



In the last few months, the Plastic endemic as become a big topic and one organisation has blamed Coca-cola for the problem. Is it fair to blame Coca-cola? What are the facts? This paper attempts to bring clarity on Coca cola's sustainable effort or lack of it.

Coca cola V Greenpeace (Poster & defense)

MANAGEMENT ETHICS
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Introduction

Studies revealed, millions of plastic wastes have been flowing into the oceans, and most of these plastics were from China, other Asian countries and Parts of Africa due to poor waste management. Studies also revealed that plastic waste from Europe, U.S and Japan were exported to these areas. The effort to remedy the situation must be coordinated both locally and globally (Jambeck, et al., 2015; fig 1). Nonetheless, Greenpeace is asking Coca-Cola to take responsibility for the plastic endemic. Besides, Greenpeace is an organization that promotes World peace by investigating, exposing and confronting environmental abuse, and championing solutions (GreenpeaceUK, 2018). MarketLine, (2011) suggested that Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company (Appendix 1.1). Greenpeace claimed that Coca-Cola produces an estimated 100 billion throwaway plastic bottles every year (Greenpeace, 2018a). Still, they still described the types of plastic found in the ocean to be plastic bags, plastic bottles, polypropylene fishing net, plastic rope, plastic toys, rubber tires, plastic toothbrushes and more (Greenpeace, 2017). I am concern because Greenpeace has demonstrated that you cannot rely on what they say. Tyler, (2007) suggested "assuming that Greenpeace has their facts straight is a very bad assumption indeed". Greenpeace was embarrassed over targeting Apple, Greenpeace alleged Apples equipment's were not eco-friendlily, the EPA's evidence proves Apple gets top ratings for eco-friendly notebooks.

Plastic waste awareness

I remembered when Sir David Attenborough gave a rallying cry for help to reduce plastic waste on the final BBC Earth's Blue Planet II on 10th December 2017 (Radiotimes, 2017). Besides, several NGO'S have been campaigning vigorously on the matter for years such as Ocean conservancy, WWF etc. The Plastic endemic was discoursed in the parliament, on the radio, on the

T.V, but nowhere was Coca-cola singled out except by Greenpeace. Why did Greenpeace not attack the British Plastic Federation (BPF) a £23 billion industry employing 170,000 people? The BPF is the second biggest direct employer in the UK. The plastic industry has a turnover of £23.5 billion (BPF, 2018b).

Fig 1 Oceans Plastic



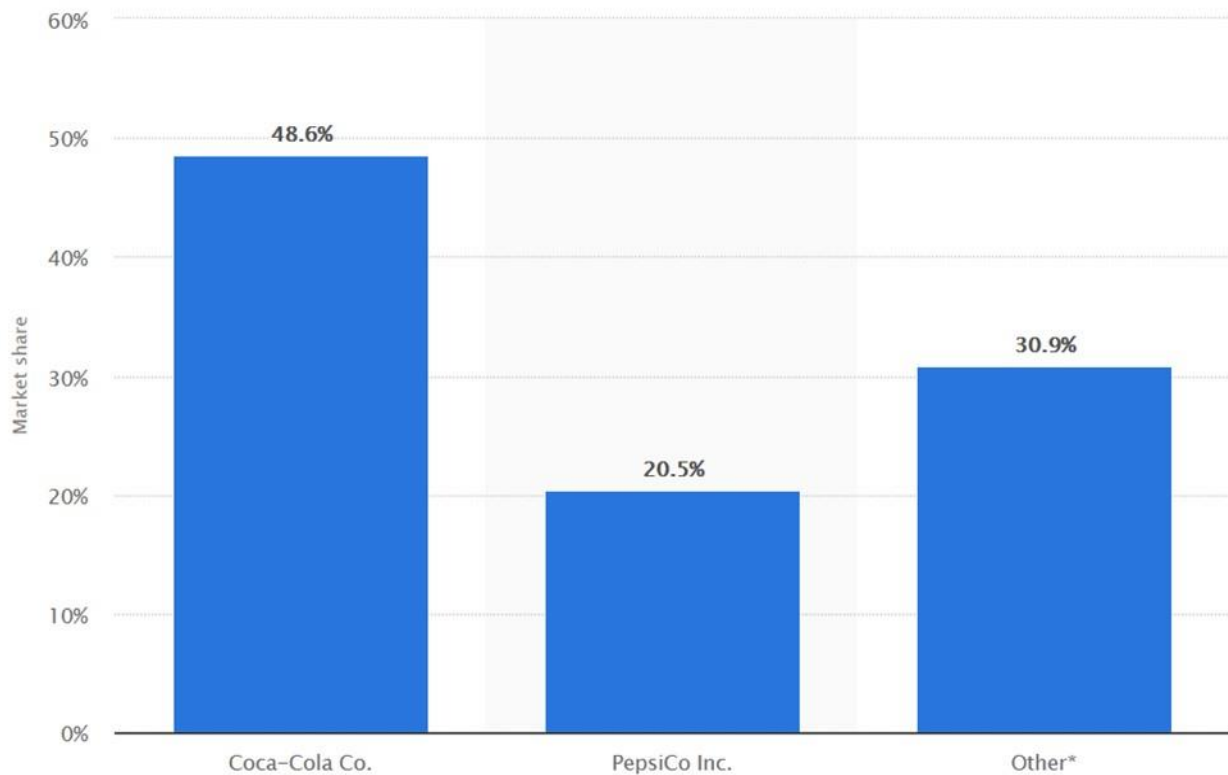
(BPF, 2017)

