



A smart practice case study on
persuasive sustainable fashion
communication

-

Mastering Better World Fashion's
communication challenge

Master Thesis
2017

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MSc. International Marketing



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BUSINESS

GREENWASHING IN FASHION: WILL SUSTAINABLE MARKETING MESSAGES EVER BECOME EASIER TO NAVIGATE?

And could an industry-wide sustainability standard be a realistic goal for the future?

CHANTAL FERNANDEZ • AUG 4, 2016

797
SHARES



"THERE IS NO
BEAUTY IN THE
FINEST CLOTH IF IT
MAKES HUNGER &
UNHAPPINESS."

MAHATMA GANDHI

**Buy Less,
Choose Well,
Make It Last.**

-Vivienne Westwood



PROLOGUE

The Sustainability – Marketing Conflict

Our master thesis fusions the concepts of sustainability and marketing. Did that antithesis prick your ears? Good! Yes, we chose a concept that rejects consumerism and one that fuels it. What motivates us to bridge two opposites is the belief that marketing can be a tool to 'sell' a new lifestyle – a greener one.

And there is no literately alternative. Our earth's population grows, consumption grows, waste grows. In the age of climate change showing its destructive face more and more, we have to face our role and our responsibility to take care of our home and take care of each other. While there is a growing number of sustainability initiatives, conscious consumers and NGO's creating awareness, we think business leaders and marketers have a crucial role in pushing this development forward.

"The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind." (David W. Orr)

The idea of a more environmentally friendly and ethical future can become a reality by marketing and communicating it effectively and persuasively to the consumer. Sustainability marketing does not only require innovation and out-of-the-box thinking in terms of product development, but also needs new ways of communication. Thus, it does not mean to erase the concept of success as such, but to use sustainability marketing to tell a story that reaches the mind and the heart of the consumer to herald a more sustainable future.



Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this thesis is to strategically enhance the communication of the e-commerce start-up Better World Fashion. Therefore, a framework for sustainable fashion communication is created and applied to develop a smart practice guide of persuasive sustainable fashion communication towards the mass market.

Design/methodology/approach - Taking a subjectivist, hermeneutic stance, a qualitative multiple case study approach is selected to conduct a smart practice research. The thesis investigates the communication practices of five companies on four units on their corporate websites through a directed content analysis on the three identified communication dimensions of value profile, message mix, and credibility establishment.

Findings - The findings reveal that the difficulty of sustainable fashion communication lies in the conflicting natures of both concepts. Fashion is symbolic and hedonic, and relates to implicitly create dreams and emotions. Sustainability, refers to taking responsibility and selfless actions without a direct personal benefit giving it a rational character that requires textual, explicit communication. Smart communication is found to bridge the conflict and activate the mainstream consumer through the creation of emotions. It is smart to centre the consumer by focusing on personal values in the form of a double benefit approach in which fashion values are in the foreground and sustainability values are mentioned secondarily (Fashion-First strategy). The analysis of Better World Fashion shows that the brand suffers from green marketing myopia, and several communication practices stand in sharp contrast to the smart practices. The essence of recommendations lies in a strategic roadmap for BWF's value profile, message mix and credibility establishment throughout the different website units that focus on taking a more emotional positioning and shifting from high text sustainable information, to a more fashion imagery. This is exemplified by proposing a rebranding of BWF with two possible scenarios based on uniqueness, or country of origin as a core value.

Research limitation - Employing a smart practice study, the findings are tailored to BWF and thus delimited from the ability of generalisations. As all observed cases are embedded in a specific context, a replicative transfer of the results to other contexts is limited.

Originality/value - The thesis contributes to the literature by developing an integrated framework on sustainable fashion communication which creates a holistic picture of the dimensions and variables in the field of research. Furthermore, it investigates the web-based communication of sustainable fashion brands through content analysis to extract smart practices, a way the issue has not yet been studied.

Paper type - Research paper



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After writing around 150 pages within the last five months, these last words of thanks are the finishing touch of this thesis. This project presents not only the end of our master program, but also the end of our student lives. Therefore, some words to our sources of strength and inspiration.

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Jan - for his spirit of adventure, his advices and for teaching me to stay positive in tough times;

Ilse - for her wisdom and for her understanding ears;

Ottavia - for having a shoulder to lean on and making me feel home.



List of Abbreviations

BWF – Better World Fashion

BPR – Best practice research



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CHAPTER I

Introduction



1.1 A new green paradigm

In the light of climate change, limited resources and growing population, a frame for a more sustainable future is needed. The concept of sustainability acknowledges that the resources of our planet are finite and that global shifts such as industrialization and intense population growth have led to environmental damage and significant inequalities (Ritch, 2015). With increasing information and media attention, sustainability worked its way from a niche to a mainstream movement with consumers being increasingly conscious about their consumption. According to the newest report on *The State of Sustainable Markets*, consumers are in the process of shifting their buying patterns and becoming more socially conscious about social, ethical and environmental consequences (Lernoud et al., 2015). In numbers, this translates into “more than 75 % of consumers routinely reporting that they are green, or prefer environmentally friendly products” (Cronin et al., 2010, p.159).

Changes require efforts by all stakeholders – the government, the industries and the consumers. Even though shifts are getting visible and researchers point out that most consumer show a positive attitude towards sustainability, the “pro-sustainable attitudes frequently do not translate into pro-sustainable behaviour” (Joyner Armstrong et al., 2016, p.421). The academic literature considers this as ‘attitude-behaviour gap’ (Joyner Armstrong et al., 2016; Cronin et al., 2010; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Ertekin & Atik, 2015). This discrepancy can be often observed for the sustainability offerings across different products branches and industries (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

Cronin et al. (2010) appeal to marketing academics for helping to bridge the attitude-behaviour gap by considering marketing as the key linkage between customers and firms. Sustainability marketing

“encompasses a philosophy and a range of activities. It aims to satisfy consumers’ needs or wants and create a favourable position for the business in the marketplace by communicating how the business addresses environmental, social and economic concerns” (Villarino & Font, 2015, p.236).

Ottman (2011) also emphasizes on the role of marketing to address the green paradigm with new strategies incorporating a holistic point of view, eco innovative products and service offerings. Marketers and their brands need to provide products that accomplish the balance between consumer needs for quality performance, affordability, and convenience with the lowest impact possible on environment and social considerations. At the next step, it is the necessary to create demand for the brand through credible, value-laden communication (Ottman, 2011). This highlights the importance of communication in the field of sustainability marketing.



1.2 The power of communication

“Communication will make sustainable development a reality”

(United Nations Environment Programme, 2005, p.7)

Experts are convinced that “communication will make sustainable development a reality” (United Nations Environment Programme, 2005, p.7), as it represents an integral part of the journey towards sustainable development in the sense that it provides the means to achieve lasting and meaningful change (United Nations environment programme, 2005).

Marketing communication is an element of the marketing mix (Fuller, 1999) and “represents the voice of a brand and the means by which companies can establish a dialogue with consumers concerning their product offerings” (Keller, 2002, p. 823). Businesses can demonstrate their offerings, products and what their brand stands for. Its role is to positively influence stakeholder behaviour and to blend communication tools to provide customers with added value through information (Fuller, 1999).

1.3 The sustainability communication issue - how to talk the walk?

However, as noted broadly in the literature, effective marketing communication represents a difficulty, as it remains highly problematic to persuade and activate customers through communication in the sustainability context (Smith & Brower, 2012; Villarino & Font, 2015). In other words, marketers lack the understanding and knowledge on how to communicate sustainability effectively (Ottman, 2011; Villarino & Font, 2015). In practice, many sustainable firms were found to focus on their products and its sustainability aspects, rather than being customer need focused and to communicate personal positive outcomes of the purchase. The literature refers to this issue as the problem of sustainability marketing myopia (Villarino & Font, 2015).

Hence, sustainability marketing and its communication represent a fundamental challenge of today's business environment. Yet, especially the sustainable fashion industry appears to be affected by this dilemma, and suffers from this challenge due to the lack of guidelines of how to effectively communicate their brands and practices to customers (Visser, 2015).

1.4 How to make green the new black - The Sustainable Fashion dilemma

Although there is the urgent need for change, the fashion industry has been seemingly lacking behind in addressing the dilemmas relating to the environmental and human costs of its impact (Beard, 2008). The fast fashion movement characterised by rapid trend product cycles and low pricing, encourages impulsive and



continuous consumptions, and dominates the market. Ritch (2015) identifies this as a clear antithesis to the concept of sustainability, which strives to protect resources as much as possible. The results are environmental degradation, hazardous chemicals, low wages, violation of workers' rights and child labour (Bly et al., 2015). According to literature, almost "10 % of global greenhouse gas emission [...] and 17-20 % of global industrial water pollution, is generated from textile dyeing and finishing process alone" (Joyner Armstrong et al., 2016, p. 418). In fact, the fashion sector in its current state is "exploiting both consumers and workers, damaging the ecosystem and the environment, contributing to depletion of natural resources, and increasing textile waste" (Ertekin & Atik, 2015, p.55).

Due to the high negative impact, greening as a counter act is also happening in the fashion industry. The global sustainability movement and establishment of alternative consumption patterns is mirrored in shifts undertaken by long-established brand name apparel companies, such as AmericanApparel or Levi Strauss, who responded to the growing media attention and consumer interest by modifying their product design, production, and sourcing strategies to incorporate environmentally friendly practices (Yan et al., 2012). Sustainable fashion can be defined as "clothing, shoes and accessories that are manufactured, marketed and used in the most sustainable manner possible, taking into account both environmental and socio-economic aspects." (Green Strategy, 2014, n.p.).

Still, as Henninger et al. (2016) point out, sustainable clothing presents a niche market, which does not pose a serious alternative to the fast fashion industry. McNeill & Moore (2015) argue that continued barriers hinder the mass engagement in ethical apparel acquisition. Even though consumers increasingly care about environmental and social issues, many consumers still are not fully conscious about the environmental impact of fashion production (Ritch, 2015). According to Yan et al. (2012, p.152) the absence "of clarity and the use of vague terms relating to environmentally friendly products and brands create confusion and and/or raise concerns about greenwashing in the minds of consumers". Greenwashing can be defined as using exaggerated environmental claims and promises that curry consumer favour (Nikos, 2013). Other authors highlight the problematic of limited access and premium price of such products (Yan et al., 2012; Ertekin & Atik, 2015; McNeill & Moore, 2015). Additionally, eco fashion faces strong prejudices and negative perceptions as consumers view sustainable lifestyles as difficult, unexciting, and unattractive (Ertekin & Atik 2015; McNeill & Moore, 2015). This can be summarized as a perceived conflict between fashionability and eco clothing, a social desirability bias respectively. The psychological role of fashion is crucial in this context. Yan et al. (2012) refer to the high involvement of customers in the fashion purchase due to its symbolic and hedonic character. As fashion is used for creating a personal identity, "drivers to be 'fashionable' often outweigh drivers to be ethical or sustainable" (McNeill & Moore, 2015, p. 213).



In summary, consumers are either not aware of the negative outputs of fast fashion (Ritch, 2015) and/ or they lack in empowerment, and the willingness to change their manifested behaviour. Feelings of helplessness and overburden decrease this motivation (Ertekin & Atik, 2015). Besides that, the consumption of fast fashion is generally not associated with the reduction of quality of personal life, since any harmful effects of clothing to the individual are less noticeable (Beard, 2008) as compared to for instance the food industry. Consequently, sustainable clothing is yet not part of the mainstream fashion market (Henninger et al., 2016).

1.5 Sustainable fashion communication - How walk (talk) the tightrope?

While the number of sustainable fashion businesses appears to grow, the actual consumption remains scarce (Yan et al., 2012). Henninger et al. (2016, p. 405) highlight the issue of communication:

“A challenge is to persuasively communicate the benefit of sustainable fashion to consumers to increase buy-in within the mainstream fashion landscape.”

Persuasion is defined “as human communication designed to influence others by modifying beliefs, values or attitudes” (Villarino & Font, 2015, p. 327). A message that activates the customer or leads to behaviour change is defined as persuasive (Villarino & Font, 2015). Visser et al. (2015) point out that strategies for effective communication of sustainable apparel to the mainstream market remain underexplored. Hence, there is the need of sustainable fashion businesses to better communicate their offerings as for now the green apparel industry is facing poor effectiveness in communicating sustainability values to the consumer (Henninger et al., 2016).

Sustainability fashion communication appears to be a difficult balancing act, especially due to the many variables that need to be considered. For instance, Yan et al. (2012) inspect the effect of message explicitness on brand preference and emphasise on the ‘right’ degree of explicitness as a clear communication is preferred by consumers. However, “too much information in fashion advertising can be of disinterest – or even a distraction – to consumers” (Yan et al. 2012, p.162). Ottman (2011) even talks about a consumer's tiring of the same green messages and imagery, and that a green fatigue is developing due to the plethora of green campaigns in the media. This discussion can be summarized as the dilemma which sustainable fashion brands face in their communication: How can businesses in the light of the fast fashion dominance capture the consumer's conscience of sustainable fashion without being overeagerly dictatorial, pushy or unnecessarily exploitative of consumers’ anxieties (Bread, 2008). All those aspects exemplify the need for establishing communication guidelines that enable sustainable fashion brands to master this tightrope.



It is clear that “sustainable communication encompasses a new “breed” of actions within the field of communications” (Avlonas, 2013, p.242), and persuasive communication to reach beyond niche market remains an issue. The crucial challenge is “to transmit the right message, in the appropriate amount, through the suitable communication channels” (Avlonas, 2013, p. 241). While the academic research is starting to grow in the field of sustainability marketing due to increasing attention and managerial relevance, the literature appears to be still scarce and to the author's best knowledge no integrated communication model for sustainable fashion exists. Hence, it is necessary to identify how sustainable fashion brands can effectively communicate their products and brand to the customer beyond the niche market. As Ottman (2011) highlights, the complexity of the sustainable communication processes and the costs of doing it well, represents an overwhelming task, especially for small start-ups with big green ideas.

