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Master Thesis

Bridging the Attitude-Behaviour Gap in the Fashion Industry -

Implications and Prerequisites for Fostering Sustainable Consumption

By

Elsa Sahiti (101823)
Tobias Laurentz Thomas Dickmann (105547)

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Supervisor:	Jesper Clement	Number of characters:	227238

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: *This research tries to shed a light on current consumer behaviour and consumer perception of sustainability in the fashion industry. Since the fashion industry is inherently unsustainable and consumers are not yet acting on their sustainability awareness, this thesis seeks a way forward in fostering sustainable consumer behaviour. By examining this so-called attitude-behaviour gap through the lenses of the participants, the research formulates prerequisites for needed changes to move towards sustainable consumption. These prerequisites entail a variety of changes by different stakeholders including governmental regulation, social roles of businesses as well as changes in the consumer culture. Moreover, the prerequisites and outlook of this thesis can serve as basis for managerial implications. This could guide companies in understanding what the consumer expects and demands from them in a more sustainable future.*

Methodological and research approach: *To investigate industry changes necessary to foster this change, an abductive, exploratory, qualitative research was conducted. Through qualitative shopping experiments and a subsequent focus group discussion, data was collected and analyzed using the Thematic Network Analysis. This focus gon the participants perception enabled the researchers to identify and formulate prerequisites for change in the industry.*

Results: *The key findings of this research suggest that consumers expect multi-stakeholder involvement in turning the fashion industry into more sustainable practices. The participants examined a need for increased focus on regulation, increased sustainable product availability and production practices by brands and companies, as well as a need for more education and infrastructure to support sustainable consumption. A need for change in consumer culture and behaviour was examined to be a subsequent step to these industry changes.*

Limitations: *Several limitations arising from the critical research paradigm, the qualitative method as well as pre-existing beliefs and knowledge among the researchers are given that potentially influenced the analysis and interpretation of data. Having these limitations in mind, the researchers tried to minimize the effects of said constraints by adopting an objective view.*

Value: *By following the outlined approach, this study is – to the researchers' knowledge - the first to take the point of view of the consumer to investigate how the attitude-behaviour gap can be closed for the fashion industry. Both current obstacles that prevent consumers from acting more sustainable as well as needed changes to overcome those obstacles are the main focal points of this research. Therefore, it further brings value to the different stakeholders to understand consumer expectations.*

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1. Introduction

The fashion industry is notoriously making headlines for its bleak environmental impact and human rights issues (Diddi & Niehm, 2017; Teibel, 2019). Poor working conditions, child labour and low wages, as well as environmental issues in the form of resource exploitation and use of hazardous chemicals, have long been discussed as problems of the fashion industry (Bly et al., 2015; Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). A resource-intensive value chain that spans various stages, from cotton production to the retail stores, make it the second most polluting industry in the world, right after the oil industry (Teibel, 2019; Vehmas et al., 2018). Additionally, almost three-quarter of the world's apparel exports come from developing countries (Teibel, 2019)). Here, lax environmental legislation, cheaper labour, and ineffective enforcement mechanisms are exploited, amplifying the precarious environmental and social externalities (Arrigo, 2013; Jastram & Schneider, 2018; Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014).Thereby, the highly fragmented, complex and in-transparent value chains of the industry with non-standardized production practices across factories and countries, make it difficult to control for these issues (Jastram & Schneider, 2018; Teibel, 2019).

Beyond the production practices, the nature of fashion consumption is inherently unsustainable (Teibel, 2019). Due to seasonality and the high importance of trends, the industry is built on cyclical change and planned obsolescence, which fuels overconsumption and waste (Bly et al., 2015; Teibel, 2019). The fast fashion trend reinforces this with its fast production cycles, rapidly changing styles and cheap throwaway products. Consumer demands for low prices lead to firms needing to lower their production costs, ultimately putting pressure on suppliers, who in turn lower their production standards and working conditions (Pedersen & Andersen, 2015). New trends and low prices together drive mass consumption, accelerate fashion obsolescence and increase waste, undermining long-term sustainability (Bly et al., 2015; Gjerdrum Pedersen & Reitan Andersen, 2013; Schweighöfer et al., 2017; Vehmas et al. 2018). Hence, experts argue that this vicious cycle is the leading cause of unsustainability in the industry and stress the need for a change in consumer culture to achieve greater sustainability in the industry (Gjerdrum Pedersen & Reitan Andersen, 2013). Thus, interventions at both an individual consumer level as well as at the societal level are required (Harris et al., 2016) advocating in favour of shared responsibility between business, government and consumers (Bürklin, 2019; Teibel, 2019).

1.1. Research question

The sustainability debate in fashion often revolves around holding brands accountable for their production practices, although consumer usage and disposal constitute the most significant environmental footprint (Jastram & Schneider, 2018). Under the same presumption, Bürklin (2019) argues that consumers have the responsibility to utilize their purchasing power to direct change, just like it is expected of companies to follow certain standards. More recently, life-cycle approaches have emerged, where brands are called for to maintain accountability over their products throughout the entire life-cycle. However, as the brand ultimately loses control over their product, consumers play a focal role to reduce the environmental footprint, as they can adopt, e.g. reuse, repair and recycling activities to extend the life-cycle of a product (Teibel, 2019).

A report by WRAP (2013) showed that augmenting the life-cycle of clothes - and thereby slowing the speed of overconsumption - could help decrease this environmental footprint. Thereby, increasing the lifetime of a piece by 1/3 could yield roughly 1/3 of carbon and water savings, as well as 1/5 of waste and resource cost savings (WRAP, 2013). This finding highlights the fundamental role of consumer behaviour and habits in decreasing the environmental impacts of fashion consumption - beyond their purchasing practices (Jastram & Schneider, 2018). Hence this thesis follows the argument, that consumers should share accountability along with business for the products they produce and use by adopting sustainable consumption behaviour (Teibel, 2019).

However, many consumers tend to disagree on their responsibility for sustainable consumption because they perceive their field of action to be limited. Firstly, product availability and pricing of sustainable products is regarded as problematic (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015). Secondly, the lack of information and transparency, as well as mistrust towards companies prevent the consumer from making an educated decision, leading to inconsequent behaviour, which is known under the term ‘attitude-behaviour gap’ (Shen et al., 2012; Teibel, 2019). Thus, the paper recognizes the fundamental role the consumer plays in driving sustainability in fashion while conceding consumer action to be limited due to institutional constraints (Teibel, 2019; Bürklin, 2019). Therefore, the emphasis of this paper is twofold. It focuses on both how consumer behaviour would have to change to advance sustainable consumption and what underlying industry practices would require change to enable this behaviour, thus examining how to close the attitude-behaviour gap. More specifically, the study examines the following research question:

"Which changes need to occur in the fashion industry to bridge the attitude-behaviour gap and foster sustainable fashion consumption?"

1.2. Delimitations

In the following section, the scope, as well as the focus area of this research, will be elaborated, clarifying the perspective used to approach the research question. Firstly, this research is approached from a consumer angle and tries to uncover current behavioural patterns of consumers in the fashion industry. Therefore, both the literature review, as well as the data collection, mostly follow industry developments from a consumer standpoint and their assessment of which changes need to occur to make fashion consumption more sustainable. With this in mind, industry players and the regulatory environment are analysed from a consumer perspective to gain an understanding of current developments in the market environment. Thus, this thesis does not analyse the regulatory or business perspective in-depth and focuses mainly on gaining a better understanding of individual behaviours and potential changes in behaviour in the future.

As a second delimitation, this thesis does not take geographical differences into account. The scope of the analysis focuses solely on the fashion industry of western first world countries, more specifically, the European market. Since there are vital differences between the fashion markets in different countries and continents, it seemed most appropriate to go into detail on only one specific market rather than trying to understand consumer behaviour across multiple geographies. This course of the study further seemed advisable since the researchers, as well as participants of the study, originate from Europe and, are most knowledgeable about the western fashion industry.

As a third delimitation, the thesis mainly focuses on younger consumers from generation Y and Z, because they are more focused on sustainability than other generations(Beltrami et al., 2019). Especially concerning sustainable fashion, the younger consumer group shows a much higher involvement of sustainability measures in their decision making (Beltrami et al., 2019). Since this group is becoming the most relevant for the fashion industry and is amounting for most of the fashion expenditure, this focus seemed reasonable.

Lastly, this research does not focus on one specific market or product category but talks about fashion as one industry. Since this research aims to pinpoint a potential way forward in sustainable fashion consumption in general, this abstraction from specific fashion items seemed most fitting. In the same way, the fashion markets and consumers were not separated by price points. Through taking this holistic view, this research does not seek to serve as a specific guide for companies or consumers on how to adopt sustainability behaviours, but as a mere outlook on different pillars of change.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

In this section, a complete overview of the thesis-structure will be given to guide the reader throughout the research. Following the introduction of the research topic, the underlying concepts that are of importance to contextualize both the literature review and the research design will be defined. Since these concepts are proactively used in the data collection, gaining an understanding of the concepts will contribute to the comprehension of the topic.

The following literature review examines sustainability governance, the social role of businesses in the industry as well as current consumer behaviour and overall sustainable fashion consumption. These topics are relevant to understand the underlying phenomena in sustainability in fashion. Forthwith, the focal points of the review will be summarized, laying the foundation for the research proposition of this thesis. The next section will outline the methodology for the data collection and analysis, including the researcher's philosophy of science, the research approach, nature, and strategy as well as the methodological choice of this research. Subsequently, the research design and data analysis, as well as findings, will be explained and highlighted. As a final step, the discussion will combine the findings of the research with the existing knowledge from the review in order to derive what changes need to occur in the fashion industry in order to drive sustainable fashion consumption and close the attitude behaviour gap. Lastly, the managerial implications arising from these insights as well as limitations and potential further research will be accounted for.

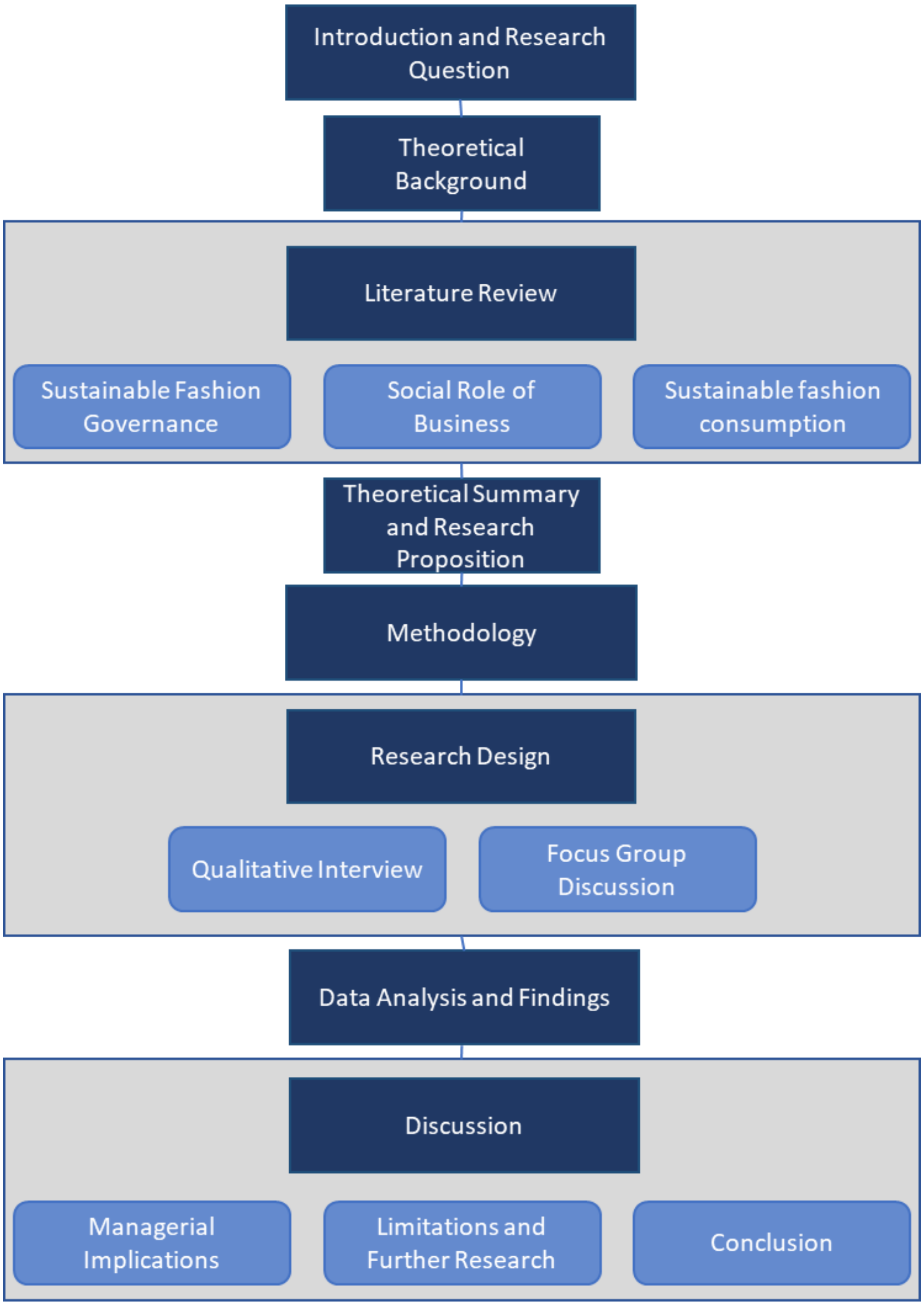

Figure 1: Depiction of the thesis structure

2. Theoretical Background

This thesis draws upon several concepts such as priming, anchoring and framing effects that will be applied in the research design, as well as the concepts of the social role of business and the attitude behaviour gap which form the theoretical foundation needed to understand the research topic. The following section will define and explain these underlying concepts. Since this paper makes assumptions that are dependent on the validity of these concept definitions, they are needed to comprehend the research design as well as the context of the research area.

2.1. Priming anchoring and framing

Priming, anchoring and framing heuristics in consumer behaviour have first been described by Kahneman, Slavic, Slovic, & Tversky (1974) as effects of how individuals subconsciously adapt their behaviour in different settings and stimuli conditions. These effects play an essential role in this research since participants of this research were given different pieces of information to evoke subconsciously adapted behaviour. Thus, it is necessary to understand the concepts before assessing their application.

Priming effects are defined as "the activation of various mental constructs unbeknownst to individuals via the perception of external stimuli" (Weingarten et al., 2016, p. 472). Thereby, the researchers exposed individuals to a stimulus condition that will impact latter responses and behaviour. One example of such a priming effect as used by Kahneman (2011) is the completion of word puzzles. After seeing pictures of or talking about food, individuals were likely to complete the word puzzle "so_p" to "soup" rather than "soap". On the other hand, individuals primed with images or discussions about cleaning, washing and dusting off would complete it to "soap" more often (Kahneman, 2011).

In this thesis, perceptual and conceptual priming is especially essential for the construction of the research design. Perceptual priming refers to the necessity of a similar form of stimuli. Here the priming effect occurs best if the modalities and exact format of the chosen stimulus are the same. One example would be the use of visual cues for the prime if the latter stimulus that the individual reacts to is visual. For verbal cues, e.g. questions containing stimulus information can be used to prime the following answers (Goolkasian & Woodberry, 2010). For conceptual priming, the meaning of the primes is essential. Here, using primes with a similar meaning to ensure the individual associates them with latter stimuli assures the effect. A straightforward example would be using the context of sustainability which would prime for words such as environment, ecology or emissions since they belong to one category (Thompson-Schill & Kan, 2001). Following the article by Thompson-Schill & Kan (2001), a repetition of the primes and using different conceptual primes from the same category can help ensure the priming effects.

The *anchoring effect* is a cognitive bias that often links well to priming. The term anchoring effect arises through individuals getting ‘anchored’ by the given information in the beginning and heavily rely on this first piece of information throughout decision-making and behaviour in general (Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman et al., 1974). The initial information is used as a guideline and point of reference for the whole process and can influence decision-making. Subsequent judgements of individuals rely on these anchors, which are proven to play a role in online buying behaviour (Wu & Cheng, 2011).

As a third effect, *framing* describes several concepts on how individuals perceive and communicate about reality. This effect suggests that the same information framed in different ways can lead to different behaviour by individuals (Kahneman, 2011). Framing in this sense is perceptual as it does not refer to what contents are being said or shown, but how information is conveyed. This also applies to individuals answering questions and explaining their attitudes based on questions (Wu & Cheng, 2011). The article exemplifies that message framing, e.g. through describing product attributes very positively generally lead to much more favourable responses by individuals, but also works for negatively connotated descriptions.

2.2. Attitude-behaviour gap

The attitude behaviour gap also called the intention behaviour gap, is a well-researched phenomenon in behavioural science and can be characterized as individuals not acting on their underlying beliefs and attitudes (Moraes et al., 2012). This gap also exists for environmental and sustainability concerns of individuals (Eom et al., 2018; van Horen et al., 2018). As Moraes et al. (2012) examine, consumers generally have a very positive attitude towards environmentally friendly products and have developed an intention to buy such. However, this intention does not correlate with consumer behaviour because most consumers do not actually buy sustainable products and thus do not act on their beliefs. A study by Young, Hwang, McDonald, &

Oates (2010) quantified this gap, finding that although 30% of consumers indicated that they are very concerned about environmental issues, only 5% acted accordingly.

As underlying factors for the emergence of the gap, Terlau & Hirsch (2015) name individual, social and situational factors. These include higher prices for sustainable products, the still limited availability, differences in sensory criteria such as the feel, taste and look of the products as well as lack or overload of information. However, although some of these factors such as availability, price and quality of products have come much closer to non-sustainable products in recent years, this gap remains unclosed (Moraes et al., 2012). This gap has also been found to play a role in fashion consumption and is further elaborated in the literature review (Niinimäki, 2010).

2.3. The social role of business

The social role of business has been widely theorized, under various terms, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Corporate Citizenship (CC) and Political CSR (PCSR). Carroll (1979), originally conceptualized a firm's social responsibility (CSR) to comprise of the economic and legal obligations that are required, and the ethical and philanthropic responsibilities which are expected (Carroll, 2016). The revision of this concept into a stakeholder framework resulted in the creation of the *CSR pyramid* (1991). Its foundation is the firms' economic obligation to be profitable because economic sustainability is required before social goals can be pursued. Next, is the legal obligation to abide by the laws and regulations, which constitute a social codification of rules on how the business is expected to operate within civil society.

Furthermore, an ethical responsibility to do what is just and fair over and above the law is excepted. Lastly, philanthropic responsibility to voluntarily contribute to society's welfare is desired and make a *good corporate citizen*. While each component addresses different stakeholder's needs, the firm should "engage in decisions, actions, policies and practices" that concurrently fulfil the needs and expectations of the different stakeholders (Carroll, 2016, p.7).

Within the CSR realm, CC theory later evolves from the notion of the *corporate citizen*. This notion goes beyond the original notion of social responsibility as an external affair and ascribes social affiliation and political function to the corporation (Birch, 2001). Nevertheless, the terminology mostly remained the same as for CSR. Carroll (1999) and other authors, such as Maignan and Ferrell (2000), define it almost synonymously as *"the extent to which businesses meet the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary responsibilities imposed on them by their stakeholders"* (Matten and Crane, 2005, p.169). Demanding a more distinct and robust definition, Matten and Crane (2005), subsequentially reconceptualize the term Corporate Citizenship as the administration of civil, social and political rights, alongside or instead of the government. These rights entail freedom from abuses of third parties (including the government), and entitlements, such as health care and education. The authors argue that at the failure of governments to provide these fundamental rights corporations increasingly assume government responsibilities. Thus, acting as political substitutes rather than philanthropists, business should accordingly be held accountable similar to governments. This raises the paramount question, whether they should and can legitimately act in such function in the first instance.

Scherer & Palazzo (2011) argue that as a consequence of nation-states forfeiting regulatory control over a corporation's global operations, global governance has evolved to include business. Global governance here refers to the polycentric governing of global activities through "defining and implementing global rules and providing global public goods" (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011, p.900). Business, by self-regulating under the pressure of NGOs, has now entered this realm alongside governments, international organizations and civil society groups. Thus, PSCR extends the social role of corporations to go beyond mere compliance with laws and moral rules and confers a political role to corporations to fill the institutional void of global governance and provide public goods. This paradigm shift demonstrates a move from *legal liability to social connectedness* and from *hard to soft law*. Corporations are thus held accountable for social and environmental externalities within their supply chain, as they are considered complicit. As a result, they voluntarily self-regulate within their direct operations in order to keep their *social license to operate*. Thereby, it is challenging to navigate differing legal frameworks and ethical norms and morals across the globe, making moral legitimacy critical to legitimized activities and successful intervention by corporations.

All in all, there are various theories on the social role of business, that have evolved to include political functions over time. Having discussed Carroll's CSR *pyramid* (1991), a stakeholder framework that demands the concurrent fulfilment of economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities towards different stakeholders. Building on this, Matten & Crane (2005) developed their notion of CC, which concedes a political role to corporations. According to the authors, as governments fail to provide basic rights to their citizens, they take up governmental functions that go beyond the philanthropic responsibility of being a good corporate citizen. Questioning the legitimacy of corporations in assuming government functions, Hsieh's (2009) notion of the duty not to do harm is utilized to justify partial involvement by business, insofar as it promotes just institutions that can regulate for market failures. Here, Scherer & Palazzo (2011) argue that multinationals, under social pressure, are assuming a political role, by filling a regulatory vacuum in global governance through self-regulation.

In order to encompass all theories, the paper will utilize Blowfield and Frynas (2016) definition of corporate social responsibility as

> *"an umbrella term for a variety of theories and practices all of which recognize the following: (1) that companies have a responsibility for their impact on society and the natural environment, sometimes beyond legal compliance and the liability of individuals; (2) that companies have a responsibility for the behaviour of others with whom they do business (e.g., within supply chains); and (3) that business needs to manage its relationship with wider society whether for reasons of commercial viability or to add value to society."* (Blowfield & Frynas, 2016, p.503).

3. Literature Review

In this section, the existing body of literature in the field of sustainable fashion will be reviewed, laying the theoretical foundation and contextualizing the research. At first, the realm of Sustainability Governance in Fashion will be examined to understand the different perspectives that potentially influence the industry. In a second step, corporate responsibility and businesses' social role will be reviewed in order to analyse the current industry environment and developments throughout recent years. Finally, current consumer behaviour in sustainable fashion consumption and the attitude-behaviour gap will be examined to assess factors impeding increased sustainable consumption and potential ways to bridge the gap.

3.1. Sustainability Governance in the Fashion Industry

Regulation and governance concerning sustainability in the fashion industry can be defined as Sustainable Fashion Governance (SFG). SFG is a polycentric approach to support, incentivize or force social and ecological value creation in the fashion industry through various initiatives, standards and strategies (Jastram & Schneider, 2015). In this regard, Hira & Benson-Rea (2017) assess three different perspectives on governance: public, private and social governance. Related to public governance, laws and regulations are established and enforced by national governments and intergovernmental organizations. On the other hand, private governance refers to "social mores that determine acceptable market behaviour, professional standards and codes of conduct, collective bargaining agreements that define the obligations of firms towards workers, and other non-governmental institutions" (Gereffi, Gary & Mayer, 2004). Following these definitions, public governance is well established at a national level, whereas private governance can surmount borders. At last, social governance is generally referring to the work of NGOs and labour unions lobbying business and government and negotiating for better conditions within the value chains. However, these governance initiatives are often interrelated, with private-public partnerships becoming increasingly popular (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017).

