporations have in society seems to have no easy answer (Grafström et al. 2008, p. 38). Dahlsrud (2008, p. 1) argues that despite numerous efforts to bring about a clear and unbiased definition of CSR, there is still uncertainty on how it shall be defined, both in the corporate and academic world. Dahlsrud (2008, p. 5) defines five dimensions of CSR definitions; The environmental dimension, The social dimension, The economic dimension, The stakeholder dimension and The voluntariness dimension. Not only is there a confusion on how to define CSR, there are also a number of other terms which have similar meaning, such as ‘sustainability’, ‘corporate citizenship’ and ‘business ethics’ (Grafström et al., 2008, p. 38).

Grafström et al (2008, p. 39) argues that the important thing is to understand what the expectations are on the company, rather than trying to find the right “true” definition on CSR. One way to understand CSR and its definitions is as Dahlsrud (2008, p. 2) sees it. Dahlsrud (2008, p. 2) studies CSR as a social construction created in discourse. Dahlsrud (2008, p. 6) argues that the CSR definitions are rather describing the phenomenon of CSR rather than presenting any guidance on how to manage the challenges within this phenomenon. Therefore, Dahlsrud (2008, p. 6) argues, the challenge for business is not so much about defining CSR, but rather to understand how CSR is socially constructed in a specific context and, further, how to take this into account when business strategies are developed.

Even though there are large differences in how companies choose to define and hence work with CSR, Grafström et al. (2008, p. 48) argues that these efforts are commonly motivated in the same way. One argument is the link between social responsibility and profitability, and the second argument often used is that it contribute to make the company an attractive employer (Grafström et al. 2008, p. 48).

Morsing (2003, p. 146) argues that a shift can be seen from companies engaging in CSR without communicating it, to a situation where the communication of it is getting increasingly important, since just doing CSR is not sufficient any more. For CSR to add value, it has to be communicated. Morsing (2003, p. 146) also argues that since the notion that CSR can give competitive advantages seems to be spreading, there is a growing amount of high quality communication of CSR activities among firms.

### 1.3 Problem discussion

Questions regarding corporations’ role and responsibility in society are today being actualized in the retail sector (Frostenson et al., 2010, p. 3). During the past decade a variety of factors have forced retailers to take an increasing and visible interest in the environmental, economic and social impact of their activities (Jones et al. 2005a, p. 207). Some of these factors which is mentioned by Jones et al. (2005a, p. 207) are; increased customer awareness, pressure from government, trade units and investors, new

legislation, developments in information and communication technologies and media attention. A growing number of large retailers seems to be increasingly keen to communicate their commitment to sustainable development to their shareholders customers and general public (Jones et al., 2005a, p. 207).

When it comes to retailing and CSR researchers use terms such as “green retailing” or “sustainable retailing” or retailers “promoting sustainable consumption” to describe the CSR work done and communicated in store (Jones et. al, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2011; Fuentes, 2012; Lai et al., 2010). It is argued that retailers have a central position between consumers and producers and thereby have become responsible for circulating green products and hence the greening of consumption (Fuentes, 2011, p. 8). Retailing can be said to be assigned the role of helping the consumers to make their consumption and lifestyle greener (Fuentes, 2011, p. 8). It is through stores and other retail sites that green products are made available to consumers (Fuentes, 2011, p. 7). Fuentes (2011, p. 9) argues that; *retail corporations are not only expected to display products and services, now they must also offer consumers the opportunity to green the world while they shop.*

However, research has shown that the extent to which the retailers communicate their commitment to CSR activities in store is varying. Jones et al. (2007) did a study on the top 10-retailers in the UK use of corporate social responsibility in store as mean of communication. They found that even though it was considerable variation in the extent to which the retailers used the CSR themes to communicate with the customers in the store, they were used in a very limited way, if at all (Jones et al., 2007). In another study, Jones et. al. (2011) studied food retailers promotion of sustainable consumption in store, and argues that even though retailers make commitments in their sustainability reports to encourage customers to a more sustainable consumption, the communication of these issues in store are limited (Jones et al., 2011). Instead price offer-messages, which can be seen as encouraging more consumption, is taking the overhand, undermining the commitment to sustainable consumption (Jones et al., 2011).

Since corporations serve the need of multiple stakeholders such as shareholders, customers and employees, Lee et al. (2012, p. 745) argues that it is important to understand their perceptions of CSR activities. Morsing (2003, p. 152) argues that one group of stakeholders which is commonly overlooked in the CSR debate is the organisational members. Employees are important stakeholders since they not only determine the quality of the product/service that customers receive, but also because employee’ well-being is directly related to job performance (Lee et al., 2012, p. 745). In studies done on how to communicate CSR efforts, the store employees’ contact with the customers in these matters is seldom mentioned. It is essential to remember that store employees are not only shelf packers and till operators, but play a crucial role in forming retail images and patronage intentions (Mc Goldric, p. 500, p. 534). It is in the store that the promises of the retailer become fulfilled (Grönroos, 2007). Even though the retailers are taking an increasingly high interest in acting responsible towards the stakeholders, Frostenson et. al. (2010, p. 9) argues that there seems to be a lack of knowledge on how this is affecting the employees and their work situation.



In a study done by Frostenson et al. (2010, p.4) the authors argue that there is a tendency to what is called a filtration when it comes to retailers communication of corporate responsibility. That is, that the responsibility is rather on central units of the corporate structure than on subsidiary or store level (Frostenson et al., 2010, p. 4). Morsing (2003) questions the often taken for granted assumption that important stakeholders for CSR is consumers. One argument for this is that much of the CSR information is hard to read, and rather difficult to understand, and designed for reader who have knowledge about CSR (not for the average customer), which, according to Morsing (2003, p. 151) leads to a rather elitist approach to communicating about CSR. Morsing (2003, p. 152) argues that the communication of CSR is rather done in “scientific mode” than in “marketing mode”.

Sustainable retailing, retail companies taking corporate social responsibility and green retailing are all subjects of interest in research. This thesis will focus on the environmental aspect of retailers taking CSR. As previously discussed the definitions of these phenomenon are ambiguous, both in what they include and what the difference is between different concepts. In this thesis, these are going to be referred to as “green” strategies and practices. Most of the communication of green efforts seems to be done at the web and not in the physical stores (see eg. Jones et al. 2007, Jones et al. 2011, Frostenson et al. 2011). When stores are studied it seems as if it is the physical material such as printed brochures and signage in the store is in focus (see eg. Jones et al. 2007; Jones et al 2011; Fuentes 2012). However, there seems to be a need for more research in how retail employees are working with the green strategies adopted by the retail companies; how does store employees engage with green questions and what are the implications of green strategies on their daily work?

## 1.4 Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a greater understanding of the relation between green strategies and the store employees’ practices. By analysing both the green strategies and practices the aim is to see in what way the commitments made in the green strategies of a retailer are involving the store employees’ practices. The ambition of this thesis is to contribute to a greater understanding in how green retailing can be conducted and the implications of this for the store employees.

To study this a qualitative case study is going to be conducted of the Swedish grocery retailer Coop utilizing both qualitative interviews with store employees as well as qualitative document analysis of the green strategies. This study is delimited to the perspective of the store employees in relation to the public statements made by Coop, and hence exclude an explicit customer and management perspective.

### 1.4.1 Research questions

To fulfil the purpose of this study the following research questions have been formulated;

- What are the green strategies of Coop?
- How are these green strategies expressed in the store and in the practices of the store employees?

This will be studied from three different angles identified from the problem discussion. The first one is what commitments a retailer take to environment and what practices are involved in this, and how these can be seen in the practices of the store employees. The second is how the green efforts can be communicated and how this involves the practices of store employees. The third is the how the involvement of the personnel in green strategies is done and possible implications of this.

### 1.4 Theoretical perspectives

To gain a broad understanding of green strategies and practices, the theoretical review is not limited to theories referring to CSR, but also includes green retailing, retailers working with sustainable development and sustainable consumption. As previously argued, these are going to be referred to as green strategies and practices. However, when referring to other authors their terminology will be used. The theoretical perspective which lead this thesis to its research question and working as a basis for the analysis is a *practice perspective*. To take a practice approach is, according to Fuentes (2011, p. 25), to regard the social as something which is in continuously making. When it comes to ‘strategy’, which is of interest in this thesis, a practice perspective implies that a strategy is something that company do instead of something it has (Wittington, 2006, p. 626). Following the insights from Wittington (2006, p. 626) a strategy is more than just a property of organisations, but something people do, with stuff from outside as well as inside the organisations, which have effects that imbue whole society. Following this brief presentation of the theoretical standpoints of this thesis, the outline of this thesis is going to be presented.

### 1.5 Outline

This thesis has the following structure:

**Chapter 1. Introduction:** In chapter one an introduction and background to the problem is given, which leads to the research question and purpose of this study.

**Chapter 2. Theoretical framework:** In the second chapter the theoretical framework is presented, presenting previous research in the subjects of CSR & Green retailing, Communication of green efforts and Employees involvement in CSR and green strategies.

**Chapter 3. Research methodology:** In the third chapter, the methodological choices and considerations are presented, and the conduction of document study and group interviews are described.

**Chapter 4. Empirics and analysis:** In the fourth chapter the findings from the study is presented, in a combined analysis where strategy (document analysis) and practice (group interviews) is analysed in relation to the theoretical framework.

**Chapter 5. Discussion and conclusion:** In the fifth chapter, discussion and conclusion is presented, followed by the limitations of this study and the author's suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

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*In this chapter previous research concerning CSR and green retailing is going to be presented from three different perspectives, CSR and Green retailing, Communication of CSR and green efforts and Employees' involvement in CSR and green practices.*

### 2.1 CSR & Green Retailing

Both in research and practice CSR is getting increased attention (Dahlsrud, 2008, p. 1). However, it seems to be an uncertainty in how CSR should be defined both in practice and research (Dahlsrud, 2008, p. 1). Ness (1992, p. 38) argues that an organization adopt a CSR policy if they undertake obligations to individuals and institutions beyond economic and legal minimum. The issues which are subject of this obligation is very broad, and can cover internal aspects such as commitments to the employees in terms of health and safety, work opportunities and working environment and so on (Ness, 1992, p. 38). The obligations can also involve obligations outside the firm in terms of for example attention to environmental issues, commitment to local communities and sponsorships (Ness, 1992, p. 38). According to Jones et al. (2007, p. 18), CSR is concerned with environmental, social and economic considerations into business strategies and practices.

Grafström et al. (2008, p. 65) argues that there is no commonly agreed upon definition of CSR, rather, the social responsibility of a company is defined and developed in collaboration with and in between the organisation and the stakeholders. Stakeholders are here defined as those who have an interest in the company, which can be central stakeholders such as shareholders, customers and suppliers, but also media, NGO's, government (Grafström et. al., 2008, p. 65). Dahlsrud (2008, p. 6) is taking a perspective of CSR as a social construction created in discourse, and argues that the major challenge is not to understand the definition of CSR, but rather to understand how CSR is socially

constructed in a specific context, and how to take this into account when developing business strategies. So, how shall this be seen in the context of retailers?

When discussing retailers CSR work, “green retailing” is a term used. As with CSR, there seems to be no commonly agreed definition of green retailing (Lai et. al., 2010). Stern & Ander (2008, p. 33) refers to green retailing as “greentailing” and argues that there is a lack of uniform understanding of what constitutes greentailing and how trade-offs shall be made in doing “green well”. Instead, they argue that the goal must be *a commitment by retailers and suppliers to act ethically in an economically, social and environmentally sustainable manner* (Stern & Ander, 2008, p. 33). The goal for green retailing stated by Stern & Ander (2008, p. 33) is hence similar to definitions of CSR, and involving similar aspects.

Sustainability is a word used by many retailers to express their environmental and social commitments and efforts in company mission statements or CSR-reports (Stern & Ander, 2008, p. 40). The meaning of this word is often defined by the retailer in terms of how it relates to the own business (Stern & Ander, 2008, p. 40). This is also argued by Fuentes (2012, p. 17) who argues that depending on which retailer you look at sustainability becomes something different; sustainability is redefined.

Retailers taking social responsibility, green retailing and sustainability have no exact recipe or easy answers, rather it is the context of the retailer in which these concepts are created and recreated. With that in mind some the following section presents some theories on how green retailing according to some researchers can be conducted.