Better World Fashion (BWF) is such a sustainable fashion start-up, which follows its green idea to change the fashion industry. The Danish online fashion brand produces sustainable leather jackets from recycled materials to the global market since 2016. Just like discussed above, also *BWF* faces challenges in relation to persuasive suitability communication to achieve a favourable position in the mainstream market, and therefore needs to find improved ways to communicate effectively to potential customers.



1.6 Research objectives

Drawing on the highlighted aspects in the introduction, the thesis is devoted to develop knowledge about persuasive sustainability fashion communication to leach strategic recommendations for BWF.

The objective of the project can be divided into four steps:

- I. First, the project seeks to create **understanding** about characteristics of persuasive sustainable fashion communication in the context of sustainability marketing.
- II. Second, the project pursues to **construct** an analytical framework for sustainability fashion communication by drawing from the literature insights.
- III. Third, the project seeks to identify **smart practices** and develop a **guide** for BWF by capturing persuasive communication characteristics of multiple sustainable fashion brands through the application of the analytical framework.
- IV. Lastly, the thesis is devoted to give **recommendations** for enhanced persuasive communication with the customers by contrasting the smart practice guide with BWF's practices.

1.7 Project structure

In order to address the research objectives of this thesis, we will proceed on the following sequence. First, the methodology chapter will outline the paradigmatic foundation of the thesis, as well as the approach chosen for identify relevant literature. Second, the authors need to gain knowledge in the research field of sustainability fashion marketing communication. As the literature in this research field is limited, we examine the concepts of sustainability fashion communication, sustainability marketing communication and fashion communication in a thorough literature review. These insights will be used to conceptualize an analytical framework.

After the theory chapter, the research design is outlined. The analytical framework will be applied in a multiple case study of selected sustainable fashion businesses to establish a smart practice guide. The smart practice guide should help BWF to learn from the examination of successful firms operating in the same business area. Through a comparative research design the issue will be illustrated by multiple cases to identify patterns of smart practice in persuasive communication. The findings will be used to give recommendation to *BWF* as to enhance their marketing communication.

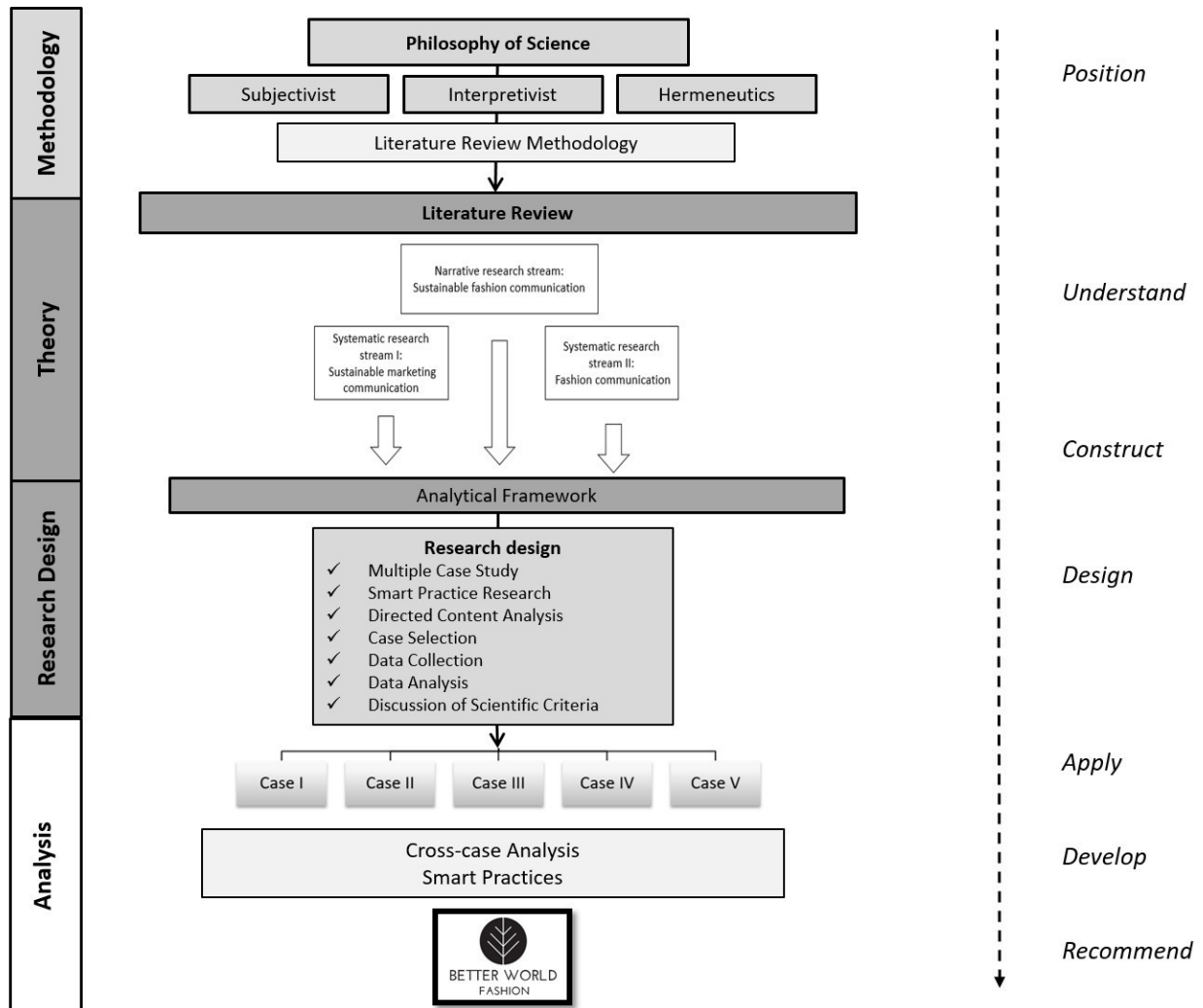


Figure 1 Project structure

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of green leaves, likely from a plant like a geranium, showing detailed vein patterns and varying shades of green. The leaves are slightly out of focus, creating a soft, naturalistic texture.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explicitly present the methodological considerations employed in the thesis. Two pillars are addressed. First, the philosophy of science is laid out by introducing the paradigmatic positioning with its basic assumptions and logic underlying the thesis. The second part informs about the utilized methods to acquire the literature research insights for the theoretical foundation of the thesis. The search protocol provides information into the procedure of the literature search and selection process. The research design which addresses our guide to execution is discussed in separately in Chapter IV.



2.1 Philosophy of science

Academia generally agrees upon the fact that there are different worldviews held by researchers, whether if they are aware of it or not. These worldviews reflect the existing differences in knowledge foundation, values and assumptions about the social world. This implies that every social science research is value-laden, and the assumptions hold by a researcher influences the choice of approach taken and methods utilized (Kuada, 2010).

The assumptions and beliefs can be defined as a paradigm. A paradigm is characterised a

“a cluster of beliefs and dictates that for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.714).

Thus, a paradigm consists of a set of common understandings of the nature of the explored phenomenon, the kinds of questions that are useful to ask about the phenomenon, how researchers should structure their approach to answering their research questions and how the results should be interpreted. A paradigm, in that sense, represents a basic frame for understanding and investigating a phenomenon. Consequently, it has a strong influence on the research procedure and its result. Therefore, the researcher needs to be consciously aware of the paradigmatic assumptions (Kuada, 2010).

A commonly used distinction in social science research is drawn between the **objective** and **subjective paradigm** (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Arbnor & Bjerke, 1997; Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The research paradigm is based on the researcher's set of philosophical assumption concerning four dimensions: Ontology, epistemology, human nature, methodology. The selected paradigm with its associated assumptions indicates how researchers ‘access’ the path of social science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Ontology “concerns the very essence of the phenomenon under investigation” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, xii). It is typically distinguished between the **nominalist** and **realist positioning**. By taking a realistic stance, the researcher assumes that reality takes place outside of human beings, that there is a definite, outside and objective reality, which is like the natural science. By taking a nominalist stance, the researcher assumes that reality happens through human beings. Thus, reality takes place in a human’s mind, is subjective and a definite reality is not existing (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Epistemological issues determine what is considered and expressed as *true* knowledge and what not. It refers to the character of knowledge. Social science is dominated by two positions, **positivism** and **anti-positivism** (also called interpretivism), which constitute two opposite extremes. When researchers take a positivist stance, they “seek to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and



causal relationships between its constituent elements” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 4). This objective perspective is mostly connected to the natural science. In contrast, anti-positivists claim that to gain knowledge, you should take the perspective of the studied phenomenon and try to look at the world through their eyes. Thus, the aim of research is mainly to *understand* which can only be reached through an internal, subjective perspective, being as close as possible to the studied phenomenon (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Anti-positivists are “concerned with the empathic understanding of human action rather than with the forces that are deemed to act on it” (Bryman, 2012, p. 29).

A distinction is made between a **deterministic** and a **voluntarist** perspective on **human nature**. The deterministic point of view regards humans as passive objects, determined by its surroundings. In contrast, the voluntarist perspective sees humans as independent and active beings, who can create their own opinions and determine their behaviour. Depending on the view about humans, researchers either focus more on contextual aspects that determine behaviour (deterministic perspective), or voluntary factors that help to understand human’s self-determined behaviour (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Methodology is concerned with the question, if the researcher takes a **nomothetic** or **ideographic** strategy. The former focuses on the relevance of gaining knowledge in a structured and systematic way and thus, uses techniques that are also used in the natural science. Nomothetic researchers are “preoccupied with the construction of scientific tests and the use of quantitative techniques for the analysis of data” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6 f.). On the contrary, ideographic researchers aim to be as near as possible on the studied object to be able to gain deep insights and understandings and thus, use more subjective research techniques (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Certain assumptions can go hand in hand with each other. The two dominant epistemological stances (positivism and anti-positivism) are often associated with specific assumptions, which is shown in Table 1 (Kuada, 2010).

Table 1 Objectivist-Subjectivist Dispositions in Social Science (Kuada, 2010, p. 37)

Assumption	Objectivist	Subjectivist
Ontology	Realism	Nominalism
Epistemology	Positivism	Anti-positivism
Human Nature	Determinism	Voluntarism
Methodology	Nomothetic	Ideographic



2.1.1 Classification of paradigm in social science

Different classification approaches of paradigms exist. One of the most common classifications is the RRIF typology by Burrell & Morgan (1979). The typology consists of the two dimensions, objectivism versus subjectivism and radical change versus regulation dimension (Kuada, 2010). The former one is related to a classical subjective and objective perspective. The latter one “concentrated upon explaining the nature of social order and equilibrium on the one hand, and those which were more concerned with problems of change, conflict and coercion in social structures on the others” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 10). By taking a stance in both dimensions, the researcher positions itself in one of the four paradigms: Radical humanism, radical structuralism, interpretivism and functionalism (shown in Figure 2).

The sociology of radical change	
Subjectivity	Radical humanism
	Radical structuralism
Objectivity	Interpretivism
	Functionalism
The sociology of regulation	

Figure 2 The RRIF Classification of paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979)

Due to increasing interplay between these paradigms and their application in different social realities, lines of thought have been developed which are in between the two extremes, so called schools of thought (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

2.1.2 Paradigmatic foundation of the thesis

To reinforce the research approach of the thesis, the initial step is dedicated to the discussion of the scientific positioning. This presents the root assumptions to ensure a mutual understanding between the reader and us when it comes to comprehend and evaluate the decisions taken in the thesis.

2.1.2.1 Perspective on the research phenomenon

The **phenomenon** under investigation in this thesis is persuasive communication in the context of sustainability fashion marketing, respectively how sustainable fashion brands can activate their customers through communication. **Persuasive communication** is an intellectual human concept that is “designed to influence others by modifying beliefs, values or attitudes’ [...] in a conscious attempt through the transmission of a



message” (Villarino & Font, 2015, p. 327). Thus, the authors of the project consider persuasive communication as an **intentional and purposeful act**, from which businesses can make use of. In this sense, persuasive communication can be ascribed to **strategic communication** which is defined by Connolly-Ahern (2008, n.p.) as “purposeful communication by a person or an organization designed to persuade audiences with the goal of increasing knowledge, changing attitudes, or inducing desired behaviour”.

On a micro-level, **communication** takes place between the transmitter and recipient. Hence, it can be stated that the focus is on the **interaction between the sender and the receiver** of the messages. The process is **highly complex** as it can proceed on various levels and multiple directions. The communication procedure starts with a source that aims to transfer a concept to the recipient. For that, “the message needs to be encoded into a symbol in order to be transmitted to the receivers, who on their end need to decode the message into a meaning” (Sullivan, 2009, n.p). The decoding process depends on the recipient's perceptual capacity and the situational context (Sullivan, 2009). Therefore, communication is an essential and powerful element between human beings. Companies aiming at transmitting a desirable message related to their offerings, have increasingly lost control over the way their messages are decoded and interpreted by the customers, receivers respectively (Jacobs & Mossinkoff, 2007). Thus, the authors view **communication as interactive, complex and socially constructed** between humans.

Additionally, this research examines persuasive communication through a sustainability fashion lens. Fashion as a phenomenon can be characterized as **constructed by humans’** due to its symbolic and hedonic character that goes beyond simple utilitarian aspects. Fashion amongst others, can satisfy emotional needs, addresses ego-identification, or can be a means to group membership (e.g. D’Souza, 2015).