3.1.1. A need for adequate cross-border business regulation

The need for governance and regulation in the fashion industry is widely regarded as indispensable. Devastating events, such as the death of over 1100 workers in the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh in 2013 have increased public scrutiny of the industry (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017; Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014). In the same vein, NGO campaigns for minimum labour and environmental standards have long been lobbying international policy actors, such as the World Trade Organization and the International Labour Organization to impose higher standards and regulations in the industry.

However, these efforts only resulted in mixed results because developing country governments resisted international standards (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014). As a result, these campaigns have been increasingly directed against Western multinationals (MNCs).

Against this background of absent governmental regulation, the need for adequate cross-border business regulation has become more than apparent. High fragmentation and lack of transparency, however, make it difficult to hold individual actors accountable (Teibel, 2019). Lister et al. (2015) argue that environmental upgrading in global value chains is more likely to occur, where unipolar governance exists and where lead firms are consumer-facing and thus bearing reputational risks. Thereby, an increasing amount of actors with different interests and different levels of reputational damage costs could lead to a diffusion of compliance and thus undermines the need for increased regulations (Lister et al., 2015). This is also the case for the fashion industry, as there is a multitude of smaller and bigger firms with differing reputational risks. Leading firms, such as H&M, Zara or Nike, are strongly consumer-facing and hence face high reputational risk in case misconduct is made public (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017).

3.1.2. Voluntary self-regulation by businesses

NGOs pressure brands into changing production practices based on the assumption that corporations control production and can dictate how products are produced. As a response, business starts to regulate itself under the name of CSR, developing codes of conduct and implementing auditing systems, with ambiguous results (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). Theoretically, compliance with these codes should reward suppliers with long-term relations, excluding those with low compliance (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen 2014). However, these efforts have only led to ambiguous results. In reality, suppliers are facing a dilemma of trying to fulfil buyers demand for low prices, timely orders and compliance with their code of conducts. Additionally, buyer’s purchasing practices often were not coherent with their codes of conduct, leading to suppliers committing auditing fraud and thereby undermining their validity (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen 2014). A study on Nike’s failing auditing system (Locke 2013) showed that audits had not improved working conditions: for 42% the conditions have remained the same, whilst for 36% the conditions even declined. The examination of the auditing system-related these poor scores to technological and financial constraints (Locke,2013; Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). While for the most part, firms demand improves conditions, the financial burden associated with upgrading falls back on the suppliers (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014).

In addition, this issue is further amplified, as suppliers face a multitude of different sets of codes and standards set by different brands, which create inefficiencies and make it costly for suppliers to follow these standards. Therefore costs and efforts to enforce private governance solutions, often make them insufficient (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). Furthermore, private governance initiatives often remain ineffective as they rely on market-based sanctions and lack legal enforcement since they are voluntary (Jastram & Schneider, 2018). Instead, the strength of local public authoritative rule-making institutions is critical in the success of private regulatory programs (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). This being the case, Hsieh (2009) argues that corporations should promote an institutional framework that respects and enforces the compliance with governmental regulations and social governance, rather than imposing their rule-making.

Under this backdrop, realizing the importance of public governance to solve sustainability issues, public-private governance initiatives emerged. One example in Sustainable Fashion Governance is the Fair Wear Foundation, an independent NGO with aims to improve labour conditions in the textile industry. It defines common ethical standards, conducts audits and consults corporations on local legislation, labour standards and local culture (Jastram & Schneider, 2018). Another initiative is the Bangladesh Accord, which is the first one with legally enforceable commitments to international labour rights protections, involving a multitude of brands and retailers (Jastram & Schneider, 2018). The Social and Labour Convergence Project is a more recent industry-driven initiative that involves a variety of stakeholders, such as retailers, industry groups and civil society and is led by well-known brands, such as Nike and H&M. Their mission is to develop an industry-wide standard for social and labour performance assessment to level the playing field, bringing clarity and reducing duplicated auditing and the associated costs (Jastram & Schneider, 2018).

3.1.3. A need for cross-border governmental regulation?

Although many corporations would prefer self-regulation and deliberate practices such as stated above, only a mixture of national regulations, international agreements, and voluntary private standards will prove most successful (Jastram & Schneider, 2018). The Pulse of the Fashion Industry Report (2017) showed that missing regulations and policies impedes sustainability in the sector. In fact, 24 % of the surveyed companies confirmed that lack of regulation impedes sustainable practices. Thereby, their sustainability agenda was deemed most influential by policy-makers and regulators (Kerr & Landry, 2017). Thus, industry members are pushing for supportive regulation from international institutions that “reinforces sustainability targets and incentives change” (Kerr & Landry, 2017, p.106). One such endeavour is the Global Reporting Initiative that tried to codify best reporting practices with guidelines on sustainability reporting. Another example is the United Nation's Global Compact, which mobilizes the support of corporations in ensuring human rights, labour standards, environmental protection, and anti-corruption within their supply chains. In 2006 the two programs created strategic alliances with corporate partners to complement one another (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017).

Furthermore, the ILO created the ISO 26000 standard in 2010 that provides guidance for corporations on how to engage in a socially responsible and transparent way (Kaya, 2016). However, these existing initiatives have proven insufficient as they are non-binding for firms. At the same time, standardized nation-wide laws across globally dispersed operations are not realistic either (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017).

This suggests that governments need to take charge of the industry and set standards that make companies liable beyond geographic boundaries. Recently, the European Union issued the non-financial reporting directive (2014/95/EU) and successive guidelines (EUG 2017/C215/01) that mandate large public-interest companies to disclose reports on implemented policies in regards to environmental protection, social responsibility, human rights, and anti-corruption (Manes-Rossi et al., 2018). These non-binding guidelines help companies “disclose high quality, relevant, useful, consistent and more comparable non-financial (environmental, social and governance-related) information in a way that fosters resilient and sustainable growth and employment, and provides transparency to stakeholders" (European Commission, 2017, p.4). The intention of this directive is that transparency will allow investors, consumers, NGOs and other stakeholders to assess the non-financial performance of large firms, which in turn will develop a more responsible approach to business (European Comission, 2014).

A KPMG report of 2015 shows a correlation between a high corporate responsibility reporting rate (90 per cent or above) and mandatory reporting requirements imposed by legislation (Kaya, 2016). One example of such progressive government intervention is France's Article 225 of Grenelle II Act, which postulates that companies beyond a specific size in all industries need to report on multiple social, environmental and governance indicators, showing concern for business operations in the sense of a triple bottom line. This article entails independent verification and accreditation by a third party, making it the most robust reporting law worldwide (Teibel, 2019). It fosters transparency, big data collection, standardization and issue spotting (Teibel, 2019). Two years after inception, a study showed that companies were committed to this approach, and their reporting has improved, leading to far more systematic and accurate data collected than before. This suggests that there is a need for a more holistic approach that includes voluntary private standards, international agreements, as well as national regulation in local and western economies (Teibel, 2019).

3.1.4. Future outlook

In the future, more government regulation can be expected. This could be in the form of standard-setting for eco-fashion labels, as well as their legal enforcement. Another solution could be a "green tax", similar to the CO2 tax, which taxes the production of new materials and incentivizes the use of renewable energy and resources, as well as reusable and recyclable materials (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). Furthermore, government could foster innovation more directly by subsidizing research and development (Teibel,2019). Moreover, national procurement choices and import/export regulations with strict labelling could be implemented (Jastram & Schneider, 2018). However, the critical change would arguably only take place through increasing pressure by consumers, alongside industry and the international political community. In fact, this collective approach is preferred and potentially more effective than public or private regulation alone. While policy-makers can provide the regulatory environment, e.g. through tax breaks, innovation subsidies or enforced standards, business can co-create it, and consumers can hold them accountable (Hira& Benson-Rea, 2017; Teibel, 2019).

As this analysis suggests, the current governance and regulation efforts pertaining to the fashion industry are not sufficient to guide companies towards more sustainable production practices. With the existing governance framework, it is easy for companies to circumvent regulations and thereby engage in unsustainable behaviour. After having examined these governance issues, the following section will elaborate on current CSR initiatives. This assessment will examine how companies and brands are operating in the current industry environment and will help shed light on how sustainability practices are being adopted.

3.2. Corporate social responsibility initiatives

Companies have started to take social sustainability issues more seriously in order to strengthen their business competitiveness. Moreover, environmental concerns are increasingly included into strategies and operations of companies across industries (Sundström, Ahmadi, & Mickelsson, 2019) This adaption of more environmentally friendly practices also can be observed in the fashion industry. Here, recent years have seen changes in companies that are trying to realize eco-innovation in order to offer and advertise sustainable products (Cleff, van Driel, Mildner, & Walter, 2018). However, although Cleff et al. (2018) see that companies are taking these measures and changes into their hands, this process is described as rather slow when assessing the overall industry change. According to the authors, this slow development is due to industry patterns and practices such as fast fashion trends that companies are not willing to abolish. This assessment aligns with several other studies in the field that describe the industry as just being on the verge of becoming aware of adapting the social side of their business to incorporate sustainability concerns (Pedersen & Andersen, 2015; Pedersen et al., 2018). Albeit the fact that companies in the fashion industry, in general, are seeing the increased importance of this role, there is a vast difference between brands (Park & Kim, 2016).In this regard, Park & Kim (2016) divide the industry by distinguishing between proactive and reactive approaches with proactive brands putting sustainability practices at the core of their business strategy.

The number of new and upcoming brands that take the proactive approach to sustainability has grown immensely throughout the past few years. These brands have adopted new and innovative business models where sustainability forms the core of their strategy (Schaltegger & Lüdeke-Freund, 2012) and try to create economic value by increasing corporate sustainability and environmental performance (Pedersen et al., 2018; Schaltegger & Lüdeke-Freund, 2012). Although acting sustainably can align with a company's fiduciary duty (Smith, 2002), the economic value creation through it has not yet been proven to generally be a working business case (Schaltegger & Lüdeke-Freund, 2012). As the article by Schaltegger & Lüdeke-Freund (2012) argues, a recurring business model innovation would be necessary to create these business cases.

One of the most prominent examples of a brand that is successful in putting sustainability at the core of their business strategy is 'Patagonia' (Fowler & Hope, 2007; Reinhardt et al., 2010). Patagonia, as a high-end outdoors fashion brand is concurrently reassessing its business model based on sustainability and re-evaluating new and innovative ways to compete (Reinhardt et al., 2010). Furthermore, the brand tries to impact the product life-cycle even after the product purchase by offering repairs and thereby creating more customer touchpoints than just the purchasing phase. This strategy has proven to be very successful also in economic terms where the company surpasses profit margins of competing brands in the market (Reinhardt et al., 2010). Another company that is taking a proactive approach to sustainability is 'Reformation' (Duffy & Nobbs, 2018). The case study by Duffy & Nobbs (2018) found that sustainability can also be a business case for companies in their communication across channels. The Reformation brand takes sustainability as their motivation and story behind the products, and proactively communicates it. This strategy has proved to impact brand loyalty and trust positively and is especially compelling and successful in enabling the company to engage with its audience across multiple sales channel (Duffy & Nobbs, 2018). Especially for brands focusing on e-commerce and trying to increase digital touchpoints with their customers, this strategy proves to be valuable.

These upcoming brands that use a proactive approach have led established fast-fashion players to acknowledge their social role as well. However, these players are only changing their behaviour slowly and have not reiterated their business models significantly. Instead, most fast fashion companies like H&M and Zara are following a more reactive approach. In recent years, these fast-fashion chains have started to adapt by signing industry-wide and legally binding safety agreements and are starting to reassess their value chains (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014; Li et al., 2014). Here, sustainability improvement strategies are used to strengthen the supply chain and increase strategic alliances with suppliers (Li et al., 2014). Also, fast-fashion companies have started to use green marketing to affect consumer's selection and loyalty (Li et al., 2014). However, these sustainability actions have not yet prevailed throughout the practices of the companies, and only smaller percentages of their products are promoted as sustainable and conscious products (Binet et al., 2019). Moreover, since these fast-fashion retailers are regarding their sustainability initiatives as a strategic behaviour to compete with the upcoming brands in that field (Li et al., 2014), consumers tend to acknowledge these efforts as greenwashing (Paula & Mikkonen, 2016). Critics are questioning if companies are actually accepting their social role and act by it, or if they are solely adapting since they operate in a market-sensitive industry environment (Paula & Mikkonen, 2016).

Albeit the fact that many companies have started to initiate corporate social responsibility initiatives, only a small fraction of consumers have adapted to these (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017; D. Shen et al., 2013; Vehmas et al., 2018). Therefore, the last section will investigate consumer behaviour by examining sustainable fashion consumption, as well as consumer decision-making processes. Moreover, the attitude-behaviour gap within the fashion industry and solutions to bridge it will be analysed.

3.3. Sustainable Fashion Consumption

Consumption is a complex social phenomenon that goes beyond the rudimentary concept of the purchasing of goods and services for their basic functional use. Following a broader definition, Campbell (1995) describes consumption as "*any activity that involves the selection, purchase, usage, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service]*" (p. 104). As such, consumption is considered to fulfil not only material functions but also a variety of private and social functions, allowing amongst others the signalling of social status, group belonging or individuality (Campbell, 1995). These social functions are central to fashion consumption, where products embody social meanings and aim to fulfil the needs for identity construction, self-expression, individuality and social belonging (Bly et al., 2015). These social meanings are transitionary and thus fuel continuous consumption - at the need to stay up to date. This is further intensified by the dominant consumer culture of fast fashion, with its everchanging styles and multiple seasons a year, at low prices and with fast production cycles (Schweighöfer et al., 2017; Vehmas et al., 2018).

The socially conscious movement of slow fashion is opposing the fast fashion trend. It aims to slow down the production, consumption and discarding of clothing by stressing quality over quantity and ensuring fair wages and responsible practices (Vehmas et al., 2018). Slow fashion is part of a more significant trend of sustainable fashion consumption, alongside ethical fashion, eco-fashion, fair trade fashion, second hand, upcycling, swapping, reduced consumption and anti-consumption. This multitude of notions has created ambiguity to what sustainable consumption actually constitutes and encompasses (Bly et al., 2015). In this regard, research by Shen, et al. (2013) attempted to clarify what consumers perceive as sustainable fashion. The study found four factors that consumers are concerned with – namely order of importance: (1) recycling and vintage; (2) fair trade and regional; (3) organic and vegan; and (4) craftmanship and individual production. Next to this, consumers differentiate between social and environmentally conscious fashion. While the former assesses human rights issues and working conditions, e.g. through fair trade, the latter is about reducing environmental externalities, e.g. through recycling or organic fashion (B. Shen et al., 2012).

Moreover, as aforementioned, sustainable fashion goes beyond manufacturing practices and raw materials. Recent studies on the life cycle of garments show that the use and disposal phases have the highest environmental impact, amounting to an estimated 75-95% of the total environmental impact of fashion products. Consequently, as the fashion company loses control over the item, the environmental impact ultimately largely depends on post-purchase consumer behaviour (Teibel, 2019). Therefore, sustainable fashion consumption also requires a change in consumer attitudes and behaviours to take into account the environmental and social impact when selecting, purchasing, using, maintaining, repairing and disposing of fashion goods. It involves choosing and demanding sustainable alternatives that last longer, as well as energy-efficient care, fixing instead of discarding, and finally also disposing responsibly to augment the life-cycle of garments (Carrington et al., 2014; Teibel, 2019; Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016).

Next to the change in fashion consumption, change in consumer culture is needed to make the life cycle of products more sustainable. Ultimately, it is the consumer who drives sustainable market transformation through his consumption decisions (Bly et al., 2015; Teibel, 2019). This change gives rise to a new type of consumer, the so-called ethical or conscious consumer, who takes into account environmental and social concerns in his consumption choices (Carrington et al., 2014). What constitutes conscious fashion consumption behaviour is, however, ambiguous, as it is primarily shaped and driven by consumer conceptions, rather than a concrete defined industry notion. As a result, many consumers have adopted their own understanding of conscious consumption behaviour (Bly et al., 2015). For example, Connell (2011) found that consumers adapted various behaviours relating to their fashion consumption: purchasing long-lasting, high-quality products; purchasing only second hand; sewing, repairing or reviving an item to extend its use; reducing the washing and tumble-drying; and responsible disposal through giving away, selling or swapping. Additionally, some consumers can reject or reduce the consumption of products, which is following another trend called the anti-consumption movement (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017).

3.3.1. Motivating sustainable consumption

The propensity of a consumer towards a certain behaviour is considered to be ascertained mainly by the individual's motivations and values (Machado et al., 2019). Thus, sustainable consumer behaviours are believed to be motivated by ethical and ideological aspirations to reduce social and environmental impacts (Bly et al., 2015). Concerning this, Diddi & Niehm (2017) suggested that personal values and moral norms influence attitude towards purchase intentions of fashion brands that promote sustainable practices. In the same vein, Yan et al. (2012) found that personal values and norms, environmental attitudes, as well as attitude towards brand and advertisement strongly correlated with the intention to purchase sustainable fashion. Furthermore, B. Shen et al. (2012) found that an individual's knowledge and concern of ethical issues influence consumer's susceptibility to ethical fashion. The greater the understanding of ethical implications, the higher the support for ethical brands and the higher is the willingness to pay a premium. Also, consumers have a higher willingness to pay a premium for socially responsible brands than for environmentally sustainable brands, implying that environmental concerns are subordinate to human rights concerns.

Similarly, Razzaq et al. (2018) discovered that high fashion involvement of consumers is often correlated to increased knowledge on sustainable fashion, prompting sustainable purchasing intentions. In addition to high fashion involvement, an individual's pro-environmental attitude correlates positively to sustainable fashion consumption. The higher a consumer's perception of personal responsibility in sustainable consumption as well as awareness of the impact of a consumer's actions on the environment, the more a consumer will engage in sustainable fashion consumption. Similarly, Johnson & Im (2014) assessed that consumers intentions to purchase from fashion brands with sustainability claims is primarily determined by social and environmental concerns of the individual.

Interestingly, however, sustainable consumption behaviours are motivated by more than ideological or ethical aspirations to reduce social and environmental impacts. In their study of sustainable fashion consumption pioneers, Bly et al. (2015) find, that for them, similarly to ethically-minded consumers, sustainability is also about freedom, uniqueness, resistance, authenticity, trust and well-being. This connotates that identity construction, self-expression, individuality and social belonging are also central to sustainable consumption, making personal style a prevalent driver of sustainable behaviours in fashion consumption (Bly et al., 2015).

In fact, Schweighöfer et al. (2017) found a positive link between *subjective norms, self-identity* and *ethical obligations* and decision-making processes in sustainable fashion purchases. Moreover, the authors discovered that actual sustainable buying behaviour strongly correlated with self-identifying oneself with a sustainable community. This is because opinions and input on sustainability of others matter in changing one's own behaviour. Thus, attitudes form in conjunction with the social pressures and behavioural expectations of the environment (Diddi & Niehm, 2017). Here, research has shown that young consumers often portray the highest sustainability awareness (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). A struggle for identity and uniqueness, as well as a deep need for reassurance by their peers, makes them adapt to pressures and expectations of their social environment. This adaptation is characterized by increased information and awareness of sustainability concerns. In this regard, a survey by Beltrami et al. (2019) found that within Gen Z, 90% of the consumers believe in the importance of sustainability in their practices. This awareness is especially important for fashion companies since this generation accounts for 40% of global consumers in 2020 and will become even more critical for consumption over the next decade (Beltrami et al., 2019). Therefore, Gen Z is the most critical consumer with regards to sustainability and CSR and has also impacted millennials and older consumer groups to focus more on sustainable practices (Beltrami et al., 2019).

3.3.2. Decision-making criteria in fashion consumption

Kotler & Armstrong (2010) conceptualizes three factors that determine clothing purchasing behaviour: *personal, psychological and cultural factors*. Personal factors, such as age, gender, level of education and income, are the most substantial decisive factors for purchasing behaviour. The psychological factors include personality, conceptions, norms and values. Here, different personalities are strongly linked to specific products and brand choices. Lastly, socio-cultural factors, such as belonging to a family, peers, and the general environment directly influence consumer awareness and thus, attitudes and behaviours (Koca & Koc, 2016b). Consuming sustainable fashion provides consumers with the benefit of social approval and making a good impression on people (Chi, 2015).

Moreover, the study by Koca and Koc (2016) finds that gender strongly influences decision-making approaches and purchasing behaviour in fashion consumption. Women, for example, are inclined to purchases emotion-based products more often than men, who predominantly purchase need-based items. While men are brand conscious, women are a lot more fashion-conscious, meaning they want to follow the changing trends of fashion. As such, women consume fashion more excessively, especially also including fast fashion items (Koca & Koc, 2016b).

On another note, corporate branding and marketing initiatives, that convey values such as brand image, quality, aesthetics and functionality have an equally strong influence on consumer's purchasing decisions (Koca & Koc, 2016b). However, alongside these traditional utility-driven values, principles of ethical behaviour and acting according to social norms and values have become a more prevalent factor in purchasing decisions (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2011). This development is reflected in the increasing relevance of company's CSR records in the consumption decisions of fashion buyers. In recent years, consumers have started to penalize companies with bad track records and moved their spend away from unsustainable brands and corporations (Arrigo, 2013; Diddi & Niehm, 2017). Chi (2015), however finds that price and quality factors have the most substantial influence on decision-making. While social and emotional values might be vital in this process, they are in the end, merely complementary. Here, the price has been one of the overriding factors over sustainability considerations within purchasing decisions (Chi, 2015; Vehmas et al., 2018).

Eliminating the price factor, a study by Cervellon & Shammas (2013) identifies three considerations that drive sustainable luxury consumption: (1) ecological-centred benefits of preventing harm and doing good; (2) ego-centred benefits of hedonism and guilt-free pleasure; and (3) socio-cultural benefits of attracting attention and group belonging. These can be considered to apply for regular consumption as well.

To better understand sustainable fashion consumption, Bly et al. (2015) study the consumption context of internal and external factors that influence decision-making. On the one hand, internal factors refer to resources and fashion-related knowledge of the individual consumer. Whereas information has been found to increase consumer awareness and to alter consumer behaviour, information overload has often paralyzed consumer action. Although there is a correlation of increased economic resources and sustainable purchases, alternative forms of sustainable consumption, such as second-hand shopping decrease spending, but are rather time-intensive. On the other hand, external factors include limited availability of sustainable product choices, structural conditions that can expedite or hamper sustainable behaviour, and social and cultural norms that tacitly influence behaviour. Here, for example, consumers participation in donation, recycling or sharing of clothing, is mostly dependent on available infrastructure, and independent of individual environmental and social concerns (Bly et al., 2015).

3.3.3. The attitude behaviour gap in fashion consumption

There is a general acknowledgement that there is a wide gap between declared sustainable attitudes and actual consumer behaviour (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017; B. Shen et al., 2012; Vehmas et al., 2018; Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016). The United Nations Environment Program's report on "Global Action for Sustainable Consumption and Production" (2017) found that while 72% of European consumers state a willingness to buy green products, only 17 % actually do, despite having the values and intentions to do so (UNEP, 2017). Similarly, Shen et al. (2012) found that although consumers are increasingly concerned about the social and environmental externalities of their purchase, 90 per cent of consumers still purchase conventional fashion. These findings concede that understanding the reasons behind the attitude-behaviour gap is a decisive issue to deal with when wanting to increase sustainable consumption behaviour in consumers (Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016).

One pertinent factor is the knowledge gap. Shen et al. (2012) account for the gap as a consequence of consumer's limited knowledge about social and environmental issues of their fashion consumption. Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan (2016) observe the level of sustainability understanding to be positively correlating to sustainable behaviour. The better the grasp of sustainability implications of products, the higher the likelihood to purchase sustainable products (Dickson, 2001). However, Markkula & Moisander (2012) detected that sustainability-related information is perceived as a challenge, as it is difficult for consumers to differentiate between the potentially contradictory information. Valor (2008) further found that sustainable consumption is perceived to be time-consuming, expensive and taxing.