### 2.1.1 Green Practices

Lai et al. (2010) focuses on green retailing considering the environmental impact of the retailer. Lai et al. (2010, pp. 13-18) conceptualize green retailing in three dimensions of practices; internal-improvement-based green retailing, external-coordination-based green retailing and supportive-development-based green retailing. These dimensions are used to categorize retailers reported green retailing practices. They argue that the different steps in the value-chain of a retailer can contribute in different ways to the greening of the retailer. Each of these dimensions are described in terms of how and where it takes place and who the key party involved in the practices are:

- ***Internal-improvement-based GR*** practices are performed by employees. This dimension involves improving efficiency by minimizing emissions, effluents and waste in operations and logistics. This can help the retailer to reduce costs and gain in environmental performance. By continuous improvement this internally focused dimension helps prevent pollution by reducing waste. This can be done for example by green store utilization (using systems or devices in store to enable energy savings or reducing/recycling waste) and green transportation. (Lai et al., 2010, pp. 15-16)

- **External-coordination-based GR** practices involves coordinating with stakeholders to minimize lifecycle cost of products, which includes the environmental impact of the product from the production, usage and disposal process. The stakeholders involved are customers and suppliers, and acquisition and marketing are suggested means. The retailers' role as a coordinator between these stakeholders is seen as critical for green practices to succeed. External-coordination-based GR can be done through purchasing goods with eco-labels, cooperate with suppliers in designing products and packaging with environmental considerations, educate and encourage customers for their participation in reducing waste/recycle/reusing products and by providing green-after sale services. (Lai et al., 2010, pp. 15-18)
- **Supportive-development-based GR** involves taking a long term perspective, that is, to work for a sustainable development. Lai et al. (2010) argues that *firms needs to take a long term vision and commitment to environmental protection*. The can be done by developing technology and human resources to support green activities and further growth of the firm. This, according to Lai et al. (2010) is a question for top management. Activities can be “green human resource development” promoting employee participation for green development, develop green policies including mission and visions on green commitment, and technological development such as supporting research, or engage in the development of technology to reduce environmental impact. (Lai et al., 17-18)

To summarize, Lai et al. (2010) identifies three dimensions when conceptualising green retailing. The first one is the one that employees work with and includes reducing waste throughout the value chain to minimize pollution. The second dimension is a question of coordinating the stakeholders (primarily the customers and suppliers), so the life cycle cost of the product is as low as possible. The third dimension involves taking a long term commitment and mission in environmental protection.

Serner & Ander (2008, p. 40) takes a similar approach to green retailing and argues that four key elements are involved in becoming a “successful greentailer”; 1. Think Green (expressing commitment in sustainability report, having a person overseeing the green efforts), 2. Act Green (infrastructure efforts, such as optimizing energy efficiencies and pointing it out through in-store marketing, transportation, greening of supply chain, recognising the importance of reducing packaging, encourage better utilization of existing materials and decreasing waste both in the own business but also to consumers by reducing, reusing and recycling) 3. Sell Green (the authors argues that even though the definition of a green products might be as complicated as what constitutes a green retailers, sell green is about offering green products to the customer, which can be everything from organic, natural, environmental products and so on) 4. Convey Green (expressing the green efforts, doing charity). (Stern & Ander, 2008, p. 40-53)

The practices involved in green retailing are in the above theories both related to the own businesses impact on the environment, but also stress the retailer as the middle hand between suppliers and customers. Jones et al. (2011, p. 936) argues that retailers are the “active intermediaries” between primary producers and manufactures on the one hand,

and consumers on the other. Thus, Jones et al. (2011, p. 936) argues that retailers can be seen to be in a unique position to drive sustainable consumption. This can according to Jones et al (2011, p. 936) be done in three ways; through their own actions, through partnerships with suppliers, and through their daily interactions with consumers.

In the following section the retailers' communication of green efforts is going to be discussed, starting with a broad introduction to CSR communication, and then narrowing down to retailers communication.

## 2.2 Communication of green efforts

When it comes to communication of the CSR efforts Morsing (2003, p. 146) argues that working with CSR for the reason for “good cause” is increasingly being replaced with communication about it dominated the corporate attention; *Communication seems unavoidable if CSR is to have a strategic and economic purpose* (Morsing, 2003, p. 149). However, the communication of CSR can be paradoxical. Morsing (2003, p. 150) states that companies face a situation where they are encouraged to engage in CSR to build strong reputation, but at the same time stakeholders are unwilling to receive too much information about companies' CSR engagements. Pomeroy & Dolnicar (2009, p. 288) argues that communicating CSR through traditional advertising is perceived as over exaggeration the good efforts of the company which can lead to a scepticism toward the message, as well as a cynicism. Rather than using conventional advertising as mean of communication Morsing & Shultz (2006, p. 336) argues that stakeholders prefer communication of CSR efforts through what they call “minimal releases”, such as annual reports and websites.

In general a large part of companies' communication about CSR is done on their websites (Grafström, et al., 2008, p. 139). Jones et al. (2005b) discusses CSR as means of marketing and communication with customers within grocery stores. The authors stresses that the store as the customers most frequent, and perhaps only interface with the retailer. Therefore the researchers argue that it is in the store, rather than on the webpage the transmission of CSR messages can take place most widely (Jones et al., 2005b, p. 54). In the next section theories of retailers in store communication of green efforts in store is going to be presented.

### 2.2.1 In store-communication of green efforts

In a number of articles Jones et al. (2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2011) studies retailers in the UK and the in-store communication and marketing of CSR, sustainability questions and how retailers work with promoting sustainable consumption in store. Jones et al. (2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2011) takes the perspective of the retailer as a middle-hand between the suppliers and customers, arguing that retailers have a considerable impact on the environment, economy and society, and hence, have a dominant role to play in facilitating

more sustainable patterns of production and consumption (see Jones et al. 2005a, pp. 208-209).

The findings from the studies shows that the extent to which retailers actually communicate their green commitments in store are varied, and in many cases limited. Jones et al. (2007) conducted a study on UK's top ten retailers, comparing CSR information available on the web with the expressions of CSR-themes in the stores. Even though the retailers expressed commitment to CSR-related questions on the web, the communication of such themes in store was limited, if existing at all (Jones et al., 2007).

One explanation suggested by Jones et al. (2007) to why the CSR-themes were used in a limited way in store is that the available reports and information concerning the retailers CSR's work reflects the aspirations of the retailers. However, it might not be followed up in day-to-day operations. One reason for this might be the highly competitive environment in which the retailers exist. It could also be because the retailer isn't sure of how such communication affects consumer; to which extent it will it positively affect consumer buying behaviour and if it comes with any down sides.

In a study on how retailers work to promote sustainable consumption in store, Jones et al. (2011) found that there was a lack of messages and information about sustainable consumption available in store, and that the majority of the messages was rather focusing on getting the consumer to buy more than promoting a sustainable consumption. If such messages was to be found they were often small signs on self-edges or on product packaging. Jones et al. (2011) argues that even though such information was possible to find, it is not likely that this approach will engage customers who have little awareness or concern for these issues. Jones et al. (2011) therefor argues that the in-store messages isn't coherent with the strategic commitment to sustainable consumption to consumers. Hence, Jones et al. (2011, p. 946) argues that the public commitment to sustainable consumption made in sustainability reports is consistently being undermined by the marketing messages in store which is designed to encourage consumption.

Fuentes (2011, p. 229) taking a critical perspective on green retailing argues that it shall not be assumed that retailing of green products will unproblematic lead to sustainable consumption. Stern & Ander (2008, p. 70) states the obvious; *the easiest way* [for the consumer] *to be green is to simply consume less*. This, however, is complicated for the retailer, since decreased consumption, probably lead to decrease in sales.

The relation between social responsibility and profitability is a constantly reoccurring theme (Grafström et al., 2008, p. 149). CSR is often discussed as a question witch is more related to the win for the own organisation rather than altruism, as a business strategy, rather than charity (Grafström et al., 2008, p. 150). The question raised from this two standpoints is if they are possible to combine - by doing "good", it will also lead to increased profit for the organisation (Grafström et al., 2008, p. 149). Retailers seems to face an even more complicated situation than Grafström et al. (2008, p. 149) points out, since a retailers green efforts can, decrease consumption. The question for retailers is



hence not only if the retailers green efforts will lead to increased profitability, but also includes the risk of decreased profitability.

Stern & Ander (2008, p. 29) argues that retailers going green might face the paradox of; *How do we present the appearance of being green while still making sure that we meet our business goals?* On one hand, CSR is often argued to have a positive impact on profitability of a firm (Grafström et al., 2008, p. 48), but on the other, following the above discussion, it seems as if the retailers commitment to taking responsibility can have negative effects on the profitability.

Apart from the financial implications of in store communication of green efforts, there are also other explanations to the lack of in store communication. Frostenson et al. (2010) studies retailers' communication of responsibility questions and the involvement of store employees in this communication. In this study Frostenson et al. (2010, p. 53) finds that it is not the store, or the store employees who get the responsibility questions in first hand. Further the authors argue that, despite the store employees' important role in the customer meeting these questions are not decentralised in any real meaning. Frostenson et al. (2010, p. 53) refers to this as "filtration" of the retailers communication of responsibility, which means that the communication of these questions is rather done on corporate than on subsidiary or store level. The information in these question becomes the task of "experts" on central levels of the organisation (Frostenson, 2010, p. 55). One indication of the lack of information on store level, which is stated by the Frostenson et al. (2010, p. 53) is that the responsibility work isn't driven by consumers, but rather by other stakeholders such as NGO's and media. These stakeholders approach the company centrally, which can be a reason for the filtration of communication.

### 2.2.2 The view of the customer & green retailing

The way that retailers work with CSR and expressing their green efforts is different. Differences can also be explained in relation to the sector in which the company is in, different sectors have different demands which makes the focus of CSR different (Grafström et al., 2008, p. 62). Fuentes (2012, p. 17) however, argues that sustainability efforts and communication is redefined not only depending on which industry it operates in, but also depending on who the customer is believed to be. The sustainability work and marketing of the retailers in Fuentes's (2012) study seems to be guided by imaginary customers (Fuentes, 2012, p. 18).

Studies of the in store communication of green efforts is often concerned with the physical material of the store, and hence, lacks the perspective of the employee in the retail store. In the next section, theories concerning the store employees and employees' involvement in green efforts is going to be presented.



## 2.3 Employees and CSR

In this third and last section of the theoretical framework theories relating to the store employees' role in CSR and green retailing is going to be reviewed. This starts with a description of the specific characteristics of service work, second theories in employees involvement in CSR and green practices is reviewed, followed by a perspective of employees as stakeholders as stakeholders.

### 2.3.1 Service Work

To be able to understand the work situation and practices of retail store employees it is necessary take into consideration the specific characteristics of service work. Not only can there be a tension between how to balance the promotion of sustainable consumption in relation to business targets, but there might also be a tension between quality and quantity of the work.

Korczynski (2009, p. 76), taking a critical perspective on service work, argues that service workers can feel what could be described as tensions and contradictions associated to giving service. The contradictions are associated to the socially embedded relationship and encounter with the customers, which on one hand can be a key source of satisfaction and pleasure, and on the other hand a key source of dissatisfaction, humiliation and pain (Korczynski, 2009, p. 74). The tension experienced by service workers is relating to quality and quantity targets, where the service worker can feel torn between a desire to give quality service to customers and targets concerning quantity in numbers of customers handled (Korczynski, 2009, pp. 76-77). To conceptualize the contradictions in service work Korczynski (2009, p. 78) uses the concept *Customer-oriented bureaucracy*.

A bureaucracy can according to Korczynski (2009, p. 78) be described as a purely rational, efficiency focused organization. Service organisations need to rationalize the work to lower costs and maximize efficiency in order to compete with prices and efficiency of service delivery, in this way the service organisation can be seen as a bureaucracy (Korczynski, 2009, p. 78). On the other hand, the customer cannot be forgotten, and to be able to compete the service organisation also needs to be customer oriented (Korczynski, 2009, p. 78). Therefor Korczynski (2009, p. 78) argues that service work organization is structured by the dual and potentially contradictory logics of bureaucratization and customer-orientation.

Using the model of service oriented bureaucracy highlight the fact that management in a service organisation demands that the service workers have both qualitative and quantitative goals for their work. This view of service work also have implications of what can be seen as basis for authority. In a bureaucracy the authority and power is formalized in routines and procedures (Korczynski, 2009, p. 82). In the customer oriented bureaucracy, however, the authority is also comes from the customer. This means that power can become legitimate if it is seen as acting for the customer (Korczynski, 2009, p. 82). From these two perspectives of bureaucracy and customer orientation, it could be argued that the service worker have two bosses, both management and the customer

(Korczyński, 2009, p. 82). The role of the management, in the customer-oriented bureaucracy could be said to be to combine the two, contradicting, different logics and keep tensions latent (Korczyński, 2009, p. 85).

This view of the store employees' work, is important to gain understanding in how the green strategies, which, at least not at first sights are involved in the already contradictory relationship between giving customers service and seeking for efficiency.