2.1.2.2 Selected research perspective

In the area of sustainability communication, especially the customer side has received significant attention by evaluating their reactions, perceptions and behavioural changes dependent on communication (e.g. Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016; Pittner, 2014; Nagar, 2014; Bickart & Ruth, 2012; Tu et al., 2013; Visser et al., 2015; Kuhn et al., 2012). However, as pointed out by Jacobs & Mossinkoff (2007), the **customer research** side appears to be **increasingly difficult**. The customer as such has been undergoing a shift in line with the increasing opportunities of information searching and the resulting awareness on companies’ attempts to manipulate. Customers became increasingly unpredictable, and consequently difficult to satisfy. Wouters (2005 *in* Jacobs & Mossinkoff, 2007, p.458) highlights the essence of the problematic as follows: “**People do not say what they think, people do not do what they say, and there is a difference between what people say and what interviewers register**”. As indicated in Chapter I, an essential issue of sustainability marketing is the intention-behaviour



gap. Due to this, it appears to be problematic to see through the eyes of the customers. Instead, it is necessary to shift perspective and study the phenomenon from the **business point of view**.

2.1.2.3 Methodological positioning and assumptions

As discussed above, clarification of positioning is important to address the choices and viewpoints of the thesis and its research design. Hence, relating to that, an **interpretivist approach** allows us to create an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, which is largely **unexplored in research**. Every approach has positive and negative aspects, thus also the interpretivist approach with its subjective nature. Therefore, generalizations of the results are limited compared to an objective approach (Kuada, 2010). However, an objectivist approach would have delimited from creating an in depth understanding of the issue. We chose to adopt an interpretivist research approach as the phenomenon of fashion, and notions of sustainability are **socially constructed** through shared meaning and understanding. According to Kuada (2010), interpretivists are preoccupied with understanding and giving sense to the situation in various contexts, which **fits to the core of the project** of getting deep understanding about the complex nature of persuasive sustainable fashion communication.

In order to provide a detailed discussion of positioning, rather than looking at the overall paradigm, which means deciding between two very different extremes, a more specific perspective in terms of **school of thought** will be discussed. Specifically, we decided to position the thesis within a **hermeneutic research tradition**, which is a school of thought within the subjectivist approach, the **interpretive paradigm** respectively. A hermeneutic positioning is the closest interpretivist school of thought within subjectivity to the **objectivity border**. As persuasive communication is seen as an intention to influence change on the customer side, this indicates a **causal term**. Also, language as a means to empower and facilitate is implicitly causal. Nevertheless, even though it is a causal process that is investigated, it cannot be characterized as a mechanic force due to human complexity. Instead, the causality that is based on an accumulation of explanations. This means that marketing communication is not a fixed cause with a determinist character that changes people's behaviours, attitudes and believe. Still, by taking a business perspective to sustainability fashion communication we strive to use the interactionist character of communication as to bring about desired changes in costumers' decision-making (Schneider et al., 2015). Thus, a hermeneutic position addresses the character of the phenomenon under investigation.

Hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation and understanding of the individual human cognition that creates the world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). It focuses on the creation of artefacts and how they can obtain an **objective character**. Dilthey (1976, *in* Burrell & Morgan, 1979), one of the main contributors to the hermeneutic



literature, suggests that objective knowledge can be attained through reliving the life of the observer and **understanding the world of the objective mind**. Therefore, the author claims, in line with the interpretive and hermeneutic circle, that the social world cannot be understood independently of its parts and vice versa (Dilthey, 1976 in Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

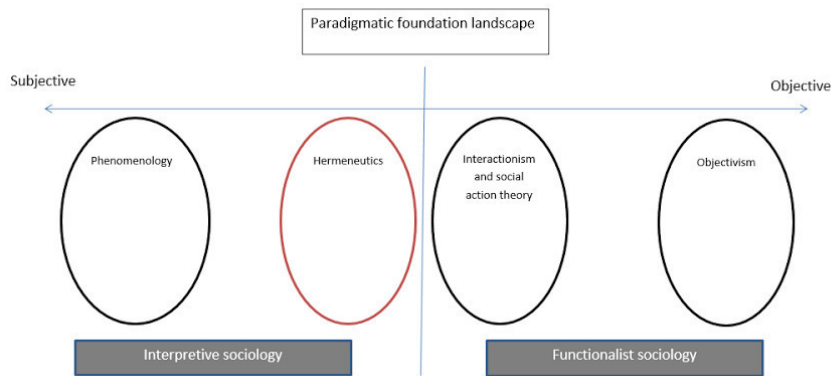


Figure 3 Paradigmatic foundation (inspired by Burrell & Morgan, 1979)

Ontology

Hermeneutics sees the world as socially constructed by humans (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and is “concerned with the interpretation and understanding the products of the human mind which characterise the social world” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.235f.). Based on this, we take a nominalist stance, as communication is viewed as **interaction** between human beings, and we assume that **reality happens through humans**, meaning that the reality of sustainability fashion communication takes place in the human mind and is essentially subjective in nature. Thus, in order to address the research objective to enhance communication activities for BWF, it is crucial to **understand how market leaders practice communication and the underlying reasoning**. This, calls for exploring and understanding how successful sustainable fashion brands design their communication towards (potential) customers.

Epistemology

Epistemological assumptions capture what is believed to be true and describes the nature of knowledge (Kuada, 2010). It addresses the question “how we know what we know” (Kuada, 2010, p.36), respectively, how knowledge can be obtained. Addressing this dimension and the character of knowledge, we represent anti-positivist assumptions, as we assume that the “the social world can only be understood by occupying the frame of reference” (Kuada, 2010, p.36), thus meaning that knowledge cannot be captured by being an external or an outsider towards the phenomenon. Instead one can only gather knowledge by being **internal** and **familiar**



with the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, only through **holding an in depth understanding** of the phenomenon, enables us to give recommendations towards persuasive communication within the field of sustainability fashion. As our ontological assumptions question the likeability to understand and solve the phenomenon under investigation without being a part of the environment, this calls for deeper understanding drives the epistemological assumptions towards an anti-positivist one.

Human Nature

The project aims to obtain knowledge about persuasive sustainability fashion communication from the business perspective. In relation to **human nature**, people are viewed as **active information gatherers** rather than passive respondents to stimuli from the inside and outside. In other words, the actors are perceived as capable to gather and analyses information, and take decisions based on that information. In that sense, it is expected to arrive at the desired understanding concerning persuasive sustainability fashion communication through an internal, subjective perspective. Following that position, we take the voluntarist perspective as humans are viewed as being **independent** and form their own behaviour, being **self-determined** respectively.

Methods

Hermeneutic researchers conduct **methodological** iterative processes as a means to increase understanding of the objectifications of mind (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Based on those assumptions, a **qualitative research design** is chosen as to investigate the why and how, not just what, where, when (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The objective is to identify effective communication strategies of market leaders in the sustainable fashion industry, thus a **comparative design** focusing on **smart practices** is chosen. Generally, research into current smart practices represents a strategic attempt to learn from the examination of market leaders in the defined research field. The practices of firms with a successful market position provide the understanding on how to increase persuasion likelihood. Based on these assumptions, we arrive at an ideographic methodology for this thesis, meaning that we seek closeness to the studied object as a means to gain deep insights through a subjective research design. The research design builds upon this, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.



2.2 Literature review methodology

The following section aims to give a comprehensive view about the collection and nature of the examined literature. The search and selection process is laid out, followed by an analysis of the literature on the meta-level, according to chosen variables such as time scale, industry, research region, and their research focus (perspective and research approach). The section is organized into three parts: First, the theoretical perspective on the different approaches of conducting a literature review is presented. Then, we elaborate on the chosen procedure to identify relevant literature, and finally we conclude our findings and position this thesis within the identified literature landscape.

2.2.1 Theoretical view

The purpose of reviewing the literature is to “**frame the problem** in the introduction to the study” (Creswell, 2003, p.31), and to identify existing research topics within a specific field (Bryman, 2012). As pointed out by Kuada (2010), the process reveals major trends and conflicts, as well as knowledge gaps in the specific field. According to Creswell (2003), a literature review gives important background information for studying a certain problem by revealing the main authors who have been involved within the research area. Furthermore, the literature review highlights the importance of the present research project and the shows the path, which will be taken by the researcher (Bryman, 2012).

Two consecutive steps of a literature review can be identified. An **initial screening** of the area of investigation is conducted, which provides the well-grounded basis for the **problem statement** (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The second step covers the **specified literature** that paves the way for the discussion of viewpoints and topics of the field (Kuada, 2010). This step creates the **theoretical frame** for the thesis and will be carried out in the following.

There are two different approaches to conduct a literature review such as in a **systematic** or **narrative manner**. According to Bryman (2012), systematic literature reviewing ensures thoroughness in examining a particular field of study. The purpose is “to generate **unbiased and comprehensive** accounts of the literature” (Bryman, 2012, p. 102). Systematic reviews are characterized as replicable, scientific and transparent process, which reduces the risk of bias and ensures reliability of the investigation. In comparison, a narrative search is a less structured and more unfocused as it rather **casually investigates** the research field. Thus, it is considered as being a more **subjective method**. However, researchers may find articles that would have otherwise been excluded due to the limitations and narrowly defined search words in a systematic literature review. Therefore,



the second approach finds application for rather unexplored research areas, and offers the opportunity to find articles that do not carry the well-known terms or key words (Bryman, 2012).

A subordinate selection strategy, especially used in scarce search areas, is referred to as 'berry picking' model of information introduced by Bates (1989). It relates to the process of identifying aspects and concepts in a certain research area, and then follow up with a more specific search query or an author or citation search. Bates' (1989) berry picking model represents a meta-strategy that includes the tactic of backward chaining, also called footnote chasing, which involves following references (footnotes) in the identified books and articles of interest, and moving backward through a chain of reference list. However, Lange (2013) states to be careful when conducting this approach as this method can be subjective by choosing intentional articles that confirm favoured knowledge. Thus, Lange (2013) recommends, that researcher should be consciously aware of their picking approach and the potential biases. Researchers should select carefully, and not only pick articles that do confirm existing knowledge. Furthermore, "they must be explicit about case selection" (Lange, 2013, n.p.), and make the selection process transparent (Lange, 2013).

2.2.2 Methodological approach of the thesis

As identified in Chapter I, the knowledge in the field of sustainability fashion communication is scarce and the field is uncharted. Thus, in a first step a **narrative research approach** is conducted to screen the literature for insights specific into the area of **sustainable fashion communication**, offering a method it to identifying existing literature in the unexplored field. However, due to its rather subjective and less structured character, a narrative research approach includes the risks of a biased literature selection (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In relation to that, Rousseau et al. (2008, p.503) state that in "assembling the material to be reviewed, in most cases, the **broadest possible array** of relevant research should be gathered to compensate for researcher value judgments and uncontrolled validity threats".

To address the query for additional literature that is gathered in a more objective and structure manner, a **systematic literature approach** is followed to review the two main concepts of **persuasive sustainability marketing communication** and **persuasive fashion communication**. A systematic research approach should enable to gain a deep and unbiased understanding of the "phenomenon in question, following a strict order and avoid a subjective choice of literature" (Bryman, 2012, p. 102). Additionally, the research fields of the two concepts are extensively explored, so that we need a systematic approach with specifically determined search words to identify the relevant articles. The insights of both systematic research streams combined with the narrative review set the basis for developing an **analytical framework for persuasive communication of sustainable fashion**. The figure below illustrates the described literature review process.

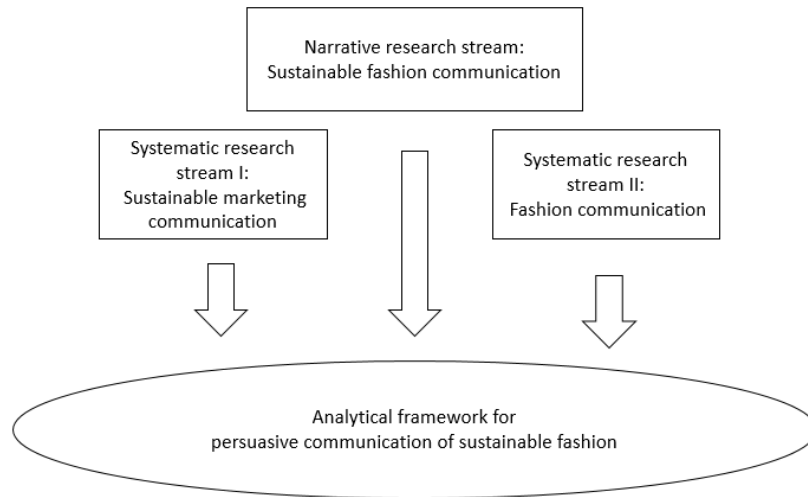


Figure 4 Methodological approach literature review

2.1.2.1 Narrative research approach - Sustainable fashion communication

We employed different combinations of search words such as ‘communication’, ‘sustainability’, ‘fashion industry’, ‘eco-fashion’, ‘apparel’, ‘message’ and/or ‘advertisement’ in the data base *ProQuest* and additionally in the data base *EbscoHost* in order to identify articles that specifically related to the research topic of sustainable fashion communication. This results in four articles that were published in 2012 and 2015. Three of these articles focus on broader strategic approaches referring to the communication/ non-communication of sustainable practices in general (Da Giau et al., 2015; D’Souza, 2015; Soler et al., 2015). Yan et al. (2012) take upon the difficulties of effective communication of sustainability (e.g. greenwashing), and focus specifically on the **message design**, respectively on how to communicate effectively sustainable fashion. Therefore, this article is highly important for our research project. As the literature in this specific field appears to be scarce, we apply the method of backward chaining in the article (Bates, 1989). By screening the references for articles that devote their research to the **design of sustainable fashion messages**, we find four further relevant articles that are published between 1997 and 2012. Referring to the importance of transparency and consciousness when using this method (section 2.1.1), we select the articles due to its thematic relevance to get deeper understanding of the specific area of sustainability fashion message design, and not to confirm existing knowledge. Eventually, **eight articles** are the result of the search.