Furthermore, prior research discovered a mistrust towards and lack of transparency by companies. This is considered to hinder consumers from making educated decisions and translating their concerns into actual purchasing behaviours (B. Shen et al., 2012;

Teibel, 2019). Here, especially the young consumers, are suspicious of brands, labels and other impact measures, as there is no transparency and trustworthy information on them (Yildiz et al., 2015). Thus, rather than on labels, consumers rely on intuitive, emotional identifications of trust and legitimacy (Bly et al., 2015), based on perceived sustainability in relation to a firm's reputation (Shen et al., 2012). Here, Roberts (1996) found that consumers are only willing to act when they feel that their decisions can make a difference. Consequently, consumers are more likely to boycott irresponsible companies than reward responsible ones (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). In the end, consumption decisions are mostly irrational and hardly aligned with one’s values, and as such, positive ethical attitudes are insufficient (Bly et al., 2015).

Thus, despite increased ethical attitudes, sustainability is rarely taken into account as a purchasing criterion (Connell, 2011; Harris et al., 2016; Vehmas et al., 2018; Bly et al., 2015). Instead, price, aesthetics, quality and fit are still of higher-order (Yildiz et al., 2015). This dissonance can be explained by the complexity of the discourse on sustainable fashion, as well as the diversity in ethical concerns, which disempower consumers in taking relevant action (Markkula & Moisander, 2012). Here, Carrington et al. (2014) reconceptualize the dissonance between ethical intentions and actual purchasing decision and attribute it to four interrelated factors that are the same across consumers with varying awareness levels: “(1) prioritization of ethical concerns; (2) formation of plans and habits; (3) willingness to commit and sacrifice; and (4) modes of shopping behaviour.” (Carrington et al., 2014, p. 2762). Here, the lack of cognitive dissonance is attributed to consumer’s ability to rationalize their unethical purchasing decisions (Carrington et al., 2014).

3.3.4. Bridging the attitude behaviour gap, a shared responsibility

To increase sustainable consumption behaviour, bridging the attitude behaviour gap is of vital importance (Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016). Related to that, Harris et al. (2016) argue that consumer responsibility needs to be fostered not at an individual level, but rather at a group and industry level. Bürklin (2019) suggests that consumer responsibility can be fostered as part of a wider stakeholder network. Institutional agents, such as business, governmental institutions and NGOs can use policy-making and self-regulation of the industry to increase responsible consumption in consumers by providing relevant information and empowering consumers. In this network, NGOs have the role of raising sustainability awareness in consumers, whereas governmental institutions such as universities and research institutes support with scientific findings. Moreover, companies need to provide more transparency along their supply chain, employing marketing strategies that ensure easy-to-understand information (Bürklin, 2019).

In fact, Vehmas et al. (2017) and Harris et al. (2016) find that increased supply chain transparency is an essential factor in increasing sustainable consumption, as consumers can only make responsible decisions when informed (Bürklin, 2019). To this point, Vehmas et al., (2017) examines the need for substantiated and visible information to be presented attractively by use of storytelling. Here, consumers prefer neutral, fact-based communication with precise information about e.g. how much waste has been decreased over negative, emotional communication (Eom et al., 2018; Vehmas et al., 2018). Similarly, Harris et al. (2016) find that brand communication should focus on promoting an ethical lifestyle rather than on issues related to fashion consumption. Here, social media influencers and other marketing tools should be deployed in reaching, especially the younger generation (Harris et al., 2016). As an example, Eom et al. (2018) find that green demarketing advertising can influence consumers not to purchase unneeded products. However, all these initiatives require consumer trust, which in turn requires increased transparency of the supply chain (Harris et al., 2016; Vehmas et al., 2018)

Following another approach, Teibel (2019) argues that brands should engage closely with consumers to raise awareness about their role in furthering sustainability goals. This engagement should go beyond pre-retail consumer engagement like eco-labels, that intend to drive sustainable purchase. Instead, the author argues for the importance of post-retail engagement, educating consumers on e.g. mindful washing and drying through labels, or on disposal of items through take-back programs. A fitting example for such strong consumer engagement is Reformation, a young sustainable fashion label, which utilizes strong consumer engagement. On each product page, precise information on the sustainability of the product like water savings, as well as fabric and care details are displayed. Furthermore, the brand utilizes social media campaigns with influencers across platforms, with taglines such as "Being naked is the #1 most unsustainable option. We're #2" (Reformation.com, 2020a). Another good example is H&M, who initiated a take-back program in their stores, providing customers with vouchers for recycling their clothes with them (H&M.com, 2020).

Concluding the review, the literature research has shown several issues related to the current fashion industry environment that need to change in order to guide sustainable practices and thereby enable sustainable consumer behaviour. These issues will be highlighted in the following chapter.

4. Theoretical summary and research proposition

In this section, an overview and summary of the most relevant literature will be given to identify research gaps which this research could potentially close. Next, the research proposition and how this research is seeking to close the identified gap will be outlined.

4.1. Theoretical summary

For the fashion industry to become more sustainable, the literature review examines the need for multi-stakeholder involvement. Prior research has shown that fashion is a complicated industry including brands, companies, and suppliers that are scattered across different geographies and that form part of in-transparent and complex value chains (Vehmas et al., 2018; Teibel, 2019). Within those value chains, the focus and alignment of practices with sustainability are difficult to control and regulate (Lister et al., 2015). Current production practices of the fashion industry are widely regarded as inherently unsustainable (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014; Lister et al., 2015; Vehmas et al., 2018; Teibel, 2019). In this regard, the review has also shown that the different facets of governance are not yet able to impose well-functioning measures to ensure that sustainable processes are being applied throughout the production (Lund-Thomsen & Lindgreen, 2014; Lister et al., 2015). Therefore, many scholars identify a need for increased cross border regulation. With these predispositions, the change and development of the industry towards environmentally friendly and socially acceptable practices has been relatively slow. This stands opposite to a rapidly increasing number of consumers gaining awareness and valuing the importance of sustainable fashion (Beltrami et al., 2019). Thus, affordable, sustainable products need to be more readily available to consumers (Terlau & Hirsch, 2015).

In addition, brands, companies and suppliers themselves differ extensively in the perception of their social role in leading the change towards sustainable consumption (Cleff et al., 2018; Park & Kim, 2016). Some players acknowledge this role and innovate their business model to incorporate sustainability as well as structure their business strategies and operations accordingly (Cleff et al., 2018). Through the literature review, it became apparent that there is potential for business initiatives and business model innovation to incorporate sustainability. However, the extent to which this is prevalent in the industry is minimal, with many fast-fashion chains only adopting sustainable practices on a limited scale. Moreover, a clear need for new practices that focus on the complete product life-cycle has been examined. When producing clothing items, companies should have the use and disposal phase already in mind and should be held responsible for making subsequent phases to the purchasing as sustainability friendly as possible. (Carrington et al., 2014; Teibel, 2019; Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016) Since production practices impact the availability of sustainable fashion product, it also has implications on consumers not being able to purchase sustainably (Goolkasian & Woodberry, 2010; Li et al., 2014). Since production practices impact the availability of sustainable fashion product, it also has implications on consumers not being able to purchase sustainably (Goolkasian & Woodberry, 2010; Li et al., 2014).

However, also the consumer behaviour in the market would have to change drastically to increase the need of changes in practices of the industry (Shen et al. 2012; Schweighöfer et al., 2017; Vehmas et al., 2018). Here, the literature review identified a need for change in consumer culture, away from current fast fashion practices (Bly et al., 2015; Gjerdrum Pedersen & Reitan Andersen, 2013; Schweighöfer et al., 2017; Vehmas et al. 2018). In the same vein, consumers would need better education on the use and disposal of products (Connell 2011). Overall, the review has examined that many consumers share values and attitudes, favouring sustainable products and behaviour. Moreover, these global environmental concerns are examined to be growing in importance (UNEP, 2017). However, albeit the presence of these values and attitudes, the engagement in sustainable behaviour and actions on these beliefs is not adjusting in accordance (Shen et al., 2012; Teibel, 2019). This so-called attitude-behaviour gap has been identified in the fashion industry by different studies; however, research on possibilities to close this gap has yet been scarce.

4.2. Research proposition

Albeit the fact that the underlying issues of the attitude-behaviour gap are well researched, it has not yet been closed and there have not yet been proposals on what changes would need to occur in the fashion industry to enable this closure (Perry & Chung, 2016). Alongside the attitude-behaviour gap, there is a perceived disparity and difference between which product criteria consumers demand from fashion brands and what is currently offered. Surprisingly, the existing research in the field has not yet examined the consumer perception of the gap (Perry & Chung, 2016). Moreover, there has not yet been research aiming at answering the question of which changes the consumer examines to be necessary to engage in sustainable consumption. Therefore, the research at hand aims to extend the existing body of literature by shedding light on the consumer perception of the industry and the gap.

Additionally, the prerequisites, as identified by the participants of this study, will be analysed and discussed. Since the consumers' attitudes and values have been found to include a strive for more sustainable consumption, taking the stand of the consumer could prove helpful to assess the prerequisites that would be needed to enable them. However, the existing literature has not yet formulated those potential prerequisites. This makes it challenging to identify and prioritize potential needs for changes in the industry, as seen from the consumer standpoint. Following this angle, this research will be the first to explore prerequisites as identified by the consumers. It will further examine their perception of how the gap could potentially be closed.

A secondary research field, as identified by Perry & Chung (2016), is the increased focus on storing, using, and maintaining behaviours of consumers in connection to the attitude behaviour gap. The existing body of literature has yet only focussed on the sustainability in the purchasing phase of clothing items and neglected the use and disposal phase. Wiederhold & Martinez (2018) also raised the importance of additional research that is including these phases. Therefore, this research will entail this focus.

5. Methodological approach

The following section will examine the research philosophy, the research approach, as well as the general methodological principles and the underlying assumptions of this research. Therefore, this part will follow the “research onion” model as proposed by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2019). Moreover, the chosen research paradigm will be discussed concerning the possible ways it could benefit or negatively impact the research findings. In addition to these outer layers of the research onion, the research strategy as well as the data collection and analysis approach will be addressed shortly and will be further elaborated on in the following chapters: 6. Research design, and 7. Data analysis and findings.

Figure 2: Depiction of the chosen methodological approach, adapted from Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2019)

5.1. Research philosophy

Every research has assumptions on how the world is understood and how that understanding is gained (Saunders et al., 2019). This influences the entire research design from the formulation of the research question, the chosen data collection and analysis methods, to the interpretation and discussion of the findings, as well as the conclusions and recommendations made (Healy & Perry, 2000; Moses & Knutsen, 2012). The philosophy of social science classifies these underlying assumptions of a research project based on different ontological and epistemological principles (Saunders et al., 2019). Thereby, ontological principles about the nature of existence and the understanding of reality have epistemological consequences on what we can know and how to obtain this knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019). From this methodology, suitable methods to produce reliable knowledge can be derived (Healy & Perry, 2000; Marsh & Furlong, 2002). Hence, the research paradigm strongly influences the limitations of the research. These are further arising from the approach and analysis of the data collection method. Therefore the examination of the paradigm is especially important in qualitative research (Healy & Perry, 2000) as carried out in this thesis. Furthermore, understanding the implicit philosophy of the research, the reader can better relate to the use and reasoning behind the chosen methods and better place and discern the findings and interpretations thereof.

The critical realism paradigm

There are multiple philosophical approaches in social sciences that differ in their ontological and epistemological views such as, e.g. positivism, pragmatism, constructivism, interpretivism and realism(Saunders et al., 2019). The fundamental philosophy of this thesis can be placed between positivism and realism, and is called the critical realism paradigm as defined by Bhaskar (2010) and further clarified by Danermark, Ekström, & Karlsson (2019). In the way it distinguishes between the real and observable world it includes traits of both the realist as well as the positivist paradigm. Following the critical realism paradigm, the researcher can only examine empirically observable experiences that are the outcome of actual events, generated by mechanisms from reality as depicted in Figure 3 (Mingers & Willcocks, 2004). The emergent paradigm differentiates itself from, e.g. positivism by recognising that observations can be erroneous and that theories are revisable, emphasising multi-level analysis to understand underlying mechanisms (Saunders et al., 2019). It criticises the positivist paradigm – which is the dominating paradigm in social sciences and consumer research (Sihombing, 2011) – for taking the observed mechanisms as reality. Here, it takes on interpretative beliefs, arguing that existing methods and theories should be viewed as an iterative process of improvements highly influenced and constructed by social structures (Bhaskar, 2010; Danermark et al., 2019). This multi-level analysis approach enables the researcher to observe events and mechanisms from different angles and to understand the subject matter meticulously. In this aspect, critical realism also distinguishes itself from direct realism in that it sees the world as changeable, therefore concentrating on multi-level studies, instead of a single observational level (Danermark et al., 2019).

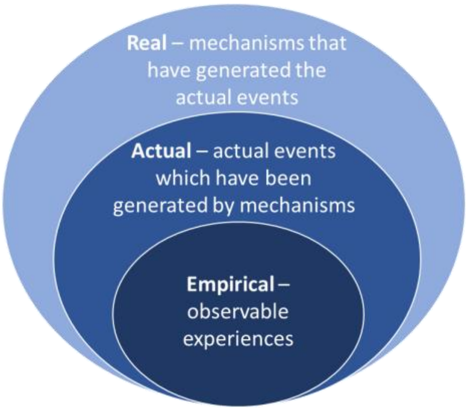

Figure 3: Schematic of the critical realist research paradigm, adapted from Mingers & Willcocks (2004)

Following Danermark et al. (2019), the critical realism paradigm enables research to develop generalising claims without making them law-like as in positivist research (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore the paradigm fits especially well with the chosen abductive approach for this research (see section 5.2) since abduction and retroduction are seen as the primary tools within the critical research paradigm (Danermark et al., 2019). Moreover, this approach of understanding the studied topic through underlying mechanisms that are changing (Haigh, Kemp, Bazeley, & Haigh., 2019) aligns very well with the researchers' view on sustainability in the fashion industry and the trends that influence consumer behaviour.

From an epistemological standpoint, the critical realism paradigm assumes that the researchers investigate and operate with objective lenses - independent from inherent beliefs - assessing solely based on prior education and existing knowledge in the field (Danermark et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2019). Although the research design and methodology developed in this paper try to assure this objectivity, some degree of subjectivity among the researchers must be assumed. This concession is especially important to acknowledge since the qualitative interviews and the focus group were held in person and could, therefore, imply social conditioning in the researchers (Danermark et al., 2019).

5.2. Abductive research approach

The research approach describes how information and the understanding of the research topic are derived in order to answer the chosen research question (Saunders et al., 2019). In order to derive this understanding and to set it into context, this thesis follows the approach of abductive reasoning as examined by Bell, Bryman, & Harley (2018). Abduction, as a form of logical interference, is used especially in qualitative and exploratory research since it seeks to find the most likely reasoning from incomplete observations. Other than induction, where specific observations are used to derive general conclusions and to determine general rules, abductive reasoning is looking for cause-effect relationships that explain the observed phenomena (Bell et al., 2018). However, both use observations as evidence to derive claims and guesses, in contrast to the deductive approach, where general rules are appropriated to arrive at specific conclusions that are assessed to be true. Therefore, the abductive approach can be seen as a pragmatist perspective that tries to overcome the shortcomings of both deductive as well as inductive reasoning (Bell et al., 2018). This approach allows the researcher to explain findings without having to explicitly determine theories through either confirming them (by deduction) or creating them (by induction), which has made this approach increasingly popular.

Recent literature proposes that abduction can play a role in qualitative research in order to identify themes, codes and categories as well as interlinked issues (Lipscomb, 2012). This thesis seeks to identify what changes need to occur in the fashion industry in order to foster sustainable consumption. Thereby, it is vital to understand the current consumer behaviour and its underlying patterns on multiple levels. Thus, this approach of creating new knowledge through abduction fits well.

Besides, the chosen approach aligns well with the researchers' view on the ever-changing consumer behaviour in fashion consumption, where it no law-like theories on future behaviour can be generated but where new cause-effect relationships are continuously emerging.

Through an abductive approach, the researchers collect data in order to determine patterns resulting in themes which then allow for a thorough analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). In this research, the presented research question poses the need for explaining cause-effect relationships for consumers to gauge towards more sustainable consumption. Therefore, the researchers are confident with relying on abductive reasoning as the leading approach in this project. Based on this abductive approach of the research, both a qualitative experiment as well as a subsequent focus group discussion were used to gather a variety of observations and input data on different levels and from different points of view. These were then analysed to generate three different levels of themes for the network analysis explained in chapter six.

5.3. Methodological Choice

Before collecting the data, the researchers need to define the methods used to conduct the research (Saunders et al., 2019). Based on the critical realist research paradigm as well as the abductive research approach and in line with the research question, a qualitative research design has been chosen in order to understand the aforementioned cause-effect relations in fashion consumption (Danermark et al., 2019; Lipscomb, 2012). By monitoring participant behaviour throughout the experiments and by discussing the results of the experiment with a second group of participants, the researchers sought to identify the decision-making criteria for fashion purchases as well as in fashion use. Thereby, the researchers aim to find ways to drive more sustainable consumption in fashion consumers. The experiment as the first stage of the data collection was chosen by the researchers to gain insights on consumers' current fashion consumption and to shed light on how they perceive sustainability in this context.

Moreover, the researchers were aware of potentially experiencing the attitude-behaviour gap throughout the experiments. Therefore, the methodological choice could help for a better understanding of the critical factors and for insights on how to align the attitudes, intentions and actual behaviour of the participants. The focus group as the second stage of collecting qualitative data, was used to gain a deeper understanding of the factors behind this attitude-behaviour gap, as well as what solutions the participants find to alter these factors towards a desired state. The collected data, in combination with prior literature, allows for the identification of changes needed in the fashion industry.

As the third stage of the data collection, this research meant to examine the social role of business by interviewing industry experts. The intention behind these interviews was to gain insights on company and policy perspectives within the industry as well as their perception of responsibility. These interviews were initially incorporated into the methodological choice to put the industry requirements into context further. However, due to difficulties revolving the CoVid-19 pandemic, these interviews were cancelled. Therefore, this interference with the research process constitutes an unforeseen limitation.

5.4. Exploratory versus conclusive research

In general, research designs follow either an exploratory or conclusive research nature (Saunders et al., 2019). Exploratory research designs are applied when the objective of the data collection is to provide insights and gain an understanding of the principal phenomena (Shukla, 2008). On the other hand, conclusive research designs can be characterised by the analysis of large, representative data samples to obtain significant results about the research topic through verifying or falsifying predefined hypotheses (Shukla, 2008). These conclusive research designs are most often applied in structured and formal research processes connected to quantitative research. This thesis applies an exploratory research design since its goal is to obtain more in-depth knowledge by making use of qualitative and semi-structured experiments as well as the focus group (Saunders et al., 2019; Shukla, 2008). Therefore, the collected data depends on smaller samples and focuses on reaching a saturation point for the researched topic.

Moreover, a flexible research process allows for emerging and connected topics to be included if relevant. This flexibility further assures the open direction of the research since it can be slightly adapted in an iterative process based on newly created data and knowledge throughout the process (Shukla, 2008). Considering the combination of the chosen critical realist paradigm with abduction as a research approach, the exploratory nature of the research also ensures the unrestricted and open-ended processing of the data obtained from the multi-level analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). As the ultimate goal of this research is to answer the research question on what changes need to occur in the fashion industry in order to foster sustainable consumption, the exploratory research design is most fitting. Moreover, consumer behaviour is continuously changing due to emerging trends and has only been studied in a sustainability context recently with researchers' knowledge yet being incomplete (Perry & Chung, 2016). This would make a conclusive research design inadequate for answering the research question since the researchers suspect that the underlying theories might not yet be able to explain the current consumer behaviour and its implications for sustainability sufficiently enough to identify what changes need to occur in the fashion industry in order to foster sustainable consumption.

5.5. Research strategy

The research strategy is a combination of the chosen research philosophy, the research approach, as well as the methodological choice of the research. Therefore, it is the plan to collect and analyse data in order to answer the research question (Saunders et al., 2019). In qualitative research, the commonly used data collection strategies often include semi-structured interviews or group discussions (Saunders et al., 2019). This thesis includes both these strategies, with the semi-structured interviews being part of the qualitative interviews in the experiment and the focus group discussion being held subsequently.

The strategy behind this approach was to obtain first knowledge about current consumer behaviour and participants' understanding of sustainability, as well as to observe participants purchase behaviour and decision making through the interviews. In the following, these observations were discussed with the focus group, concentrating the researchers' attention on underlying motives and industry changes required to foster more sustainable fashion consumption behaviour. The strategy involved the observation of the participants' online purchase behaviour rather than their in-store shopping behaviour, to allow for smooth execution and a minimalization of noise and disturbance while providing the participants with a comparable consumer experience. This strategy was further chosen so that the participants could voice their decisions and behaviour without being influenced by environmental factors such as other shoppers or in-store marketing, music, and so on. The focus group discussion allowed to contextualise the data obtained in the experiments and discuss possible causes for the observed behaviour. Furthermore, it was used to identify what industry changes participants believe to be essential in order to foster more sustainable fashion consumption in them.

In the following chapter, the constructed research design based on this research strategy will be outlined. Thereafter, the data collection method and data analysis approach, as suggested in the research onion by Saunders et al. (2019) will be delineated.

6. Research design

This research aims to identify industry changes required to increase sustainable fashion consumption by consumers. A threefold perspective, implicating consumers, business, and government is applied to formulate pre-requisites that help foster this sustainable behaviour in fashion. Therefore, a qualitative approach is used in order to gain an in-depth understanding of consumer's sustainability concerns, as well as their actual consumer behaviour, dissecting the attitude-behaviour gap. With this intention, two different methods for qualitative primary data collection were chosen. First, a qualitative experiment with interviews (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012) was conducted. Participants were divided into two groups, that each attended the same experiment. One group of interviewees was primed, framed, and anchored with sustainability-related information and the other group with a neutral frame and anchor. Subsequently, a focus group was held with participants being given an overview of the findings of the prior interviews to discuss and elaborate on. Due to situational constraints relating to CoVid-19, this thesis informs its business and government perspective solely on prior research. The research design initially incorporated qualitative interviews with industry and corporate experts to cross-examine the recommendations and inputs gained from the experiments and the group discussion. However, this approach had to be conceded due to difficulties in conducting and scheduling interviews with the respective experts.

In the following chapter, the interview, as well as the focus group approach and the respective conduct, will be outlined.

6.1. The qualitative experiment

Although experimental research methods are most often used within quantitative research as they are concerned with measuring and statistically validating or falsifying phenomena, a new strand of research suggests that experimental research methods can also be used for qualitative data collection (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012; Sherman & Strang, 2004). In this regard, scholars find controlled observations in experiment settings to yield qualitative input data through open-ended questions in interviews and observations (Pathak et al., 2013). Therefore, the experiment follows the so-called "qualitative experiment" design as established by Robinson & Mendelson (2012). This experimental approach allows the researcher to gain not just qualitative interview answers from the participants but to observe their actual behaviour further. Following Bayley & Nancarrow (1998), setting participants in an actual purchasing context allows gaining better insights on their behaviour, including buying impulses, product searches and decision making criteria. Therefore, in the context of purchasing behaviour, this method was examined to yield the best input data to answer the question on hand.

