Case Insight 18.1: One Bag Habit

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Hi, my name is Felicia, I work as Sustainability Manager for H&M Sweden.

Hi, I'm Fredrika Klarén and I work as Head of Sustainability at KappAhl.

And my name is Anna-Karin Dahlberg and I'm Corporate Sustainability Manager at Lindex.

Like many other industries today, the fashion industry is using way too many natural resources and we are more of a linear industry today, so we need to become more of a circular industry and also more climate neutral, and we also have a big challenge with the social impact that we are facing today. So for industry, we all need to work with these questions and they are the biggest challenges that we’re facing today.

I think we all felt like we were becoming more aware of, of the environmental damage from, from bag consumption and that we really needed to tackle this on an industry level, and to really change the behaviour of consumers and we were also eagerly awaiting legislation on the, regarding bags and it never really showed up so we just came together and realised that we can do this together and that we can invite more to join in.

So we formed One Bag Habit with a goal to increase the awareness among consumers about the sustainable options we have for bag consumption, and also to actually reduce the amount of bags that we consume, and we also wanted to support causes that worked for sustainable development through this.

It was successful because it was a joint action, where we really sent a very clear message to the customer. Very often we are, we are addressing the same kind of issues but sometimes we do it in different ways towards the customer but this really had the same clear message, so wherever the customer came, she or he got the same message.

So we managed to bring about awareness at a larger scale and really launching this concept at the same time, in the market, I think that’s, that’s the main success story on online habit.

Yeah.

The initiative firstly was very positively perceived from our customers and our co-workers and today we are measuring two KPIs, the one is the reduced of plastic bags and we do it for our own brands and then we do it for the initiative together as well.

Today, we see that we have reduced between 50-70%, the uses or plastic bag usage which is great.

Of all bags.

Of all bags, sorry, yes, paper and plastic bags.

Yeah.

And we also follow-up on how much we have been donating to different charity organisations as well from the initiative.

I think we all got some valuable experiences that we can take into new collaborations and initiatives. One is that by actually taking time to thoroughly plan how this initiative will have the biggest sustainability impact and also be a simple solution, by doing that you, you gain the be- the best effect. But then also that we evidently are able to do this large impact by just coming together with a clear message as Anna-Karin said earlier, and we, we actually, some say that we’ve actually managed in creating a new norm when it comes to bag consumption, that extends when you consume fashion, that you actually use that new norm when you go to the grocery stores or-

I, I feel it myself, I bring my own bag now to the grocery stores or any shopping I do, I have an extra bag in, in my bag.

Yeah, yeah.

So to say, yeah.

And I heard from my hairdresser, he said that yeah, it’s very obvious, something happened in the market because now my customers are really saying that “No, don’t put the shampoo in a bag”.

Yeah.

So it extends beyond the initiative.

Yeah, it does.

Well as Felicia started with, we are facing many, many challenges in this industry and there are lots of collaboration initiatives going on, most of them actually on a pre-competitive basis and we work a lot together with, in the production stage of, in our industry, such as sustainable cotton, you know, harmonised way of assessing our factories, water management projects, lots of different things we are doing together as an industry and we sit across the table and, and discuss how to address our challenges.

I think when it comes to collaboration in the market, like you know, where we actually compete, we can do much more when it comes to initiatives similar to One Bag Habit, of course, but it’s more challenging when we do it, you know, in our communication and in our engagement with the consumer 'cause after all, we are competitors but I think we can do even more to have much larger impact and bring about awareness and at a larger scale.

Got a lot of common grounds when it comes to sustainable consumption, for instance recycling or just re- supporting research.

Yeah.

As well to teach our customers how to prolong the life of their garments.

Yeah, yeah.

And what climate impact that has, so we have a lot, a lot to do.

Yeah.

And we hear a lot about our customers being a little bit confused about the different tags there are in the market because we all have different ways of telling the customer what is a more sustainable choice and it’s not very harmonised, we can probably do more there as well.

Yeah.

Although it’s more challenging, I see more challenges.

Yes.

But very much needed.

Very much needed, yes.

To harmonise, yes.

To have a bigger impact.

I think that’s somewhere where we are really challenged today because we don’t really have a clear template of how to collaborate or what … what kind of sustainability issues that we need to collaborate on, this is something that we make up as we go along, when we do our assessment of, of what kind of impact we need to have continuously.

I think we need to see more research as well on where the biggest impacts in our value chain are, so we know what to focus on the most as well.

And, and collaborating like this, you know, yeah, we don’t have a clear template or a checklist to follow.

No.

It’s very unbroken ground …

Yes.