Meta-analysis

The articles origin in specific geographical regions, mainly the USA (Da Giau et al., 2015; Yan et al., 2012; Kim & Damhost, 1997; Kim et al., 1997). All articles conduct **primary research**. The texts tackle the topic of



sustainable fashion communication either from a **customer perspective** by conducting **quantitative** consumer surveys, or address the topic from a **business perspective** using **qualitative** case studies.

Yan et al. (2012, p.151) fall within the first category by investigating “the influence of two variables – brand name and message explicitness – on attitude toward advertisement and attitude toward brands”. Phau & Ong (2007) and Kim & Damhost (1997) study the effect of different sustainable claims compared to mainstream claims on customer response. Kim et al. (1997) investigate the influence of consumer’s environmental concerns on responses to fashion advertisements.

Within the second category, D’Souza (2015) examines branding activities of a sustainable firm in Australia. Soler et al. (2015) and Da Giau et al. (2015) conduct multiple case studies to capture the communication of sustainable practices of several fashion companies in Italy and Sweden. Lorek & Lucas (2003) investigate the influences on sustainable consumption patterns. Special attention is drawn to the question how existing niche markets could be extended to mass markets. This question is deepened by case studies on the green textile and the green power markets. The following figure positions the examined articles, on the dimension *research approach* and *perspective*.

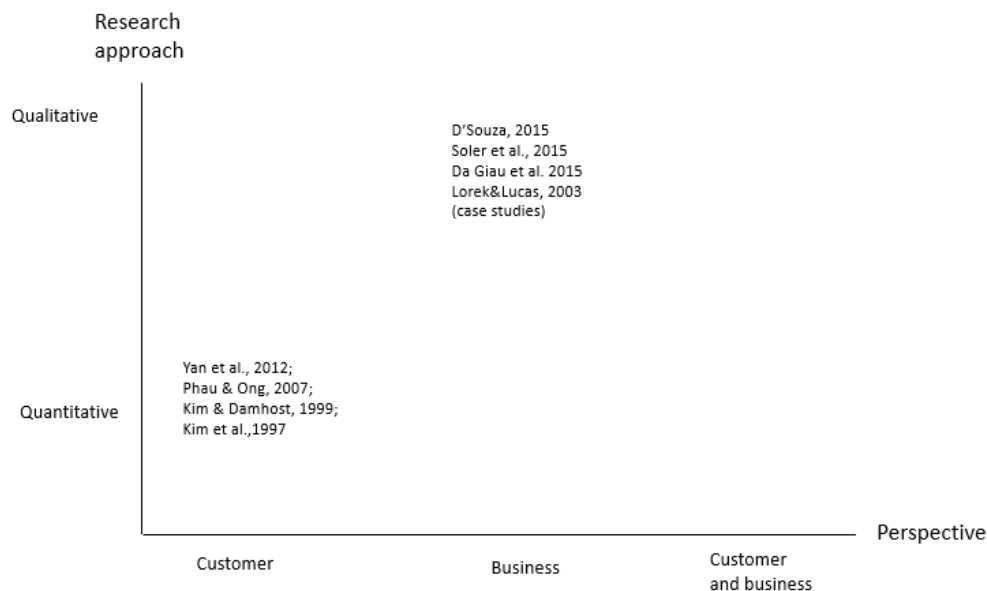


Figure 5 Positioning the narrative research stream



2.1.2.2 Systematic research stream I - Sustainability marketing communication

The first step of conducting a systematic literature review is to determine appropriate search words that set limits and restrict the research field to a certain area. Synonyms or words which are used by analogy should be considered, as well as usage of operations such as AND, OR, and NOT (Bryman, 2012).

The **first systematic literature** review focuses on articles that concern **sustainability marketing**. Particularly, these terms should be mentioned in the abstract, or in the title of the articles as belonging together to ensure that it represents a key issue in the selected literature (expressed through "..."). Several synonyms for sustainability are found through the preliminary. According to Noonan & Coleman (2013, p. 19) the "term 'sustainable', has synonyms such as the term '*green*'" and according to Seretny & Seretny (2012, p.69) "sustainability [...] is an *economic, social and environmental* issue". Thus, the 1st condition is that either the abstract or the title of the literature contains the terminology "*sustainable marketing*" (or synonyms like '*sustainability marketing*', '*green marketing*', '*eco marketing*', '*ecological marketing*' or '*environmental marketing*').

Within the field of sustainable marketing, we are interested in **persuasive communication**. As shown in section 2.1.2.1 persuasive communication can be ascribed to strategic communication which is defined by Connolly-Ahern (2008, n.p.) as "purposeful communication by a person or an organization designed to persuade audiences with the goal of increasing knowledge, changing attitudes, or inducing desired behaviour". Thus, synonymous of persuasive communication are '*strategic communication*', '*communication strategies*', '*communication strategy*' and '*communication effectiveness*'. Furthermore, *advertisement* and *advertising* are used as synonyms as several authors utilize these terms in the context of persuasiveness. Hassan & Valenzuela (2016, p.170) state that „advertising both creates awareness and it a means of *persuasion*” and Wei et al. (2014, p.68) claim that “advertising is a type of marketing communication employed to arouse or *persuade* a target audience to engage in a specific action”. Thus, the 2nd condition is that the literature contains the words “persuasive communication” (or synonyms like '*communication effectiveness*', '*strategic communication*', '*communication strategies*' and '*communication strategy*', '*advertising*' or '*advertisement*') in the abstract. We apply the following combination of keywords in *ProQuest* on the 5th April 2017.

```
(ab("sustainable marketing" OR "sustainability marketing" OR "green marketing" OR "eco marketing" OR "ecological marketing" OR "environmental marketing") OR ti("sustainable marketing" OR "sustainability marketing" OR "green marketing" OR "eco marketing" OR "ecological marketing" OR "environmental marketing")) AND ab("persuasive communication" OR "communication effectiveness" OR "strategic communication" OR "communication strategies" OR "communication strategy" OR advertising OR advertisement)
```



Figure 6 Search protocol of the first systematic research stream (Source: ProQuest)



The research stream leads to 276 results. To ensure to gain deep reliable insights and high quality papers, the 3rd condition is set as "full texts" that have been 'peer reviewed', respectively approved by experts. This results in 39 articles. All texts are published in the time between 1990 and 2017, whereas most articles are released after 2010. We both read the abstract of every article and decide in consensus which articles are relevant for the phenomenon under investigation. Four of the articles are identified as being out of topic like the paper by Hansen (1997) that addresses forest certification, or Haggard et al. (2014) who explore the impact of gender and political ideology on climate change. Furthermore, 13 texts are considered as not being relevant by having a different focus like:

- ethical discussion about the sense of (sustainable) marketing (Chitakornkijasil, 2012; Pranee, 2010);
- exploring which consumers might be influenced by green advertisement but not how the advertisement should be implemented (Ankit & Mayur, 2013; Sabir et al., 2014);
- scientism towards sustainable advertisement (Mohr et al., 1998; do Paço & Reis, 2012);
- greenwashing in the context of established, not fully sustainable companies (Lane, 2012);
- multiple stakeholders and prioritization of sustainable approaches (López-Rodríguez, 2016).

Consequently, 22 articles are selected. After a thorough examination of the articles, two further articles are excluded due to a lack of relevance. Shrum et al. (1995) address features of green consumers, and Ku et al. (2012, p.41) "investigates the effect of consumers' self-regulatory focus on their response to green versus non-green advertising appeals". Both texts do not contain information on addressing the main stream consumer. So, we finally worked with a literature basis of 20 highly relevant articles with regards to persuasive sustainability marketing communication. The following figure should illustrate the selection process.

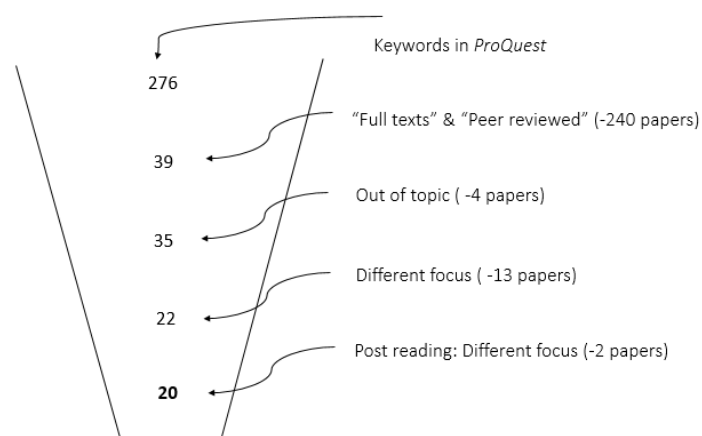


Figure 7 Selection process of the first systematic research stream



17 of the 20 articles are published after 2010. The peak years are 2012 (5 texts published), 2014 (4 texts published) and 2015 (3 texts published). The articles focus on different industries, among them the accommodation industry (Villarino & Font, 2015; Chan, 2013), the food industry (Pittner, 2014), the cleaning industry (Ryan, 2012), and the fashion industry (Visser et al., 2015). The article that focuses on fashion industry will be used in the *sustainable fashion communication section* in the literature review. Other articles are generally covering the field without addressing any specific industry (e.g. Nagar, 2014; Minton et al., 2012; Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016; Bickart & Ruth, 2012). Most articles refer to specific regions including articles from Asia (India e.g. Nagar, 2014; China e.g. Chan, 2013), the USA (e.g. Minton et al., 2012; Bickart & Ruth, 2012), Europe (Austria e.g. Pittner, 2014), and Australia (e.g. Polonsky et al., 1997; Grimmer & Woolley, 2014). The fact that the examined articles are predominantly published after 2010, and addressing a variety of industries and regions, confirms that sustainable marketing communication is a worldwide arising, universal issue.

Most articles conduct **primary research**, whereas only a few articles are limited to **conceptualization**. Pure conceptualization texts concentrate on effective marketing and communication techniques for sustainable products and services to customers in general (Ottman et al., 2006), or specifically to green customers (Noonan & Coleman, 2013). Other conceptualizations are more general, like Seretny & Seretny (2012) who conceptualize sustainable marketing.

The articles show different perspectives, and predominantly address the **customer perspective** by using (potential) customers as research objects. Among them, most of these articles focus on specific topics and formulate and test hypothesis through questionnaires. For instance, Nagar (2014, p.71) examines “relationship between consumer’s attitude toward green advertising and brand loyalty”, Bickart & Ruth (2012) focus on eco seals, and Tu et al. (2013, p.1083) analyse “the relationship between framing effect (FE) and green message”. The researchers often make use of an experimental design, presenting different stimuli to the sample and capture differences in attitude or purchase intention (Bickart & Ruth, 2012; Visser et al., 2015).

Two articles with a **customer perspective** use a **qualitative research** approach. Hassan & Valenzuela (2016, p.174) conduct interviews to explore „how consumers perceive green advertising and its influence on the decision-making process”, and Pittner (2014) examines characteristics, values and communication techniques addressing LOHAS. Two articles take a **business perspective**, focusing on sustainable businesses directly without including the customer’s view. One of them uses a **quantitative approach**, exploring specifically sustainability messages on 40 websites of awarded businesses in the accommodation industry (Villarino & Font, 2015). The other takes a **qualitative approach** by analysing two adverts of the firm ‘Method’ (Ryan, 2012).



One article combines **customer and business perspective** by focusing on “the gap between hotel managers and customer perceptions of the relative importance of green marketing-related activities” (Chan, 2013, p. 1017).

The following figure positions the examined articles on the dimension *research approach* and *perspective*.

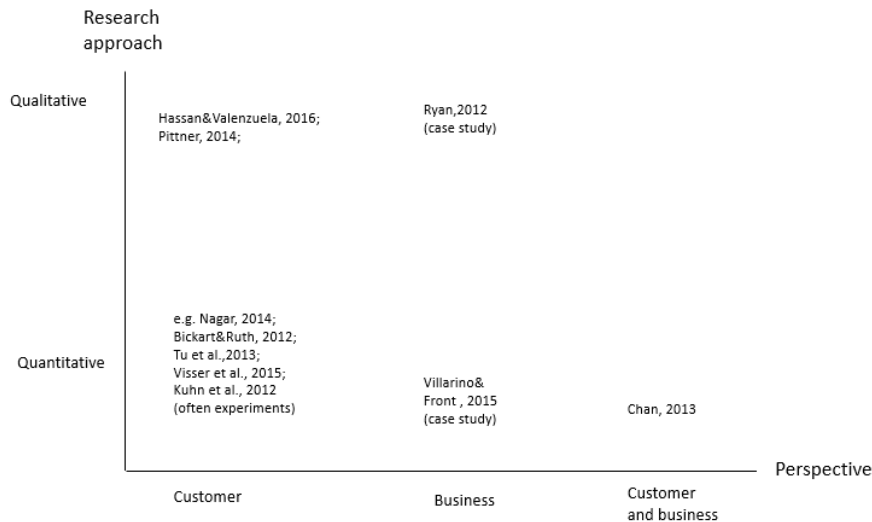


Figure 8 Positioning the first systematic research stream

As already mentioned only one article (Visser et al., 2015) relates their research specifically to the fashion industry. This presents a further confirmation of the research gap and the need for a second systematic research review about fashion communication.