### 2.3.2 Involvement in green practices

Lee et al. (2012) argues that a major challenge for managers is how to enable a more close involvement of employees' in the CSR initiatives. Further Lee et al (2012) argues that it is important to take employees from unawareness to active involvement in these. Lai et. al. (2010, p. 23) argues that involvement of every employee is important for the retailer to fully execute green retailing throughout the retail chain and implementation of green practices in each of the retail chain activities. Further Lai et al. (2010, p. 23) argues that it is important that every employee understand their role and participate in the process. To achieve this, Lai et al. (2010, p. 23) suggest internal training and education as means to create awareness of green practices, as well as "nurture a green culture". Lai et al. (2010, p. 24) argues that organisational learning about green retail adoption can be done through coordination and cross-functional relationships between employees. The employees' engagement in these questions are important for the long term perspective of green retailing (Lai et al., 2010).

Collier & Esteban (2007, p. 27) stresses the importance of senior management's commitment in CSR questions, since these are vital to ensure the commitment from employees. This since Collier & Esteban (2007, p. 27) argues that it is their responsibility to ensure that the CSR rhetoric becomes reality in organizational processes, practices and procedures. Further Collier & Esteban (2007, p. 27) argues that senior management commitment is important, since without this, employees might feel that these questions easily can be ignored.

Involvement of employees can also lead to some issues. Frostenson (2007) finds that there are four different areas where demands can increase on the individual employee as a consequence of implementation CSR internally. These four areas are; knowledge, relevance, performance, and normative compliance. These four areas, can according to Frostenson (2007) raise issues which should be taken into consideration when implementing CSR strategies.

The first is a knowledge-issue; in the organisation studied the employees didn't have knowledge in the discussion or terminology used in the social responsibility communication (Frostenson, 2007, p. 23). Second, Frostenson (2007, p. 23) finds a relevance issue, that is, the employees finds it difficult to relate ethical and social responsibility to the own work situation. Third, there a performance problem, as the responsibilities can lead to higher work load for and control of the individual employees when following the guidelines (Frostenson, 2007, p. 23). The last problem is a normative

issue, since what the central management might not have the same view as the employees on what is ethically right and what the organisation shall support, for example when doing charity. (Frostenson, 2007, p. 24).

In a study done by Frostenson et al. (2012), concerning corporate responsibility of the retailer in terms of “code of conduct” and employees use of it, they found that store employees in the studied companies had a good idea of the existence of the code. The employees did not relate the code to their own work, but rather to those formally responsible for it within the company (Frostenson et al., 2012, p. 267). One reason for this stated by Frostenson et al. (2012, p. 267) is that the code of conduct is referring to the supply chain and production, which in the studied retail companies is located in distant countries and for that reason not relating to the work of the employee. Despite the lack of relevance and application on store level, Frostenson et al. (2012, p. 267) still argues that the code of conduct had some kind of function for the store employees, as it had some positive impact on the employees’ perception of the company and was seen as a tool to be able to talk to more or less critical customers.

### 2.3.3 Employees as stakeholders

Employees are also a stakeholder of the organisation, and can therefore not only be seen as practitioners of the green strategies. Morsing (2003, p 152) argues that organisational members are one of the main target groups for the CSR, since it can be a reason for choosing to work for a company, as well as a matter of pride and identification with the organisation.

Kim et al (2010, p. 557) studies CSR in an employee perspective and makes a distinction between internal and external CSR, depending on the stakeholder it aims to satisfy. Internal CSR includes such activities which are related to the employees and their work situation, covering aspects such as employees’ welfare and business ethics (Kim et al, 2010, p. 557). External CSR from an employee perspective can be seen as how employees evaluate the initiatives taken of the corporation (Kim et al, 2010, p. 557).

Birth et al., (2008) argues that there are a number of potential benefits for organisations communicating and promoting CSR efforts internally. According to Birth et al. (2008, p. 185) CSR communication to employees can create good reputation and publicity for the company through word of mouth. Further Birth et al. (2008, p. 185) argues that CSR communication can increase employees’ satisfaction and commitment. CSR communication in regards to employees also have the possibility to attract future employees, since CSR communication have the possibility to increase the appeal of the company as a future employer. Further, Birth et al. (2008, p. 185) argues that CSR communication to employees can decrease employee turnover.

# Chapter 3. Research Method

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*Using a qualitative research approach, a case study design, and collect empirical data combining qualitative document analysis with group interviews was seen as the best way to gain knowledge in the stated research question. In this chapter the case company Coop is presented, followed by the methodological considerations.*

## 3.1 Presentation of the company

According to Frostenson et al. (2010, p. 53) different sectors of the retail industry have to different extent developed strategies for corporate responsibility. According to Jones et al (2011, p. 937) food retailers are widely recognised as having a significant impact on the environment, economy and society. Food retailers are also the retail sector in Sweden in which most retailers say that they are working with corporate social responsibility one way or another (Svensk Handel, 2013, p. 10). For this reason it is an interesting sector to investigate in this thesis.

Coop is one of the leading Swedish grocery retailers, holding approximately 21 % of the total market shares (Delfi, DLF & Friköpenkap, 2012). Coop is the core business of KF, the Swedish Co-operative Union (Coop.se 1). KF has long history of engagement in the environmental questions and has ever since the start in 1899 incorporated different kind of sustainability questions into the retail business (Coop.se 2). Today, Coop is considered by consumers to be the most sustainable brand in the consumer survey Sustainable Brands which investigates consumers' views on companies in terms of environmental responsibility, human rights, working conditions and anti-corruption (Coop.se 3). Coop has been ranked highest in this survey two years in a row, both 2011 and 2012 (Coop.se 3).

Since year 2009 all the Coop stores are certified with KRAV (Coop.se 4). KRAV is an environmental certification for food, built on ecological grounds and with high demands on animal welfare, health, social responsibility and climate impact (Krav.se 1). When certifying the store with KRAV there are some certain demands on the store (Krav.se 2). The store shall have a broad assortment of KRAV certified products, and which is of interest for this thesis, the personnel in the store shall have good knowledge about the KRAV certification as well as about ecological production (Coop.se 4, Krav.se 2)

The reason for choosing Coop as the case of this thesis is that it is one retailer who have a long history of working with “green” questions. It is also due to the fact that all of the stores are KRAV certified which makes it interesting to look at in terms of how the sustainability practices is conducted in the stores. The KRAV-certification of the stores might not be the largest part of Coop's green strategies, but it is an interesting hint that Coop at least has some intention to extend the green strategies from the web out to the stores, and hence, to the store personnel.

### 3.2 Research Approach; Qualitative approach

The qualitative research strategy is best suited for this research since it, as Flick (2009, p. 21) describes it; *is oriented towards analysing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity and starting from people's expressions and activities in their local context*. Qualitative research is focused on seeing through the eyes of the people being studied, description and emphasis on context as well as on social processes (Bryman & Bell, 2003, pp. 293-296). A quantitative method would have limited me to choose a few variables and not giving the whole picture of the practices of the store employees as they see it. In qualitative research, objects are not reduced to single variables, but represented in their entirety and everyday context (Flick, 2009, p. 15). Instead of trying to control the participants in the study, as in an experiment, the qualitative researcher embraces the context of the everyday life of the participants.

According to Flick (2009, p. 15) central criteria to ensure quality in qualitative research depends on if the findings are grounded in the empirical material. Further it depends on whether the methods are appropriately selected and applied and the relevance of the findings and reflexivity of proceedings (Flick, 2009, p. 15). Qualitative research is often criticized for lacking transparency, both in how sampling and analysis actually is conducted (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 302). To increase quality in this research the considerations and conduction which constitute the data collection and analysis of it is going to be described as thoroughly as possible.

### 3.3 Research design; Case study design

The specific focus of this research led to a case study, since this allows a close and detailed study of one case (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 53). Yin (2003, p. 9) argues that case studies are advantageous when “how” or “why” questions are being asked. Further Yin (2003, p. 9) argues that case studies are appropriate when these questions are asked about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has little or no control. The “case” in a case study can be many different things, such as persons, institutions, or as in this thesis, an organisation (Flick, 2009, p. 134). By doing a case study, this thesis could focus on the green strategies of one organisation, in relation to the store employees' practices and hence enable what Bryman & Bell (2003, p. 54) calls an *intensive examination of the setting* and an *in-depth elucidation of it*.

One important question when doing a case study is how it should be delimited: What should be included in analysing the case? (Flick, 2009, p. 134) In this study the collection of empirical material is limited to include interviews with store employees and a document study of the sustainability strategies. This study is therefore delimited to the perspective of the store employees in relation to the public statements made in the official documents written by Coop and KF, and hence exclude an explicit customer and management perspective.

### 3.4 Generalizability

The selection of a qualitative case study design have implications for the studies *generalizability*, the question of the possibility to apply the findings from this study to other cases (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 55). In qualitative research statements are made for the specific context and cases. These statements are based on the analysis of the relations, conditions and processes in these, which makes it problematic to apply these statements on other cases in other contexts (Flick, 2009, p. 407). The selection of a qualitative case study design thus makes generalization of the findings to other cases rather difficult (Flick, 2009, p. 143). This means that the possibility to directly apply the findings from this study to other cases such as other retailers, is limited.

However, in a case study, a statistical generalization such as can be seen in quantitative methods such as surveys, based on notions of representative sample where the findings reflects a wider population, is not the goal (May, 2011, p. 223). May (2011, p. 233) argues *that in a case study it is theoretical reasoning that matters in producing generalizable conclusions*. Yin (2003, p. 10) similarly, argue that since a case study does not represent a “sample” the goal will be to generalize theories (analytical generalization) and not to count frequencies (statistical generalization). That means, that even though the findings from this study can’t be directly applied to other retailers, this study can contribute with is a theoretical reasoning in an issue which applies to other retailers as well.

### 3.5 Data collection

To gain knowledge in this research question collection of empirical data was done using two different methods. First a qualitative document study was conducted using documents published by KF and Coop. The document study aimed to gain an understanding of the green strategies and practices stated in this. After the document study three group interviews with store employees was conducted to get their understanding of their practices in relation to the green strategies.

#### 3.5.1 Document study

To provide a background to the group-interviews and resulting data concerning the practices of the store employees, a qualitative document study was conducted. This type of document study typically involves searching for underlying themes in the material (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 417). In case-study research, documents can be used to build up a description of the organisation and its history (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 413). Document studies are commonly combined with interviews since they can be a useful addition to other forms of data, if the context of their production and use are taken into account (Flick, 2009, pp. 261-262). The purpose of the document study was to gain an understanding of what green strategies Coop have, and in how they express these commitments.



### 3.5.1.1 Which document to use?

When conducting document studies the sampling of document is important. One limitation of the document study is that the researcher might have to limit the selection of documents instead of using all available (Flick, 2009, p. 259). The purpose of the document study was to understand what green strategies Coop have. To do this the website of KF and Coop was searched for information in how they argue to take responsibility. Coop refers to their commitments to take responsibility for ethical, environmental, social and economic questions as “sustainability” and “sustainable development”. The documents used in the document analysis is KF Sustainability Report 2012 (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012) which is a part of the KF Annual Report 2012 (KF Verksamhetsberättelse, 2012), and Coops policy for sustainable development (Coops policy för hållbar utveckling, 2012). Both documents are written in Swedish. These documents were chosen since this is where the strategies for sustainable development is most closely described. The sustainability strategies are also briefly described on the webpage under the headline “Our Responsibility” (Coop.se 5), but this information is also to a high degree included in the sustainability report. Both documents are available for anyone on Coop’s webpage.

### 3.5.1.2 How the documents were analysed

The study of the sustainability report and policy does not serve as giving any truths about how the sustainability work actually is conducted at Coop. Documents are not to be seen as transparent representations of organisational routines, decision-making processes, or professional practices (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011, p. 79). Rather documents shall be treated with consideration to who has written the document, what the purpose of it is, who the reader is (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011, p. 79). The documents used are created by Coop, and is aimed to everyone who have an interest of it, which can be all stakeholders. What is written in the document is what Coop wants to tell, in a way which Coop wants to tell it, that is, how the strategies are marketed.

Documents alone can’t tell anything about how the organisation operates on a day to day basis, and shall not be seen as evidence of what they report (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011, p. 79), not either shall the document be seen as bias-free data (Flick, 2009, p. 261). Rather the document was interpreted in terms of what reality the document is creating and how it does it (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011, p. 81). Following this reasoning, the main question leading the document analysis was; what reality does the sustainability report create concerning the sustainability strategies and the practices of it?

The documents were closely read, first, to get to know what green strategies Coop states and what practices are involved in this work. These insights were used when forming the questions for the interview guide (further explained below). After the interviews, the documents were closely read again, now in relation to what was said during the interviews and in relation to previous theory. To provide the reader of this thesis with an

understanding of how Coops green strategies are organised, the analysis is structured after the structure of the strategies.

The documents are written in Swedish, which means that the quotations used in the analysis will be translated by the author, which has been as careful as possible to preserve the original meaning.