For this experiment, an online shopping experience within different online shops was simulated. The participants were asked to interact with the web stores, to describe their customer journey and to explain their thought process. This set-up closely follows Robinson & Mendelson's (2012) qualitative experiment design by combining qualitative interviews with the experiment set-up. In order to apply different stimuli conditions, the participants were divided into two groups (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). For this purpose, two different videos, followed by an initial set of questions, were selected. The first group was shown a neutral video containing information about online shopping and online stores, in order to set the interviewees in a similar and neutral emotional state. Subsequently, that group was asked questions regarding their online and offline shopping behaviour. Both the video and questions were chosen as a neutral stimulus, ensuring impartiality.

The second group was shown a video containing information about the environmental and social externalities during the product lifecycle of a t-shirt - this chosen stimulus allowed for anchoring the subsequently asked questions. Here the intended effect was the anchoring of sustainability and corporate social sustainability as well as responsible buying behaviour. The chosen video encompassed these three topics and elicited information about the interviewee's perception and their exhibited behaviour in this context during their visits to the four online stores. Next to a different video, the participants of group two were asked a set of additional questions at the beginning of the experiment. These were related to their overall awareness of sustainability issues in the fashion industry and their concerns and behaviour. This was done in order to ensure sufficient priming for sustainability.

Apart from the video and the subsequent set of questions, the experiment was conducted identically. The questions asked were the same for both interview groups to ensure subsequent comparability of the observations. All participants were shown the four online stores and asked to replicate their usual online shopping behaviour (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). Subsequently, they were instructed to describe and verbalise this behaviour and the decision-making process towards product purchases, including information about where participants clicked and navigated and which product detail pages they visited. Moreover, the interviewees were asked questions about the respective fashion brands, the displayed information on the website and the product specifications of relevance. Lastly, the participants were asked to rank the four stores in order of their personal prioritisation. Here, they were asked how this prioritisation would change if they were to win 500 DKK. The experiment was concluded with a final ranking of the four stores by the perceived sustainability of the brand. A set of final questions about the interview itself followed this ranking. These questions were also identical for all participants.

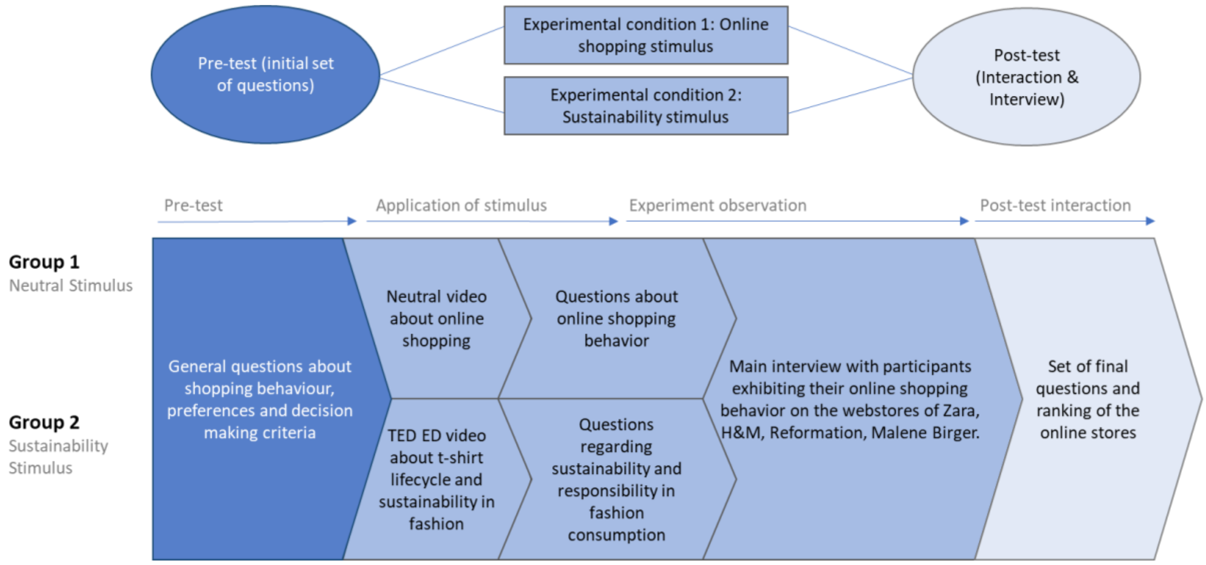

Figure 4: Depiction of the qualitative experiment technique, adapted from Robinson & Mendelson (2012)

6.1.1. Participant selection

It is essential to select fitting interviewees from a larger population of participants, to allow for an in-depth understanding of the research topic through conducting interviews (Demarrais & Lapan, 2003). Following Demarrais & Lapan (2003), a criterion-based selection strategy was applied, and only female European participants of Generation Z were selected. As elaborated in the literature review, this generation has an increasing focus on sustainability practices and thus was selected as the target group for the interviews (Koca & Koc, 2016b; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). 12 interviewees with a mean age of 24, participated in six interview rounds. The participants were recruited as pairs of two with a close friendship. This choice was made based on the conception that two friends, of the same gender and with similar shopping interests would exhibit a similar shopping behaviour due to similar shopping preferences and a close interrelation of their shopping experiences (Roy et al., 2016). This selection process moreover assured a homogeneity of the selected group regarding their educational background and age (Krueger & Leader, 2002). However, the fields of study were highly diverse, and thus, the participants potentially differed in their knowledge about sustainability practices and the fashion industry. Subsequently, these two friends would then be split into the two different stimuli groups to get comparable results from two similar individuals going through the two different interview set-ups.

The selection of the participants took place via a variety of Facebook groups using public posts. After reacting to the posts, participants were messaged privately to see if they fit the selection criteria. The exact message that was used can be found in Appendix A. Also, as a recruiting incentive, the chance to win 500dkk was used to gain attention. This increased attention helped the selection and assembly of a fitting group of participants. For details, please see Table 1 below:

Participant Name	Background	Age	Prime	Experiment ID
Paulina M	German	24	Neutral	PM_N
Marit K	German	23	Neutral	MK_N
Chin V	Danish	20	Neutral	CV_N
Sarah M	Belgian	24	Neutral	SM_N
Shanice A	Dutch	24	Neutral	SA_N
Chiara H	Austrian	25	Sustainability	CH_S
Safiya S	Swiss	23	Sustainability	SS_S
Raluca D	Romanian	20	Sustainability	RD_S
Laura S	French	22	Sustainability	LS_S
Frederikke SH	Danish	22	Sustainability	FSH_S

Table 1: Experiment participants and individual experiment IDs

Stimuli

Following Kahneman (2011), a variety of stimuli can be used to anchor, frame, and prime information. These stimuli are often applied in interviews as a device to encourage the participants to consciously or subconsciously focus on specific topics relevant to the research (Törrönen, 2002). This approach allowed to obtain knowledge about the participants in two different settings. Therefore, this research used two different videos as a visual prime and a set of different questions as a non-visual prime. The chosen approach mirrors Bimonte, Bosco, & Stabile (2020) that used a visual priming technique, including a short video, to assess the willingness to pay for environmentally friendly goods.

Video

The videos, as the first stimulus of the interview, were selected based on extensive online research. In order to find the right material, several video sharing platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo and Dailymotion were scouted, and a set of different options of videos were chosen based on predefined selection criteria, see Table 2 below. These selection criteria were based on the concepts of priming, anchoring and framing to ensure that the wanted stimulus effects occur. Furthermore, the message and information conveyed by the video needed to fit all selection criteria. To ensure the selection of the most appropriate video, different options were sent to eight contestants to judge if the three underlying effects occurred. These contestants were asked to rank the videos on the specific criteria and to select the video with the clearest stimulus (Neequaye, 2018). All contestants were informed about the purpose of the research, as well as, the anticipated and intended anchoring, priming and framing effect of the video.

Criteria for video selection	
	*please rank all questions from 1 (least) - 5 (most)
Neutral stimulus video	**Sustainability stimulus video**
Did the video set you into an emotionally neutral state?	Did the video convey a message about the importance of sustainability, CSR and self-regulation of the industry?
Are the colours and background of the video neutral?	Did the video contain information about sustainability, responsibility and CSR within the fashion industry?
Was the video neutral in regard to sustainability?	Did the video convey a sense of urge to change practices, regulations and fashion consumption by consumers?
Was the video neutral with regards to the 4 brands selected for the interview (Reformation, Malene Birger, H&M, Zara)?	Was the video neutral with regards to the 4 brands selected for the interview (Reformation, Malene Birger, H&M, Zara)?

Table 2: Criteria for video selection

These selection criteria ensured that the effect of the stimulus and the interview approach were aligned. It also ensured that the experiment-interviews were anchored and framed in an anticipated way. The chosen video was set in the beginning to anchor the following questions and experiment in either the neutral or sustainability context. For the neutral video, the first 6 minutes of a top ten list of online stores was chosen. The video was narrated by an influencer standing in front of a neutral background, elaborating on her favourite places to shop online. The influencer described her perception of the stores and the related product, not mentioning sustainability or CSR topics. Moreover, the brands and products mentioned were not the same as used later during the interview to ensure an unbiased view of the interviewees during that part. Since the video also did not include the influencer's customer behaviour and journey on these websites, the video selected matched all criteria for the research purpose.

The second selected video was an animated video focusing on the negative environmental and social externalities during the lifecycle of a t-shirt. This video contained information about contamination, heavy resource use, issues with transportation, low labour standards and sweatshop conditions as well as the impacts of the global fashion industry on climate change and emissions. Furthermore, it included a section on consumer's impact during the usage and disposal phase, suggesting alternative behaviours. The producer of this video is TED-Ed, an award-winning education platform (TEDEd, 2020). This video was chosen to objectively educate the consumer on the topic as well as sensitising him for responsible consumption. Therefore, the chosen video was aligned with the predefined criteria and anchored and framed the following interview with conscious decision making.

Moreover, the video was priming the interview within the context and association of sustainability and conscious decision-making. Through incorporating sustainability-related expressions and showing images of different practices, both the verbal as well as the visual cues allowed for the latter association as intended by the researchers. In this case, also the format and modality of the prime were the same since the participants went on to see the same websites and had to explain their shopping behaviour on the respective web stores. Both videos used as stimuli can be found in the Appendix B.

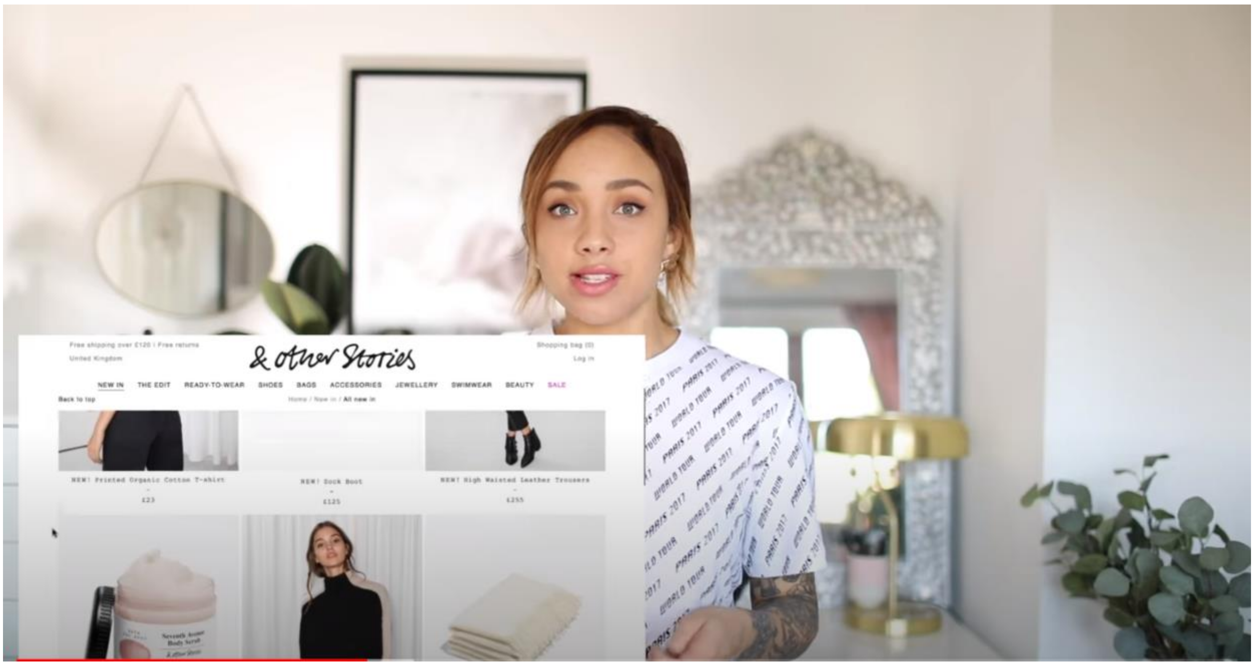

Figure 5: Screenshot of the neutral online shopping video for group 1

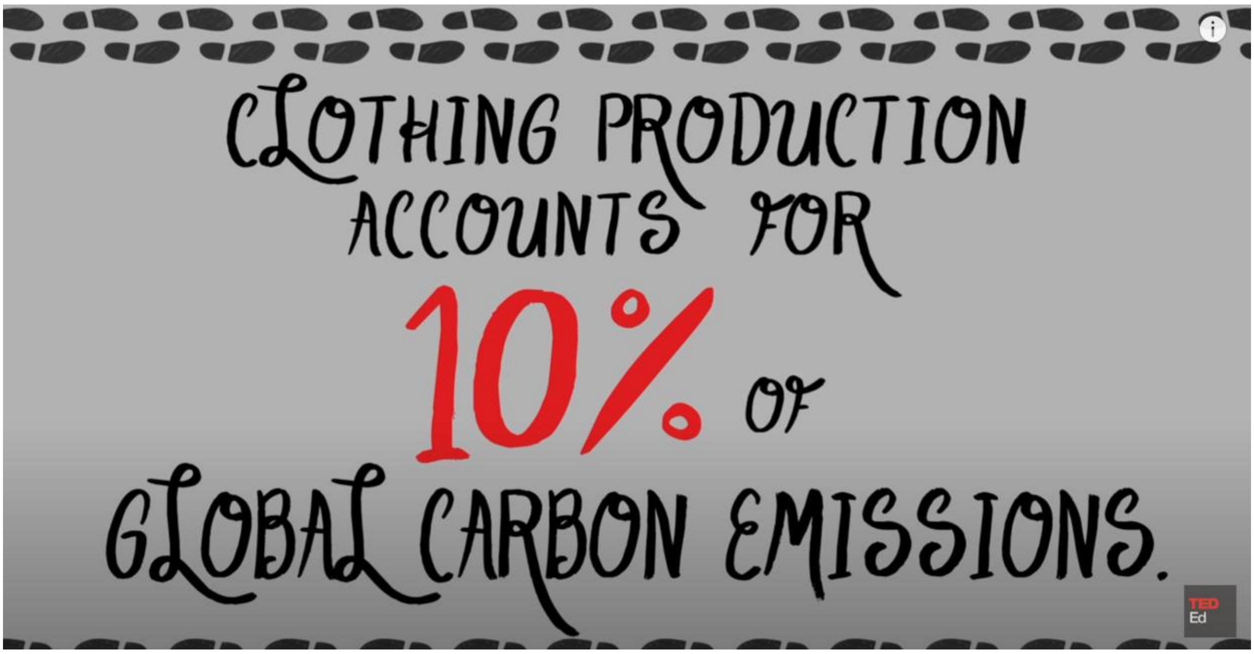

Figure 6: Screenshot of the sustainability stimulus video from TED-Ed for group 2.

6.1.2. The second set of questions

Next to the utilisation of videos as primary stimuli, the second set of questions for group 2 was used as a secondary stimulus. Here the interviewees were asked questions about their awareness of sustainability concerns in the fashion industry, as well as their shopping and consumption behaviour relating to sustainable fashion. In this way, priming the participants with specific thoughts and wordings ensures the stimulus effect. Hence, the second set of questions differed between the groups as previously elaborated. Moreover, questions directly relating to their consumption behaviour and decision-making process were asked to gain knowledge about the participants' predisposition.

Furthermore, these questions served as a second stimulus as suggested by Thompson-Schill & Kan (2001) to link sustainability with the participant's consumption and decision-making behaviour (Törrönen, 2002). This approach of applying a secondary stimulus with non-visual elicitation was used to support the interviewee in processing the stimulus, and to ensure the right anchoring and framing of the interview. The secondary prime moreover ensured the same modality of the stimulus for priming purposes, since the verbal cues and the interview style of these first questions matched the subsequently asked questions (van der Ven et al., 2017).

6.1.3. Interview guides

For the construction of the interview guide, the researchers closely followed Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi (2016) in order to allow for in-depth data collection, gaining a rich understanding about the research phenomena. With this in mind, the interview guides were semi-structured to obtain stringent answers revolving the research topic but to also allow for reciprocity between the interviewer and interviewee with regards to asking follow-up questions or individual explanations (Kallio et al., 2016). The two interview guides were designed based on the literature research conducted before the data collection about sustainability in fashion behaviour and consumption. This preparation ensured that the researchers had sufficient knowledge in the researched field to be complemented and expanded by the answers of the participants. Besides, the extensive research on the applied concepts of anchoring, framing and priming has been instrumental for the creation of the interview guides.

The pre-test shopping questions of the interview guide were used to get to know the interviewees general shopping behaviour and preferences in brands, products as well as online versus offline shopping. Moreover, the five most important decision-making criteria of the interviewee were inquired. This pre-test questioning allowed for getting to know the intended behaviour of the participant without actually being in the shopping environment and having to choose between actual products (Carrington et al., 2014). The questions were held general but enabled the interviewers to gain a preliminary understanding of the participants' fashion consumption patterns. The pre-test questions were held identical.

The second set of questions differed between the two groups since group two was primed with the second stimulus. While group two received questions regarding their perception of fashion sustainability, group one was asked a few more questions about their online shopping behaviour and general brand preferences.

During the experiment, the focus of the interview guides was to gain knowledge about three main pillars of information: the decision-making criteria, the onsite information search as well as the brand perception of the interviewee. These topics were picked to see if and how participants would search for sustainability information on the respective web stores, as well as, if and how this information would impact their decision-making. Moreover, the questions were used to guide the interviewee to focus on the three aspects during their web store visits. Both interview guides can be found in Appendix C.

Throughout the last set of questions, the participants were first asked to rank the visited web stores according to their preference and then based on the perceived sustainability of the brands. Lastly, all participants, regardless of the stimulus group, were asked how much they cared about sustainability in fashion.

6.1.4. Web store selection for the experiment

For the experiment, four web stores were selected to allow for observation of participants' interaction with the websites, as well as their general online shopping behaviour. These stores were selected as pairs so that two of them would be similar regarding price and product offering, as well as based on brand awareness. The pairs should be comparable in all these factors but differentiated through their take on sustainability. One of the selected pairs was H&M versus Zara as both are well known, have a very similar product offering and are generally in the same price range. However, H&M is branding itself as a sustainable fast fashion brand. It is starting to focus increasingly on sustainability and wants to become climate positive until 2030, using 100% recycled materials (H&M Group, 2020). This information is very visible and promoted on the product detail pages. H&M *conscious* line, which consists of sustainable garments, further promotes sustainability and is omnipresent on the H&M website.

Moreover, the main navigation menu has an explicit menu item for sustainability. Although Zara has comparable goals for the future (Shatzman, 2019), the website does not incorporate any information about the current sustainability of products, and there is no promoting of sustainable garments. Hence, it can be assumed that participants are well aware of H&M initiatives but would not perceive ZARA as sustainable.

For the second pair of brands “Reformation” and “by Malene Birger" were selected. These two brands are in the high-end price segment and less well known by consumers. Therefore, the assumption for this research was that the participants would not know these brands and would not have a pre-existing perception of the brands or any preference. Again, one of the brands - in this case, "Reformation" - has a stronger focus on sustainability that is very visible on their website. The brand only produces clothing from organic and recycled garments and puts sustainability at the core of their brand (Reformation.com, 2020a). All product detail pages show how sustainable every product is, including emission and resource savings through the production of the garment (Reformation.com, 2020b).

On the contrary, "by Malene Birger” does not brand itself as sustainable. Overall, they do not provide any information about the sustainability of their garments on their detail pages. The research showed that only one of the pages on “by Malene Birger” contained information about their sustainability practices (Bymalenebirger.com, 2020). However, finding this information would have required an extensive search by the participants.

6.2. Focus group design

The focus group, as the second qualitative method, was used to discuss the input obtained from the experiment. Moreover, it enabled the researchers to get further insights from the participants on the observed attitude-behaviour gap, industry changes required to drive more sustainable fashion consumption and responsibilities of different stakeholders. The interview guide for the group discussion included questions about how consumers could be influenced to buy more sustainably and how companies could promote their sustainable efforts without it coming across as greenwashing. Moreover, the group discussion focussed on the responsibility of different stakeholders such as companies, consumers, and government. In that last regard, both governmental regulations, as well as labels, were discussed as two main recurring topics. For the design of the focus group discussion, this research loosely follows the approaches by Breen (2006) and Krueger & Leader (2002).

6.2.1. Participant selection

The selection of the participants for the focus group followed the same criterion-based approach as for the experiment (Demarrais & Lapan, 2003). Again, the researchers searched for female participants from Generation Z. However, the selection was limited to people that did not participate in the prior experiment. The selected participants had different nationalities but were homogenous regarding their educational background and age (Krueger & Leader, 2002). Except for the moderators, which were known to some of the participants, participants did not know each other before the group discussion. Overall, six people were carefully selected for the group discussion based on their fit. These participants were incentivised by an informal setting of the meeting and catered with cake, coffee and tea.

6.2.2. Discussion procedure and guide

The focus group discussion was divided into three parts, the warm-up section, the main discussion, as well as the closing section. Research suggests that the warm-up session should be held rather informal and with the purpose of the development of a group belonging as well as creating an environment where the participants can engage in freely (Tarrant et al., 2016). A short introduction round helped participants getting to know each other, provided a relaxed atmosphere and ensured the psychological safety of the participants in the setting (Krueger & Leader, 2002). The following main discussion was used to obtain the input that the researcher needed and helped with answering the research question. Since the data from the experiments was analysed before the discussion, this part helped to supplement and clarify previously identified themes further (Krueger & Leader, 2002). The focus on the main point of the discussion should be the last third of the discussion in order to allow for precise answers and statements in the light of the prior discussed topics (Breen, 2006). The closing section should be primarily used to give the participants a chance to summarise their central points of the discussion and allow for general statements and questions.

Before commencing the discussion, the participants were notified and asked for approval to record the group discussion. First, in the warm-up section, the participants were welcomed and asked to be seated in a circle. They were offered cake as well as tea and coffee to facilitate a feeling of comfort and allow for first informal conversations. In the same vein, the first minutes of the warm-up section were dedicated to brief the participants on the input gained from the experiments. This briefing set the tone for the following discussion as proposed by both Breen (2006) and Krueger & Leader (2002).

Moreover, the participants were asked two initial questions: whether they find it challenging to live sustainability and if they deemed it as important in their lives. These initial questions were intended to provide context to the discussion and allow for the first interaction between the participants. An order of answering was established to ensure that everyone received the same time to speak and that no participant would be excluded from the discussion.

For the main discussion, the moderators spent a majority of the time probing for the participants' experiences and perceptions around sustainability in fashion consumptions and encouraged them to share ideas on the research topic (Breen, 2006). Participants were also asked to mention whether they agree or disagree with the positions of the other participants. In this part, the moderators focused on a limited number of open-ended questions concerning the attitude-behaviour gap and suggestions on how to bridge it. The questions were worded not to be leading the answers and predominantly asked for the participants' perceptions and opinions on the topic (Breen, 2006). Input and statements by the participants were often followed up by the moderators to get all participants involved and to lead the discussion in the direction of helping to answer the research question (Krueger & Leader, 2002).