2.1.2.3 Systematic research stream II – Fashion communication

The literature review is dedicated towards articles that focus on **persuasive communication of fashion**. Particularly, these terms should be used in the abstract to ensure that it represents a key issue in the selected literature. The 1st condition is that the abstracts contains the terms ‘*fashion*’ and synonyms like ‘*clothing*’ or ‘*apparel*’. The 2nd condition is that the abstract contains ‘*persuasive communication*’ and derived synonyms as already used in the first research stream (‘*strategic communication*’, ‘*communication strategies*’, ‘*communication strategy*’, ‘*communication effectiveness*’, ‘*advertisement*’ or ‘*advertising*’). We apply the following combination of keywords in *ProQuest* on the 23th May 2017.

ab(fashion OR apparel OR clothing) AND ab("persuasive communication" OR "communication effectiveness" OR "strategic communication" OR "communication strategies" OR "communication strategy" OR advertising OR advertisement)



Figure 9 Search protocol of the second systematic research stream (source: ProQuest)



This leads to 14,429 articles. To ensure deep reliable insights and high quality papers, the 3rd condition are "full texts" that have been 'peer reviewed', respectively approved by experts. This results in 294 articles. A closer look at the texts reveals that the word *fashion* is ambiguous, and not always used synonymous to clothing. The word *fashion* is also used to express that something is done in a certain way, a manner of doing something e.g. to do something in an open or casual *fashion*. Thus, we limit our research to the clothing industry, by selecting '*Textile & apparel industries*' under the category *classifications* which results in 40 articles. A second filter is applied concerning the publication date as fashion is a time sensitive issue (Lahiri & Siddika, 2014) and we aim for up-to-date knowledge. Hence, included articles are published from 2000 on, which results in 35 articles. We both read the abstract of every article and decide in consensus on relevant articles.

One articles is excluded as it is not written in English. Another article is excluded as it is a book review. Out of the remaining 33 articles, 23 articles are identified as not being relevant for the phenomenon under investigation. Two articles are considered as off-topic by focusing on business leaders and gender (de Arruda et al., 2015), or on developing a bike app (Chun & Lee, 2016). Other texts are too broad addressing marketing and branding (Tong & Hawley, 2009), or addressing different issues as the internationalization of fashion firms (Lopez & Fan, 2009; Moore et al., 2000), fashion involvement (Radder & Huang, 2008; Khare & Rakesh, 2010), effectiveness of advertising on firm performance (Cucculelli et al., 2014) or social comparison through advertisement (Adomaitis & Johnson, 2008). Eventually, the literature basis consists of **9 highly relevant articles** with regards to **persuasive fashion communication**. The following figure illustrates the selection process.

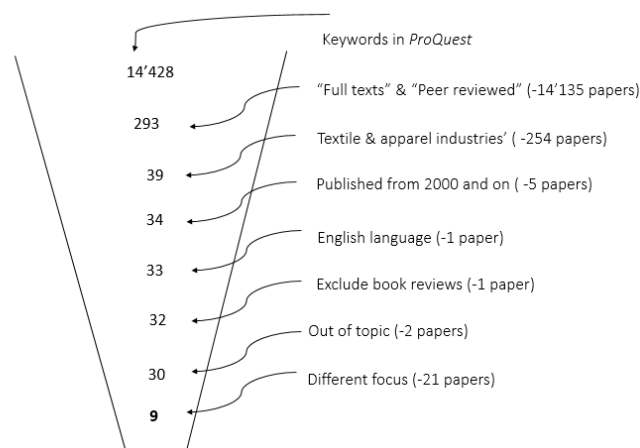


Figure 10 Selection process of the second research stream

Meta-Analysis



Meta-Analysis

The articles origin from different countries like China (Chen & Chen, 2014), the USA (Kinley et al., 2010; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2011; Wong & Malone, 2016), Bangladesh (Lahiri & Siddika, 2014), Spain (Meneses & Rodriguez, 2010), and New Zealand (Wiley et al., 2007). This shows that the topic is a global issue. Almost all articles conduct **primary research**. Two articles are limited to pure **conceptualization** and address the importance of celebrity endorsement in fashion brand communication (Carroll, 2009), and the conceptualization of different marketing streams (Jacobs & Mossinkoff, 2007).

The articles conducting **primary research** show different perspectives. A **customer perspective** is predominantly taken. Among them, most use a **quantitative research approach** through questionnaires to capture customer's perceptions, opinions and/ or behaviour. The texts focus on specific topics like the effectiveness of different information sources (e.g. peers or internet advertising) on fashion purchase behaviour (Chen & Chen, 2014; Kinley et al., 2010). Wiley et al. (2007) investigate the visual content of fashion advertisement, Wong & Malone (2016) focus on SMS apparel advertisement, Meneses & Rodriguez (2010) investigate the emotional component of fashion adoption. Lahiri & Siddika (2014, p.64) "determine the impact of apparel promotion on fashion behaviour" and give recommendation for social media, celebrities' endorsement and press conferences. Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar (2011) use a **qualitative research** approach with a **customer perspective**, and address the importance of celebrity endorsement in fashion branding.

Two texts take a **business perspective**, thereby conducting **quantitative content analysis**. Ko et al. (2010) give a holistic overview about presented consumer benefits of fashion items by analysing advertisement in fashion magazines. Touchette (2015) investigates branded entertainment of fashion on Facebook.

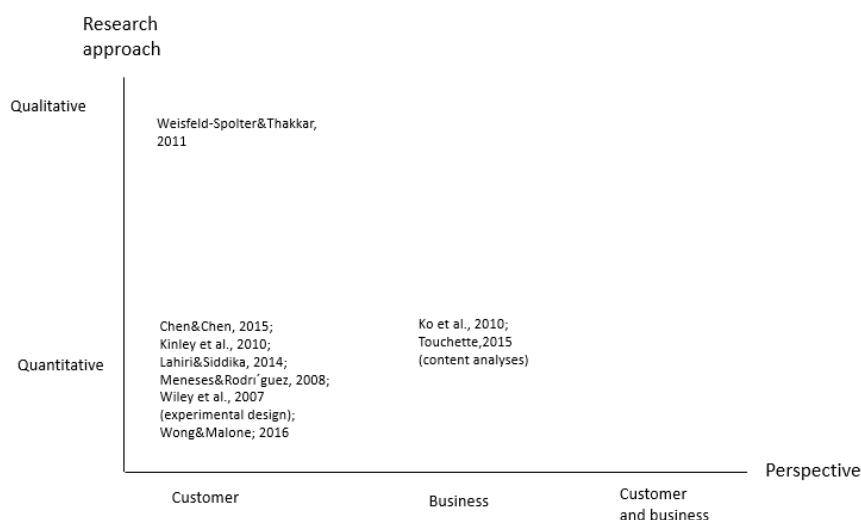


Figure 11 Positioning the literature of the second research stream



2.1.3 Conclusion

In total, the theoretical foundation is built on 37 articles (Figure 12). We position all identified articles that conduct primary research on the dimension research approach and perspective. Furthermore, in line with Chapter II, we position ourselves within a **qualitative research design with a business perspective**.

Four articles proceed on a similar basis. The fact that three of these derived from the narrative search on sustainability fashion communication, thus the specific field of research, is an additional confirmation of our research positioning choice.

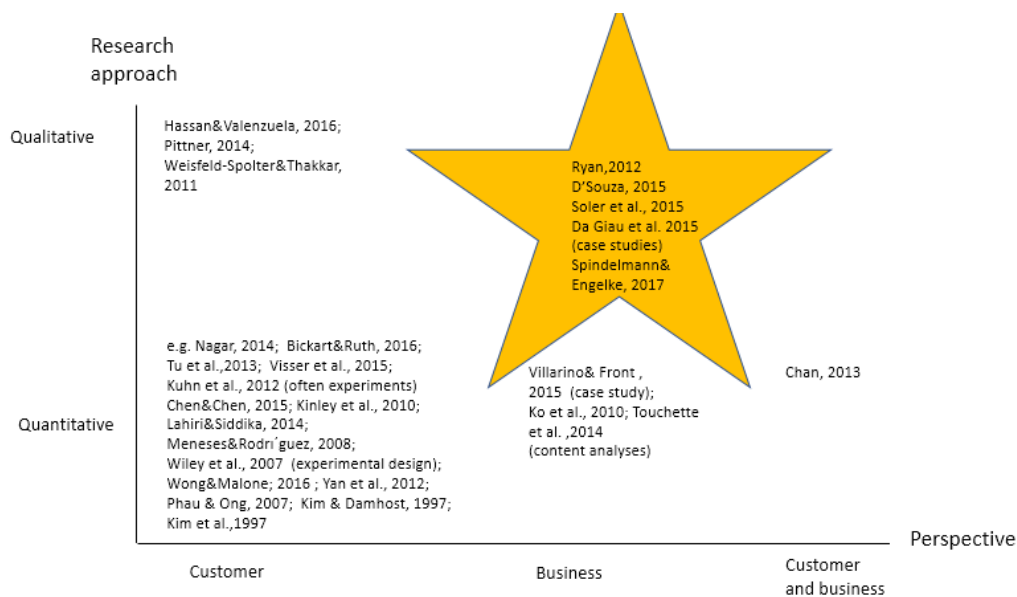


Figure 12 Positioning the thesis within the literature

Ryan (2012) is analysing sustainability adverts. Soler et al. (2015) and Da Giau et al. (2015) conduct multiple case studies to capture the communication of sustainable practices of fashion companies whereby the companies are not fully sustainable. D'Souza's (2015) case study on sustainable clothing businesses focuses on branding and marketing, and not explicitly on communication. This shows that this thesis is unique in its overall approach and perspective by studying the communication strategies of multiple sustainable fashion brands. Thus, it holds an immense potential to contribute to the scarce research field of sustainable fashion communication.

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of green leaves, likely from a plant like a peace lily, with prominent veins and a slightly waxy texture. The leaves are in various shades of green, from dark forest green to a lighter, almost yellowish-green where the light hits. The lighting creates a sense of depth and texture.

CHAPTER III

Theory

*This chapter addresses the theoretical understanding of the phenomena of sustainability fashion marketing communication. The review seeks to create the “**understanding** about characteristics of persuasive sustainable fashion communication in the context of sustainability”, as stated in the research question. The review shows a lack of integrated communication frameworks for sustainable fashion brands, and the need for insights into the sustainable fashion field. The findings are conceptualized, as a means to address the second research objective to “**construct** an analytical framework for sustainability fashion communication by drawing from the literature insights”.*



3.1 Literature review

The literature review is organized into four pillars. First, a development section defines and characterizes the main concepts of this thesis and puts them in their historical perspective. Hereafter, the three sections devoted to the three streams, namely sustainable fashion communication, sustainability marketing communication, and fashion communication.

3.1.1 Socio-economic development of concepts

This chapter is embedding the topic of sustainable fashion communication in a socio- economic context, and highlights the development and characteristics of the modern consumer. We identify several streams of topics and concepts in the literature. A common theme is devoted towards the overall development of marketing and communication, which is connected to the evolution of the consumer. Hence, the development of sustainability marketing and its challenges are reviewed in relation to observed shifts in consumerism. Finally, a brief overview about the nature of fashion is given, in order to characterise the specific industry that the communication addresses. Those developments are important in relation to capturing the phenomenon under investigation as a means to lay out the complexity of the research field.

3.1.1.1 Stage I - Development in the field of marketing

Seretny & Seretny (2012) propose that marketing has developed in three different eras. In the first period, mainly the second half of the 20th century, marketing arose “as a product driven approach focused on intensively growing sales (Marketing 1.0)” (Seretny & Seretny, 2012, p. 63). The second period is shaped by moving consumers in the centre of activities (Marketing 2.0). Today, the society is at the beginning of the third period (Marketing 3.0), also considered as the sustainable marketing period. This is

“a value driven era, where people are no longer perceived as a target consumer market base on demographic factor but rather thoughtful and intelligent partners with emotions, feelings and specific spiritual values”
(Seretny & Seretny, 2012, p. 63).

The modern era is characterized by technology and globalization, and people demanding that firms improve market and social conditions. Through joint efforts, businesses are asked to contribute to solve worldwide problems and improve quality of life. In that sense, sustainable marketing is a crucial collaborator to sustainable economic growth. Figure 13 below illustrates the above-discussed development of marketing.

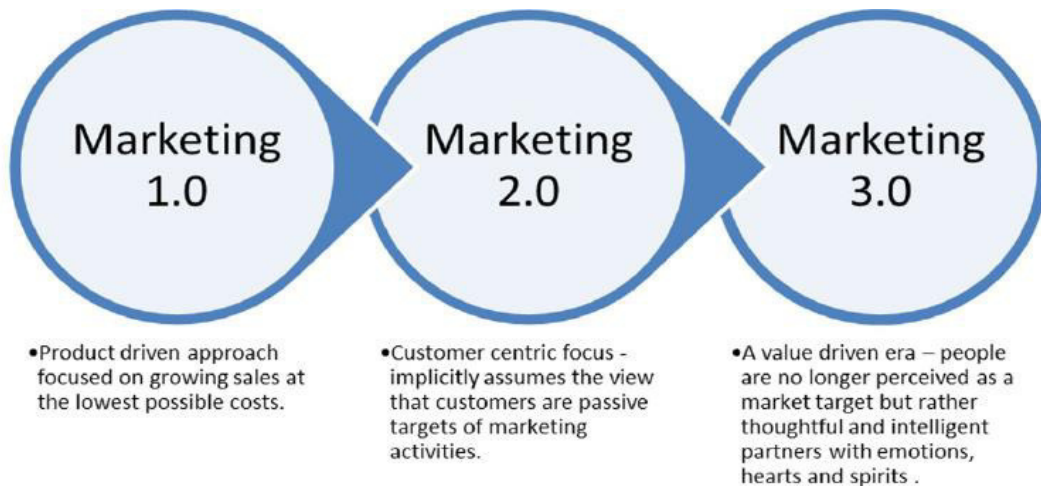


Figure 13 Marketing development (Seretny & Seretny, 2012, p. 64)

3.1.1.2 Stage II - Development of the field of sustainability and marketing

According to Seretny & Seretny (2012), sustainability marketing has developed in three phases. The first started in the 1970's and focused on environmental contamination like water and air pollution. The second phase, developed in the 1980's, focused on marketing and communicating to environmentally conscious customers. The firms considered a strategic sustainable business approach as a competitive advantage. The last period "is the current era of sustainable marketing, which aims at responsible economy and social development" (Seretny & Seretny, 2012, p. 69). It aims to fulfil the demand of the current generation by considering the demand of future generations. Furthermore, sustainable marketing is regarded as a holistic solution that aims to connect several stakeholders within and outside of the market.