Greenpeace propaganda

The question was why Coca-cola? Greenpeace said they targeted Coca-Cola specifically because they were the largest soft drinks company in the world and claimed Coca-cola plastic bottles were the most commonly found items on the ocean's surface and during beach cleans (Brown, 2018; fig 2). Henry Sidgwick in 'The Methods of Ethics' (1874) suggested Egoism as an action believed to

be morally right if the decision-maker freely decides in order to pursue interests. Greenpeace ego as a vanguard of environmental activism propelled them to attack Coca-cola because they must be in the plastic debate, they have to be challenging big organisations (Emmanuel, 2018, p.8).

Fig 2 Coca-cola market share



Statista, 2018)

Greenpeace has a deontological position to protect the Ocean at all cost, and unfortunately, Greenpeace assumes a Duty-based ethics position. They must do the right thing (fight Coca-cola), even if that produces more harm. Greenpeace do not care about the consequence of their action on Coca-cola jobs and Coca-Cola's sustainability efforts. Critics have accused Greenpeace of conducting 'Campaign of misinformation' and Greenpeace argues that their statements 'should not be taken literally' but viewed through the prism of free speech (CBC, 2017).

Fig 3 propaganda pictures



(Casson, 2017a)

The Greenpeace propaganda pictures looked staged (figs 3-6). I remembered Greenpeace Guide to Green Electronics, how they weigh them against factors such as commitment to renewable energy, carbon footprint etc. (Appendix 1). I wondered whether Greenpeace performed a comprehensive analysis of Coca-cola sustainability efforts.

Greenpeace published video spoofing Coca-Cola's beach adverts; they showed seabirds dying from plastic pollution. They mobilized support against Coca-cola by vandalizing Coke-branded vending machines and billboards with stickers of the harm plastic causes to marine life like seabirds and dolphins, but part of these efforts contradicts the accusation against Coca-cola (fig 7, 8, 9&10).

Fig 4 Greenpeace Propaganda



(Müller, 2017)

Fig 5 Greenpeace Propaganda



(GreenpeaceUK, 2018a)

Fig 6 Greenpeace Propaganda



(GreenpeaceUK, 2018b)

Fig 7 Greenpeace Propaganda



(GreenpeaceUK, 2018c)

Fig 8 Greenpeace Propaganda



(GreenpeaceUK, 2018d)

Fig 9 Greenpeace Propaganda



(GreenpeaceUK, 2018a)

Fig 2



(Greenpeace, 2017a)

Other non-government agencies are also very critical of the plastic epidemic, they wanted government action on reducing manufacturers and retailers' production of plastic waste, and they refrained from naming Coca-cola (Friends of the earth, 2018; fig 10). My frustration with Greenpeace was their ethical standard; it makes me sad when I consider the good works they have undertaken before. Greenpeace, use forceful words, they like to offend and apologize later to create storm like when they offended the people of Peru over Nazca lines stunt, and in 2014, they apologised for the 1976 anti-sealing campaign for its cultural and financial impact on Inuit people (Collyns, 2014; CBC, 2016).

Fig 10



(Friends of the earth, 2018a)

PlantBottle

The Coca-Cola Company sustainability statement proves it cares about the health of consumers and planet's health. Coca-cola is determined at making every plastic bottle 100% renewable and recyclable. Coca-cola introduced the PlantBottle in 2009, PlantBottle packaging is a redesigned

Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) and PET plastic bottle contains up to 30% renewable plant-based material that is fully recyclable, and the material will help reduce dependence on non-renewable sources (fig 11). Coca-cola understood Immanuel Kant 1724-1804 argument that they must act in the morally right way and must act from duty, and the sense of duty has led Coca-Cola actively seeking a more sustainable way (Emmanuel, 2018).