Next to the reaction to recorded verbal cues, the moderators observed the discussion for non-verbal cues of the participants to see if they approved or disagreed on specific points of the discussion (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). Further, the moderators asked the participants to confirm their position verbally in order to enable a correct understanding of the non-verbal cues, as suggested by O.Nyumba et al. (2018). During this discussion, the second moderator also took notes of the observations and the reactions that the recording was not able to capture (Krueger & Leader, 2002). Only the last third of the main section was used by the moderators to actively engage with the participants on the topic of responsibilities of stakeholders in fashion, a key research area emerging from the experiments. Here the participants were asked to elaborate on what changes are required to happen in the industry and who was perceived as responsible: consumers, corporations or governments.

In the closing section, moderators had the chance to round up the discussion with the participants. Everyone was asked to give a closing statement, including the main points that they perceived as most relevant to the discussion. Moreover, the participants were given the opportunity to add any information they deemed relevant and ask final questions before the focus group discussion was concluded.

The whole procedure, had a time frame of just over an hour to keep the focus on the topic, avoiding digression by the participants. Furthermore, this chosen time frame was intended to mitigate fatigue and ensure the concentration and participation of the participants (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). The interview guide for the focus group discussion was closely following the above-described procedure and followed the guideline by Krueger & Leader(2002). The guide was structured after the three sections and kept relatively short, allowing for a wide range of input and discussion between the participants (Hennink, 2014). Moreover, it gave the moderators the chance to spend more time on the chosen topics and gain a thorough understanding of the participants' reflections. The discussion guide can be found in Appendix D.

6.3. Limitations of the research design

Qualitative research designs are well suited to simplify and manage data without destroying complexity and context (Ochieng, 2009). In this context, the used methods are helpful to answer questions where pre-emptive reduction of the data will prevent discovery (Ochieng, 2009). However, qualitative research also underlies certain limitations. The research design, other than quantitative research, does not try to assign frequencies to the observed behaviour and thus does not allow for the researcher to make assumptions about the statistical significance of the results (Ochieng, 2009). Moreover, this research does not answer whether the findings stemming from this research can be generalised and extended to all consumers. This non-generalizability is an inherent limitation for interviews, which were part of the experiment (Almeida et al., 2017). Therefore, the findings of this research would have to be tested with larger sample sizes following a quantitative method in order to validate or falsify them (Ochieng, 2009).

Also, this research is guided and examined through the lens of the researchers (Almeida et al., 2017). Both the data collection and analysis phase are, therefore limited by the ambiguity and interpretation of the researcher. Consequently, data could potentially be read in different ways and with different connotations depending on the researchers understanding and predisposition (Almeida et al., 2017; Ochieng, 2009). This ambivalence has been examined to be one of the underlying limitations of the critical realism paradigm in general (Danermark et al., 2019). With this in mind, the research design tried to ensure minimal ambiguity through the use of multiple participants for the experiments and conceded scrutiny in asking follow-up questions. However, it is safe to assume that this remains a limitation to some extent.

Another limitation, especially for the focus group discussion, is that the research was based on the participants' willingness to participate in the study. Since this research design relied on and encouraged individuals to take part in a study about fashion, it could potentially not be representative of non-participants (Almeida et al., 2017). In this light, the financial incentive further poses a potential limitation. This incentive could especially motivate opportunistic participants interested in receiving money. This underlying motivation could potentially influence the participants' behaviour or bias the given answers.

7. Data analysis and findings

Next to amassing the data through the examined qualitative methods, the analysis of the data through sophisticated tools is a necessity to systematically structure the input data for a later presentation of the findings. Therefore, the following section will elaborate on the chosen approach for the data analysis of the inputs gained from the qualitative experiment as well as from the focus group discussion.

7.1. Analysis approach

Finding a suitable analysis approach highly depends on the form of the collected data (Krueger & Leader 2002, Attride-Stirling 2001). Since the chosen research design enabled the researcher to collect both textual and observational cues, the following section incorporates an analysis of both these types of data. From the experiment, most of the data was gained by interviewing the participants. Therefore, interviews were analysed through coding, based on different emerging themes leading to thematic networks following (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Next to this, the observations that the researchers made while conducting the experiment, as well as the exhibited behaviour on the web stores, were converted into notes to code the data alongside the interview transcripts (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016; Heyman et al., 2014; Musante & DeWalt, 2010). This approach of processing both the non-textual/non-verbal cues of the observations in correspondence with the textual cues allowed for a more wholesome and exact analysis of the input data. Thereby, also the richness of the findings and the subsequent discussion of these was ensured. For the focus group discussion, the analysis again followed Krueger &Leader (2002), the same coding approach as for the qualitative experiment in order to provide the same rigour and accuracy of the analysis as for the experiments. Furthermore, this ensured consistency in the analysis and comparability of the results of the qualitative experiment and the focus group discussion.

7.1.1. Analysis of the qualitative experiment

As examined by Attride-Stirling (2001), the thematic network analysis can be used to organise and structure the analysis of qualitative data and seeks to uncover pertinent themes within the researched topic. For this, the interviews need to be deconstructed to extract and generate themes at different levels of the interview transcripts. The network analysis systemises the extraction on three levels: (1) lowest order (basic) themes that are explicit in the interviews, (2) organising themes which are used to categorise the basic themes and group together more abstract topics, and (3) global themes which are super-ordinate, and incorporate the principal metaphors and textual contents of the interviews. This method allowed for the extraction of commonalities and key topics, as well as opinions that were voiced by participants in the experiments (Attride-Stirling, 2001). These three levels can be depicted as networks to show the interrelation of the themes, as done in Figure 7.

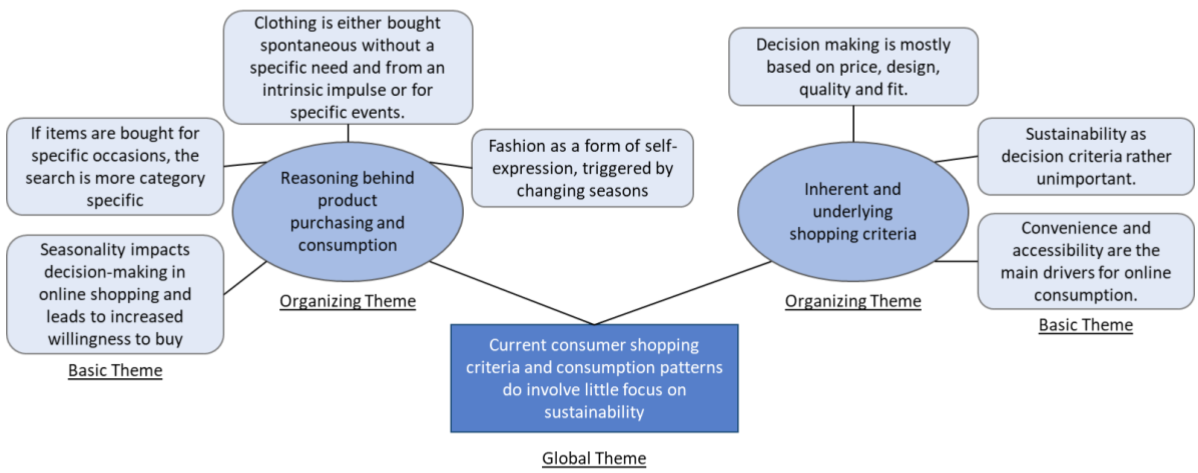

Figure 7: Example of a thematic network as outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001)

Following Attride-Stirling (2001), the basic theme as the lowest-order theme is a statement made by the interviewee, which contributes towards the meaning and context of a super-ordinate theme. For the basic theme to make sense beyond its literal meaning, the context of the other grouped basic themes is necessary. Together, these basic themes make up one organising theme. The organising theme as the middle-order theme organises the basic, relatable themes. Attride-Stirling (2001) defines them as "clusters of signification that summarise the principal assumptions of a group of basic themes, so they are more abstract and more revealing of what is going on in the texts" (p.389). They are also the base for the claims of the global themes and group the most prevalent ideas arising from the interviews. As the top-order theme, the global themes draw claims and metaphors from the raw data. The global themes give insight on arguments and positions about the topic, arising from the gained data input - in this case, foremost about consumer behaviour in sustainability. The global themes summarise the interviews and are substantiated by the lower order themes. Next to a summary, they are also an interpretation of the gained data in that they are dependent on the researchers' analysis and thematic clustering (Attride-Stirling, 2001). As the top-order theme, they are in the centre of the thematic network.

In a first step, the interviews were coded to reduce the data, resulting in the issues discussed. The interview guides laid the foundation for the coding framework with the topics of the interview questions being used as codes. Besides, recurring interviewee subjects and matters that were not matching these were added as codes to the coding framework. This method led to a total of 27 codes that were used to dissect all interview transcripts into segments with the same context (column 1 of table 3). Based on the coding, the discussed issues were grouped and enabled for the identification of the basic themes. Therefore, in the second step, 36 issues were identified and abstracted in which significant and common answers from the participants emerged and first patterns of the interview answers were unearthed (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The identified themes then were refined to a total of 36 themes that were mutually exclusive but still containing all sets of topics from the interviews. For that reason, the final themes went through multiple iterations in order to incorporate all codes and discussed issues (column 3, table 3, Attride-Stirling, 2001). For the construction of the themes, the researchers focused on commonalities throughout all interviews and homogenous, recurring answers regarding the participants understanding of sustainability, fashion consumption, shopping and sustainability behaviours and their opinions on responsibilities of stakeholders. This method was applied to both experiment groups.

Codes (Step 1)	***(Issues discussed)***	***Themes Identified (Step 2)***
¬ Decision Making Criteria ¬ Product Preferences ¬ Drivers	• Quality • Price • Fit • Design • Brands • Materials • Convenience • Accessibility • Sustainability	1. Decision making is mostly based on price, design, quality and fit. 2. Sustainability as decision criteria rather unimportant. 3. Convenience and accessibility are the main drivers for online consumption.
¬ Choice ¬ Needs	• Seasonality • Special events (weddings, sport etc) • Intrinsic motivation • Spontaneity • Impulse	4. Clothing is either bought spontaneous without a real need and from an intrinsic impulse or for specific events. 5. If items are bought for specific occasions, the search is more category specific 6. Seasonality impacts decision making in online shopping and leads to increased willingness to buy 7. Fashion as a form of self-expression, triggered by changing seasons

¬ Online ¬ Offline ¬ Shopping ¬ Search	• Time spent • Monetary expenditure • Frequency • Preferences • Product search • Trying on products	8. The extend in use of online shopping differs significantly between participants. 9. Online shopping is often used as preliminary information search. 10. Online shopping often leads to impulse buying rather than category search. 11. Need for the product to fit well can lead to preference for offline shopping (high perceived cost of sending products back). 12. However, free returns increase the convenience and leads to online shopping preference.
¬ Brand ¬ Branded products ¬ Product selection	• Brand preference • Brand perception • Product categories • Product offering	13. Brands are an important factor for online and offline shopping preferences. 14. Brands give consumer trust and high perceived value/quality of products; expensive and local brands are perceived as more sustainable. 15. Clearly perceived positive correlation between price and sustainability of brands. 16. Known brands offer guaranteed fit and familiarity of the materials/quality of the product 17. Stores with broad product offering and variety are preferred online -> one-stop-shop
¬ Product information ¬ Product composition ¬ Product design	• Garments • Production • Origin	18. Product origin and production is not important for decision-making 19. Material composition shows strong preference for non synthetic fibers. 20. Perceive expensive brands to be more ethical and sustainable in their production
¬ Sustainability of fashion ¬ Brand sustainability practices ¬ Ethical brands ¬ Ethical companies	• Ethical brands • Sustainable production • Brand sustainability • Organic materials	21. Participants are aware of sustainability issues in production of clothing 22. Setting high standards in production can be a good marketing opportunity (Patagonia) 23. Companies will need to avoid scandals, thus need to engage in sustainable practices 24. Greenwashing is common practice across the industry 25. See sustainable product as often expensive and difficult to access and obtain.
¬ Fashion consumption ¬ Fashion lifecycle ¬ Fashion use	• Fast fashion • Second-hand • Washing garments	26. Most participants tend to buy substantial amounts of fast fashion products. 27. Most participants buy second-hand product to a certain extent; however sustainability is not the driver for second-hand consumption (vintage trend). 28. Participants are not aware or concerned with the fashion lifecycle or washing materials.
¬ Personal sustainability practices ¬ Buying Behaviour ¬ Intention	• Personal behaviour • Awareness • Perceived importance of sustainability • Individual actions • Decrease in consumption	29. Sustainability of fashion is generally not a differentiating factor for consumption 30. Participants would wish ethical decision criteria had more of an impact in their own consumption 31. Participants mostly act through consuming less fast fashion, less online shopping, less returning 32. Anti-consumption is the main effort to increase sustainability
¬ Responsibility ¬ Consciousness	• Corporations • Consumers • Government • Regulation • Industry Shifts • Scandals	33. Participants see regulation and governmental involvement as a necessary step to force more ethical consumption 34. Consumers vote with their money and actions on how company's act 35. Participants see that moving from high quantity to high quality of goods could help 36. Corporate involvement and transparency in practices as driven by regulations are deemed necessary due to mistrust in brands.

Table 3: First two steps from coding to the basic themes as outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001)

In a third step, the basic themes were grouped, building thematic networks. From the 36 basic themes, the organising themes were assembled based on the conceptual contents, their correspondence and thematic consensus (column 2, table 4, Attride-Stirling, 2001). This grouping allowed the researcher to identify and explicitly state the underlying issues of the basic themes and to combine them thematically. Based on the nine organising themes, five global themes were deducted and formulated into claims as proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001). These global themes summarise the propositions of both the basic and organising themes (column 3, table 4, Attride-Stirling, 2001). The description and insights from the thematic networks as step 4 and 5 of the analysis process will follow in the next section. All depictions of the five corresponding networks can be found in Appendix E.

Themes Identified (Step 2)	***Organizing themes***	***Global themes***
01. Decision making is mostly based on price, design, quality and fit. 02. Sustainability as decision criteria rather unimportant. 03. Convenience and accessibility are the main drivers for online consumption.	Inherent and underlying shopping criteria	Current consumer shopping criteria and consumption patterns do involve little focus on sustainability
04. Clothing is either bought spontaneous without a real need and from an intrinsic impulse or for specific events. 05. If items are bought for specific occasions, the search is more category specific 06. Seasonality impacts decision making in online shopping and leads to increased willingness to buy 07. Fashion as a form of self-expression, triggered by changing seasons	Reasoning behind product purchasing and consumption	
08. The extend in use of online shopping differs significantly between participants. 09. Online shopping is often used as preliminary information search. 10. Online shopping often leads to impulse buying rather than category search. 11. Need for the product to fit well can lead to preference for offline shopping (high perceived cost of sending products back). 12. However, free returns increase the convenience and leads to online shopping preference.	Consumer behaviour on online versus offline shopping sales channels	Consumer spent happens across channels and brands with different impact on sustainability
13. Brands are an important factor for online and offline shopping preferences. 14. Brands give consumer trust and high perceived value/quality of products; expensive and local brands are perceived as more sustainable. 15. Clearly perceived positive correlation between price and sustainability of brands. 16. Known brands offer guaranteed fit and familiarity of the materials/quality of the product 17. Stores with broad product offering and variety are preferred online -> one-stop-shop	Branding as driver of spending allocation and choice of sales channel	
18. Participants are aware of sustainability issues in production of clothing 19. Product origin and production is not important for decision-making 20. Material composition shows strong preference for non synthetic fibres.	Product sourcing	Ethical and sustainability issues in operations are not yet transparent for the consumer to shift spending towards more ethical consumption
21. Setting high standards in production can be a good marketing opportunity (Patagonia) 22. Companies will need to avoid scandals, thus need to engage in sustainable practices 23. Perceive expensive brands to be more ethical and sustainable in their production 24. Perception that greenwashing is common practice across the industry	Corporate communication and transparency	

25. See sustainable product as often expensive and difficult to access and obtain.		
26. Most participants tend to buy substantial amounts of fast fashion products. 27. Most participants buy second-hand product to a certain extent; however, sustainability is not the driver for second-hand consumption (vintage trend). 28. Participants are not aware or concerned with the fashion lifecycle or washing materials.	Consumer fashion consumption with regard to product	Consumers are not well educated on sustainability issues in fashion consumption
29. Sustainability of fashion is generally not a differentiating factor for consumption 30. Participants would wish ethical decision criteria had more of an impact in their own consumption 31. Participants mostly act through consuming less fast fashion, less online shopping, less returning 32. Anti-consumption is the main effort to increase sustainability	Consumer behaviour with regards to ethical and sustainable fashion	
33. Participants see regulation and governmental involvement as a necessary step to force more ethical consumption 34. Consumers vote with their money and actions on how company's act 35. Participants see that moving from high quantity to high quality of goods could help 36. Corporate involvement and transparency in practices as driven by regulations are deemed necessary due to mistrust in brands.	Stakeholder responsibilities	Multiple stakeholders (consumers, companies, governments) must be held responsible for enhancing ethicality in the fashion industry

Table 4: The deduction of global themes as the third step following Attride-Stirling (2001)

7.1.2. Observation analysis

Since the approach by Attride-Stirling (2001) only relies on textual cues and does not incorporate non-verbal cues - such as the exhibited behaviour of the participants during the experiment - this research makes complementing the use of participant observation analysis. Following Aagaard & Matthiesen (2016), the observations of the researchers have to be included in the analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of the textual cues in combination with the physical appearance and actions of the individuals. Therefore, the observations of the researchers during the interviews as well as from the screen recordings, were noted down. Following Musante & DeWalt (2010), the researchers' observations are already being analysed by the observer during the data collection and selectively written down in field notes. The data is already being reduced from the beginning, as the researchers consciously and sub-consciously selectively chose phenomena and aspects to note down, limiting data input (Musante & DeWalt, 2010).

Moreover, re-watching the videos helped the researchers in noticing and understanding the observations and decisions as undertaken by the participants on a deeper level. This re-watching also ensured a more accurate analysis of the textual cues and an increased accuracy of the interpretation of the participants' actions, overall decreasing misunderstandings and biases (Musante & DeWalt, 2010). After the transcription of the observations into textual cues, they were analysed in the same way as the interview data. Therefore, when constructing the organising themes and global themes of the interview analysis, the observations of the researchers were assigned to the corresponding basic themes and included in the conception of the global themes.

7.1.3. Analysis of the focus group discussion

The experiment-interviews were analysed before holding the focus group, to enable sharing of insights from the experiment during the discussion. For this reason, the analysis of the focus group was done in a subsequent step. The analysis followed the same approach as outlined for the experiment since the input data from the group discussion – both textual and observational – fitted the analysis approach (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Musante & DeWalt, 2010). The data analysis leads to the emergence of 14 new basic themes, 4 new organising themes and 2 new global themes. Since the discussed topics strongly coincided with the topics from the experiment, the themes that emerged from both data collections are not mutually exclusive but allowed for the collection of more detailed input and a better understanding of the industry from a consumer standpoint.

Moreover, it enabled the focus group to concentrate on specific topics or themes for which the data input from the experiment needed additional substantiation. As a result, themes from the focus group analysis enhanced the understanding of some aspects of already analysed themes from the experiments. The following section examines this correlation of the themes from both data collection methods. Additionally, Table 5 shows the data analysis and themes from the focus group.

Themes Identified (Step 2)	*Organizing themes*	*Global themes*
01. Governmental involvement needed to set standards 02. Regulation as well as other control mechanisms are needed to show consumer how sustainable and ethical brands are 03. Clear and transparent guidelines to be able to distinguish between greenwashing and actual sustainable behaviour 04. Potentially labelling by NGO's could be a basis for consumers to build trust in practices and transparency	Government regulation and forming a basis for companies to act on	Government regulation with company involvement is a need to drive sustainability and ethical behaviour and make better products available

05. Companies must be more involved in regulations 06. Own initiatives for pushing sustainability as a decision making criterium and to innovate/differentiate from competition 07. Companies should market more with a focus on sustainable practices (incorporate this into store design/ communication) 08. This could be an advantage for companies to meet future decision-making criteria and to market products differently.	Company involvement and initiatives as well as change in product marketing	
09. Consumers will need more information that they can trust in order to behave sustainably 10. Product information should contain the impact of production both online and offline 11. Through transparency the consumer will be able to shift the spend accordingly	Product information readily available and transparent for consumer	Closing the gap between attitude and behaviour of the consumers needs education and transparency
12. Consumers need more information about the use phase and lifecycle of the products to act sustainably 13. Washing and drying practices would need to be reviewed 14. Consumers need to be educated and enabled to recycle and reuse materials	Educating the consumer on the right uses and on the product lifecycle	

Table 5: The deduction of the global themes from the focus group discussion

7.2. Findings of the data analysis

This section will highlight the main findings of both the qualitative experiment as well as the focus group discussion on the research topic. It will follow the structure of the global themes from the data analysis and elaborate on the interconnection between them. Some general findings and observations from the experiment will be examined, alongside the approach of applying the two different stimuli.

7.2.1. Findings of the qualitative experiment

Sustainable product as a decision-making criterion

The first finding of the research was that sustainability currently did not play a vital role for the participants as a shopping criterion when it comes to product preferences. When being asked about their decision-making criteria, most participants from both the neutral stimulus group as well as the sustainability stimulus group did not name sustainability of the product as a criterium. While four participants voiced sustainability as a decision-making criterion, this was only a hard criterium for one of them. This participant was also the only one to display the corresponding behaviour during the visits to the four different web stores (CV_N). She boycotted fast fashion brands, stating that she "wouldn't even look" at what they offer. For her, sustainability meant buying few, high-quality items that could be used for several years. Important to mention is, that contrary to the rest of the participants she did not consider herself price sensitive. The other three participants mentioned sustainability as a decision criterium, stating "it is an added plus for me if they engage in sustainable behaviour or in organic [products]" (SS_S) or "a brand that from the start is more sustainable, has better quality products" (PM_N). However, these participants did not display consistent behaviour during their actual decision-making process by, for example, searching for sustainability-related product information during the website visits. Moreover, they did not pick sustainable products throughout their customer journey, although available.

Instead, the prevalent decision-making criteria were price, style, fit and quality of the goods. Moreover, seasonality and trends were highlighted as reasons for repeated fashion consumption of the participants as well as shopping for specific occasions. As one of the participants explained, "I think they have like two collections per week coming out" which "triggers [people] when [one] sees there is something new, now there is something you need to have" (CH_S). However, many participants stated that the actual need for certain products was one of their five main decision-making criteria and that they would not buy the product if they deemed it as unnecessary. Nevertheless, the participants did not affiliate this with sustainability strives but with budget constraints or opportunity costs. In this regard, one participant stated: "Do I really need this [product] or do I want to go on vacation instead" (SA_N).

During the experiment, all participants of group two, primed with sustainability, commented more on sustainability in general and as a decision making criterium and deemed it as universally important. However, this did not translate into their actual shopping behaviour. One participant expressed that for her "sustainability is a factor, although [she] shops fast fashion, but that is more out of [price] restrictions" (CH_S), being aware of this inconsequent behaviour and its impacts. The main reasons for this behaviour were the perceived lack of power to make a difference "I know it's shitty, but I still do it... And that is the majority of people" (CH_S), higher price-points and the missing product variety. Some of the participants expressed the wish that sustainability would become more vital for them in their future decision-making. In this regard, one of the participants also mentioned “I think … if I would have the budget for it and I could afford to do it, I would definitely do it” (LS_S).