"Sustainable marketing is also seen as a philosophy with a goal to bring together participants in the market, social activists and organizations whose interests have not coincided so far, in order to create a common worldview through the prism of the responsibility." (Seretny & Sereny, 2012, p.69 f.)

It can be observed that several authors devote their research to green advertisement. Older definitions of green advertisement focus on green consumers, e.g. "promotional messages that may appeal to the needs and desires of environmentally concerned consumers" (Zinkhan & Carlson, 1995 *in* Nagar, 2014, p.75). In contrast, newer definitions focus more on the society as a whole e.g. "that the primary goal of green advertisement is to try to alter consumers traditional purchase behaviour by making them buy products that either do not harm the environment or that have a positive impact on it" (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011 *in* Hassan &



Valenzuela, 2016, p.170). Besides green advertising, another main concept identified is sustainability communication. According to Da Giau et al. (2012, p.77) sustainability communication can be defined as

“the set of strategies and subsequent practices that have a relevant role in disseminating information about an organization’s environmental and social behaviours to influence, support and enhance the company’s corporate image in the eyes of its stakeholders and final customers and to indirectly promote its products”

Figure 14 shows the development of sustainable marketing.



Figure 14 Sustainable marketing development (Seretny & Seretny, 2012, p.69)

In line with the rise of sustainable marketing, several challenges emerged. The literature notices that humans are sceptical concerning the marketing of sustainable products and services. Catchwords like ‘recyclable’ or ‘eco-friendly’ which were used originally by firms as a decisive purchase argument, have been perceived as increasingly ambivalent or even negative by consumers as they “have questioned the believability of such claims” (Nagar, 2014, p.73). The breach of trust can be attributed to misused sustainable slogans which add an additional value by making deceptive or overstated environmental statements, which later turned out not to be true (Nagar, 2014). The phenomenon of greenwashing has been established in the heads of the consumer, like shown in the newsworthy study by Hassan & Valenzuela (2016) on consumer perception of green advertisement. The study demonstrates that almost half of the interviewed people do not believe that sustainable advertisement is reliable and honest. Rather, the interviewees suspect that green advertisement is “nothing more than a marketing ploy that makes customers feel guilty so they will spend more in the hope that they are protecting the environment” (Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016, p.178). According to Nagar (2014, p. 77)



the problematic “of determining a product’s or organization’s true environmental stance has resulted in worldwide scepticism regarding trust in green advertising”

On the other side, customers often do not even notice that the offered products are sustainable, as “most green message labels did not make an impression in buyers’ mind” (Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016, p.171). This can be related to the general incapacity of communicating sustainability in an effective way (Da Giau et al., 2015). Hassan & Valenzuela (2016, p.171) state that “communication is an area of weakness for green marketers”, and Visser et al. (2015) highlight the lack of professionalism in communicating green products persuasively to the mass market. Additionally, Visser (2015) refers to the fear of firms to be blamed and accused by non-governmental organizations of greenwashing.

3.1.1.3 Stage III - Development in the field of fashion and sustainable fashion

From the 1920’s until the 1960’s, there was a keen sense of community and a rather passive human image. “Mass parties and movements gave people their basic identity, which as a rule was not questioned” (Jacobs & Mossinkoff, 2007, p.460). The fashion landscape was shaped by megatrends coming from Paris that people adopted in a quiet and compliant manner. The market was characterized by a strong power of the supply side. After the 1960’s, the society was increasingly shaped by a wider range of products and offerings. People had more choices thanks to a growing economy. Consequently, many consumers stopped following fashion commands from Paris, and instead developed own, more individual styles and trends. Consequently, the consumer became more active, autonomous, and less foreseeable. The emancipation from strict social guidelines, led to higher freedom and the aspiration for self-development. At the same time, it led to a higher uncertainty and people struggled to find a balance between individualism and social acceptance through adjustment (Jacobs & Mossinkoff, 2007).

Fashion as a concept needs to be described and characterized, as it represents a special product category. Clothing is an important aspect of everyday life, and is a part of the basic human needs besides nutrition and shelter (Lorek & Lucas, 2012). According to Phau & Ong (2007, p.773) clothes “satisfy many human needs, from protection, through status, to **self-expression and lifestyle**”. Fashion is a **high-involvement product** that differs from other fast-moving consumer goods in terms of its **hedonic and symbolic character** (Yan et al., 2012). Apparel has an energetic and constantly changing nature (Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2011).

Fashion brands enable individuals to portray a desired identity and thus, help to transform themselves in the person they want to be, which can facilitate to be part of a certain social group. Apparel can be considered as a **human’s second skin** (Lahiri & Siddika, 2014) and thus, presents a powerful **tool to build up identity** (Kinley et



al., 2010). “Given the intrinsic volatility and unfixity of all or most identities, it is the ability to ‘shop around’ in the supermarket of identities” (Bauman, 2000 in Jacobs & Mossinkoff, 2007, p. 462). Carroll, 2009, (p.147) sums the fashion phenomenon up by saying:

“They (consumers) dress up, now as skiers who never ski, now as pilots who cannot fly, now as soldiers who never see army life. In search for the expression of individualism bound up in a fantasy status”

Sustainable fashion is considered as fashion that avoids harmful environmental effects. Therefore, it can consist of recycled substances, organic substances (which can be degraded in soil), or be manufactured in an environmentally-friendly way e.g. through using natural colours. The aim of sustainable clothing is to reduce the effect on the environment to the minimum when producing and selling the products (D'Souza, 2015). However, as for now, no blueprint for sustainable fashion exists (D'Souza, 2015), which results in differing techniques and degree of sustainability practices.

According to D'Souza (2015) effective branding of sustainable fashion is characterized by the combination of functional and non-functional advantages. Functional advantage refer to practical product functions and characteristics such as sustainability practices, ethical practices and/or local benefits as a specific country of origin (D'Souza, 2015). Non-functional advantages refer to symbolic benefits that “intent to satisfy emotional needs, ego-identification, or group membership [...]; they express the inner individual self by embracing external marks and symbols, brands, and status items” (D'Souza, 2015, p. 72). Thus, especially the communication of fashion is crucial as clothes give meaning and create identity (D'Souza, 2015; Jacobs & Mossinkoff, 2007). Non-functional benefits can also be experimental, meaning they “provide sensory pleasure, variety, or cognitive stimulation” (D'Souza, 2015, p. 74). This refers to a customer's feeling during using a product such as an enjoyable state. In the context of sustainability, this can be related to feeling good for being altruistic (D'Souza, 2015).



3.1.2 Sustainable fashion communication

The scarce literature identified in the specific field under investigation focuses upon the problematics faced by sustainable fashion brands and its marketers, as well as suggestions towards overcoming them. The fashion industry is highly competitive and characterized by quick product life cycles (Da Giau et al., 2015). Branding is a crucial instrument to set apart from the competition that increasingly takes place online. When it comes to fashion, often solely the brand name is used to express meaning to people, and is therefore a crucial part of communication (Yan et al., 2012). Dealing with sustainable issues is clearly a new challenge for this industry “and there is a lack of defined programmes and tools that could support fashion companies in making this change” (Da Giau et al., 2015, p.73).

Phau & Ong (2007) emphasize on the fact that brands have become more conscious about the essential **need to establish high credibility** in sustainability marketing. Ad credibility can be defined as “the extent to which the audience perceives claims made about the brand in the ad to be truthful and believable” (Lutz, 1985 in Kim & Damhorst, 1999, p. 20). Credibility is found to be crucial as it is greatly influencing the attitude towards the brand, so that higher credibility is expected to support favourable responses (Kim & Damhorst, 1999).

The latest insights by Visser et al. (2015, p. 8422) emphasize on the complexity of fashion as a challenging product category in sustainable marketing, because “consumers differ in their expectations and beliefs on how much impact their sustainable choice makes and how much effort their sustainable fashion shopping takes”. The research additionally highlights that too often green marketing only achieves to reach the green buyers, and hence fail to reach the mainstream consumer. Essentially, it is claimed that “how to effectively communicate more sustainable products to mainstream consumers and to increase their buying intention is still underexplored” (Visser et al., 2015, p. 8420). Da Giau et al. (2015) note a general incapacity of communicating sustainable fashion in an effective way. Visser et al. (2015) point out the lack of professionalism to communicate green products persuasively to the mass market and refer to the fear of firms to be blamed and accused by non-governmental organizations for greenwashing. The fact that “fashion companies have become among the ones most exposed to sustainability pressure and attacks by NGOs and public opinion” (Da Giau et al., 2015 p. 74), makes sustainable fashion firms unsettle if and how they should communicate their sustainable practice or not (Da Giau et al., 2015).

3.1.2.1 High commitment vs. Muted sustainability

Da Giau et al. (2015) relate to this problematic, and find two communication approaches for sustainable firms, such as a high commitment strategy and a low disclosure strategy. The former refers to brands, which communicate their sustainability efforts to the public. In contrast, the latter refers to brands that choose a



strategic non-communication of the sustainable efforts in order to avoid critics (Da Giau et al., 2015). In line with that, Soler et al. (2015) investigate the phenomenon of muted sustainable fashion brands, in other words not to communicate sustainability efforts in their marketing and advertising strategies. The identified barrier to sustainable communication in the fashion industry is based on the perception of brands that the communication of sustainability is risky, due to the possibility of being criticized or accused of greenwashing. Some companies are found to be reluctant pursue a green eco-fashion image, but highlighted other core values when communicating to their fashion consumers (Soler et al., 2015). Muted sustainability brands are found to mainly communicate sustainability through their websites in separate sustainability sections and separately from their collections and online shops, rather than in stores and on products (Soler et al., 2015). Such companies state that their key reasoning for sustainability engagement is based on the pursuit for doing something that mattered, rather than to communicate it.

3.1.2.2 Personal vs. sustainable benefits

Yet, some authors suggest that a sustainable brand image can increase the emotional bond and brand loyalty among fashion consumers. D'Souza (2015) advocates for a communication of both benefits from product point of view and sustainable point of view. However, consumers are not willing to compromise on traditional meanings of fashion on behalf of environmental and social concerns (Soler et al., 2015). Lorek & Lucas (2012) point out that communicating sustainable aspects in fashion is like interrupting a love story with statistics on divorce rates. Hence, **rationality appeals** in relation to fashion are found to increase prejudice and even aversions to eco-textiles, rather than create positive attention and purchases. Thus, eco-aspects should only represent an additional benefit besides the attributes the consumer desires (Lorek & Lucas, 2012).

“The world of fashion is full of positive emotions. Beautiful people in a good mood dominate the catalogue pages. Compared to that information about environmental relevance of product decisions is not even boring: it merely distracts consumers’ attention” (Lorek & Lucas, 2012, p. 36).

Visser et al. (2015) explore the effect of highlighting personal versus environmental benefits on buying intention, and find that highlighting the environmental benefit instead of personal one, results in a weaker fashion image, which can reduce buying intentions. Generally, several authors agree upon that the sustainability image should not be prioritized at the expense of other more important buying criteria such as fashion appeal, as consumers do not compromise or reduce personal benefits of convenience, availability price and quality (Visser et al., 2015; Phau & Ong, 2007).



Kim et al. (1997) find differences in addressing green and mainstream consumers. Environmentally concerned consumers react positively towards nature settings and environmentally oriented claims in messages. The consumer who is not environmentally concerned, finds fashion-oriented messages more appealing. This suggests that hedonic products like clothes “can be advertised more effectively with affective, subjective attributes such as ‘prestige of ownership’ or ‘beautiful styling’” (Kim et al., 1997, p. 152). Therefore, for the mainstream market an environmental message is suggested to be focuses of only as secondary, maintaining their primary emphasis on a fashion message (Kim et al., 1997).

This is related to the layered decision process, also called double filter theory that suggests that the first criteria to be fulfilled is that the product fulfils the costumers’ “basic needs, make them happy or feel attractive, taste good, perform well, and so on” (Visser et al., 2015, p. 8422). Secondly, the right price is considered, and only in the **third step**, consumers filter “products that best communicate their environmental beliefs to finalize their purchase decision” (Visser et al., 2015, p.8422). In line with this, **sustainable characteristics can only add value** to the clothes, if the product **is attractive in the first place** (Niinimäki, 2010 *in* Visser et al., 2015).

Yan et al. (2012, p. 164) therefore claim that to reach beyond the niche market, apparel marketers need to employ a “multifaceted product marketing strategy that simultaneously calls attention to environmentally friendly product attributes and other determinant attributes such as, brand name, comfort, quality, low price, etc., rather than employ a single eco-product marketing strategy”. This multiple attribute communication can also address typical concerns regarding higher prices often associated with eco-fashion (Yan et al., 2012).