### 3.5.2 Group interview

The second method used to gain knowledge in my research question was group interviews with store employees. Interviews was chosen as a method since they, according to May (2011, p. 157) can be used as a resource for understanding how individuals make sense of their social world and act within it. The purpose of a qualitative research interview is to understand topics from the life world in the perspective of the interviewee (Kvale, 1997, p. 32).

The interviews were done in groups. The group interview can be described as an interview situation which is extended to involving more than one person (Flick, 2009, p. 195). Hence, the purpose of our group-interview, was not and shall not be according to Patton described in (Flick, 2009, p. 196), to have a discussion, a problem solving session or a decision-making group. The group interviews therefore was conducted as *interviews*, but involving more than one person.

Group interviews was chosen for several reasons. First, group interviews have the possibility to gain rich data, at the same time as they are low in cost (Flick, 2009, p. 196). Second, due to the specific focus of the interviews, the group interviews was chosen since they according to Flick (2009, p. 196) can be a way to stimulate the interviewees and support them in remembering events. Further group interviews can lead to answers beyond the single interviewee (Flick, 2009, p. 196). The experience of the group interviews further confirmed this belief, since some of the questions was seen as difficult to answer, but the participants in the groups reminded each other of events and aspects, which led to answers which would not have been possible to get with individual interviews. This is also stated by May (2011, p. 138) who argues that group interviews can lead to answers which would not have received if interviewing the same persons individually. This, however does not mean that one answer is more true than the other (May, 2011, p. 138).

The groups consisted of three persons in each group, except for one group which had two participants due to a late drop out. The term 'group' in group interview is according to Frey & Fontana (1991, p. 176) equivocal and could mean two persons or a many more. According to May (2011, p. 138) when deciding the size of the group consideration shall be made to the balance between the group being too small for an interactive study or too large and thereby preventing all group members of participating in the discussion. The selection of three persons was thought to enable everyone to answer the questions during the time stated for the interviews.



One limitation with interviews can according to May (2011, pp. 157-158) be that since an interview is a social encounter like any other, it tells the researcher little about the reality external to the interview. One way of getting past this is to observe people's behaviour instead of asking about it (May, 2011, pp.157-158). Observation is also a commonly used method within the research of retailers' green strategies in practice (See eg. Jones et al. 2005, Fuentes 2011, Fuentes 2012). These studies, however, are more focused in the physical manifestations of the green strategies within the retail stores. In this research the interest is in the employees in the retail store, and their practice of the green strategies. Due to the special interest and the specific focus of the research, the belief was that interviews would provide more and better information. This is also argued by Bryman & Bell (2003, p. 364) who argues that when the research starts with a specific focus, the qualitative interview is better suited than observations. This since the specific focus might not come up on a regular basis and the observations would make observations to an extravagant method for data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 364). Interviews can be directed at that focus and the stated research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 364).

### 3.5.2.1 Semi structured interviews

The group interviews were semi-structured which can be said to be in between the structured interview (interviews using questioners) and the focused interview (questions of more open-ended character) (May, 2011, p. 134). This type of interview was chosen since it allows people to answer more in their own terms than the standardized interviews, but still provide more structure than the focused interview (May, 2011, pp. 134-138).

An interview guide was used to provide structure and make sure that all the themes and questions I wanted to take up was covered in each of the interviews. The interview guide was partly based on the document study of Coop's sustainability strategies. The interview guide also contained more general questions about their work, view on sustainability questions. The interviews were held in Swedish, which was the natural choice of language since all the interviewees as well as author are Swedish. To increase the transparency in the research the original interview guide in Swedish is placed in Appendix 1, and an English translation of it in Appendix 2. The questions in the interview guide were specified, with considerations to what Kvale (1997, p. 121) dynamic and thematic relevance. Thematic relevance concerns that the questions relevance to the subject of research and dynamic refers to considerations to the interpersonal relation during the interview (Kvale, 1997, p. 121).

Flick (2009, p. 171) argues that during the semi-structured interview, there interviewer has to have a constant mediation between the course of the interview and the interview guide. The choice of semi-structured interviews allowed me to follow up interesting things during the interview, and to clarify questions if they were not understood. May (2011, p. 141) raises the importance of the person answering questions have access to the information needed, and that there might exist a gap between the interviewers and the interviewees mode of answering. As far as it was possible, terms which could be found

difficult to understand was not used in questions. For example, when talking about sustainable assortment which is one part of Coop's sustainability strategy, this includes a number of different types of sustainable products, the questions was limited to organic and environmentally certified products. This since it was the types of products which seemed to be most important in the sustainability report, and also the ones with the largest sales. The thought was therefore that these was easiest for the interviewees to relate to. However, some still remained, concepts such as "sustainable development" and "Coop's strategies for sustainable development" was sometimes hard for the interviewees to understand. These concepts, however, was not explained during the interview, since it was seen as important learn how these phenomena's were defined by the interviewees themselves, even though they sometimes found it difficult. Defining terms or concepts would have limited the interviewees to answer in terms of the authors' definition of the phenomena.

### 3.5.2.2 Sample

Group interviews was conducted with employees from two different Coop store which both will anonymous in this thesis. One is located in the south of Sweden and one in the Stockholm area. The store managers were contacted and asked if they wanted to participate by giving me access to the persons that I wanted to interview, the store personnel, which both agreed upon.

In one of the stores the selection of who to interview was done by the store manager, and in the other I was allowed to come and ask the employees myself if they wanted to participate. Since the purpose of the study is to gain knowledge about how the sustainability strategies are practiced in store by store personnel, the main concern was they were working in a Coop store. Since this was already secured, the sampling was based on if they were available the day that the interviews was going to take place, as well as their willingness to participate. Since the interviews was held during weekdays the persons participating were not for example students working extra, but persons who have their job at Coop as their main occupation. This type of non-probability sampling can according to Bryman & Bell (2003, p. 105) be called a convenience sampling since it is restricted to the ones available at the location as well as their willingness to participate.

It is important to take into account that depending on who is interviewed the results will be different. Of the total number of 8 persons participating in the 3 group interviews, only one was a man. Having a higher number of male participants might have given another result in the study.

### 3.5.2.3 Conduction of Group Interviews

The group-interviews were held in week 17 and 18 in conference rooms in the two stores. One of the group interviews took place in the store in the Stockholm-area, and only included two participants due to a late cancelation. The other two group interviews took place in the store located in the south of Sweden, with 3 participants in each. The interviews were between 45-60 minutes long each.

The interviews were recorded after explaining the purpose of it and getting approval from the interviewees to do so. This to be able to focus on what was said during the interview instead of taking notes. To record the interview also gives the possibility to not only know *what* was said during the interview, but also in the *way* they say it (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 353). None of the participants had any problems with getting recorded. It should, however, not be ignored that the interviewees might be affected by being recorded (Flick, 2009, p. 295).

In the beginning of the interview the purpose of the interview was briefly presented, as well as the importance for me to get their view of the questions asked. It is important that the person being interviewed have an understanding of what is expected from them as interviews, since without this, the person being interviewed might feel uncomfortable which can affect the resultant data (May, 2011, p. 141).

It is important that the interviewees feel motivated to contribute. In the beginning of the interview the importance of the interviewee's participation and answers was explained. This since May (2011, p. 142) argues that the interviewer must make the interviewees feel that their answers are valued since their cooperation is fundamental to the conduct of the research.

It was also explained that they were going to be totally anonymous, both them and the stores they work in. This was seen as important, as the participants were at their job, answering questions about their job, and I wanted to make them as comfortable as possible with sharing their thoughts about the subjects with me. There is, however, a possibility that the fact that the interviewees were at their jobs with their colleagues, influenced their answers. One the other hand, the hope was that the fact that the group interviews were conducted at their work made it easier for the interviewees to relate to their practices.

### 3.5.2.4 Analysis of the group-interviews

The recordings of the group interviews were transcribed, and the transcribed material was the basis for the analysis of the interviews. This was done since this was seen as Flick (2009, p. 299) argues *a necessary step on the way to their interpretation*. However, it shall also be taken into account that when transcribing an interview, the material is transferred from verbal conversation to a written text, which means this text is a construction (Kvale, 1997, p. 149). The transcription becomes a frozen form of the social interaction which took place during the interview (Kvale, 1997, p. 152). Since the

interviews was done in Swedish, when using quotations in the analysis, they have been translated. This can be seen as another transformation of the original interview conversation. Both the transcription and translation from Swedish to English has been done very carefully to keep the original meaning.

The transcription resulted in approximately 51 pages of transcribed material. The transcribed material was gone through several times, searching for themes and practices. When these were identified, the transcribed material was reduced to contain the most interesting aspects in relation to the stated research questions and purpose of this study. This procedure is similar to what Wibeck (2010, p. 100) refers to as content analysis of focus groups, which is another form of group interviews (Flick, 2009, p. 195). The practical procedure of a content analysis the material starts with systematically going through the material, cutting out the interesting parts of the transcriptions, and putting them together in new categories with different headlines (Wibeck, 2010, pp. 100-101). After the categorization Wibeck (2010, p. 100) argues that the analysis can start. In this case the analysis was done by close reading of the reduced material under each theme, but also switching between the categories and the full transcription, to make sure that nothing was missed in the reduction of the material. This was also done to see the context in which something was said. This systematic approach was seen as important, to make sure that the findings are verifiable, which means that other researchers would come to the same findings from the material (Wibeck, 2010, p. 100).

The reduced material under each theme was then rewritten into text, saving some quotations to make it easier for the reader to see what the basis of the interpretations are. The text was also written in a way which follows the wanted structure of this thesis which is based on both Coops green strategies and the theoretical framework.

### 3.6 Reflection of choice of method

It is a researchers duty, both to themselves and to others, to reflect upon both strengths and weaknesses of the methods that is applied (May, 2011, p. 158). Throughout this method chapter advantages and limitations of the chosen methods have been discussed. However, some further points of the limitations of the chosen methods for data collections needs to be done.

The use of document study as are often criticized for the selectivity and bias in documents. The bias of documents is related to what they contain, that is what the author chose to include, and not to include (May, 2011, p. 215). Selectivity refers to how the document is read by the researcher, and how what is included in the analysis of it and not (May, 2011, p. 215). When it comes to the selectivity and bias in how the documents were written, the document study is not seen as giving any truths about the strategies and what is actually done at Coop, however, as they are published by Coop on the webpage, an assumption can be made that this is how Coop wants to picture their sustainability strategies. This makes the documents interesting, since it can provide a resource for

understanding, not only how meaning is created, but also how the ways which new meanings are developed and employed (May, 2011, p. 211) sounding green strategies and the store employees practices of it. Considering the selectivity of what has been included in the analysis, this has been done in relation to the purpose of this thesis, which means that the parts of the strategies which relates to the stores and the store employees practices was seen as the most important to include.

As previously argued the interviews, which was chosen due to the possibility to see how the store employees make sense of their life world and act within it, have some limitations. One limitation which is mentioned above, it the interview can't provide any truths outside of the interview, being a social encounter like any else (May, 2011, pp. 157-158).

The social encounter involved in the interview also have implications for the objectivity of the research. It is often argued that the qualitative interview is lacking objectivity, especially due to the human interplay which is an essential part of the interview situation (Kvale, 1997, p. 64). Objectivity demands distance, at the same time as the interview demands the interviewer to establish a relation to have a successful interview from a qualitative perspective (May, 2011, p. 140). The task of the researcher becomes to balance between these two criteria of objectivity and relation, which, can be seen as contradictory (May, 2011, p. 140). How to handle this was given considerable thought, especially since the author is an employee in a Coop store. The considerations of this is further described in next section.

### 3.6.1 Authors pre-understanding

The author of this thesis is an employee at a Coop store, which was seen as both a strength and limitation during the research process. The insight in the work practices of the store employees was what gave the author the inspiration to start investigating the subject. The pre-understanding was also seen as a limitation since there was a risk that the authors own thoughts would impact on the interpretation of the interviewees' statements and the document study. To decrease the risk that the pre-understanding was affecting the collection and analysis of empirical material this risk was taken into considerable thought before conducting the research and data collection. During the interviews, I had to think about not substituting the interviewees' meanings with my own pre-understanding of practices from my own experience. For this reason I was very careful with saying (or thinking) "I understand what you mean", instead, I asked the interviewees "what does that mean" or "can you give an example of that".

## 3.7 Combined analysis

To fulfil the purpose of this study the green strategies from the document analysis and practices of the store employees which was revealed during the group interviews was analysed together. The interview guide used for the group interviews was partly based on the document study which was conducted before the group-interviews. However, the

flexibility of the document study allowed me to go back and forth between the document and transcribed material from the group interviews, and hence, enabled me to see new patterns and meanings in the text.