Environmental Award

Furthermore, Coca-cola has won numerous awards (Appendix 1.2). Between, 2009-2015, Coca-cola had used over 40 billion Plant Bottle in production (Appendix 2; Coca-colacompany.com, 2017).

Fig 11 Cokes PlantBottle



(Planet-vending, 2015)

Greenpeace argument did not take account of Coca-colas efforts, nor does it examine all other facts rather, Greenpeace continues its public assault on Coca-cola (Appendix 8).

Furthermore, as laudable as the PlantBottle is, it requires petroleum as both energy and material source, it needs petroleum-based energy to power farm machinery, to irrigate, to process, to make fertilizers and pesticides to grow and protect the crops. What about the ethical issue? The food and animal grazing farmland and could be used to make bio-plastics (Letstalkplastics, 2011a).

[Coca-Cola addressing the Plastic problem](#)

A recently published article by Jambeck, et al., (2015) suggested that plastic is the biggest type of marine litter and about 80% of the waste found in the sea came from land. Coca-cola is tackling the plastic problem by providing a sustainable solution and by 2025; none of their bottles will end up as litter or in oceans (Lowe, 2017, fig 13). Appendix 2a shows Coca-colas PET plastic recycling timeline.

Fig 13 Coca-cola addressing the plastic problem



(Lowe, 2017a)

Coca-cola's Collaborations and Clean-ups

Since 1995, Coca-Cola has been a Sponsoring Coastal Clean-up (Ocean Conservancy, 2018; figs 14 & 15; Appendix 3).

Fig 14 Coca-Cola Coastal Clean-ups



(Keep Britain Tidy, 2018)

The organization also collaborate with WWF on river projects (Coca-cola.co.uk, 2017c). Regarding Clean-ups, Coca-cola is again involved in the British Spring Clean 2018 (Cocacola.co.uk, 2018d); they support the Ellen MacArthur Foundation as well.

Fig 15 Coca-Cola Coastal Clean-up



(Coca-cola.co.uk, 2018d)

Coca-Cola Investment

Coca-cola is a company that continuously seeks improvement and innovation throughout their supply-chain. I remembered the visit of the environment minister to Coca-cola recycling plant based in Lincolnshire UK (fig 17). Coca-cola invested in Clean Tech since 2012, the UK's largest PET bottle re-processing plant (Coca-cola.co.uk, 2017). The plant has recycled over 50,000 tonnes PET bottles, beside; Coca-cola is the largest user of recycled plastic in the food and drink industry in the UK (Qureshi, 2017a). Coca-cola aim to make all packaging either recyclable or reusable by 2030 (Dervey, 2018).

Fig 17 Minister's visit

Environment minister visits Coca-Cola plastic bottle recycling facility

Environment minister Thérèse Coffey has visited Europe's largest plastic bottle recycling facility to see how Coca-Cola plans to double its recycled PET usage.



(Qureshi, 2017)

The investment in this plant makes all packaging to be 100% recyclable and this investment further allow Coca-cola to double recycled plastic bottles in Great Britain from 25% to 50% by 2020. See Coca-Cola's circular economy (Plastics Europe, 2018; Appendix 5).

Ethics

I could draw a distinction between Coca-Cola's ethical value and Greenpeace. Greenpeace can manipulate statement to mislead the public and go unpunished. I perceived Greenpeace teleological position to be Utilitarianism because they believe their action is morally right. They believe they are saving the planet and it does not matter what damage their action has on Coca-cola, the staff and the spill over effect of their actions, communities and other companies in the supply chain. Equally, Greenpeace actions affected the Inuit People of Canada. Besides Greenpeace, profit a lot financially from this their campaigns (CBC, 2016). The Utilitarianism theory focus on "The greatest pleasure for the greatest number of people." By attacking Coca-cola, Greenpeace gets pleasure as they are solving a problem for the earth.

Dwight Longenecker (cited in Emmanuel, 2018, p.10) defines Utilitarianism as an ethical theory that says pleasure is the greatest good and suffering is the greatest evil, therefore we must calculate the action that brings the most pleasure or satisfaction or least suffering to the majority.

On the contrary, Coca-Cola faced an ethical dilemma on plastics, they must provide Leadership through research, investment, policy and implementation; they have looked for alternatives like the PlantBottle. Greenpeace's' accusation portrays Coca-cola as socially irresponsible and this is not accurate. Still, Coca-cola is very proactive on environmental and sustainability (Drury, 2016).