Generally, within the **sustainable fashion business**, Da Giau et al. (2015) differentiate between two levels in the communication of non-personal benefits, by adding the **social sustainability perspective** to the environmental one. This dimension refers to issues related to human rights and working conditions due issues arising from outsourcing and delocalization strategies for fashion production activities (Da Giau et al., 2015).

3.1.2.3 Environmental messages

Eco labels are associated with increased credibility in sustainable fashion communication. Kim & Damhorst (1999) note that green fashion brands use eco labelling to achieve persuasion of their environmental messages, as consumers receive information that elaborates on product specification (Buda & Zhang, 2000 *in* Phau & Ong, 2007). Thus, an eco-label and information about the sustainability attributes of the product offer a means to influence consumers’ judgement of the environmental claim. Furthermore, Lorek & Lucas (2012) add that even if eco-labels are still struggling with a lack of familiarity, they hold the option to communicate eco-benefits in a compromised way. The best result is expected with a common label which does not yet exist.



In that context, it appears to be crucial to foster a sustainable fashion label that integrates aspects of environmental issues, labour conditions, and Fairtrade (Lorek & Lucas, 2012).

Using simple green claims such as ‘sustainable’, ‘recycled’ or ‘natural’ is found to be potentially negative. Kim & Damhorst (1999) find that advertisements appealing to **environmental activism** result in more positive responses than addressing environmental correctness, e.g. organic cotton or tags from recycled materials. The perception of high credibility “of the environmental donation messages may stem from consumers' belief that altruistic activism is the most effective strategy for solving complex environmental problems” (Kim & Damhorst, 1999, p. 28), rather than highlighting how a product is manufactured.

Yan et al. (2012) investigate the influence of brand **message explicitness** on brand attitudes. Generally, fashion communication uses implicit communication, as for fashion there often is a “shared understanding of unstated information such as product function or brand image” (Yan et al., 2012, p. 153). However, as noted by Kim & Damhorst (1999), as well as Yan et al. (2012), the awareness and knowledge about the negative impact of fashion production is low. In case of limited shared understanding, explicit communication is expected to be more efficient, as likeliness of misinterpretation or incorrect inferences about the meaning of the message is reduced. Due to the high complexity of environmentally friendly marketing claims (Moisander 2007 in Yan et al., 2012), the findings indicate that message receivers have **positive attitudes** towards green apparel brands when the **message is explicit** with clear and detailed information. Therefore, explicitness may be especially important to achieve attractiveness **beyond the green niche**, consumers that show interest in green purchase but are not fully committed respectively (Yan et al., 2012).

Kim & Damhorst (1999) also emphasize on the lack of knowledge and call for environmentally responsible firms to help raising awareness about the impacts of apparel and textiles on the environment in their communication. This appears to be especially important as knowledge is related to environmental commitment, and consequently the increase in positive attitude toward environmental messages in ads. Above all, also **the sustainable fashion** research calls for marketers to raise awareness and knowledge of the benefits associated with sustainable products and brands, as this can support the establishment of a sustainable market for eco-fashion by reaching consumers which are less interested in purchasing environmentally friendly products. D’Souza (2015) adds the importance of perceived consumer effectiveness, and finds high effectiveness is achieved when the individual consumer believes that his or her action / purchase makes a difference in solving an environmental problem.



3.1.2.4 Visual vs. textual communication

Kim et al. (1997) and Carroll (2009) note that affective reactions in fashion marketing can be triggered by high visual and low-text formats. Visser et al. (2015) introduce the divide between **visual/ pictorial communication** considered as an **emotional positioning strategy**, versus a **verbal/ tagline communication** considered as **functional positioning strategy**. The former caters emotions and senses, and the latter caters the mind. “The use of abundant green vegetation and clear water” (Visser et al., 2015, p. 8423) is a typical tactic in an emotional marketing strategy to establish a positive sustainable brand image. Hartman et al. (2005 *in* Visser et al., 2015) find that purchase intention for green products are positively related to an emotional strategy.

Visser et al.’s (2015) focus on different colour layouts in sustainability communication. A green colour layout is associated with sustainability by the consumers. The results suggest that overemphasizing on sustainability with a green layout combined with communicating an environmental benefit, is negatively perceived. A green layout combined with a textual personal benefit is perceived as sustainable and evaluated positively. In reverse, an environmental benefit can be positively communicated when combined with a non-green colour (Visser et al., 2015).

3.1.2.5 Channels

In relation to sustainable fashion, Da Giau et al. (2015) highlight the importance of web channels for selling and branding green apparel as a way to share information about sustainability commitment and influence the customers’ purchase intent. Web-based communication enables to push sustainability content in an economical and quick way which can be updated and customized to different stakeholder groups in comparison to traditional media e.g. newspapers, magazines, television and radio. Da Giau et al. (2015) furthermore emphasize on the webpage as a platform to publish annual sustainability reports online. This addresses the increasing demand of stakeholders for companies in the fashion industry to improve their environmental and social performance and to communicate the social and environmental practices of their operations and supply chains in a clearer way (Da Giau et al., 2015). Word of mouth on social media platforms for green advertisement and social campaigns as an indirect communication approach instead of using traditional marketing techniques, to establish credibility, appear to be important.

3.1.2.6 Summary

The literature review emphasizes the initially described gap of Chapter I. The persuasive communication of sustainable fashion brands appears to be challenging for businesses, and marketers are unconfident about the ways to design messages and content to grow business and visibility. Despite the growing intention to buy



sustainable apparel, as awareness of eco-fashion brands is still low due lack of knowledge in marketing strategies, the gap between intention and behaviour is still significant. Therefore, the success of eco fashion brands is based in skilful and improved marketing (D'Souza, 2015). Sustainable fashion is complicated as there is no defined blueprint for achieving sustainability. Marketing communication is crucial as it has a catalyst role in influencing consumers to choose fashion that supports environmental causes. Visser et al. (2015) strongly criticizes, that research for marketing towards mainstream consumers is insufficient which makes effective communication of sustainable fashion difficult. In summary, the knowledge appears to be scarce, and many aspects need newer insights. This once again justifies the utilization of further literature about the two main concepts *sustainability communication* and *fashion communication*.



3.1.3 Sustainable marketing communication

According to Purohit (2012, p. 160), the pursuit of an environmentally friendly marketing plan is associated with “growth in sales units results and increase of market share for its products in the ongoing globally competitive business world”. However, communication appears to be difficult due to the **challenge of low credibility of green marketing messages and the lack of consumers’ trust**. Therefore, trusted sources for green marketing communications are needed (Nagar, 2014). Catchwords such as ‘recyclable’ or ‘eco-friendly’, which are originally used as a decisive purchase argument, are increasingly perceived as ambivalent or even negative by consumers as they “have questioned the believability of such claims” (Nagar, 2014, p. 73). This can be attributed to the fact that the phenomenon of greenwashing has been established in the heads of people (Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016). Hassan & Valenzuela (2006, p. 178) state “the overwhelming majority of respondents who did not trust green advertisements believe that the claims being made by such advertisements were either false or exaggerated”. This shows the need to substantiate green claims and **“enhance the credibility of the messages they convey”**, as the establishment of customer trust is also associated with purchase intentions (Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016, p. 179).

3.1.3.1 Double benefit communication

Besides the issue of credibility, the major topic within the literature of sustainability marketing communication is the discussion of benefit type, also called type of message appeal. Polonsky et al. (1997) emphasize on the problem that communicating solely the environmental advantage of a product will only appeal to the **niche of green consumers**. Green appeals only attract the mass consumer when combined with a personal benefit e.g. cost-savings or improved product performance (Polonsky et al., 1997). Accordingly, green marketing must address two objectives, such as “improved environmental quality and customer satisfaction. Misjudging either or overemphasizing the former at the expense of the latter can be termed green marketing myopia” (Ottman et al., 2006, p. 24).

Hence, several authors advocate for a so-called **double benefit** for sustainable products (e.g. Ottman et al., 2006; Noonan & Coleman, 2013; Wei et al., 2014). Successful green products implemented persuasive educational messages that created a **link between green product attributes with the desired client benefit** (Wei et al., 2014). Consumers are driven by the desire to solve problems, so that interest can be generated by providing solutions to problems that also make sense for the environment. Thus, the contribution to save the environment is just an additional benefit to the overall financial savings (Noonan & Coleman, 2013). Therefore, “marketing programs successfully calibrated consumer knowledge to recognize the green product’s consumer benefits” (Ottman et al., 2006, p. 31). Some compelling marketing communications educate consumers to



recognize green products as ‘solution’ for their personal needs and the environment. The **environmental benefit** was positioned as **secondary**, if mentioned at all (Ottman et al., 2006).

Similarly, Davis (1993) notices two approaches of marketing emphasis on environmental products. The first approach relates to the focusing on environmental product attributes and only secondarily on traditional important product category attributes. The alternative approach communicates the product attributes as an addition, and mainly concentrate on traditional important product categories attributes. Here the environmental benefit functions as a tiebreaker or distinguisher compared to other offerings. For new products, **marketing first must convince the consumer**; communicate that the product will perform at least as well as the non-environmentally sensitive alternatives, before using environmental claims (Davis, 1993).

Types of environmental benefits

Polonsky et al. (1997) refer to Carlson et al.’s (1993) environmental message claim-type schema that uses four different **classifications of environmental claims**: Firms typically choose to focus on **product, process, image orientation** or an **environmental fact**. Product orientation focuses on the environmentally friendly attributes of the product. Process orientation relates to the brand’s internal technology production technique and/or disposal method that unfold the environmental benefits. The orientation on the image relates to the usage of claims that create an association between the firms and an environmental cause or activity for which there is generally broad public support. Lastly, an environmental fact is a factual statement about the environment at large, or its condition (Carlson et al., 1993 in Polonsky et al. 1997).

Davis (1993) argues that in the 1990’s, the consumer was not ready to base product purchase decision primarily on environmental attributes. However, Wei et al. (2014) note 20 years later that the consumer perceptive has come to change. Thus, the researcher recommended that

“advertisers should not be hesitant about exploiting a green appeal strategy to highlight a product’s environmental benefits, because consumer reactions toward green products have transformed from negative evaluations into positive ones, which could enhance consumers’ perceived quality, perceived price fairness, and purchase intentions” (Wei et al., 2014, p. 78).

Types of personal benefits

Villarino & Font (2015, p. 327) suggest that green marketing communications “should put the customer at the centre of the experience, even when these practices also create benefits for the business and society”. Personal benefits are proposed as for instance superior product performance, superior comfort, or reaching a certain status through the product (Villarino & Font, 2015).



By offering non-green values, e.g. convenience or high performance, green products can appeal to the mass market, as well as charge premium prices. Five categories of desirable personal benefits associated with green products are presented (Ottman et al., 2006):

1. Efficiency and cost effectiveness e.g. “The only thing our washer will shrink is your water bill”
2. Health and safety e.g. “Safer for You and the Environment”
3. Performance e.g. “Fuelled by light so it runs forever. It is unstoppable. Just like the people who wear it”
4. Symbolism and status e.g. “Make up your mind, not just your face”
5. Convenience e.g. “Long life for hard-to-reach places”

Grimmer & Woolley (2014) address the personal benefits for green offerings, and differentiate between **tangible and intangible personal values**. Tangible values are related to direct impacts that the consumer experiences, such as reduced power bills due to less energy consumption of green appliances. The intangible value origins on the **altruistic level**, meaning that the choice for green products is associated with moral satisfaction due to positive environmental behaviour or compliance with the self-concept. Thus, the main personal benefit of green consumption is related to “feeling good about themselves for acting altruistically” (Grimmer & Woolley, 2014, p. 234). Hence, by adding **emotional benefits** in the form of intangible values is important, especially for high involvement green products with higher prices (Grimmer & Woolley, 2014).

3.1.3.2 Environmental messages

The decision about the appeal type in sustainability communication represents the overall approach to green marketing. Even though this decision is crucial, another major focus lays on the message content and design. Hence, more detailed decisions need to be taken concerning the marketing communication to increase the likelihood of persuasive communication for sustainable businesses.

Message content

According to Davis (1993) there is a necessity to include a context that facilitates the evaluation of the environmental attribute in the form of a so-called **frame-of-reference**. This could be relevant comparisons of a product’s improvement versus the old formulation, or versus competitor, or a usual product category standard. Additionally, Ottman et al. (2006) refers to a frame of reference to increase the quality of believability. Thus, “consumer benefits and environmental effectiveness claims need to be compared with comparable alternatives or likely usage scenarios” (Ottman et al., 2006, p. 32).



Villarino & Font (2015) discuss the use of **social norms** in messages to be more persuasive. Social norms are defined as “rules and standards that are understood by members of a group, and that guide and/or constrain social behaviours without the force of laws” (Sherif, 1936 in Villarino & Font, 2015, p. 329). Such norms can be more effective due to the fact that individuals are influenced by the actions of others. Thus, the likelihood of persuasion can possibly be increased (Villarino & Font, 2015).

The utilisation of **morals** represents another strategic element of persuasive sustainability communication. However, as noted by Villarino & Font (2015) such messages are perceived as less competent, and reduce the likeability of the brands. Hence, marketers need to be careful to not being perceived to be judgmental as individuals are adversely affected by facing moral superiority. The risk of creating feelings of inferiority threatens consumer rights (Villarino & Font, 2015). Ottman et al. (2006) add to this discussion by warning sustainability communication to sound preachy. Ryan (2012, p. 21) finds that “uniting citizens as a collective to which each individual is called to be a responsible member” is a method employed by a successful green brand. Hence, it is suggested to call on the responsibility of the citizen consumer and connect their product with performing the duty to take care of the environment (Ryan, 2012).