The empirical material will be presented under the headlines “Coops CSR & Green retailing”, “Communication and in-store communication of green efforts”, and “Store Employees- Knowledge and involvement in green practices”. The empirical analysis is, hence, following the same structure as the theoretical framework. The green strategies found in the document study is presented under each headline, followed by themes found in the analysis of the group-interviews, corresponding to the respective part of the strategy. This structure was chosen to simplify for the reader and to fulfil the purpose of this study. After each of these three themes, an analytical summary will be made where the findings are summarized.

## Chapter 4. Empirics and Analysis

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*In this chapter the empirical material from the group-interviews and document analysis will be presented. The material will be presented and analysed in relation to each other and with previous research. Under each section of the analysis the findings from the document analysis of the green strategies is first presented, followed by the relating findings from the group interviews with store employees.*

### 4.1 Coop’s CSR & Green retailing

In this section of the analysis Coops strategy for sustainable development will be analysed in relation to the practices of the employees and theories in green retailing. The green strategies are first presented, followed by the findings from the group interviews.

#### 4.1.1 Coop’s Strategy for sustainable development

How do KF and Coop define their green strategies and in relation to whom are they taking the responsibility and in what ways are the store employees involved? KF such as many other retailers (Ander & Stern, 2008, p. 40) uses the word “sustainable development” to describe their environmental and social commitments. Sustainable development is defined as:

*“Sustainable development for KF means to combine responsibility for ethical, environmental, social and economic questions in a long term perspective” (Authors translation; KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 6)*

Sustainability is here defined, as not only taking responsibility for the environmental questions, but also social, economic and ethical questions. KF identifies their most



important stakeholders as; customers/members of the cooperation, consumer associations/owners, employees, suppliers, public authorities, interest groups. It is stressed that these stakeholders have different expectations and that the communication with different stakeholder groups take place in different forums. (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 6)

For 2013 KF states three main goal areas within the sustainability strategies; *sustainable stores*, *sustainable suppliers* and *sustainable assortment* (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning 2012, p. 7). *Employees* is also a part of the sustainability report which of interest for this thesis. In total, the sustainability report consist of six different parts; sustainable stores, sustainable suppliers, sustainable assortment, employees, society and GRI-index. The *Society* section describes the charity projects in which KF is involved, such as “VI-skogen” and “Kooperation utan gränser” (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning 2012, p. 15). These parts is, however not included in the analysis since it was not seen as involving environmental aspect or the practices of the store employees. For the same reason the *GRI-index* is not included, since this section describes how the sustainability efforts are measured and reported (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning 2012, p. 16).

In this section about CSR and green retailing the three goals for the sustainability strategies (sustainable stores, sustainable suppliers and sustainable assortment) is going to be analysed in relation to the store employee’s practices of these.

#### 4.1.2 Internal improvement - Sustainable stores

One goal for the sustainability strategies are *Sustainable Stores*, which argued by KF to be one of the ways in which they can impact the environment;

*“KF affects the environment mainly in two ways. Direct through the own business, and indirect by the assortment in store.”* (Authors translation, KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 9)

Within the goal area *Sustainable stores* the main focus is on environmental questions and by internal efforts minimise the business’ climate influence. KF argues that they are trying to reduce the environmental impact by decreasing the effect from transports (one way is by using trains as means of transportation), running of cold and freezer storage, energy consumption and waste (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 9-10). It is argued in the sustainability report that Coops stores shall sort waste in a number of different categories such as corrugated cardboard, non-rigid plastic, household waste and combustible, as a way to minimize impact on the environment. It is also argued that there is a large focus on “not only throw things in the right way, but also to through away less”, to decrease the waste of food in the entire retail chain, since this is seen as having a large impact on the environment (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 10).

This part of the strategy can be seen as what Lai et al. (2010) refers to as *Internal-improvement-based green retailing* practices, since it is focused on the impact on the environment from the own business. Lai et al. (2010) argues that internal improvement throughout the retail chain can be done by the employees of the retailer. This part of the

strategy can also be seen as what Stern & Ander (2008, p. 42) refers to as “Act green”, which also refers to green practices within the own business, such as reducing waste, supply chain and optimizing energy effectiveness.

When it comes to the store employees practices of internal improvement issues, the interviewees thought that it was quite limited. In one of the group-interviews the interviewees couldn't think of anything which was done in the store to minimize the impact on the environment. In the two other the group interviews waste separation was mentioned as one way to contribute in the store to a more sustainable development. These two groups were both in the same store, where the waste separation had been up for discussion. However, one of the interviewees argue that this is not entirely easy;

*“well, it, there is a thought, but that thought is not possible to follow to the full, because, there is corrugated cardboard, and then there is combustible and then there is plastic, and organic. But in organic all combustible which is wet end up, in combustible all plastic and corrugated cardboard ends up, if you, have it together, so well, there is a thought but it is not whole the way /.../”*

The waste separation was, hence, seen as a practice where the store employees in the store had an opportunity to make a difference for the environment, however, it was seen by this interviewee as difficult to carry out due to the construction of the “waste station”. Further, electronic shelf labels was mentioned as a way to save paper which was thought to decrease impact on nature. In one of the groups the store building was argued to be ecologically built, but there were only one person in this group who had knowledge about this. In the same store the interviewees also argued that they had lamps which automatically turn themselves off. A shift from yellow to white paper for the signs in the store was mentioned as a way to save both the environment and money. One interviewee mentions that they have shopping carts made out of recycled plastic bottles, which is argued to be quite popular among customers. One interviewee also mentions that some suppliers have a lower limit of items to be able to order from them, which was seen as a way to contribute to sustainable development, as it avoided unnecessary transports. A few of the interviews mentions that one way Coop is working with sustainable development and decreasing its environmental impact is by using trains as mean of transportation.

One of the interviewees also mentions that one goal for this person is to decrease the amount of wastage, by not having to throw away as much products, this, however, seems to be a question of economic terms rather than environmental concerns. However, this is not incompatible with the internal-improvement-based green retailing, as this dimension of green retailing, according to Lai et al. (2010) is a way to reduce costs at the same time as gaining in environmental performance.

Overall though, it does not seem as if the interviewees think so much about these matters. As one interviewee express it;

*“I guess there is a lot that happens which you don't reflect upon, as you said [referring to one of the interviewees] with train and such things, that, we just take that for granted, because it is how*



*it works, but there is a huge process to get it, yeah, to pull it off, so it... it is a bit of what is taken to the surface at that time”*

One possible interpretation of this is that since it does not directly relate to their job, it was not something which the interviewee thought about.

To sum up, the part of the strategy called sustainable stores, which involves internal improvements to decrease the own business impact on the environment is not to a high degree followed up in the practices of the interviewees. This, however is not very surprising, since the majority of the green strategies for internal improvements involves transport and other things which is not involving the store employees. The exception is waste separation in the store, which is both mentioned in the strategy and in two of the group-interviews and decreasing if wastage which was mentioned in one of the group-interviews and in the strategy. The waste separation was as pointed out by one interviewee not working the way it was supposed to, due to design of the “waste station”. In one of the group-interviews waste separation was not mentioned, however, this does not mean that they do not do it. If that is the case, it could just mean that they does not relate it to something which is environmental friendly. Lai et al. (2010) however argues that it is important that retailers work with continuous improvement to find ways to, for example reduce waste.

#### 4.1.3 External coordination - Sustainable suppliers

One other goal area in for the sustainability strategies are *Sustainable Suppliers*. In order to fulfil their goal to be the leading actor in the grocery sector in sustainable development, KF argues that collaboration with the suppliers is demanded. This to make sure that they also are taking their responsibility for humans and environment (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning 2012, p.12). KF also argues to have the ambition to be spreading their values not only to the suppliers, but that the suppliers shall be transfer these values to their other partners as well. KF explains their demands on suppliers like this;

*In excess of the legislation Coops suppliers shall live up to specific demands in for example animal care, additives and environment. (Authors translation, KF Hållbarhetsredovisning 2012, p.12)*

KF has around 11 000 different suppliers of which the majority delivers goods to Coop. The assortment and suppliers are centrally controlled to make sure that they are following Coops demands. The stores can however adjust 10% of their assortment to local conditions and buy from local suppliers. Today, Coop argues that they have the highest demands in the grocery sector when it comes to suppliers. (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 12)

This part of the strategy involves coordinating with suppliers, and can hence be seen as what Lai et al. (2010) refers to as *External-coordination-based green retailing*, where the retailers role is as coordinator of stakeholders such as suppliers. This can also be seen as what Jones et al. (2011, p. 936) refers to as “partnerships which suppliers”, which

according to these authors is one of the three ways in which retailers can drive sustainable consumption.

The high demands on suppliers which is stated in the sustainability report (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012) was also argued by the interviewees' in the group-interviews. All the interviewees argued that they knew that Coop have some demands for their suppliers. The interviewees explained that they, before deciding whether or not they could order products from a certain supplier, had to look if they were approved by Coop centrally. This was a procedure which all interviewees had knowledge about. This was done either by looking in a system, or if a new supplier recently had been approved of, they could call and say that they had been approved. One interviewee also explains that if the supplier was not approved, Coop would not pay the supplier. However, on what basis the suppliers were approved was not as clear, as one of the interviewees state;

*"No, well, that information, we have not received"*

Even though the interviewees didn't know what the demands were on the suppliers some of the interviewees expressed that they thought that the demands were high. Since this was not something the employees could impact more than to only order from the approved suppliers, to know about the demands was seen as someone else's responsibility. This was expressed in terms of "highest management", or "someone who checks". This might not either be important for the interviewees, and the knowledge that the supplier is approved of is enough. One interviewee states that;

*".../I don't think so many, here, like go further, go deeper in, it is more like," yes it is approved", good, then I can call up and say that we want it"*

This can be interpreted as how the control of the suppliers is done is not really of importance for the interviewee, since the control is done by someone else. The same kind of arguing was seen in all of the group interviews. This part of the strategy which involves external coordination of suppliers, is hence, a part where the interviewees think that they are involved, but just to a certain degree. They know that they have to check if suppliers are approved by Coop centrally, but the underlying reasons for how the suppliers are approved does not seem to relate to their practices.

#### 4.1.4. External coordination - Sustainable assortment

The third goal-area for KF's sustainability strategies is to offer a sustainable assortment. KF express their commitment like this;

*"Each and everyone's choices - not at least when it comes to groceries- makes a difference for a sustainable development. KF and Coop shall be leading in the sector within sustainable assortment and sustainable sales in Sweden. Today, Coop has the sectors largest share of sales of environmentally certified and organic groceries." (Authors translation, KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012 p. 7)*

The above quotation can be interpreted as the sales of ecological and environmental certified groceries is one part of how KF argues that they can contribute to a sustainable

development. By offering the choices, KF puts some responsibility on the customer to make the right choices - by choosing the right products, the customer can contribute to a sustainable development. The quotation also contains two goal areas when it comes to sustainable assortment; leading in sustainable assortment, and sustainable sales. Further it is argued that;

*“KF wants to inspire to and facilitate a sustainable consumption. The ambition is to be the leading actor within assortment and sales of organic and Fairtrade products. This is totally aligned with our members’ wishes; our surveys shows that 44 % think that it is important with organic products”* (Authors translation, KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 7).

Sustainable assortment is in the sustainability report defined as organic and environmentally certified products, Fairtrade certified products, offering a healthy assortment, and safe products in terms of safe handling throughout the supply chain (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning 2012, p. 7-8)

KF argues that the goal for 2012 was to increase the sales of ecological groceries to 10 %. However, this goal was not met and the sales of ecological products decreased from 5.7 % to 5.6 % compared to the year before. This can according to KF be a consequence of a revision of the Coops assortment where the total number of ecological groceries in the assortment decreased from 2791 to 2453 items. (Coop Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 7-8)

This part of the strategy can similarly to *sustainable suppliers* be seen as what Lai et. al. (2010) refers to as external-coordination-based green retailing. This since it involves to coordinate external stakeholders, in this case the customers, to decrease their impact on the environment by choosing the right products. It can also be seen as what Sterner & Ander (2008, p. 48) refers to as “Sell green”, since this is about offering green products to the customer.

Despite the commitment in the sustainability strategies of increasing sales of organic products, no one of the interviewees argued that they were not working actively to increase sales of organic or environmental certified products. Not either did they think that their colleagues were working with it. But even though not working with increasing sales of organic products, the interviewees argue that they *have* the organic assortment. One of the interviewees state that;

*“.../ I think, we are not bad at displaying it [organic assortment], but we are not good either, we are somewhere in between, we have all the products, but we do not display it, and do not expose it in that way”*

This can be interpreted as they offer the assortment, but they do not try to convince the customer to buy it. The same type of statement was seen in all of the group interviews. One other interviewee argues that;

*“well, you could say that, we would lose some on it, because if we build a display with non-organic products with something cheap and good which we have received, and it sell a lot. And then we build a display with only organic and it does not sell anything, sure, the customers might see it more, but we will lose a lot of money on it”*

To earn money, or lose money as stated in the quotation above, is one reoccurring theme in the group interviews. There is a consensus in all the group interviewees that the most important thing when choosing what products to display is the margin, how many crowns they earn per sold product and how many products they can sell. This stated by several of the interviewees as one of the reasons to why they don't work with displaying organic or environmental certified products. One other interviewee puts it like this;

*“But what I, what we have focus on now, I mean we are still a new opened store which shall establish, and we shall earn money, and sure, it is still quite good margins on organic products, but, we have to get, we expose the products which we make the most money on simply put, that is the most important thing right now. And at the same time, we do not destroy by taking away any organic products, but we don't expose it.”*

This also seems to be connected to the price of the products. A majority of the interviewees argues that the price difference of between organic and non-organic products made the customer less likely to buy organic products, which makes the sales of it less.