So whatever initiative we, we find that we feel, “wow, this is a space where we could collaborate”, we’re gonna have to sit down and start from the beginning, aren’t we?

Yeah.

And we get how to do it.

And also no company alone or no organisation or no government alone can tackle this, the challenges that the fashion industry is facing today so the most important thing is to work together and important to tackle that.

Yeah.

Yeah, definitely.

That’s really important as well.

So I'm the Corporate Sustainability Manager at Lindex and the role I have is basically to run the strategies and the governance of the sustainability work, so I have a team that I work with and I also work, work very closely with our production people who are implementing our sustainability strategies in, in production. And I work close of the marketing department, close to management group with the sustainability strategies.

So I have a Bachelor degree in Textile Economics and Marketing and I was always planning to become a buyer, I started as a buying assistant and then I've been working in the buying department as an assortment manager for one of our ranges, womenswear and I’ve been working five years in our production countries, as country manager in, in China and India and Hong Kong, I also trained in Bangladesh and now I’ve been working with the sustainability issues for four and a half years.

So I think that sustainability and embedding sustainability in a brand will be the future and I think that you know, bringing about awareness to consumers and engaging the consumers is really the future. So my advice would be to, you know, truly understand the issues and to be able to understand the complexity but transform that message into something very customer friendly and a simple, in a simple way.

I think you know, going to, to university, you study a lot of different topics and subjects, sometimes they, you lack the linkages and you studied them a little bit in silos, so if I had a wish for you know, from when I was newly examined from university, I would have wished to understand the linkages better and to understand my context, so that’s an advice to, to really put some effort in understanding what context you're in as a marketer in a company.

My name is Felicia Reuterswärd and I work as Sustainability Manager for H&M Sweden and I’ve been doing that for the past four years and my focus is the Swedish market, and the challenges that we are facing here, work both internally and externally on how we can create change.

To be honest, I did not really have a clear career path, I thought I wanted to do something when I left university, I thought I wanted to work within tourism but I ended up within the fashion industry instead and I’ve been working as a store manager, HR, within sales online and at our global sustainability department for, at H&M for the past 18 years.

I believe that you should be yourself and also highlight what your passion is and er, work with that and also to understand the business that you will be working in, the customers and what are the sustainability challenge, challenges in that industry in order to create change and be a change-maker.

Again, I would like to go back to my previous answer, that you should highlight your passion and what you want to do in order to create change, in order, also in order to stand out and if you have, I believe that everyone should have a pass- passion for sustainability because we need to work together in order to change or tackle all the challenges that we are facing today.

That there are no clear career path, they can change during, during the way and it’s okay to change and you will find new strength that you didn’t know that you had from, in the beginning of your career and also that … what else? That you don't need to know everything, it’s okay not to know everything and you will learn a lot.

My name is Fredrika Klarén and I work as Head of Sustainability at KappAhl, which means that I'm responsible for seeing that we have a clear vision and a strategy when it comes to sustainability and that it is … that we work with sustainability issues all along our value chain and within all of our business parts, and I also see to that we have engaged and clear roles when it comes to sustainability and that a good collaboration within the organisation.

I wish I would have had a clear path that I could tell you about! When I came out of, of high school, sustainability was kind of still a fringe area that no-one really had a clear view on what, what that meant in business but I know that it was my passion and that I just had to pursue that passion, so I went to Chalmers to study environmental systems analysis and then I started working at Ikea, a home furnishing retailer, with sustainability issues and got into retail and all of the exciting things that that means as far as sustainability goes, and I’ve been hooked ever since. So now I'm into fashion and sustainability.

I would advise them to, to pursue their passion the, the same way that I do, that is something that I would advise anyone to do but to really, I mean it’s good to really try to analyse how your passion and strengths meets the needs of the world today because that is really where you can make a change and you can feel like you contribute on a daily basis, to the needs of the world and I also think it’s best to be really open, to learn more as you go along and not be stressed that you don’t have the clear map or that you have all the knowledge that you need, so just be open and, and … feel comfortable in, in addressing the uncertainty of sustainability.

I think that what we’re really looking for is creative and passionate people who can come up with new ideas when it comes to sustainability because none of us are really good at communicating sustainability in a clear way today. I don’t, I don’t see any impressive campaigns or communication activities, really to be honest, we need to be more, we need to improve and we really need to be more creative and brave in this and so that would really stand out to me, someone who is that brave and creative and has new ideas, at the same time as understanding the complexity of communicating sustainability.

I mean I know that, I know for a fact that I couldn't be given any advice that I would have listened to … 20 years later, I mean you really have to figure it out for yourself and I think the, the main thing is to be comfortable with that, with not knowing and just enjoying it as you go along and learning more.