Furthermore, when being asked about where they would spend their own money, the choice between the web stores was generally not driven by sustainability criteria but by style, seasonality and price. However, when asked how they would spend the 500 DKK gift card, some participants picked a sustainable store option. They were willing to “put some extra money in it, because if it is a good product ... [there is] no need to engage into more fast fashion” (CH_S) and spend the gifted money on “more luxurious [products] than I would normally do with my own money” (SA_N).

Impact of sustainability practices across sales channels and brands on consumer behaviour

The second finding and global theme from the data analysis was that consumer spent across online and offline channels is strongly affected by brand preference, without consumers caring about the underlying sustainability practices. However, online brand preference was found to not be about the brand name, but rather about being familiar with the product fit and quality. In regard to sales channels, the preference for online versus offline sales channels differed significantly between the participants, but all mentioned that they are engaging in both sales channels to a certain degree.

Most participants expressed a preference for online sales-channels due to convenience, product offering and variety. Although some of the participants were aware of the adverse impact of transportation and product returns, convenience and the broad online product variety outweighed participants' sustainability concerns in their decision-making. Most participants mentioned that they were buying a variety of products online and that they returned most of them, completely ignoring their sustainability concerns. In this regard, one participant elaborated "I often buy three sizes and then try them on and then send two back" (MK_N). In contrast to those participants mostly buying online, some of the participants described their engagement in online shopping as preliminary product research. They viewed returns to be too time consuming and unsustainable and mentioned difficulties with the personal fit and sizing of the products as arguments for their offline purchase preference. Related to that, one participant stated: "I prefer to feel the clothes and try them on right away" (MK_N).

Regarding the notion of online information search, some of the participants read through some of the product information. However, the participants only used a few seconds to scan over the information. Although they found most information on the product pages interesting, participants generally did not change their preferences between sustainable and unsustainable products. Overall, participants perceived the extent of information as overwhelming, with one participant commenting that "nobody goes in and reads a full page when they want to just go shopping" (CH_S). Moreover, the information, e.g. for H&M, was perceived as not transparent and was met with distrust. One participant elaborated "there is no real information on why this product is sustainable" (CH_S) and another one assessed "if it says conscious without info, then I think it is a marketing thing" (SS_S). The participants saw the additional information on sustainable products as lacking a clear foundation, not allowing them to assess the actual sustainability of the product and "thus would not be effective in getting [her] to buy it" (SS_S). On the contrary, participants positively received Reformation's infographic on, e.g. CO2 savings for each product, and its material rating. Albeit this being the case, the participants did not mention to be influenced in their decision making by the additional information.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted a correlation between sales channels and brand preferences with regard to product availability. The branding aspect would impact trust in the quality and fit of the products bought online since participants relied on prior knowledge with the brand and their products. This aspect was also observed during the website interaction, where the participants knew which sizes from H&M or Zara would fit due to prior purchases. When asked about their online shopping behaviour, the participants also preferred online retailers with a broad portfolio of different brands such as ASOS and Zalando next to the big fast fashion retail brands like Zara and H&M. Here, choice and price comparison were prevalent for the choice of the online retailer. In this regard, participants criticised sustainable products were criticised, stating that there was no website collecting various sustainable brands to facilitate a price comparison. Furthermore, participants declared their preference for categories such as sustainable or non-sustainable, so that one could immediately make a choice. Moreover, some participants expressed the wish of having the same product offered both sustainably and non-sustainably so that one could choose without having to give up style.

Consumer awareness of ethical and environmental issues in the fashion industry

The third global theme evolving from the analysis highlighted participants' awareness of issues within the production/ sourcing of products and the operations of the fashion industry. In this regard, participants were aware of misconducts in production processes as one participant mentioned a need for a "more ecological friendly way, but also [appropriate] human labour conditions" (LS_S). However, this awareness only resulted in very superficial knowledge about these misconducts and was not attributed to specific brands or retailers. This superficiality of knowledge also led to a very incoherent perception of how sustainable fashion consumption would look like in practice. In general, sustainability had different meanings for the participants. For one participant, engaging in sustainable behaviour meant "organic production of [clothing items]" (CH_S), for other participants, sustainability meant second hand, high quality or anti-consumption. In regard to fashion production, the only aspect most participants cared about was the material/fibre of the product, with a clear preference for cotton and other non-synthetic fibres.

Albeit their awareness, most participants found it difficult to act according to their attitudes. One issue was that participants felt that their actions would make no difference. One participant described it as "because subconsciously, I think everybody [thinks] I can't make a change anyway" (CH_S). However, participants would want to change their behaviour if they would see a direct positive impact of their actions on sustainability or working conditions. One participant mentioned that she would support initiatives if "you see … pictures of the worker in Bangladesh, and then it says something like, by purchasing you [will] help" (SS_S). Another factor impacting participants' behaviour was that even if they wanted to consume fashion sustainably, they would not know how and where to purchase it. Participants felt that there is generally not sufficient information to know what product is and isn't sustainable. They were missing a clear definition of sustainability by the different retailers and also perceived the existing definitions as inconsistent. Participants saw the dilemma that "if [companies] say that they're very sustainable … in some way or another they are not, … but as a consumer, [you] will not be able to find out" (CV_N). In this regard, participants expressed distrust incorporate sustainability initiatives and considered the industry in general as being non-transparent and not forthcoming about issues and malpractices. Some participants also perceived sustainability initiatives as branding rather than doing good.

Next to this, the experiments showed that corporate communication and branding play a role in participants' perception of sourcing and production processes. In this regard, participants stated that setting high ethical and environmental standards and effectively communicating these practices would be seen as a good marketing objective for brands. Also, the avoidance of scandals was considered a necessity for the future, for which more ethical and environmentally friendly practices were expected. However, several of the participants were doubtful that companies and brands would be able to make this and not come across as greenwashing, due to the current non-transparency of their practices. As already previously observed, branding also affected how corporate practices were perceived, with participants perceiving expensive brands as more ethical and sustainable in their practices.

Participant education and actions concerning product purchasing and use phase

The fourth global theme, as identified through the analysis, evolved around the knowledge and education of the participants regarding the environmental and social impacts and issues of their consumption patterns. Moreover, it unearthed the participants' understanding of sustainable consumption. Most participants acknowledged that they knew little about the practices of fast fashion brands and the negative externalities of the participants' behaviour, but also deemed this on the perceived lack of power and choice of the consumers to shift their spend as aforementioned. In this aspect, some participants talked about potential ways to lessen their impact such as through buying second-hand clothing or more generally lowering their consumption. One participant argued that the consumers "vote with their dollar" and that in her decision-making process, she asks herself "do I really need this? So, from a consumption perspective, I try to save a bit" (FSH_S). Although buying second-hand was mentioned as one factor in lowering the impact of fashion consumption, the main driver behind second-hand consumption was the unique look of the products. Here one participant mentioned "I try to go maybe first [to a second-hand market] and see what I can find. And then if I don't find what I want, .. I go shopping" (RD_S). Being asked about the impact during the use phase and product lifecycle, the participants, in general, acknowledged that they were not well informed. Only one participant said she knew about it, stating "I obviously know that it is better for [the clothes] to … air dry it, but out of comfort and convenience I still put it in the dryer", further elaborating that she "might be informed about it but [does not] act accordingly" (LS_S). Other than this, the participants were not aware of other potential impacts of their behaviour during the product use phase. As it relates to the overall product lifecycle, some of the participants named product recycling as a way to lessen the impact of fashion consumption. However, none of the participants stated that they actually engage in recycling the materials. Nevertheless, the participant with a strong sustainability engagement in fashion favoured products that were made just out of one fibre since "it is a lot easier to recycle if [the material] is not blended" (CV_N).

Overall, when asking participants about their current actions to lower their negative impact, they primarily elaborated on lowering consumption and purchasing higher quality goods. One participant outlined it as “start asking for more quality and buy less quantity” while leaving it to the brands to become more sustainable (RD_S), whereas another one commented “I am trying to limit myself, really, because I don't think I need that much stuff” and “trying to go [shopping] as little as possible” (SM_N).

Participants view on responsibility for enhancing sustainability in fashion.

Several participants mentioned that it is very difficult for consumers to act sustainably in fashion consumption due to lack of transparency of the industry and the common practices, but also elaborated on a lack of responsibility and actions by different stakeholders. Ultimately, the participants wished for more government and corporate involvement to enable the consumer with shifting spend. Increased involvement of these stakeholders could lead to more industry transparency for the consumers to act upon. In this regard, one participant elaborated "governments need to … deploy regulations and laws that prohibit the really bad behaviour of companies and companies need to also work on it themselves" and "in that sense, I think the consumers must be given a direction" (CH_S). Overall, the participants agreed that it would need the responsibility and conjoint efforts of those three stakeholders to make the industry practices more sustainable but differed in who the driver of this change should be. Many participants saw the responsibility mainly on the governmental site arguing that "the sort of the stakeholder that has the highest power [and] that can immediately change a lot, is the government" (SS_S) and that "regulations… trigger a process which then goes to the consumers and to the companies". Following this assessment, the government as stakeholder was seen as the starting point for a potential industry change, also indicating that companies would most probably be reactive than proactive on changing their behaviour.

In addition, the participants saw business responsibility mainly in bringing sustainable products to the market but did not believe that companies would necessarily engage in this based on ulterior motives. Referring to this, one participant mentioned that at "a [low] price range probably nothing is hundred per cent sustainable" (LS_S) also indicating that companies would only commit to sustainable practices at higher price points. Next to the product dimension, the participants saw it as a responsibility of brands to become more transparent in their practices.

Commenting on consumer responsibilities, the participants examined this to be a subsequent step to industry changes as well as governmental regulation, sustainable consumption at the current state was not perceived feasible. Generally, the participants did not see the responsibility mainly on the consumer site other than to “start asking for more quality and buy less quantity” while leaving it to the brands to become more sustainable. First, the availability of sustainable products would need to change in order for consumers to be responsible for buying sustainably. On another note, one participant mentioned: "as consumers, yes, we do have the responsibility" and the “power to change by putting money towards products" (FSH_S). Albeit this understanding, she acknowledged that she engaged in buying fast fashion products and did not act sustainable or responsible in her consumption. Here she said that for a lower price, she was willing to "sacrifice a part of the ethical journey of a [product]" (FSH_S).

7.2.2. General insights from the data analysis and observations

In general, the group primed with the sustainability stimulus voiced more concerns regarding sustainability and went more into depth regarding their answers. The observations also showed that this group looked for more sustainability information on the websites and some participants commented that this information was missing for the decision-making process. From the neutral stimulus group, only one participant was very concerned about sustainability and stated that she did not buy sustainably. The remaining participants of the group did either not mention sustainability concerns at all or only when being exposed to sustainability information, e.g. during the web store visit of 'Reformation', that visibly displayed information of the brands' sustainability practices. At that point of the experiment, the displayed information even primed the neutral stimulus group to talk about sustainability.

In general, the experiment also showed that the participants assumed expensive products and brands to be more sustainable. Albeit not having searched for sustainability information, the more expensive brands visited during the experiment were generally ranked better in the participants' perception of sustainability.

7.2.3. Findings of the focus group discussion

The group discussion evolved around a different set of themes than the prior held experiments. The focal point of the discussion was about the changes the industry would have to face in order to foster more sustainable consumption and close the attitude behaviour gap in consumers. During the discussion, the participants overall agreed to the findings of the experiment. They confirmed the view that more government regulation is needed, while corporations should take more responsibility, with consumer responsibility being largely dependent on the institutional context provided by government and business. These stakeholder responsibilities, as mentioned by the participants, will be dissected in the following.

Government regulation with company involvement needed to drive sustainable practices

The first global theme analysed was that governments and corporations have to work together closely to drive sustainability and ethical behaviour as well as to make more conscious products available. From an industry aspect, the participants shared a distrust in companies and fast fashion brands committing to sustainability practices with one participant questioning "how can you guarantee that these products are actually sustainable" (5.30). Also, regarding products from, e.g. H&M who promote their sustainability, the participants showed a distrust stating, "I don't trust these labels" (5.46). Therefore, participants proposed explicit government involvement with setting standards and regulations for the industry that would form a basis for companies to act upon. These would also make the actual practices controllable and measurable regarding their impact. This control would be the first step to make consumers "believe in these privately organised labels" (23.10) and to enable consumers to shift to products they can evaluate regarding their sustainability. Next to this, having a control function for the industry would make greenwashing more difficult. Thus, it would benefit the companies that are acting according to high standards as consumers would gain awareness of the practices of the industry. In this regard, the participants agreed that impartial non-governmental institutions could also fulfil this control function.

These regulations were seen as a potential opportunity for companies rather than a threat or condemnation. Companies could potentially create a trend and market their products as sustainable. Participants named the brand 'Patagonia' as an example for a company with good marketing and high customer loyalty by being "innovative, and … playing on emotions" (47:20). Other companies, was argued, could capture the shifting spend by adjusting to new regulations and make sustainability a main selling point. Related to this strategy, participants argued "I can see it working on me" (47:35). However, this consumer trust potentially could be lost in an instance through malpractice or scandals as consumers would be "expecting a lot more from this company" (48:00). In addition to adapting their products, the participants argued that companies could make use of the opportunity through adopting new and innovative business models. Participants mentioned sharing clothes or repairs to capture additional spend and to create more customer touchpoints as examples.

Closing the attitude behaviour gap needs education and transparency.

As the second global theme from the focus group decision, the behaviour and responsibility of consumers, as opposed to the governmental and corporate stakeholders, were analysed. In this regard, the participants mentioned that for getting consumers to buy more sustainably, they needed to be educated better and therefore would need more available transparent information. However, the participants also acknowledged that this information would need to be easy to follow and understand. For this purpose, several different visualisations were examined, such as "labelling with CO2 impact" (28:20) on the products or "colours … like ranges of green" (29:00) for different sections of the store design to make the sustainability of the products easily understandable. However, the participants did not conclude a preferred option for the visualisation. Another participant also mentioned a "traffic light system" (30:10) for the products themselves to enable consumers to gain awareness of the impact of their consumption. This system would facilitate consumers to integrate sustainability into their decision making and would make them aware of sustainability during their shopping experience. Hence, the participants agreed that such a system could bear the potential to close the attitude behaviour gap. In this regard, one participant elaborated on going even further by not giving consumers a choice but making sustainability a pre-requisite with "only sustainable" product options (22.15).

Next to educating the consumer at the point of sales, the participants identified a need to be better informed on the impacts of their practices throughout the entire product lifecycle. In this regard, participants highlighted their unawareness related to their impact on sustainability during the use phase, through, for example, washing and drying their clothes. Although most participants knew about the unsustainability of tumble drying and tried to avoid using it, some participants still used it out of convenience, arguing "you have to just dry your clothes" (8:30). They also mentioned that many consumers would find it too time-consuming and difficult to, e.g. dry clean their high quality and expensive clothes or get them repaired instead of buying new clothing. Under this aspect, the participants agreed that most consumers would need to reduce laundry consumption, washing their clothes only when necessary.

As a third point, the participants discussed the lack of education and infrastructure to enable recycling and reuse of apparel products in general. They agreed that recycling of materials would be a necessity to make fashion consumption sustainable. It would not only help to reduce emissions in the resource extraction phase but also reduce waste. Although it was deemed as one of the most important steps, the participants criticised that there was no notable recycling infrastructure that would enable them to engage in recycling. Moreover, they criticised that there is too little information or education from fashion companies on how to engage sustainably accurately.

7.3. Summary of the findings

In line with Yildiz et al. (2015) the findings of this thesis suggest that sustainability and fashion are not strongly linked in consumers' mind. Whilst there is a general awareness of the negative social and environmental impact of the fashion industry, they lack an understanding of where these impacts arise and how they are related to consumption behaviour. This ambiguity about what sustainable fashion consumption means, leads to individual interpretations, primarily considering the production practices of fashion items and the quantity and frequency of purchasing. A considerable blind spot in consumer's minds is hereby the use-phase and the disposal of items, which falls under the consumer's control.

Overall, the participants showed to be unaware of the influential role they played through their consumption behaviour and did not concede their personal responsibility. Nevertheless, even when they did express sustainability concerns, it did not translate into actual behaviour, aligning with the findings from prior studies about the attitude-behaviour gap. Here the research suggests that price, style, fit, and quality, precede sustainability concerns. Most notably the perceived higher cost, as well as the lack of variety and availability causes sustainable product alternatives to be shunned. Fast fashion engagement is reasoned to be inevitable, whilst sustainability of the products or brands is considered a dispensable, added plus. Furthermore, the ambiguity of what constitutes sustainable fashion consumption, alongside a perceived lack of transparency and actionable information prevents consumers from making an informed decision.

Consequently, the participants elude themselves from the responsibility, on the grounds that they are powerless to make a difference as consumer behaviour is institutionalised. Instead, an inherent change in the industry is needed, away from the fast-fashion principles of constant cyclical change and cheap and disposable clothing that foster mass consumption and a throwaway culture. Here, the participants see business as an accountable stakeholder to drive change in the industry, by altering the market through transparency, consumer education and product and business model innovations. Furthermore, participants demand government intervention to exert the relevant regulatory pressure and control, as a general distrust in businesses to act in the interest of society and environment.

8. Discussion

In line with the literature review, the study suggests that although consumers are aware of the negative social and environmental impact of the fashion industry, sustainability concerns and fashion consumption still remain largely disconnected. Whereas most participants - unless previously primed with sustainability information - did not talk about sustainability concerns in their fashion consumption, each of them was able to enumerate issues such as poor working conditions, child labour, and high carbon footprint. This knowledge, however, was superficial and held in general and both sustainability, as well as ethical behaviour in consumption, were used as abstract terms. A solid understanding of the interrelated issues and their impact was not present. Thus, in line with Vehmas et al. (2018), the paper argues that this missing link between sustainability and fashion in consumer's minds is due to a lack of substantive knowledge about the negative externalities and how they are concretely linked to their purchase and overall consumption behaviour.

Arguably, this lack of knowledge leads to inconsequent behaviour by consumers, who perceive themselves as considerate of ethical and social concerns, as found in the widely acknowledged attitude-behaviour gap (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017; B. Shen et al., 2012; Vehmas et al., 2018; Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016). In line with Bly et al. (2015), the findings suggest that the complexity and equivocality around the notion of sustainable fashion consumption confused participants and led to individual interpretations of what constitutes sustainable consumption. These primary revolved around purchasing fair production practices, such as fair-trade, local, organic cotton, and recycled, as well as buying second-hand products and generally lowering quantity and frequency of purchases. Unlike Shen, et al. (2012; 2013), the research findings did not imply that the participants made a distinction between social and environmental concerns.

As concluded by Yildiz et al. (2015) price, aesthetics, quality and fit were identified to remain of the highest importance to the participants in their fashion purchasing. Overall, the participants showed not to be engaged in buying sustainably produced fashion, because it was perceived as more expensive, not as fashionable and not readily available. Second-hand shopping, on the other hand, was popular, however not motivated by the participants' sustainability concerns. Here, the primary reason for second-hand purchasing was unique style and bargains, while giving a "good feeling" for it being sustainable. This goes in hand with Bly et al. (2015), who found that sustainable consumption behaviours are motivated by self-interested aspects and go beyond ethical aspirations. In the same vein, personal style as a form of individuality and self-expression -alongside price-savings – was found to likely be the main driver behind second-hand shopping.

As another key aspect, most participants expressed an increased focus on need-based purchasing practices in limiting their fashion consumption rather than impulse shopping. However, this was not done out of conviction like in the studied anti-consumption movement (Bly et al., 2015), but rather was motivated by budgetary constraints and alternative opportunity costs, such as travels. Furthermore, need-based consumption was not generally linked to sustainable behaviour; only some of the participants who were primed with sustainability made the link. This goes hand in hand with Chi (2015), who finds that price is the predominant overriding factor over sustainability, while social and emotional values are merely complementary. Whereas the study confirms that high price is a limiting factor, it also found that it becomes less of a factor when participants choose the product for its attributes rather than for sustainability reasons. This finding suggests that consumers are more willing to pay a premium for style than they are for sustainability. Thus, our study cannot support the findings by Hira & Benson-Rea (2017), who claim that the younger generation exhibits a higher willingness and a higher likelihood to pay a premium for sustainable products.

Moreover, the paper found that the participants still predominantly shop fast fashion. They reason this to be because of restriction, due to the high price sensitivity. Furthermore, the participants felt unable to make an informed decision due to lack of transparency. This lack of transparency impacted the participants perceived power to make a difference, while other consumers were considered to be careless. In fact, research (Shen et al. (2012), Teibel (2019) and Yildiz et al. (2015) confirm that a general lack of information, in-transparency and distrust in companies, disempowers consumers from making an educated decision and taking relevant action. This suggests that adequate information will lead to more consistent behaviour. However, this is not what this research has found. The participants primed with sustainability did not show more consequent behaviour, even if they did voice more sustainability concerns throughout the shopping experience. Thus, merely having more information is not sufficient.

Additionally, the researchers observed that the participants were able to explain their behaviour and why they could not follow through on their intention. Carrington et al. (2014) argue that this ability to rationalise unethical behaviour is what makes the dissonance between intent and actual behaviour. Closing this gap requires a strict prioritisation of ethical concerns, creating new habits and a willingness to commit and sacrifice. In this regard, the participants neither followed a strict prioritisation, nor did they have an idea on how they intended to adapt their behaviour. Thus, their ethical concerns did not translate into actual behaviour. Instead, similarly to Bly et al. (2015), this thesis suggests that their consumption decisions were in the end, mostly irrational and hardly aligned with their values. Hence, ethical concerns were insufficient in strength to influence decision making.

Interestingly, however, one of the participants did show ethically consistent behaviour (CV_N). She was well informed, very fashion interested, and even working in the industry. Besides that, she had pro-environmental attitudes that went beyond her interest in fashion. This finding is in line with Razzaq et al.'s (2018) findings that suggest that a high fashion involvement leads to increased knowledge, thus increasing sustainable purchasing intentions. Thereby, a pro-environmental attitude is positively correlated to sustainable fashion consumption, again suggesting that pro-environmental attitudes will proliferate in time with more information (Bürklin, 2018).

Groups with strong sustainability opinions can foster this proliferation, as identifying with them translates into greater sustainability concerns in decision-making (Schweighöfer et al., 2017). Multiple researchers (Bly et al., 2015; Campbell, 1995; Cervellon & Shammas, 2013; Diddi & Niehm, 2017; Koca & Koc, 2016) confirm that group pressures, social signalling and struggles for social belonging strongly shape the decision-making process. Indeed, the findings suggest that this participant's social circles sustainability concerns in fashion were of higher importance, which was not the case for the other participants. This suggests a lack of social pressures and behavioural expectations towards sustainable fashion consumption, thus further explaining the missing consequent behaviour.

Lastly, it is important to point out that the participants almost entirely overlooked the usage and disposal phases. Recalling the set definition of sustainable fashion consumption, which is based on Campbell's (1995) definition of consumption, it encompasses *"any activity that involves the selection, purchase, usage, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service*[1]*"* (Campbell, 1995, p. 104). Thus, while the papers' understanding of sustainability goes beyond solely selecting and purchasing of products, this was not the case for the participants, who did not regard the usage, maintenance, repair and disposal phase as part of their sustainability consideration. This observed quasi-blind spot is concerning as use and disposal phase of the life-cycle of a garment have the highest environmental impact, amounting to up to 95% of the total environmental impact (Teibel, 2019). Thus, industry changes need to account for this and directly involve the consumer, as the use and disposal phase is largely up to the participants' behaviour.

All in all, the findings showed that the participants lack substantial knowledge of the (lack of) sustainability in their consumption practices. Changing this could raise and strengthen their awareness and inform a more robust sustainability attitude. This lack of knowledge also encompasses the use and disposal phase. Not only did they not apprehend their contribution to the negative impacts of the fashion industry, they as well did not know how to adjust their consumption even when made aware of its impact. This was attributed to the industry being in-transparent and a general mistrust in companies and labels. In the next section, suggested solutions and the ascribed responsibilities will be discuss based on the summarised points.