The sustainable assortment from the interviewees' point of view seems to be a question of having an assortment rather than promoting or actively encouraging customers to buy organic products. No one of the interviewees are working actively with increasing sales of the assortment, since, for different reasons is not believed to have the same sales as non-organic products. The commitment done by KF in the Sustainability report to be leading in sales of organic and Fairtrade products and to facilitate and inspire customers to a sustainable consumption, is not something which seems to be apparent in the store employees' practices. This is going to be further discussed in the next section of the analysis, about communication.

#### 4.1.5 Analytical summary – Green Retailing

By the presentation of its green strategies and practices Coop defines sustainable development. Stern & Ander (2008, p. 40) argues that the meaning of the word sustainability is defined by how the retailer relate to its own business, and Fuentes (2012) argues that sustainability is redefined by different retailers. KF defines sustainability as a combined responsibility for ethical, environmental, social and economic questions. Further this is described as something which is done in relation to its stakeholders by combining efforts in the own business with coordination of external stakeholders such as customers and suppliers. KF uses the word *sustainable development* and argues that the commitments are long-term. This can be seen as what Lai et al. (2010) refers to as *Supportive-development-based* green retailing, since this involves having a long term vision and commitment.

The commitments made by KF to green retail practices in *Sustainable stores*, *Sustainable suppliers* and *Sustainable assortment* is similar to the way green practices are conceptualised in theories in green retailing. For example Jones et al. (2011) where retailers are seen as “active intermediates” between suppliers and customers, Lai et al.'s (2010) three dimensions of green retailing and Stern & Ander's (2008) four steps to

become a green retailer. These efforts are to some degree followed up in the store. However, not all of them are related to the store employees' practices in the store, and when they do, it seems as if the store employees have limited knowledge about the strategies.

In the next section the communication of green efforts is going to be analysed as it is described both in KF's sustainability report and by the interviewees. This in relation to the theory concerning communication and in store communication of green strategies and practices.

## 4.2 Communication and in-store communication of green efforts

How do Coop communicate these efforts to the consumer and in what way does this communication involve the store employees? In this section of the analysis themes which occurred during the interviews relating to the communication with customers, their views of the customer and their view of their possibility to affect the customers' choices is going to be analysed in relation to KF's sustainability strategies and theories in communication of CSR and green efforts.

### 4.2.1 Communication of green efforts

KF argues that communication of sustainability is done in different forums with different stakeholder groups. Concerning the customer KF argues that;

*"The store is the natural place for the customer meeting. Customer service and Facebook are also important contact areas. Coop has around 110 000 followers on Facebook, and many of them is interested of sustainability related questions, such as organic food and animal care. The media is also used for campaigns and in educational purposes."* (Authors translation, KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, p. 6)

The first mentioned area of communication with consumers is the store, however, Facebook seems to be a much used communication tool when it comes to handling questions from consumers as well as teaching consumers about the sustainability efforts. One possible interpretations of this is that the store and store employees are not the most important contact area for communicating green efforts to, and with, customers.

This is also confirmed in the group-interviews; most of the interviewees argue that they do not talk with customers about the sustainability efforts except from questions regarding the assortment. A majority of the interviewees argued that when they get questions which can be related to the green efforts, it is mostly concerning organic products; customers who express their demand for organic products which was not in the assortment or needs help to find an organic product. One interviewee argues that the train transportation is a something which she discuss with the customers;

*“Yeah, well that is what is so important, many times when customers say to me about Coop’s milk, that it drives for a long time and everything, I usually say, that Coop is organic, or we try to become, and then I say that the milk went with train”*

This can be interpreted as if interviewee is teaching the customer about the green practices of Coop. This, however seems to be an exception, the other interviewees argues that they can’t recall that these issues has ever come up in conversations with customers. Rather, it is the products which is the main topic discussed with customers. One of the interviewees explains it like this;

*“Yes, it [questions about coops sustainability efforts] is directed by the products, customers, customers do not ask if we have bought our green, if our electricity is green, or if it is from a coal power plant in Denmark, but it is, hehe, we don’t get those questions”*

That most communication of CSR and green efforts is done online is also stated in previous research (Grafström et al. 2008, p. 129). Jones et al. (2005b, p. 54) however argues that it is in the store the messages about green efforts of can transfer most widely, as this is the most frequent and maybe only contact with the retailer. However, the customers does not seem interested in asking these questions to the store employees. This can be seen as what Frostenson (2010, p. 53) calls filtration of communication of the responsibility questions, which means that the communication of sustainability efforts is rather done on corporate level than on subsidiary (store) level, and that this communication is handled by “experts”. The “experts” can in this case be seen as the persons working with the Facebook page.

#### 4.2.2. In store marketing of green efforts

In the sustainability strategies, KF argues that they want to be leading in sales of organic and environmentally certified groceries (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 7). Further KF argues that they want to facilitate and inspire customers to a sustainable consumption (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 7). These statements are in this thesis interpreted as KF makes a commitment to work with promoting sustainable consumption. One way in-store marketing of green efforts can be done in the store is by promotion of green products. As mentioned in previous section no one of the interviewees said to be working with increasing sales of organic products. One reason for this argued by the interviewees was that the higher prices of organic products. This related to the aspect of making money, which seems to be a major objective for the employees. It was also to different degree seen as the responsibility of the store employees to change the habits of the customer. One interviewee states that;

*“Well, I don’t know, in the store, how we should work for if, well, to reach out to the customers, that buy organic instead, it is very hard to work for”*

The participants in the group interview from which the above quotation is, saw it as mostly the demand from customers which would make it possible to display organic products more. The participants in another of the group interviews said that they thought that it is their responsibility to get the consumer to think differently, even though they



didn't work with it. One of these interviewees argue that it is possible to increase the sales of organic products, but;

*"I can honestly say that I do not prioritise it, I prioritise my margin-crowns before that"*

One theme which engaged the interviewees in all of the group interviews was the placing of organic products in the store, and where they should be placed to best facilitate for the customer to make a decision to buy organic instead. This was particularly discussed for the fruit and vegetable department. The interviewees from both stores explained that the organic products was placed in a specific section and not mixed up with the non-organic products. One of these interviewees argue that:

*But I mean, if I go and choose a leek, for example, and I come to the leeks where the leeks always are, then I wouldn't know that there is a KRAV-certified leek if it is not there beside"*

The selection of the organic leek, is according to this interviewee hard to make if the option is not there besides the non-organic product. One other interviewee discussed this in terms of the dairy department, where the organic products were said to be placed next to the respectively non-organic products.

*"What you could have worked with in the departments is that you collect it [organic products] on one and the same place, there are both advantages and disadvantages with it, partly because... the disadvantages is that the customers who do not buy it, they do not see it, if you for example have it in a own section, but there are many who does, and then it might have been easier to collect everything on the same place"*

By placing the interviewees discussed that it could either highlight the organic assortment, or, make it possible for the customers to make a decision to buy organic when they are standing by the shelf. One theme in all group interviews was hence, how to get the customer to think about buying organic instead.

*".../ But I mean, to get new customer who buy organic, that we shall never do if it is placed separately, lies there and lies there, you could get new customers if you...."*

This can be interpreted as a way for the store employees to promote organic products in a less costly and more subtle way. By placing of products the interviewees are discussing a way to promote and facilitate the choice of organic products. This without losing sales on non-organic product, which might be the consequence of displaying the organic products instead of the non-organic products.

There are, hence, some thoughts on how to increase sales of organic products, however, it does not seem as if it is something which is actually set into practice. This is also found by Jones et al. (2011) who argues that retailers' in-store communication of sustainable consumption is very limited despite public commitments to encourage sustainable consumption. This can also be seen in relation to what Jones et al. (2007) argues about the in-store communication of CSR, which is that retailers are not sure if messages about CSR will lead to any downsides, as well as an insecurity of how it will affect the buying behaviour. Further, the interviewees argue that they does not think that this is what Coop centrally have focus upon, due to the financial situation of Coop. Several of the

interviewees in all group-interviews express that they think that Coop is “taking the safe way”, and therefore focus more on gaining money than to promote organic products. One way to interpret this is as Jones et al. (2007) argues; the commitment in the reports reflects the aspirations of the retailer, however, they are not followed up on a day to day basis, due to competitive environment of the retailer and insecurity of the effects.

### 4.2.3 View on the customer

In the sustainability report, KF states that in a member (customer) survey 44 % of the members state that organic products are important (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 7). KF is, hence, expressing that organic products is something which a large part of the members (customers) want. This view is however not entirely shared by the interviewees, rather, two different themes relating to the customer can be seen; one is that the customer is seen as price sensitive. The other is that the customers who buy organic products is a “special” customer, who already buys everything in organic and therefore will find it even though it is not displayed.

The first theme relates to the customer and prices of the organic products. The price difference of the products is one reason to why some of the interviewees think that the sales of the ecological products does not have the same sales as the non-ecological. One interviewee states that;

*“I think that there are more who would have chosen consciously, made a conscious selection if the prices would have looked different”*

A conscious selection would, according to this interviewee have been facilitated if the prices would have looked differently. One other interviewee states that;

*“Many have a picture of that the organic is much more expensive, and I think that, it, as previously said, it is not shown enough of it, and people have a picture of it and it is important that... actually it is not so much more expensive, sure, some things are, but now in the present situation, it is not very much of a difference, but sometimes it is just the crowns that matters, well, one crown can be a big difference”*

This can be interpreted as the interviewee on one hand thinks that the price difference is not very high, and that costumers have somewhat false notion of the prices. But on the other hand, even though the price difference might not be so big, the customer might think that one crown is a big difference. Hence, the customer is seen as price sensitive. This type of arguments can be seen in all of the group interviews, the fact that the prices are different makes the customer less likely to choose the organic product. One interviewee puts it like this;

*“well, it isn't something which has reached to a lot of customers either, well, as I said before, there are anyway not many who gets what organic is, they have not got in to that yet. I mean, families with children who already have a difficult with money, they might not go and buy the most expensive, I don't think that anyway.”*



The other interesting theme occurring during all of the group-interviews is the view on who buys organic products. As mentioned in the quotation above, this interviewee thinks that *most* customers do not really know what organic is. There seems to be a belief that there is a certain type of customer who buys organic, which is expressed in terms such as “those who buy” and “they buy everything in organic”. These customers are thought to find the organic products since they look for it. One interviewee argues that;

*”/.../ those who buy organic, we say that we start down by the fruit, then they probably buy organic all the way, from meat to dairy products up to the crisps, well, everything”*

This view of the customer might be a reason to why the interviewees does not finds it necessary to expose the organic products more, as “those who buy” will find it anyway. Fuentes (2012) argues that sustainability is refined in relation to what could be called an “imaginary customer”. In this case the customer is seen as price sensitive and “special”. This can be seen as a reason to why the organic assortment is not promoted in any special way in the store. The interviewees does not seem to think that there is a demand on these products, since they are (at least thought to be) more expensive. Also, the customer who wants to buy these products will find them.

#### 4.2.4 Analytical summary - Communication of green efforts

Just as previous research tells us (Jones et al. 2007, Jones et al 2011, Frostenson et al., 2010) the communication of green efforts does not seem to take place to a high degree on store level. One reason for this seems to be that the customer does not demand this since they doesn't direct their questions towards the store personnel. The exception is when it comes to specific organic products. Rather, customers questions about, and education in, green efforts seems to be handled on online and through the social media Facebook, as stated in KF's sustainability report.

This can, as previously argued, be seen as what Frostenson et al. (2010) calls filtration, which means that the communication in responsibility questions is handled on corporate level and by “experts”, and not on store level by the store employees. Frostenson et al. (2010, p. 53) argues that one reason for the lack of communication on store level in responsibility questions is because customers are not the main drivers in CSR questions. Different stakeholders have different expectations on the company, and in this case it does not seem as is the customers expect that these questions shall be handled on store level. Frostenson (2010, p. 53) argues that other stakeholders such as NGO and media rather are the drivers of retailers CSR work, which approach the retailer centrally, which can be the reason for the filtration of CSR communication.