Government Role

The Government's ban on single use plastic shopping bag is having an impact. Studies shows the number of single-use plastic bags used by shoppers in England has plummeted by more than 85% since the introduction of a 5p charge. Influencing consumer behaviour will surely help and Coca-Cola uses its marketing medium in consumer education (Smithers, 2016). Government can initiate a plastic bottle deposit scheme that could help with plastic waste (BBC, 2018).

Sustainability of Plastics

Plastic is a versatile material, used for a variety of things and has sustainability benefits. It could cost up to four times in replacing plastic with alternatives materials. Furthermore, Plastic helps to generate renewable energy, the wind turbines blades and photovoltaic panels are made from plastic (BPF, 2018b; fig 17b)

Fig 17b Sustainable plastic



(BPF, 2018c)

Why do we need plastic packaging?

Yet it is very tempting to idealize a world without packaging, Greenpeace may assume that if we get rid of plastic bottles that life will be better for planet. Even so, they have ignored the good they can do. Plastic keeps products free from contamination, without packaging the world would have used 2-3 times more resources. Plastic packaging saves packaging mass, and energy and greenhouse gas emissions (BPF, 2018a; fig 18; appendix 5&7).

Plastic has many uses in hospitals, 3D printing, communication and it saves lives because medical implants made of biodegradable plastic dissolves in the body and it eliminates the need for second operations for patients (Letstalkplastics, 2011a)

Fig 18 Food waste



(BPF, 2018a)

Conclusion

Sir David Attenborough orated, “Surely, we have a responsibility to care for our blue planet?” (O'Donovan, 2017). The producers, consumers and government have a crucial and urgent role to play to solving the plastic endemic. The society need to a change of lifestyle to reduce the amount of packaging we consume. Companies cannot re-use plastics if consumers do not return the plastic in a suitable place and in a suitable condition (MarketLine, 2017). To solve the plastic endemic, there is need for collaboration between industries, Government, NGOs, individuals and society.

In recent years, researchers have investigated variety of approaches to plastic waste, and Coca-Cola's World without waste is a welcomed sustainable ambition. Greenpeace should laud Coca-Cola's determination to collect and recycle the equivalent of every bottle they sell. It would not be fair to attribute the global plastic problem to Coca-cola alone. Greenpeace should not be peddling falsehood, rather the facts.

Recommendation

Coca-cola and Scientist should continue to explore other materials that will cause a near zero impact on the earth's resources. Coca-cola should continue to collaborate with organisations such as WWF, Ellen MacArthur Foundation etc. to develop sustainable solutions. Government can initiate a plastic bottle deposit scheme that could help with plastic waste.

Fig 19 Collaboration



(BPF, 2017a)

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Appendices

Appendix 1

In 2017, Greenpeace awarded Apple high marks for reducing energy usage, shifting to renewables and supply chain (Bluff, 2017), Appendix 1.1

The Coca-Cola logo is recognized by 94% of the world's population. Coca-Cola's name is the second-most understood term in the world, behind "okay" (Bhasin, 2011). MarketLine, (2011)

Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company, and Coca-Cola has more than 500 sparkling brands and nearly 3,900 beverage choices. Over 1.9 billion beverages are sold in more than 200 countries each day (Worldofcoca-cola.com, 2018)

Appendix 1.2

The innovative Coca cola PlantBottle was honored with several awards such as Greener Package Award, the DuPont Award for Packaging Innovation and the Design for Recycling Award from the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (Worldofcoca-cola.com, 2018). Safe America Foundation, (2017) honored Coca-cola for the bio-degradable Dasani PlantBottle. In 2014, Coca-cola was Industry Champion of the Year Award for its Bio-based PlantBottle Technology. Coca-cola is the largest bio-plastic end user in the world, and their target is to have all their new PET plastic to contain PlantBottle technology by 2020 (SpecialChem, 2014).|

Appendix 2

More than 40 billion PlantBottle packages have reached the market in over 40 countries.

Made from up to 30 percent plant-based materials, the use of PlantBottle packaging to date has helped prevent 365,000 metric tons of potential carbon dioxide emissions – the equivalent of 41 million gallons of gas, more than 77,000 cars or 845,000 barrels of oil saved (Coca-colacompany.com, 2017).