8.1. Moving towards sustainable consumption, closing the gap

One of the impediments voiced by the participants was the lack of transparency and relatable information provided by companies. This finding goes hand in hand with the reviewed literature which suggests that more transparent supply chains (Harris et al.,; Vehmas et al., 2017), and more substantiated and visible information (Bürklin, 2019; Teibel, 2019; Vehmas et al., 2017) are needed for the consumer to make responsible consumption decisions. Under this aspect, the participants suggested that they would need more concise and concrete information that could translate directly into behaviour. However, we observed that they would not look at the sustainability information provided by the brands in-depth, but instead were facing an information overload. Here, Vehmas et al. (2017) suggest that brands should utilise storytelling to display information in an attractive way to engage the consumer.

As a good example, the sustainable fashion label 'Reformation' has been praised by the participants for its concrete product information tags, such as its CO2, water and waste savings and the rating of material. The rating scheme ranks from "A Allstars to 'E - Eww, Never'. This engaging way of communicating the material ranking scheme was well received by the participants. This finding goes hand in hand with prior research by Eom et al. (2018), that concluded that consumers prefer fact-based communication with concrete information, e.g. waste savings, over negative emotive communication .On the other hand, H&M Conscious was considered to display too much information, whilst failing to effectively communicate what their conscious collection represents, thus being perceived as greenwashing. This finding further suggests that consumers trust in a brand is crucial for its successful sustainability communication (Harris et al., 2016; Vehmas et al., 2018).

Even though research finds that pre-retail engagement of consumers through reliable information is key to drive sustainable fashion behaviour (Teibel, 2019), there is a need for this information to be simplified and minimised. Overall, participants criticised, that they had to read up on the information and often go onto separate pages, making it necessary for the consumer to interrupt their shopping experience and thus arguably losing consumers' attention. In fact, those participants that were not primed with sustainability did not look at the separate website information at all. Participants suggested that visualisations that are easy to follow, e.g. a "traffic light system" with simple colour coding of red, yellow, green that would classify products ethical impacts, would support consumers in integrating ethical concerns into their decision making. Although the need for a simplified communication speaks for this approach, it assumes that consumers will respond to these visual cues, even if there are no prior findings that suggest that this would work in fashion consumption.Additionally, this codification might not be that easy, as the ethical issues related to the production processes might emerge as too complex to be translated into a three-level colour code as used by traffic light systems. Moreover, a collectively used code would have to be established with different stakeholders agreeing on what the different ratings mean. Overall, this solution - although providing an interesting starting point - seems insufficient as such.

Instead, sustainability should be more integrated into brand communication. Harris et al. (2016) here recommend that brands should focus on promoting an ethical lifestyle rather than on issues concerning fashion consumption by use of social media influence and other marketing tools. Here 'Reformation' can be regarded as a good example since the brand is actively engaging with consumers and gained popularity through their innovative marketing strategies. Moreover, their focus on selling stylish fashion that is as well sustainable was well received by the participants who did not want to sacrifice style and see fashion as a means of self-expression. This finding suggests that brand image and aesthetics have a strong influence on consumer's purchasing decision (Koca & Koc, 2016a), arguing for effectively applied marketing tools that focus on style and lifestyle over negative emotive information.

In this regard, the participants further argued that more comparable choices were needed, with one participant elaborating that she would only switch to a sustainable option when she found a comparable product. Another participant went as far, as to say that there should be no unsustainable product options, in order to give the consumer no choice. Although the latter is utopian and poses no real potential, the former is in line with Bly et al. (2015) who finds that external factors - such as limited availability of sustainable alternatives - hamper sustainable consumption behaviours. Consequently, sustainability should not be an extra cost for the consumer, but rather a prerequisite for the industry. Besides, participants suggested an adaptation of store designs with separate sections for sustainable products - both offline and online. Although this could ease access to sustainable products, it would force the consumer to make that decision from the beginning. Thus, it could potentially prevent consumers who are not actively looking for sustainable fashion from being exposed to these products. Regardless, more variety and availability of sustainable products with adopted store design could be part of a feasible solution.

Lastly, the participants expressed a need for better education on sustainable practices throughout the use-phase. In this regard, consumers would need to be made aware of their impact and educated on appropriate conduct. As suggested, companies could use business model innovation, by, e.g. building sharing platforms, repair stations and return initiatives, that would enable more sustainable consumption behaviour in use and disposal. Teibel (2019) indeed examines that companies need to engage consumers post-purchase as well, in order to make them aware that they are part of the "sustainability equation". Here, Bly et al. (2015), for example, finds that consumers participation in donation, recycling or sharing of clothing is largely dependent on available infrastructure, and independent of individual ethical concern. Thus, companies can provide, e.g. take-back initiatives, as in the examined case of H&M, in order to educate consumers and foster sustainable fashion consumption overall.

However, it may not be overlooked that these proposals rely on consumer's trust in fashion brands and labels, which this research found to be lacking. Instead of trusting information displayed on the websites or searching for information, participants referred to intuitive judgement calls, such as assuming higher prices to be correlated to fairer production practices, even though Yildiz et al. (2015) found that this not to be true. Also, Shen et al. (2012) confirm that instead of relying on labels, consumers base their judgment on the perceived sustainability of a firm in relation to a firm's reputation. Thus, brands need to employ effective branding and marketing tools, as suggested above, if they want to compete for market share in sustainable fashion.

8.2. Together, with a shared responsibility

Apart from financial motivations, business arguably has a societal and environmental responsibility (Blowfield and Frynas, 2016; Caroll, 2016). Apart from having the corporate social responsibility to ensure fair production practices specifically in developing countries (Hsieh, 2009; Matten & Crane, 2005, Hsieh, 2009; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011), the paper argues that business has a - less obvious - social responsibility for consumer culture and consumption practices. This goes in hand with the life-cycle approach, that argues that brands need to maintain accountability over their products throughout the life-cycle (Teibel, 2019). Thus, this paper claims that business has the responsibility to employ CSR (Blowfield and Frynas, 2016) to enable sustainable consumption by altering the market contexts and building the necessary infrastructure. This responsibility entails more than just offering sustainable products; it requires an education of the consumer and infrastructure, such as take-back programs.

Here, however, governmental interference in the form of regulations that would not only control labels but as well-set production and reporting standards, is demanded by participants, as a prerequisite for trust. This finding is in line with Yildiz et al.'s (2015) findings, which state that young consumers demand governmental regulation that controls labels so that they can make informed decisions. Hence, government involvement in establishing and monitoring compliance with sustainability labels could help ensure adequate guidance for consumers. Here, informing and educating the consumer should be a responsibility shared by government as well as business.

Here, the literature review found that despite preferring self-regulation, even business confirms that the lack of regulation impedes sustainable practices. Their sustainability agenda was self-reportedly most influenced by policymakers and regulators (Kerr & Landry, 2017). Thus, voluntary initiatives, such as the Global Reporting Initiative, that tried to codify best reporting practices with guidelines on sustainability reporting, remain insufficient (Hira & Benson-Rea, 2017). Instead, mandatory initiatives such as the EU-directive on non-financial reporting (EUG 2017/C215/01) are said to be needed to provide the necessary transparency. Moreover, Jastram & Schneider (2018) argue for further regulation in the shape of, e.g. a green tax and national procurement choices which would align with the participants' perceived necessity for regulations.

Although sustainability solutions are demanded of the industry, the consumers' attitudes and behaviours play a focal role as suggested by the findings of this research as well as the literature (Jastram& Schneider, 2018; Teibel, 2019). In fact, one of the participants argued that in theory consumers could and should vote through their purchase, however, in practice this poses difficult since consumers can only choose between existing products, and lack sufficient knowledge about underlying practices. Thus, consumers cannot be expected to change their consumption behaviour on their own. Instead, solutions have to encompass companies, governments and consumers. Bürklin (2018) takes up this notion of shared responsibility and argues that institutional agents, such as government and companies, can empower consumers by providing product information and recommendations through transparency. Then, however, it is up to the consumer to use their purchasing power to alter social and environmental outcomes.

8.3. Future Outlook

In the future, increased industry pressure from different stakeholders can be expected. On the one hand, the international political community, alongside NGOs has already been successfully pressuring the industry to improve their production practices, with government continuously implementing new regulation. In the future, alongside more rigorous reporting, we can potentially expect legally enforced labels, penalties through CO_2 and waste taxes, as well as incentives through tax break and innovation subsidies. Lastly, progressive brands and companies are putting pressure on the industry and business community. With pro-active small and big brands adopting and competing on sustainable practices, other brands can ultimately only follow.

On the other hand, consumers are becoming increasingly aware and thus are starting to demand more sustainable practices from corporations - a trend that is increasing. Here, we can expect that empowering the consumer will lead to them using their purchasing power as a vote, penalising those brands with bad track records. Consequently, a shift in demand will put more pressure on the industry and ultimately force brands to adopt in order to keep their social license to operate and remain competitive.

8.4. Prerequisites for moving towards sustainable fashion consumption

Following the discussion of the data collected and the existing literature, the paper finds that consumers are overall willing to adopt sustainable fashion consumption behaviour if that adaption comes easily. Here, merely providing information is not sufficient, rather an institutionalisation of sustainability in fashion consumption with relevant infrastructure is needed. Hence, the paper identifies the following changes required in the industry to foster sustainable fashion consumption.

Consumer education about sustainable consumption practices

Consumers need to be further educated on the negative implications of their fashion consumption, both relating to purchase, but as well usage and disposal. Here, they need to learn alternative, more sustainable ways of consuming. Brands could utilise marketing and branding strategies, whereas government could institutionalise it through regulation, educating employing media and school curricular.

Transparency and labels to assess sustainability measures

More transparency about business production practices is required. Here, business and government can co-create labels to ensure that consumers can make informed decisions. Sustainability here can be a market differentiator for brands.

Increased governmental regulation

Government needs to foster a regulatory environment that ensures sustainable production practices. This regulation can either penalise, e.g. implementing a CO_2 and waste tax or incentivise firms with tax breaks and innovation subsidies. Furthermore, it needs to ensure transparency and accurate information on business practices.

Institutional context

Sustainable fashion consumption needs to be institutionalised in fashion consumption in order to change the fast-fashion culture. For that, more discourse needs to happen in public media outlets, brand communication and potentially educational institutions.

Sustainability enabling infrastructure

Sustainable products need to be readily available at a competitive price. Furthermore, infrastructure such as readily available take-back programs and fixing stations can enable consumers to act more sustainably. Brands that can fulfil this need in the future will find a competitive advantage.

Consumer engagement through sustainability communication

Communication strategies through branding and marketing activities pose the most effective way to engage consumers. Thereby, the focus should be on selling fashionable clothes and a sustainable lifestyle, responding to consumers need of self-expression and identity creation.

Increased Consumer commitment to sustainable fashion

Institutional drivers can only do so much to ease sustainable fashion consumption for consumers. In the end, consumers need to take on some responsibility and collaborate to educate themselves, to shift their demand and to adopt new consumption practices.

A shift in consumer culture

Ultimately, only a move away from fast fashion can be truly sustainable. Thus, the aforementioned prerequisites need to include initiatives that foster a more sustainable consumer culture, where fashion lasts, both from a material perspective but as well from a social trend perspective.

8.5. Managerial implications

The identified prerequisites and outlook of the discussion yield valuable managerial implications. Since both address issues from the consumer standpoint, they offer significant importance for business decisions, already today but potentially also for the years to come.

Firstly, business managers will be facing a rapidly changing business landscape in which they are expected to take more responsibility regarding social and environmental sustainability. Since this landscape is expected to be influenced by new regulations as well as new sets of standards and practices, early adopters might be able to gain competitive advantages. *Therefore, acting proactively and aligning with this outlook would meet the company's fiduciary duty (Scherer & Palazzo,* 2011). Here an increased focus on sustainable production practices ensures that these new standards are followed.

Moreover, early adopters that change their product availability towards sustainable items that match future consumer demands can potentially gain competitive advantages in sustainability related domains and increase market shares in strategically important markets. Furthermore, CSR can help mitigate reputational risks, whilst it also increases scrutiny on the firm at the same time, thus demanding careful risk management of CSR (Vehmas et al., 2018).

By marketing their goods differently, they can potentially gain access to new consumer groups. Being a front-runner in sustainable fashion could allow companies to communicate CSR activities that if carefully managed, potentially leading to increased brand value. As communication has been identified as an important lever for addressing consumer sustainability demands, this new focus could help to gain consumer loyalty and brand recognition for good practices (Hwang et al., 2016). Since a shift in consumer commitment and consumer culture is to be expected, this again could mean advantages for companies acting compliant and proactively communicating their practices.

Furthermore, there are several managerial implications arising from the need for change in education and infrastructure. In this regard, companies could increase contact points with the consumer and create potential new income streams. These contact points could also help build new shopping experiences and different consumer journeys. One example of this could be an integration of repair counters in stores, where customers could drop used clothes that need mending or upgrading to prolong the life cycle (Diddi & Yan, 2019). This solution could increase the frequency of in-store visits by consumers, but also their perceived value of the shopping experience overall. This solution would also be possible for educational perspectives on how to treat products and how to dispose of them. Here an integrated disposal station for recycling apparel materials could potentially have the same effect as the repair counters (Diddi & Yan, 2019).

9. Concluding remarks

In this final chapter, the scientific contribution of this research will be discussed alongside the studies limitation and potential for further research.

9.1 Contribution to the existing body of literature

This thesis contributes to the existing body of literature by providing a starting point to close the widely acknowledged attitude-behaviour gap in sustainable fashion consumption (Bürklin, 2019; Eom et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2012; Teibel, 2019; Vehmas et al., 2018; Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016) To the researchers knowledge, it is the first to study the institutional context of fashion consumption with a consumer point of view on the business and regulatory environment. This complements prior research on consumer responsibility (Bürklin, 2019) and product life-cycle approaches (Teibel, 2019) seeking to close the attitude behaviour gap. It provides an in-depth understanding of consumer behaviour and the institutional and corporate constraints in sustainable fashion, as it relates to the product life-cycle approach. Here, it enriches the existing body of literature with a comprehensive list of prerequisites that are required to change the institutional context of sustainable fashion in order for consumers to adopt sustainable consumption behaviours.

For this purpose, current consumer sustainability concerns, as well as their behaviour, have been studied under the lens of the attitude-behaviour gap, alongside business initiatives and governmental regulation in the fashion industry. Here, the study found that the institutional context of the industry constrain sustainable fashion consumption by consumers. A shift in dominant consumer culture away from fast fashion and towards a holistic life-cycle approach is needed in order to ensure the profound change that is needed (Teibel, 2019). Thereby in line with literature consumer education, transparency of value chains as well as sustainable product availability and infrastructure such as fixing and deposit stations were identified as some key prerequisites that will enable sustainable consumption behaviour by the consumer (Bürklin, 2019; Eom et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2012; Teibel, 2019; Vehmas et al., 2018; Wai Yee & Hasnah Hassan, 2016). Moreover, the paper argues for the shared responsibility of consumers, business and government, as done before by Bly et al. (2015) and Bürklin et al. (2015). Here, government is supposed to provide the regulatory framework for an institutional change, whereas business is expected to take accountability over their products throughout the entire life cycle and help build the required infrastructure (Bly et al., 2015). Lastly, more commitment from consumers is required to make informed decisions and consequentially shift demand (Bürklin, 2019).

9.2 Limitations and further research

However, like every research, this study has limitations that lie outside the researchers' control (Almeida, Queirós, & Faria, 2017; Ochieng, 2009). Therefore, this section will examine those limitations that are not solely attributable to the research design but are more general. Some of these limitations arose due to the current CoVid-19 pandemic.

The main limitation of this research, as well as its strength, is its small but well selected sample size. While it allowed for an in-depth investigation of consumer attitudes and behaviours in sustainable fashion consumption, it only reflects a small sub-group of rather homogeneous consumers, thus limiting the generalisability of the findings. Also, data collection was limited due to the sudden outbreak of CoVid-19. Here, whereas the experiments and focus group provided many valuable insights, they could not be continued/repeated until the saturation point of the discussed topics was reached.

Besides, the qualitative method of this thesis does not allow for generalisations (Lamnek, 2005).

Further research could validate the findings by quantifying the qualitative experiment as conducted throughout this thesis. Since the experiment is foremost a quantitative method, this could be easily adapted to verify or falsify hypothesis derived from this qualitative research under a quantitative approach. Amongst other potential studies, the perceived responsibilities for the identified prerequisites, as well as an assessment of consumers perception on brands proactively communicating sustainable practices could be possible with minor adjustments to the research design.

Another unforeseen limitation arises from our experiment set-up and interview guides. Participants of the studies assumed the study to be about online shopping behaviour, due to unintended priming affects. As a result, the study was able to collect substantial insights into online shopping behaviour. Although these findings were not intended, they provide an exciting starting point for further research.

On the one hand, online shopping with its free deliveries and returns is found to increase mindless consumption, having severe negative implications for sustainable consumption, that could be studied in the future. On the other hand, this study found that it provides an opportunity to further educate the consumer by the use of digital marketing tools. However, it does not inform on how to successfully implement these marketing campaigns. Hence, it provides an opportunity for further research that could enrich the existing body of literature, where concrete education and communication strategies could be investigated based on case studies.

Moreover, the initial research strategy of a three-folded perspective, including consumers, business and industry regulation had to be adjusted to rely on secondary research as scheduled interviews with corporate and industry experts were cancelled. Thus, other stakeholders' reflections on the future of sustainability in the fashion industry, as well as its prerequisites for change, could not be examined first-hand to complement the gained consumer insights. This limited the study to identifying prerequisites, rather than formulating concrete recommendations for the industry.

Further research could advance the findings of this study by including other stakeholders’ perspectives. Here, motivations of companies’ and their willingness to drive sustainable change in the fashion industry as well as the feasibility of governmental intervention could provide additional insights on institutional drivers of sustainability in the fashion industry. Furthermore, potential advancements of public-private partnerships in the realm of Sustainable Fashion Governance can be examined.

Whereas traditionally mainly production practices have been studied in the context of sustainability in the fashion industry (Jastram & Schneider, 2018), this study suggests to focus on the entire consumption of a product life cycle (Teibel, 2019). Hence, future research should focus on the consumers’ role in sustainable fashion consumption and how to enable and engage them, as inevitably their behavioural adaptations decide over the effectiveness of any solution introduced.

Lastly, although this study was able to provide a better understanding of the institutional context of fashion consumption, it was not able to formulate concrete actions and relate them to responsibilities that can alter this context. Hence, further research can integrate different perspectives to formulate concrete solutions that are co-informed by business, government and other institutional drivers.

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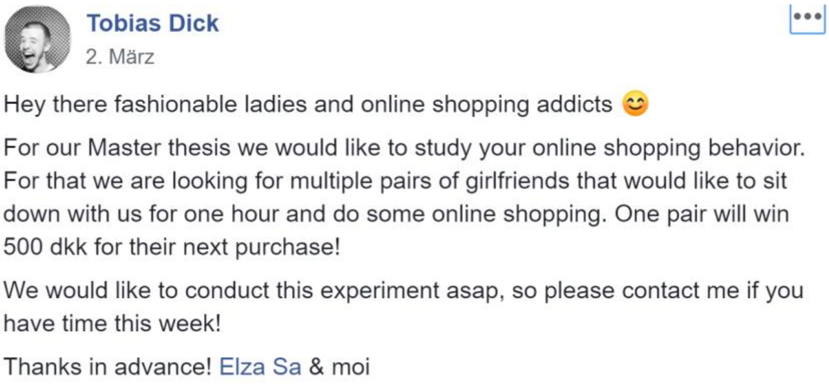
LIST OF APPENDICES

<u>Appendix A</u>: Message/ Facebook post used for participant election



Tobias Dick
2. März

Hey there fashionable ladies and online shopping addicts 😊

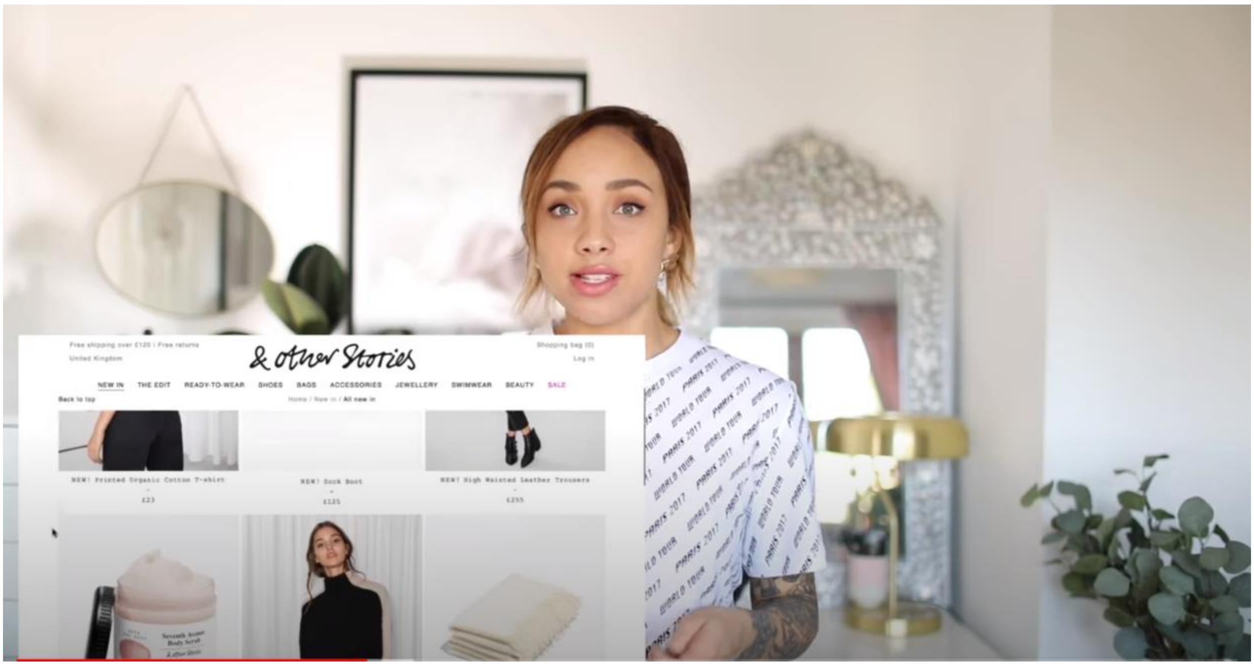
For our Master thesis we would like to study your online shopping behavior. For that we are looking for multiple pairs of girlfriends that would like to sit down with us for one hour and do some online shopping. One pair will win 500 dkk for their next purchase!

We would like to conduct this experiment asap, so please contact me if you have time this week!