One way which in-store communication of green strategies could be done is by promoting sustainable consumption. Despite the commitment in the sustainability report to work with promotion of sustainable consumption, this does not seem to be done by the store employees. One other reason to why the store is not used to communicate with the customers seems to be the insecurity among the store employees of what in store promotion of organic products will lead to, and in particular, how it will affect the

profitability. This is also argued by Jones et al. (2007) and Jones et al. (2011) who argues that the in store communication of CSR and sustainable consumption is limited due to the uncertainty of the effects on customers buying behaviour. This is also directed by what Fuentes' (2012) calls an "imaginary customer", which in this case is seen as price sensitive and in most cases, not interested in buying the organic product, since this is restricted to the "special" customers which is described as "those who buy".

Jones et al. (2005b, p. 54) argues that it is in the store, rather than the webpage the transmission of CSR messages can take place most widely, since this is the most frequent and for many, only interaction with the retailer. Following this argument it could be argued that the store and store employees as means of communication in these questions are not being utilized.

### 4.3. Store employees – Knowledge and involvement in green practices

In this part of the analysis the practices of the store employees and the involvement in the green strategies is going to be analysed. First the interviewees' perspective on their job is going to be presented, followed by their information and knowledge in green strategies and practices, then their involvement in the green strategies and practices and finally the store employees are going to be seen as stakeholders to the organisation.

#### 4.3.1 Service and Selling

To understand how Coop's sustainability strategies relate to the practices of the employees, it is important to understand how they see their job and what practices are involved in this. During all of the group-interviews two major themes occurred. The first theme is to give the customers service, which was done through keeping their departments nice and tidy, unpacking products, order new products and so on. Giving service to the customers was also what was referred by the interviewees in two of the group-interviews as "being good hosts", which included making the customers feel welcome and having informal conversations with the customers. Giving customers' service also included listening to customers wishes and answering questions. One interviewee also argues that "being good hosts" is something which they are followed up on by the management.

The second theme was to make money, which was a reoccurring theme in all group-interviews. This was also the only thing that all interviewees said that they were measuring performance on, on department and store level. The two aspects of making money and giving customers service was also by some of the interviewees argued to be connected. One interviewee puts it like this;

*"It is the customers who are our bread and living, if you say, if we do not have any customers we will still not break even, and therefore they have to be in focus /.../ and that's why we have this kind of goals [referring to some company guidelines of how to be a good hosts], or it is some of*

*them at least I know, to get customers to want to come back, and then we can go break even, if the customers come”*

The two themes of giving service to customers and to make money seems to be two major objectives of the interviewees’ works as they see it. This can be seen in relation to what Korczynski (2009) refers to as the customer-oriented bureaucracy. In this perspective the service organisation is seen as driven by the dual logic of bureaucracy and customer-orientation. The theme of “making money” can be seen as what Korczynski (2009) refers to as the bureaucratic side of service work, which involves maximize efficiency in order to compete with prices and efficiency in service delivery. The interviewees also stress the importance of giving the customers service, in order to make them come again to ensure that they make money, which can be seen as what Korczynski (2009) refers to as the customer-oriented side of the service work. One possible interpretation of this is that the green strategies does not apply to the store employees’ practices, since they are not seen as making money or as a service for the customer.

Several of the interviewees states that Coops financial situation is not very good, which is expressed in terms such as “ICA goes 100 times better”, and “we have to stop losing money”. A possible interpretation of this is as if the interviewees are rather focusing on sustainable development in economic terms. In two of the group interviews, the term “sustainable development” was understood as having sustainable financial goals, which meant to them meant having realistic goal for sales. This is also interpreted as the most important goal for the interviewees in their jobs is to make money, and one way to achieve this is by giving service to the customers. The focus on making money was also in previous chapter referred to as something which is a reason to not promote organic products in any specific way.

### 4.3.2 Information and knowledge

In Coops policy for sustainable development (Coops policy för hållbar utveckling, 2012) there are a number of statements on how Coop shall contribute to a long-term sustainable development. One of these points is to:

*“Work for a good internal knowledge level within the sustainability area, as well as spreading the knowledge internally”* (Auhors translation; Coop policy för hållbar utveckling, 2012).

When it comes to this internal knowledge, KF argues that new employed office-employees in KF normally takes an introduction education. This education is focused on clarifying the strategy and organisation as well as the organisations standpoint in sustainable development (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 13). When it comes to the store employees there is no introduction education mentioned in the document. Instead, e-education in the “KF Akademin” (KF Academy) is mentioned as a good way for employees to get education in subjects such as visions and values, leadership, sustainable development and service, since;

*“E-education suits the store employees, as the stores have fixed schedules and every education occasion causes higher workload for the colleagues.”* (Authors translation; KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 13)

From a critical point of view, this statement could imply that the education for store employees is not a prioritised area, since they are not allowed to get extra time to do this, but shall do it on their normal work hours, leading the rest of the colleagues to a higher workload.

When it comes to the store employees’ information in the sustainability strategies, a majority of the interviewees argue that they get information about the sustainability efforts through the intranet. One interviewee also mentions Coop staff magazine as a source of information. No one of the interviewees argue that questions regarding the sustainability work is something which is discussed in the store, or that these issues is something which is discussed during meetings. Overall, the information which the interviewees argue that they get is not very extensive. One interviewee states that;

*I guess it is like with everything else, you have to seek that information, the intranet, it is often written about ”Utan gränser” and ”Vi-skogen” /.../*

This can be interpreted as if the information is not something which is given to the store employees, but rather something which they should find for themselves. Overall, it seems as if the knowledge about the sustainability strategies are quite low. No one of the interviewees can, for example, mention any of the goals which is stated in KF’s sustainability report. When it comes to education, there is at least one interviewee in all the group-interviews who can recall that there has been an online-education available. This e-education the interviewees either haven’t done, or for those who have done it, can’t remember the content of it, except for one interviewee who could recall some parts included the education.

Some of the interviewees also argue that if they would get a question about Coop’s sustainability efforts, they would not know how to answer them. This can be seen as what Frostenson (2007, p. 23) refers to as a knowledge problem, since the interviewees does not have the knowledge about the sustainability strategies and terminology used in it. However, since these kind of questions rarely comes up in the store it does not seem to be a problem for the interviewees.

The commitment in Coops policy for sustainable development (Coop Policy för hållbar utveckling, 2012) to work for a good internal knowledge within the sustainability area, is not confirmed by the interviewees. Rather, the knowledge seems to be quite low, which can have its explanation in the low amount of information given the store employees. To work for a good internal knowledge is also stressed by Lai et al. (2010) as they argues that it is necessary to enable implementation of green practices throughout the retail chain. Further, Lai et al. (2010) argues that internal knowledge and engagement is important to ensure the long term perspective of green retailing.

### 4.3.3 Lack of support & Involvement in green practices

One important theme which reoccurs during the group-interviews is that the interviewees seem to think that these matters are not prioritized by the management. This is expressed in terms such as “no one has told us to work with this”, “if it is so important, they would have given us an education in it”. Some interviewees argue that they think it is due to the financial situation of Coop (which they argue is not very good) that “the focus is elsewhere”.

A majority of interviewees argues that they do not feel very involved in the sustainability strategies since, as one interviewee argues “you don’t get as much information as you might have needed”. One interviewee also states that “they do not ask us”. Another interviewee, however argues that it feels as if the store employees are involved since “we are the ones who does it, it feels like, or, the management says to us what we should do to get a sustainable development”. One interpretation of this is that, the reason that no one seems to be working with, for example promotion of organic products, is because the management has not told them to.

Collier & Esteban (2007, p. 27) argues that it is of high importance that senior management commit to the CSR questions, since this commitment is of critical importance to get the commitment from the employees. In this case the interviewees does not seem to believe that the senior management is very committed. This since the interviewees does not get the information about the sustainability strategies and goals, and due to the lack of instructions to work with it in the store.

The involvement of the interviewees in the sustainability questions does not seem to be so high, apart from the lack of support, it might also be due to what Frostenson (2007, p. 23) refers to as a relevance-problem. To the interviewees in this study, the sustainability strategies does not relate to the everyday practices, which mainly is concerned about making money and giving service to the customers.

### 4.3.4 Store employees as stakeholders

In the sustainability report KF argues that the employees are contributing to the consumers experience of KF and to the competitiveness of KF. KF argues to have an ambition that both current and potential employees shall see KF as an attractive employer (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 13). One contributor for achieving this is;

*“/.../ to have a sustainability work in the front, something which is increasingly valued by employees when choosing where to work.”* (Auhtors translation; KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 13)

Morsing (2003, p. 152) argues that organisational members can feel pride and identification with the company as a result of a company’s CSR efforts. Some of the interviewees seems to be proud, one of the interviewees express that in conversations with customers who want to buy organic product she feels that;

*“/.../ most of the time we have an organic option, so I can be quite proud, to be working in a store which has so much, you can always offer something, it feels like /.../”*

One other interviewee states that before starting working in the store, she told all her neighbours working in a store which was ecologically built. This statement can be seen as one of the potential benefits with CSR in relation to employees which is stated by Birth et al. (2008, p. 185) who argues that CSR can lead to good publicity for the company through word of mouth. This can also be interpreted as a proudness of working for a “good” company, as argued by Morsing (2003, p. 152). The two interviewees who expressed this were also two of the interviewees who expressed that they had a personal interest in organic products and environmental questions.

KF argues that a yearly employee survey reveals that 73 % of employees think that the company they are working for is doing a good job when it comes to sustainability questions (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 13). However, it is also stated in the sustainability report the employee survey reveals that internal communication and communication visions and values are possible areas of improvement (KF Hållbarhetsredovisning, 2012, p. 13). The previously argued lack of knowledge and information, is here also stated by KF, as they state that internal communication of visions and values can be improved. The potential benefits of CSR argued by Birth (2008, p. 185) and Morsing (2003, p. 152) such as creating good reputation and publicity through word of mouth or feeling proud, would, require knowledge in the efforts made by the company. That is, if the store employees are not aware of the green strategies and efforts, the potential benefits of this, probably doesn't appear.

#### 4.3.5 Analytical Summary - Store Employees - Knowledge & involvement in green practices

Previous research stress the importance of involving all employees in the green strategies and practices (Lee et al. 2012, Lai et al. 2012). In Coops policy for sustainable development, it is argued that internal knowledge in sustainability questions is important to ensure long term sustainability (Coop policy för hållbar utveckling, 2012). This is also argued by Lai et al. (2010, p. 23) who states that the employees involvement is important to ensure the long term perspective of green retailing. However, the information and education given to the store employees seems to be limited. It also seems as if the information available is up to the store employees to find for themselves. This leads to a lack of knowledge, which, could be seen as what Frostenson (2007, p. 23) refers to as a knowledge problem. However, as the interviewees didn't meet this type of questions often, the lack of knowledge wasn't seen as a big problem for them.

The interviewees also seem to think that there is a lack of commitment from the senior management to take these questions out to the stores and store employees. The involvement from senior management in these questions is according to Collier & Esteban (2007, p. 27) important to ensure commitment from employees. Collier & Esteban (2007, p. 27) argues that it is their responsibility to ensure that what is referred

to as “CSR rhetoric” becomes reality in the organisation, is also argued by the interviewees. This as they think that they are not told to work with these questions to a high degree.

The interviewees also express what could be referred to as what Frostenson (2007, p. 23) calls a relevance problem. Since they see their most important tasks to earn money and give service to the customers the green practices does not apply to their definition of their job. The relevance problem can also be seen in relation to the Korczynski’s (2009) conceptualization of service work as the service oriented bureaucracy. In this perspective, one reason to the lack of relevance can be that the green strategies does not apply to the customer orientation, as it is not seen as a service to the consumers, not either does it apply to the bureaucratic side, since the practice of green strategies doesn’t relate to making money. One possible interpretation of this is that to get relevance for the store employees the green strategies and practices need to either apply to either the service oriented *or* bureaucracy logic of the service work. This can also be seen as the tension between the goal to earn money and promoting sustainable consumption, which is argued by Stern & Ander (2008, p. 70) as one problem for retailers going green.

The store employees’ lack of knowledge in the green strategies can also have implications when seeing the store employees as stakeholders to the organisation. The potential benefits of the CSR work argued by previous research such as feeling proud of the organisation (Morsing, 2003, p. 152) and increased satisfaction and commitment and creation of publicity through word of mouth (Birth et al., 2008, p. 185) will probably not appear if the store employees do not have the knowledge in how Coop is engaging in these questions.



# Chapter 5. Discussion & Conclusion

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*In this chapter the conclusions of this thesis is going to be presented and discussed. This is followed by limitations and suggestions for further research.*

## 5.1 Discussion & Conclusions

The research questions leading this study is; *What are the green strategies of Coop?* and *How are these green strategies expressed in the store and in the practices of the store employees?* By analysing both the green strategies and store employees' practices this thesis aimed to see how the commitments made in the green strategies of a retailer are involving the store employees' practices. In this conclusion the major findings are going to be presented.