Appendix 2a

Coca-colas PET plastic recycling timeline

2002: Coca-Cola began to encourage a culture of recycling in Mexico and Mexico is the leading country globally for recycling PET. (Quincey, 2018)

2005: Unified Recycling: Coca-Cola Launches First Bottles-to-Fiber Recycling Operation in Nigeria (Alli, 2015; fig 16).

2016: Over 2 billion PET bottles were collected and recycled and used to package products in South Africa (PETCO, 2017; Wells, 2017)

Fig 16 Bottles-to-Fiber



(Coca-colacompany.com, 2018)

Appendix 3

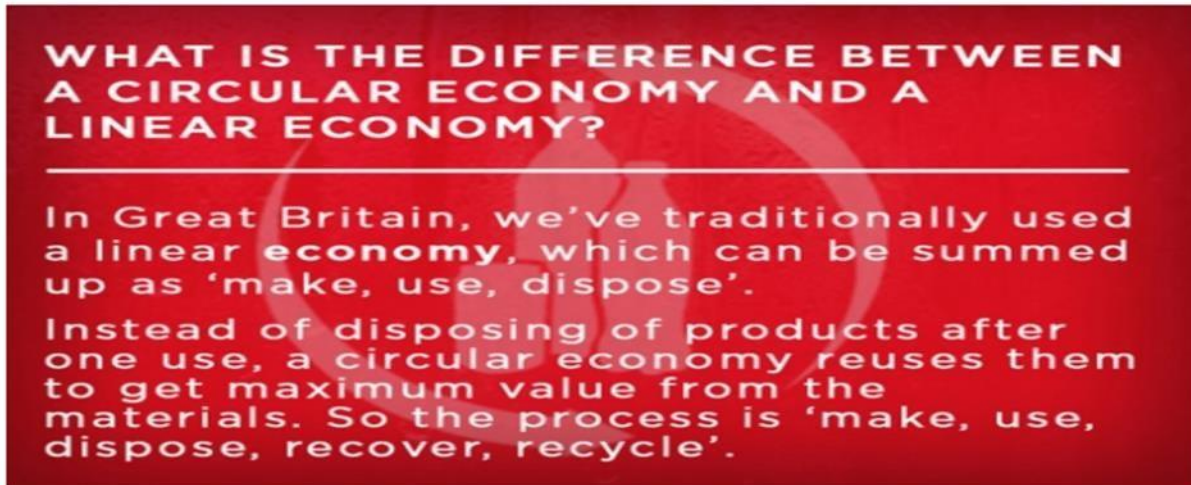
Quincey, (2018) the Coca-Cola chairman talked about the vision for a world without waste.

Since 1995, Coca-Cola has been a Sponsoring Coastal Clean-up (Ocean Conservancy, 2018).

Quincey, (2018) suggested that Coca-cola has mobilized over 11 million people to clean up 206 million pounds of trash from over 360,000 miles of coastline

Appendix 4

The circular economy represents an alternative, more sustainable model to the traditional linear economy (Plastics Europe, 2018).



(Coca-cola.co.uk, 2017b)

Appendix 5

Plastics are vital when there are natural disasters like hurricane, clean, safe water helped keep people alive. Bottles can benefit society if they designed properly and disposed of responsibly.

Modern food and beverage containers help reduce food spoilage and waste. They limit the spread of disease. It is impossible to purchase liquids, gels, powders or out-of-season fruit. We would have significant problems with food safety and hygiene. Food wastage would increase this would have negative environmental impacts.

Loose products generate a lot of in-store waste, in some cases leading to increases of 20%.

Damage and losses would occur to goods in the retail and logistics chain. (Advisory Committee on Packaging, 2008).|

Appendix 6



(BBC, 2018)

Appendix 7

About 220 litres are needed to produce 1000 plastic bags, while 3800 litres of water are needed to produce the same number of paper bags (1). And in terms of energy used and greenhouse gases being emitted during manufacturing, the plastic bag comes out best (Letstalkplastics, 2011)

It is lightweight – Over the lifetime of the average car, lightweight plastic parts save around 3,000 litres of fuel

It is durable – Plastic pipes are designed to last for more than 100 years and reduces the overall failure rate

It saves water – The production of plastic bags consumes less than 4% of the water needed to make a paper bag

It is recyclable – all plastic can be recycled but it is not always technically or economically possible. If plastic cannot be recycled the calorific value of plastic can be recovered through energy from waste plants. Recycling one tonne of plastic bottles saves 1.5 tonnes of Carbon

It only uses 4% of the world's oil production - the rest is used for transport, energy, heat or is burnt. (BPF, 2018b)

Appendix 8 Greenpeace campaign



(Brown, 2018a)