Thanks in advance! Elza Sa & moi

<u>Appendix B:</u> Stimulus videos used for participant priming

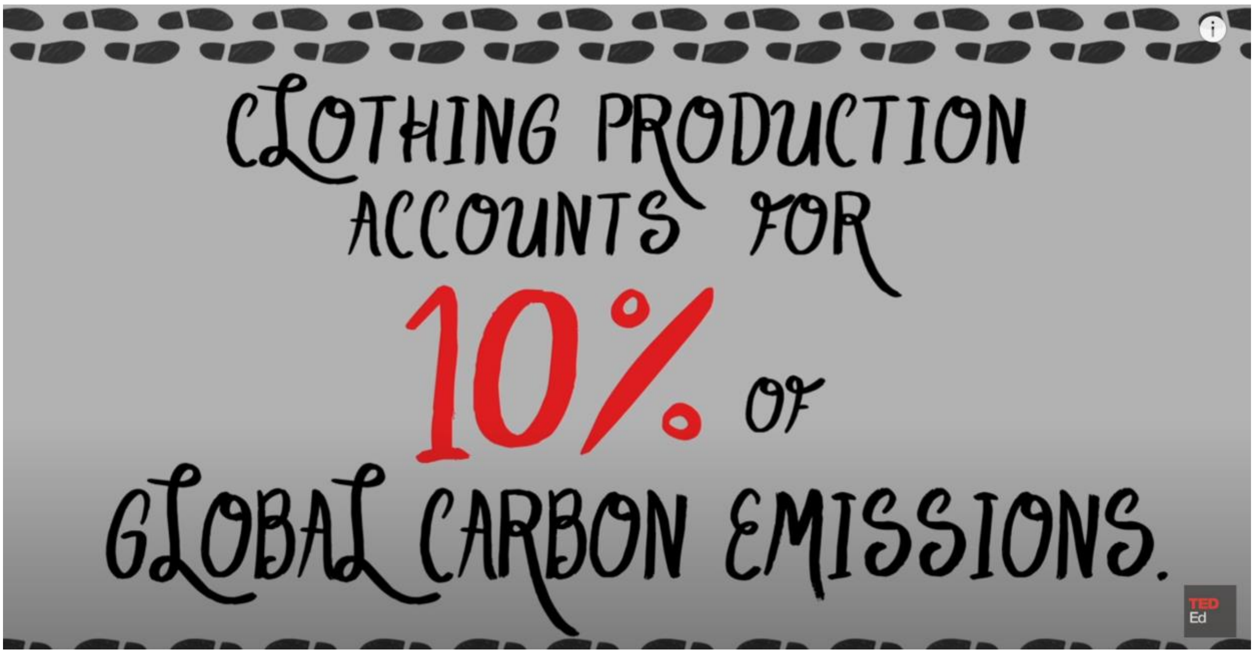
Neutral stimulus video:



MY TOP 10 PLACES TO SHOP ONLINE by Samantha Maria

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIr6Bv_JTSw

Sustainability stimulus video:



The life cycle of a t-shirt - Angel Chang by TED-Ed

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiSYoeqb_VY

Appendix C: Interview guides for the qualitative experiment

Interview guide for Group 1: Neutral stimulus

General info: As the research field for our master thesis, we are examining online shopping behavior, specifically focusing on the fashion industry. We want you to explain to us what influences you most in your decision making and how you would describe your fashion buying behavior. Please elaborate while going over the webstores how you perceive their products, what you would do differently and what additional information would be helpful. First, we would like to ask you some questions before we commence the online shopping experience.
Pre- shopping info **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiSYoeqb_VY**
Pre- shopping questions: -What is important to you when going shopping? -Do you shop more online or offline? -Do you do research before online? -What are your top 5 decision making criteria when buying clothes? -Where do you go shopping most (Online shopping/in-store shopping) -Do you inform yourself online first and then buy clothes in store -What are your favorite brands?

Webstore Links: https://www.hm.com/entrance.ahtml?orguri=%2F https://www.zara.com/ https://www.thereformation.com/ https://www.bymalenebirger.com/dk/en/home/
In-store questions: When you first go to the page: What do you like about this brand? Would you consider buying fashion here? Why, why not? When you go on the product page: What do you like about this product? (When you get to a product page) Why did you pick this product? You seem to like a lot of products from here, why? What information is missing for you? Would you consider buying this product? Why, why not? Would you improve product information? If so, what more information would you like? General questions What are your top 5 decision making criteria when buying clothes? What kind of clothes would you like to be more easily available?

Interview guide for Group 2: Sustainability stimulus

General info: As the research field for our master thesis, we are examining online shopping behavior, specifically focusing on the fashion industry. We want you to explain to us what influences you most in your decision making and how you would describe your fashion buying behavior. Please elaborate while going over the webstores how you perceive their products, what you would do differently and what additional information would be helpful. First, we would like to ask you some questions before we commence the online shopping experience.
Pre- shopping info **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiSYoeqb_VY**

Pre- shopping questions:

-What is important to you when going shopping?
-Do you shop more online or offline?
-Do you do research before online?
-What are your top 5 decision making criteria when buying clothes?
-Where do you go shopping most (Online shopping/in-store shopping)
-Do you inform yourself online first and then buy clothes in store
-What are your favorite brands?

Second set of questions:

-What does sustainability in fashion mean to you? Is it important for your shopping behavior?
-Do you buy sustainable clothing? Why/ Why not?
-Would you buy sustainable clothing in the future?
-In your opinion who is responsible to make sure fashion is sustainable? What can you do? What do you do? What role do brands play? What role does the government play?
-What brands do you know that are sustainable?
-Are you well informed about sustainability in the use phase of clothing??

Webstore Links:

https://www.hm.com/entrance.ahtml?orguri=%2F
https://www.zara.com/
https://www.thereformation.com/
https://www.bymalenebirger.com/dk/en/home/

In-store questions:

When you first go to the page:
What do you like about this brand?
Would you consider buying fashion here? Why, why not?

When you go on the product page:
What do you like about this product? (When you get to a product page)
Why did you pick this product?
You seem to like a lot of products from here, why?
What information is missing for you?
Would you consider buying this product? Why, why not?
Would you improve product information? If so, what more information would you like?

General questions
What are your top 5 decision making criteria when buying clothes?
What kind of clothes would you like to be more easily available?

Appendix D: Discussion guide for the focus group discussion

Warm-up section: The first few minutes of your group should be devoted to warming up the participants, making them relaxed in the group setting and getting them to start thinking about the subject generally. So usually your first few questions would be very broad and designed more to get participants relaxed and talking than necessarily finding out anything useful.
Questions for the warm-up section: Do you find it hard or easy to live sustainable? What does sustainability in fashion mean to you? is it important to you at all?
Main section Insight into our research: We conducted several experiments with 2 groups: One was primed with sustainability information and one with a neutral prime about online shopping. We wanted to see how they react when sustainability is on the forefront of their mind. For the sustainability primed group, we found an increased attention for sustainability information, but the contestants did not decide for more sustainable products. Although the participants said sustainability is important to them, they did not act accordingly. Decision making criteria mostly were style, price, and quality. Some participants said that sustainability is a decision-making criterion for them but saw it more as an added benefit. Also felt ashamed that they are not as concerned as they should be. Price was always the winning argument for not purchasing sustainably. The participants in general also correlated a higher price with sustainability in production. Some participants perceived an overflow of information and products. At the same time they found that there is too little information on sustainability or that it is too difficult to find. This was perceived as an additional effort that would be needed to act sustainably. Now in this discussion we want to talk about: Is there a possibility to close the gap between intentional behaviour and actual behavior? What should be done? What can companies do, what can regulators do?
Questions for the main section: Do you see this gap between intentional and actual behavior for yourself? Why do you think it exists? How would you close the gap between intentional behavior and actual behaviour? • What would incline you to actually buy more sustainable products? • What would make you stop buying not sustainable products? • What would decrease your consumption? • What would make you treat your clothes better? (how do you place information and guide consumers? Labels, Online banners, campaigns) How could you make sustainable products/information about sustainable products more visible? Easier comprehensible and leading to action? How can brands enhance their sustainability image in a way that would lead you to act more sustainable? Could you all together formulate an action plan on how you would execute such an undertaking? How would you avoid coming across as greenwashing?

Closing section
You may want to spend the last few minutes of your focus group rounding up your understanding of your participants' answers, and giving them time to respond

Questions for the closing section:

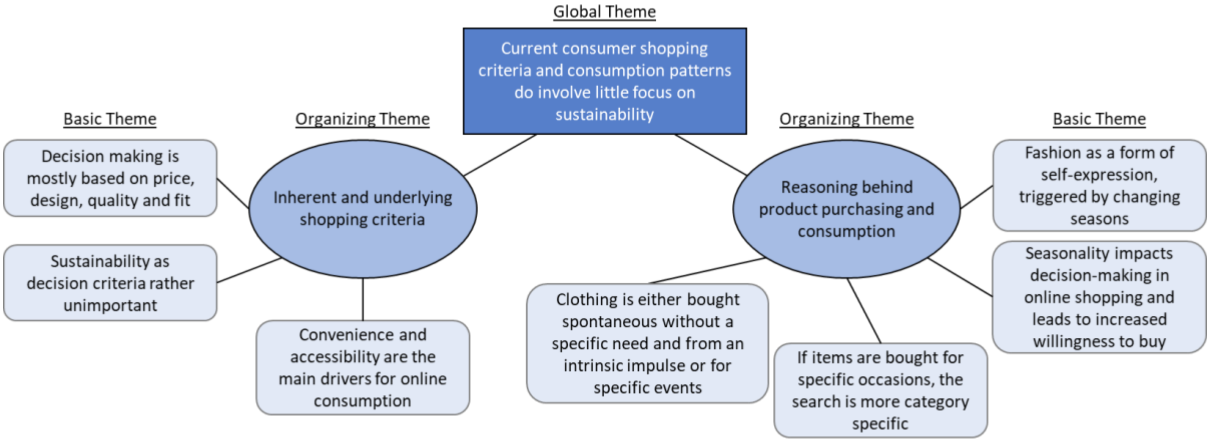
To round this up, what would be your main point that would have to change for you to buy sustainable product? Stop buying fast fashion? Treat your clothes differently?

What can companies do in terms of communication, branding?

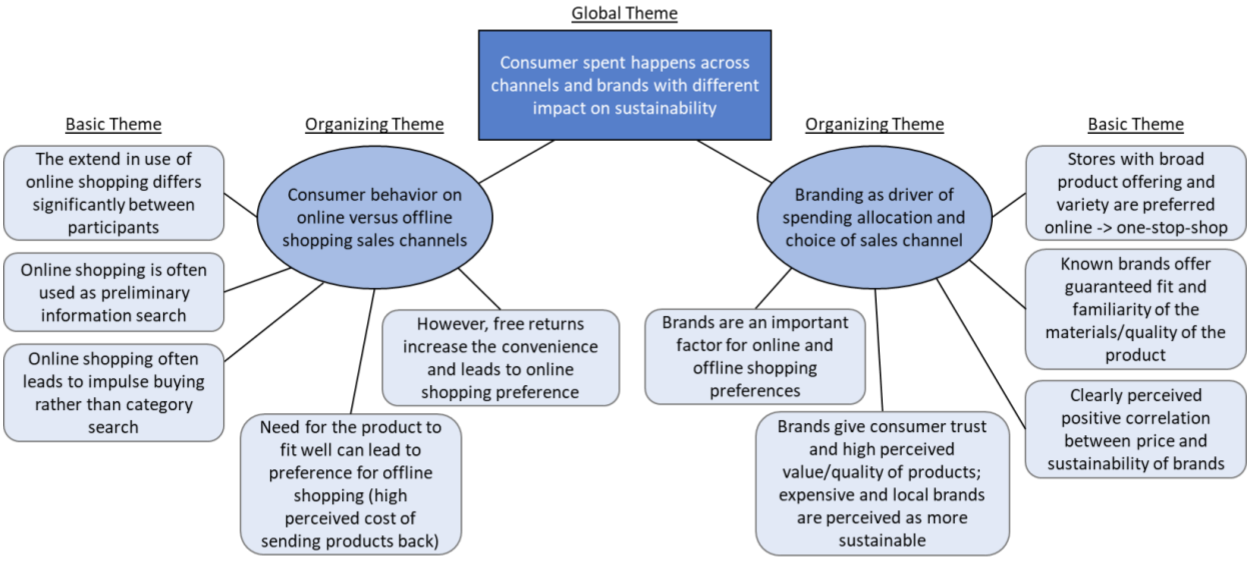
What should governments do?

Is there something else you would d like to say regarding this matter?

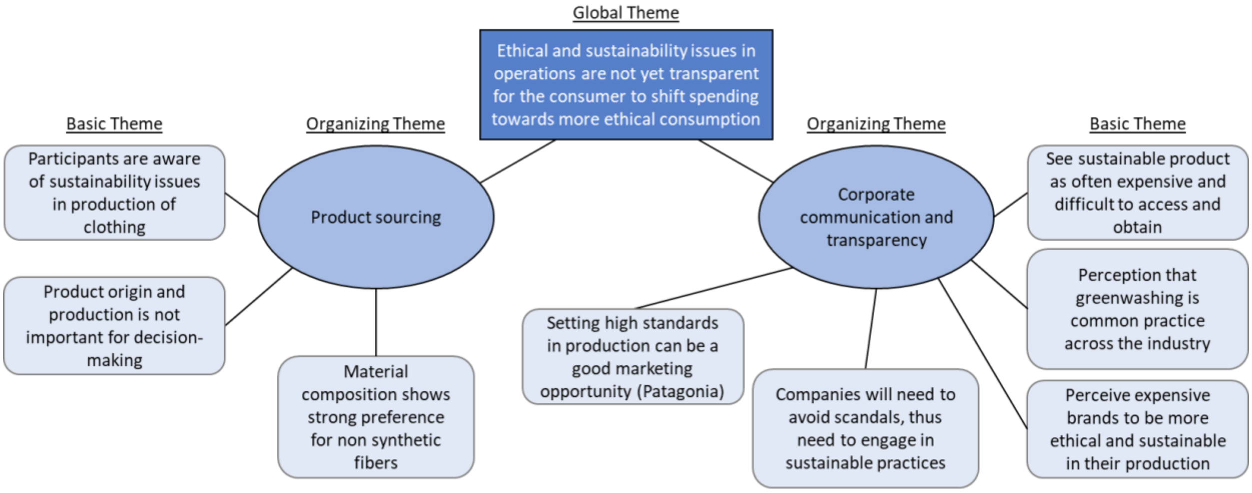
<u>Appendix E:</u> Thematic Networks from the experiment analysis following the depiction of (Attride-Stirling, 2001)



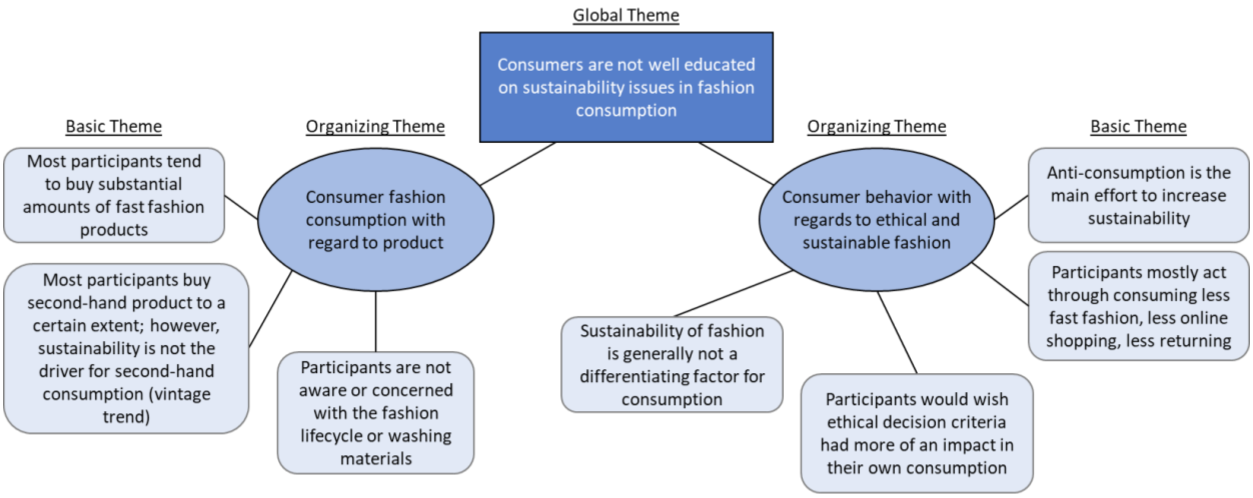
Depiction of the network corresponding to the <u>first global theme</u>: *Current consumer shopping criteria and consumption patterns do involve little focus on sustainability*



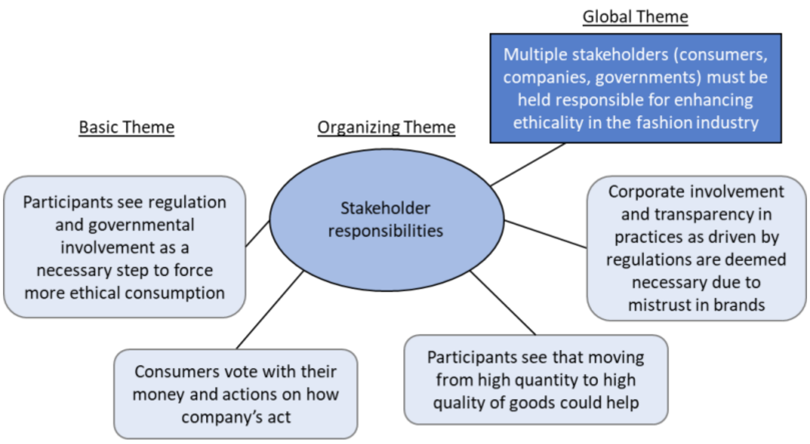
Depiction of the network from the <u>second global theme</u>: *Consumer spent happens across channels and brands with different impact on sustainability*



Depiction of the network from the <u>third global theme</u>: *Ethical and sustainability issues in operations are not yet transparent for the consumer to shift spending towards more ethical consumption*

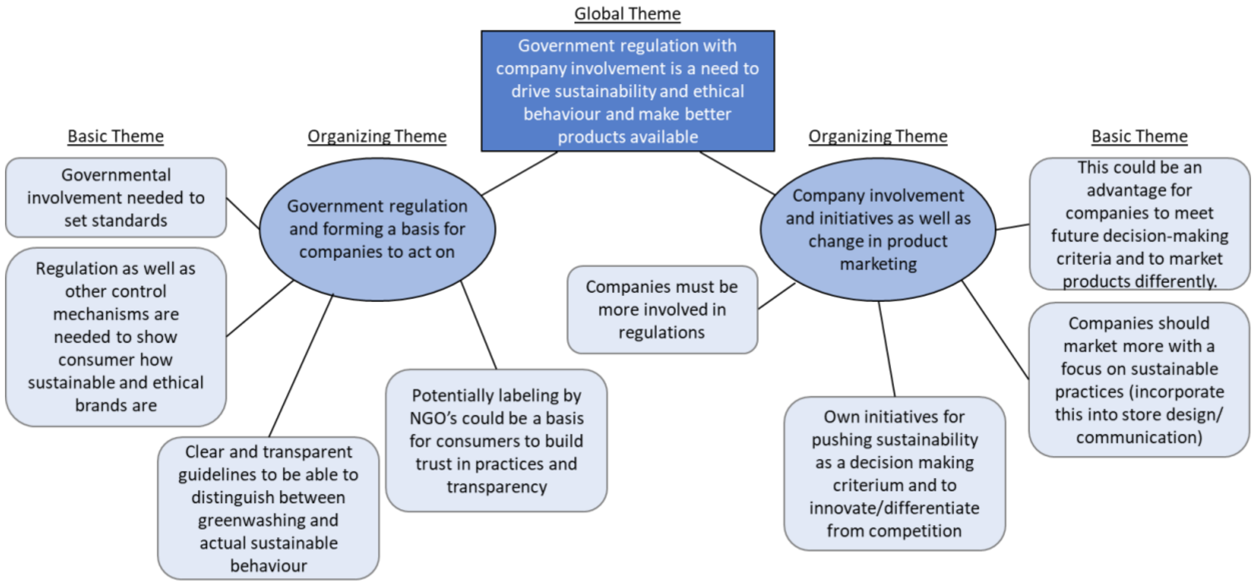


Depiction of the network from the <u>fourth global theme</u>: *Consumers are not well educated on sustainability issues in fashion consumption*

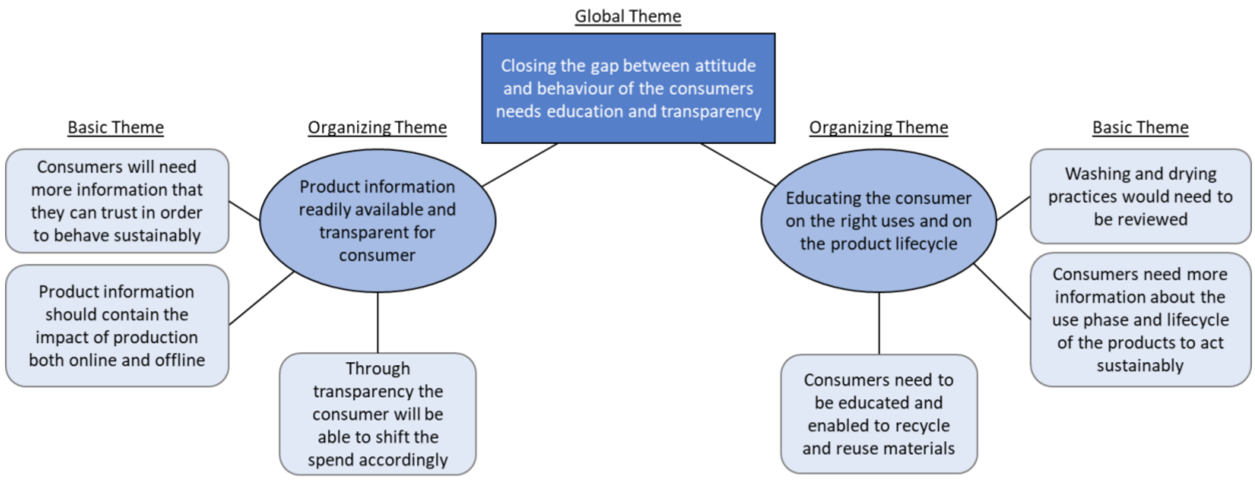


Depiction of the network from the <u>fifth global theme</u>: *Multiple stakeholders (consumers, companies, governments) must be held responsible for enhancing ethicality in the fashion industry*

Appendix F: Thematic Networks from the analysis of the focus group discussion following the depiction of (Attride-Stirling, 2001)



Depiction of the network from the first global theme: *Government regulation with company involvement is a need to drive sustainability and ethical behaviour and make better products available*



Depiction of the network from the second global theme: *Closing the gap between attitude and behaviour of the consumers needs education and transparency*

Appendix F: Links for the screen recordings of the experiments as well as the focus group discussion.

Participant Name	Experiment ID	Link
Paulina M	PM_N	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1VYXz2-ZWY6wYhbEfCGz_tdTts7Zu2VVc
Marit K	MK_N	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1-7rLYhTAAQ2wSLy-Mqwd8jQ0WcfZ40IZ
Chin V	CV_N	https://drive.google.com/open?id=14oRBZ3MNafeg_S-OGIxkFif7MFBz_u0p
Sarah M	SM_N	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1mn6QuyxW3qzpWoECl6xYsRSauBEPenZE
Shanice A	SA_N	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1YDhsjyF47TCvzM10j-ue93RGPcpZCfIF
Chiara H	CH_S	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1rXXBHL1cg6Hbp3IFMXUj8cC3ZptRF84p
Safiya S	SS_S	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1OD5sWWLG7tZEg2_yGfDiohWk3l-gC2IG
Raluca D	RD_S	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1snWOZiLj4BC5Wt5B2qhbslQSKJiPTcz-
Laura S	LS_S	https://drive.google.com/open?id=17J_6AgSlNFlPI3M-LxVXEYZHQh7EtJLH
Frederikke SH	FSH_S	https://drive.google.com/open?id=1c7gmbt2umL2Xepow2LYvUPr3qaIUASXw

Link for the recording of the focus group:
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1GM0Wvn7qxOyEiP5cAKqGQW6ch8EQQmxx