### 5.1.1 Coop's green strategies

This thesis took its departure in how corporations of today can act responsible and the confusion and lack of commonly agreed upon definitions and practices in both theory and practice. Rather than having one definitive definition of CSR this thesis views the responsibility of a company as something which is created in relation to the stakeholders and the specific context, and is constantly defined and redefined in practice. The focus of this thesis has been the environmental aspects of CSR.

KF uses the word "sustainability" to describe their responsibility in ethical, environmental, social and economic questions. In the sustainability report, KF states six different areas; sustainable stores, sustainable suppliers and sustainable stores, employees, society and GRI-index. The society and GRI-index has not been discussed in this thesis. This since these parts were not seen environmental aspects of CSR which is the focus of this thesis. These parts were not either seen as involving the not the stores and store employees in the same way as the other four areas. Sustainable development is defined by KF as a combined responsibility for ethical, environmental, social and economic questions in a long term perspective. The definition of green practices in the three goal areas sustainable stores, sustainable suppliers and sustainable assortment done by KF follows the definitions done in theory of green retailing (Jones et al. 2011, Lai et al. 2010, Sterner & Ander, 2008). These theories views retailer as a "middle hand" between suppliers and consumers with possibility to impact both sides, which is also stressed by KF and Coop.

### 5.1.2 Low involvement & knowledge

The green strategies does not seem to relate to the store employees practices, apart from when they are explicitly told by the management to work with a part of it. One example of this is the case with checking if the suppliers are approved by Coop. However, the

background to the approving of suppliers remains unknown for the store employees. The same type of arguing could be done in the goal area sustainable stores which was identified as internal improvements based green retailing. The store employees in two of the stores argues that they work with waste separation when throwing their trash, but the reason for this and implication of it does not seem evident. It could be argued that these green practices lose some of the meaning which is given them in the sustainability report. That is, even though these practices are a part of the green strategies, since the employees doesn't know it, it might not have any meaning for them to do it. Much of the responsibility questions seems to be handled on corporate level, which, makes the store employees consider the responsibility to be on someone else in the organisation.

The knowledge of the green strategies among the store employees seems to be quite low. The green strategies and goals are quite unfamiliar for the store employees in this study. Despite commitments in Coop's policy for sustainable development to work for good internal knowledge, it seems as if the information in these issues is mainly up to the store employees to find for themselves. Education to store employees in sustainability questions does not either seem to be a prioritized area. It also seems to be a lack of support from management in getting the store employees to work with these questions. The store employees express that since the management have not told them to work with these questions in any way, it doesn't seem so important.

### 5.1.3 Filtration of communication

The communication of green efforts does not seem to take place in the store. From KF's sustainability report we learn that much of this communication takes place on Facebook. This is also confirmed by the interviewees who argue that they, in general, do not get questions from customers about Coops green efforts or strategies. Their communication with customers in these questions are for most of the store employees limited to questions regarding the goal area sustainable assortment, and in particular customers asking for specific organic products. The store employees also states that, if they would get questions about Coops green strategies or practices, they would have hard time answering them due to their lack of knowledge in these questions. In relation to what Jones et al (2005b, p. 54) argues about the store, not the web, being the place where these messages can transfer most widely, it could be argued that Coop miss out on important opportunities to communicate these questions to the customers.

### 5.1.4 Green strategies & Service work

In the goal area sustainable assortment, KF argues that they want to inspire the customer to a sustainable consumption. One part of this is to be leading in sales of organic and environmentally certified products. However, this seems to be restricted to having the products, no one of the store employees in this study argues that they or their colleagues are working to increase sales of these. This also seems to be connected to how the store employees understanding of the customer. Two major themes occur; the customer is price

sensitive, and the ones who buy organic products are “special” and buy everything in organic. These views of the customer have been argued to direct the practices of the store employees, in not exposing organic products. In the sustainability report KF argues that a large part, 44 %, of their members think that it is important with organic products. It seems to be a difference in how the customer is seen in the green strategy and by the store employees.

One finding in this study is how the employees see their job, which was defined as making money and giving service to customers. This has been seen in relation to Krozinzczy's (2009) conceptualization of service work, which is directed by the two contradictory logics of customer-orientation and bureaucracy. Working with the green strategies does not seem to apply to either of these logics as the store employee sees it, as it was not directly seen as a way to make money, or to give service to the customer. This leads to what Frostenson (2007) calls a relevance problem, since the store employees can't relate the green strategies to their definition of their job. One implication of this is that to gain in relevance for the store employees, the management needs to promote these aspects, either as a way to make money or as a way to give customers service.

### 5.1.5 Sustainability redefined

In addition to what previous research has shown, that sustainability is redefined in different organisations, this study shows that sustainability might also be redefined in different parts of the organisation. The store employees' major focus is not upon these green strategies, but rather on sustainable development in economic terms. To make money and giving service was expressed in all group-interviews as the main goals for their jobs. Stern & Ander (2008) and Fuentes (2012) argue that sustainability is redefined in different organisations. One possible interpretation from this study, is that sustainability at Coop is not only redefined in relation to the specific organisation, but also in different *parts* of the organisation. The interviewees' statements during the group-interviews are possible to interpret as if sustainable development, in a long term perspective only can be assured if the Coop doesn't “lose money”. To take responsibility for the actions in relation to environment and society becomes the task of someone else in the organisation.

This thesis took its departure in how retailers can act responsible and what commitments are involved in this. Retailers have the possibility to affect both producers and consumers in making consumption more “green” and environmentally sustainable (Fuentes, 2011). However, it seems as if the commitments made in the KF's sustainability report does not trickle down in the organisation to the stores and store employees, but stays at the corporate levels. The commitment to affect consumers somehow stays on the corporate level, and doesn't reach the stores and store employees. The few of the store employees practices which relate to decreasing the own business and suppliers impact on environment, seems to be lacking the meaning to the store personnel due to lack of knowledge in the background to these procedures. Coop is hence constructing and

reconstructing the view of green retailing as a rather decoupled activity where the commitment is stated online but do not relate to the store or the store employees.

## 5.2 Limitation & Suggestions for further research

This thesis hopes to have provided the reader with an increased understanding in the relation between green strategies and store employees' practices at Coop. By focusing on the store employees, their view on the customer and management has been put forward. However, this study can't tell how the senior management or customers actually think in these questions. For future studies it would be interesting to study how the retail management sees the relation between the green strategies and store employees. Suggestions for further research is also to move the focus to the customer. How can the retail store affect the customers in making greener choices? Further it would be interesting to study how the store employees and the store itself can contribute to customers' experience of themselves as green customers.

The selection of a qualitative case study of one organisation gives a limitation to generalize the findings to other cases, such as other retailers. In this thesis store employees from two different Coop stores were interviewed, if choosing other stores it would have been possible to get other results. With these limitations in mind, this thesis can provide an important insight in CSR & green retailing in relation to the store employees' practices.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1. Interview guide - Original

### Bakgrundsfrågor

1. Skulle ni kunna berätta vad ni jobbar med, ansvarsområden och arbetsuppgifter?
2. Kan ni berätta om hur ert arbete följs upp?
3. Skulle ni kunna berätta om vilka mål ni arbetar efter?
4. Hur länge har ni jobbat på Coop? -> i denna butik?

### Ansvar

5. Vilket ansvar tycker ni att företag har i samhället?
6. Vilket ansvar tycker ni att Coop tar i samhället?

### Strategi för hållbar utveckling

7. Vad betyder hållbar utveckling för er?
8. Kan ni berätta om vad ni tror att "Coops strategi för hållbar utveckling" innebär?
9. Känner ni till några mål Coop jobbar mot när det gäller hållbar utveckling?  
I så fall, vilka?
10. Upplever ni att dessa mål har någon inverkan på ert dagliga arbete?

### Hållbart sortiment

11. Vad innebär "ekologiskt" för er?
12. Vad "miljömärkt" för er?
13. Skulle ni kunna berätta om hur ni arbetar med ekologiskt & miljömärkt sortiment?
14. Jobbar ni med att öka försäljningen av ekologiska eller miljömärkta varor?  
Följ upp;  
OM JA: På vilket sätt?  
OM NEJ: Varför inte?
15. Jobbar andra kollegor i butiken med att öka försäljningen ekologiska eller miljömärkta varor?
16. Vad är det som styr vilka varor exponeras extra mycket? (till exempel vad som placeras på exponeringar eller gavlar?)
17. Vad är er syn på att vilja sälja *mer* och att *samtidigt* vilja sälja ekologiskt och bidra till hållbar utveckling? (finns någon motsättning?)

### Hållbara butiker

18. Om man bortser från sortiment, finns det något annat ni gör i butiken för att vara mer miljövänliga/ bidra till en hållbar utveckling?

### Hållbara leverantörer

19. Har ni någon kontakt med leverantörer?
20. Kommer frågor om hållbarhet upp i denna kommunikation?
21. Kan ni berätta om vilka krav som ställs på Coops leverantörer?

## Kravmärkt butik

22. Denna butik är KRAV-certifierad,-vad innebär det för er? (i det dagliga arbetet?)
23. Vad tror ni att det innebär det för kunden?
24. Pratar ni någonsin om att butiken är kravmärkt och vad det innebär?

## Kommunikation – Intern och Extern

Intern kommunikation:

25. På vilket sätt får ni information om Coops strategier för hållbar utveckling och miljöarbete?
26. Pratar ni här i butiken någon gång om hållbar utveckling eller ekologi, på möten till exempel?
27. Har någon av er gått någon utbildningar inom hållbarhet? Vad innefattade denna?
28. Har det hänt att ni har tagit upp någon fråga som rör hållbar utveckling eller miljöarbete med er chef? Eller med någon kollega → Kan ni berätta?

Extern kommunikation;

29. Händer det att ni får frågor av kunder om Coops hållbarhets- eller miljöarbete?
30. Hur känns det att svara på denna typen av frågor?
31. Har det hänt att ni har känt att ni inte haft kunskap nog att svara på denna typ av frågor? Hur brukar ni lösa ni situationen?

## Anställda och CSR

32. På vilket sätt upplever ni att ni är en del av den strategi som Coop har för hållbar utveckling?
33. Hur skulle ni säga att ni blir påverkade i arbetet av Coops strategier för hållbarhetsstrategier?

## Appendix 2. Interview guide - English version

### Background questions

1. Could you tell me what you work with, responsibilities and tasks?
2. Can you tell me how your work is being followed up?
3. Could you tell me about what goals you are working towards?
4. For how long have you been an employee at Coop? In this store?

### Responsibility

5. What responsibility do you think a corporation *have* in society?
6. What responsibility do you think that Coop *takes* in the society?

### Strategy for sustainable development

7. What does “sustainable development” mean to you?
8. Can you tell me what you think that “Coops strategy for sustainable development” mean?
9. Do you know any goals Coop is working towards when it comes to sustainable development?  
In that case, which are these?
10. Do you think that these goals have any impact on your daily work?

### Sustainable assortment

11. What does “organic” mean to you?
12. What does “environmentally certified” mean to you?
13. Can you tell me how you work with organic and environmental certified assortment?
14. Do you work to increase sales of organic or environmentally certified products?  
Follow up:  
IF YES: In what way?  
IF NO: Why not?
15. Do other colleagues in the store work with increase sales of organic or environmentally certified products?
16. What is directing what products which are displayed? (for example in large displays)
17. What is your view on wanting to sell more, and at the same time want to sell organic and contribute to a sustainable development? (Is there any contradiction?)

### Sustainable Stores

18. Apart from the assortment, is there anything else you do in the store to be more environmentally friendly/ contribute to a sustainable development?

### Sustainable Suppliers

19. Do you have any contact with suppliers?
20. Does questions regarding sustainable development occur in this communication?
21. Can you tell me about what demands there are on Coops suppliers?

### Krav-certified store

22. This store is KRAV-certified, what does that mean to you? (In the daily work?)
23. What do you think it means to the customer?
24. Do you ever talk about that the store is KRAV-certified and what that means?

## Communication – Internal and external

Internal communication:

25. In what way do you get information about Coops strategies for sustainable development and environmental work?
26. Do you ever talk about sustainable development or ecology in the store, on meetings for example?
27. Have any of you ever done any education in sustainability? What did it include?
28. Have you ever taken up a question which can be related to sustainable development or environmental work with your manager? Or which a colleague? Can you tell me about this?

External communication:

29. Does it happen that you get questions from customers about Coops sustainability or environmental work?
30. How does it feel to answer this type of questions?
31. Have it ever happened that you didn't have the knowledge to answer this type of questions? How do you usually solve the situation?

## Employees and CSR

32. In what way do you think that you are a part of Coops strategy for sustainable development?
33. How do you think that you get affected in your work of Coops strategies for sustainable development?