Tu et al. (2013) emphasize on the functions of **environmental knowledge** and information appeal. Consumers’ comprehension of marketing information will be influenced by their degree of knowledge, which affects their judgment and attitude. As discussed in the introduction chapter, a challenge for green fashion marketers relates to the lack of knowledge of the consumers about the negative consequences of fast fashion practices in comparison to other industries like the energy or food industry. Tu et al. (2013) refer to offering information as a main strategy in the promotion of environmental behaviours. Empirical studies found that increased knowledge can enhance environmental behaviours (Tu et al., 2013). In line with that, Ottman et al. (2006) emphasize on the successful communication using compelling, **educational marketing messages** and slogans. Likewise, Noonan & Coleman (2013), call for green advertisements to share necessary information to educate the consumer better.

Several authors discuss the aspect of **real life experience** and personal experience. Villarino & Font (2015) associate personalized messages in the format of real stories to be likely to create emotions by involving costumers in the message. The creation of compelling stories is more persuasive than a message without experience. Nagar (2014) demands marketers to position green brands through communicating sustainability achievements or by publicizing stories of the company and employees’ green initiatives (Nagar, 2014, p. 86). Thus, it is important to create the ability for the costumer to experience the sustainability, and empower them on the emotional level.



Message design

Message design refers to how the message is expressed to accomplish a persuasive outcome. Different variables of message design can be found in the literature such as message fame, message specificity, message explicitness, denotative expressions and active messages.

Tu et al. (2013) note that message framing influences the perception of green messages. Framing is the process of embedding a message in a specific setting. The so-called **message effect** “refers to the outcome of different decisions made towards two logically similar statements regarding the same issue [...]. **Positively or negatively framed** statements will lead to different decisions” (Tu et al., 2013, p. 1085). Generally, consumer prefer a positive frame as it enhance positive cognitions, and thus experiences a higher authenticity, higher affinity and lead to a more positive attitude towards a brand. However, if the topic is related to health (breast self-examination or skin cancer testing), negative framing is found to be more effective due to the human ambition to avoid loss (Tu et al., 2013). Even though sustainable advertisement aims to trigger selfless behaviour to reduce the negative effects in the environment, thus protect the health of the planet, Tu et al. (2013) find that advertisement of sustainable products is more effective in a positive frame. Consequently, “although green products are environmental friendly, they are not products associated with issues of life and security, such as health problems” (Tu et al., 2013, p. 1094). Furthermore, Kinoti (2011 in Noonan & Coleman, 2013) emphasize on the importance of targeting customers with a positive message within the context of sustainable marketing.

Davis (1993) relates to the importance of **specificity of environmental claim**. Claims can be specific or vague. Specific environmental claims “present concrete, tangible environmental characteristics and benefits of the product supported by objective, factual information” (Davis, 1993, p. 21). In contrast, unspecific environmental claims “contain abstract, vague or ambiguous wording, without factual support, to describe the product’s environmental characteristics or benefits” (Davis, 1993, p. 21). **Specific claims increase positive brand and product image, as well as product purchase intention**, whereas vague formulations incorporate the risk of rising negative perception and the impression of the brand as being manipulative and unethical (Davis, 1993). Moreover, Villarino & Font (2015) advocate for **specific messages** as they are more credible to the consumer compared to than generic claims that do not provide examples which increases the risk of consumer scepticism.

Villarino & Font (2015) note the **explicit-implicit divide in messages** that refers to stating or not stating a message conclusion. An implicit message leaves the conclusion open to be made by the message receiver without giving away the concrete answer. This is mainly effective for audiences that are familiar with the concept. In contrast, explicit messages state their conclusion directly which reduces the likelihood for misunderstandings. The messages can also be understood by people who are not familiar with a specific



jargon. In the context of sustainability, this means that segments outside the green niche that are still unfamiliar with sustainability practices or impact, can decode a message correctly (Villarino & Font, 2015). However, the advantage of implicit messages is that they portray sustainability as normal or a standard. Hassan & Valenzuela (2016) suggest that “once green products are not perceived to cater to a niche and are instead targeted at the mainstream and viewed as the **“new normal,”** manufacturers will be able to secure a larger market share” (Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016, p. 179). Still, an explicit message design may be necessary to address the broad public for now (Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016).

Sustainability messages can contain **denotative** or **connotative expressions** (Villarino & Font, 2015). Denotative communication utilized words that have minimum room for misinterpretation, and have a generally accepted meaning (‘Reuse your towel for the environment in order to reduce water wastage’). Connotative expressions are dependent on the individual interpretation as they can be understood differently (‘e.g. ecolodge’). Research found that environmental specificity increased consumer trust, and that **denotative statements become a critical part of persuasion**. If the message is connotative, the abstractness will result in decreased effectiveness. Buzzwords often used by brands in their environmental claim promotions such as ‘environmentally friendly’, ‘ethical’ and ‘sustainable’, are lacking a universal meaning which may negatively affect the persuasive outcome (Villarino & Font, 2015).

Moreover, there are active and passive environmental messages (Villarino & Font, 2015). An **active message** asks the message receiver to do or change something in a direct and straightforward way (‘reuse your towel’). A **passive message** does not directly ask to change behaviour (‘We reuse our towels for the environment’). A passive voice holds the risk of reducing the credibility of the statement and lowers the probability of achieving desired changes in behaviours. Thus, **the more specific recommendations** a message provides, **the more persuasive** it will be (Villarino & Font, 2015).

Villarino & Font (2015) discuss that messages can either be **logical** or **appealing**. Logical messages focus on communicating facts or statistics, which primarily inform, but are found to be persuasive. Still, Tu et al. (2013) highlight the relevance of specific data in the green marketing communication. Davis (1993) calls to utilize specific data to increase believability of the product attribute. In contrast, Villarino & Font (2015) find that emotional appeals are more likely to grab the attention, create favourable associations that are better remembered, and might trigger behaviour. “A message like ‘5.5% reduction in energy use in 2015’ is logical, whilst ‘Our 5.5% reduction in energy usage in makes us feel proud and motivates us to keep working’ is appealing” (Villarino & Font, 2015, p. 328).



3.1.3.3 Source Credibility

Villarino & Font (2015) discuss the source credibility element under the concept of authority, which “refers to the person and their credentials provided by the information content” (Villarino & Font, 2015, p. 329). High competences and a high standing of the author go along with a high credibility of the received information, and have a positive influence on consumer attitudes. We find that in the field of sustainable marketing communication three types of opportunities help to establish credibility and support marketing claims: the categories are logos such as **eco-labels**, **sustainable alliances** and **words of mouth initiatives** (Villarino & Font, 2015).

Eco seals and labels

The literature shows that the usage of eco-labels can serve as an effective technique to strengthen the message credibility. However, the effectiveness of eco-labels can vary depending on the characteristics of the customer (environmental concerned versus non-concerned), (Bickart & Ruth, 2012) and/or the organization which awards the label (Ottman et al., 2006). Ottman et al. (2006) holds a critical view on eco labels and reminds that their usage and perception is not without controversy. Generally, eco certificates can act as a **differentiator** and **positively influence** consumer decision-making. However, marketers should be **critical** and carefully **analyse** the organization behind the certification, its **reputation across stakeholders** and its used evaluation methods. Furthermore, the researcher state that firms should **enlighten its customer** about the value of the used eco-label (Ottman et al., 2006). Generally, Purohit (2012) notes the need for better understanding of consumer response to eco-labels.

Bickart & Ruth (2012) differentiate between **internal and external sources** of eco-labels. Highly environmentally concerned consumers hold favourable attitudes toward firms that have developed their **own eco-seals** rather than “borrowing” the eco-seal from another source, such as the government and an NGO. Nevertheless, the less concerned mass consumer who holds less nuanced knowledge levels, may favour labels from **official sources** as they “rely on an automatic assumption that government seals are more independent” (Bickart & Ruth, 2012, p. 57). Manufacture’s own seals might therefore regarded as less trustworthy and create suspicion. Likewise, Pittner (2014) notes that seals from independent sources are regarded as more trusted. Thus, independent sources appear to be more effective for the mainstream market (Bickart & Ruth, 2012; Pittner, 2014).



Strategic alliances

Mendleson & Polonsky (1995) suggest that strategic alliances with environmental groups can assist in overcoming lack of credibility, consumer confusion over claims, and consumer cynicism (Mendleson & Polonsky, 1995 in Chan, 2013). Ottman et al. (2006) find that green consumption of younger consumers can be triggered by unsolicited endorsement of high-profile celebrities. Additionally, Kumar (2014) advocates for strategic partnerships, as collaborating with leading sustainability players for environmental projects to improve visibility in the market. Additionally, it is an opportunity to strive for memberships in relevant industry and networking groups (Kumar, 2014).

Word of mouth / mouse marketing

As a reaction to consumer scepticism, the role of **word of mouth** has been growing significantly. The collective wisdom and experience of friends and peers about products, considered as word of mouth in the offline context and word of mouse in the online context, is perceived as **reliable** (Ottman et al., 2006). These sources enjoy great credibility especially for products that are complex, new and innovative. Ottman et al. (2006, p. 34) suggests that to facilitate word of mouth,

“marketers need to create credible messages, stories, and Websites about their products that are so compelling, interesting, and/or entertaining that consumers will seek the information out and forward it to their friends and family”.

3.1.3.4 Channels

An important element of the marketing communication is the channel chosen for the transmission of message towards the receiver. Minton et al. (2012, p.72) highlight “that each communication medium provides a different message in the way that the message is sent over the medium”.

Purohit (2012) claims that more **traditional communications** such as print and television advertisement contribute in the buying decision of green products. However, traditional print or television media does not enable to an interactive exchange with consumers and traditional communication approaches that aimed at persuading were diagnosed to be unsuccessfully in convincing consumers to purchase sustainability products (Minton et al. 2012).

Minton et al.’s (2012) research find that the **internet** is the primary source for green products for one third of the consumer. Ottman et al. (2006, p. 33) highlight the importance of online communication:



“The Internet, through e-mail and its fast, accessible repository of information, web sites, search engines, blogs, product ratings sites, podcasts and other digital platforms, open significant opportunities for tapping consumers’ social and communication networks to diffuse credible “word-of-mouth” about green products.”

3.1.3.5 Conclusion

Extracting the essence of the existing literature in the field of sustainability marketing communication, one can observe that the communication of sustainability appears to be a complex and sensitive issue. This is due to the lack of knowledge and trust when it comes to green marketing resulting from greenwashing.

A focus can be observed around a double benefit communication to avoid green marketing myopia. Within the double benefits theory, many authors advocate for **focusing primary on personal benefits** and secondary on environmental benefits (Ottman et al., 2006; Wei et al., 2014; Noonan & Coleman, 2013). We identify several different personal and environmental benefits in the literature. Hence, during the process of developing a marketing and communication strategy, a crucial decision needs to be taken concerning the combination of benefits, and the level of emphasis given to the environmental claim (Davis, 1993).

The communication appears to be very much focuses on details which can be attributed to the challenge of communicating sustainability in general and marketers’ need for sensibility. Overall, tendencies towards **positive message framing, a specific, explicit, denotative and active message design** are identified. Moreover, in terms of the message content, recommendations can be found for **frame of references, social norms** and using **real life examples**. In contrast, the literature advises against using moralization. Some authors argue for emotional messages, while others point towards logical content in the form of facts and statistics. **Eco-labels, strategic alliances, as well as word of mouth/ mouse** marketing are noted as credibility sources in persuasive sustainability marketing communication.



3.1.4 Fashion communication

According to Carroll (2009) the fashion industry especially struggles in relation to marketing literacy, and resulting consumer scepticism. Consumers are overwhelmed with the extensive amount of different advertisement messages, and have started to see through attempts of persuasion or manipulation. This has resulted in increasing resistance towards marketing techniques, called 'marketing literacy' (Carroll, 2009). Similarly, Kinley et al. (2010, p. 566) state that especially younger people are "more likely to be sceptical because they are often bombarded with messages through various media".

3.1.4.1 Values in fashion communication

Ko et al. (2010) point out that fashion advertisement can express different **values** that are of **personal importance** for fashion consumers. Thus, consumers' buying decisions are influenced by perceived outcomes and associated personal values. In the course of a content analysis of fashion advertisement with a focus on textual headlines and ad copy, Ko et al. (2010, p. 455) find "either functional (relatively immediate, tangible, physical experiences) or psychosocial (emotional or social and more symbolic experience)" outcomes. Functional outcomes are associated with **functional values**. Psychosocial outcomes are associated with three sub groups such as **social**, **emotional** and **epistemic values**. The following two tables provide definitions for the different types of fashion values.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) functional: emphasizing clothing's physical functions and instrumental performance;(2) social: focusing on social class, reference group, and cultural ethnic group;(3) emotional: emphasizing consumers' positive and negative feelings;(4) epistemic: relating to the pursuit of variety and novelty; |
|---|

Figure 15 Types of fashion values (Ko et al., 2010, p. 456)

The authors find out that functional values were predominant in earlier times (1970s-1990s), but since "the 2000s, emotional values have overtaken in emphasis" (Ko et al., 2010, p. 458). The following table lists all values, its various forms and descriptions.



	Categories	Description
Functional	Versatility	Stressing that the clothing can be used for many purposes
	Ease of care	Stressing that the clothing is easy to care for
	Comfort	Stressing that the clothing gives the wearer comfort
	High quality	Stressing that the quality of the clothing excels in one or more characteristics
	Protection	Stressing that the clothing protects the body from weather conditions, stains, etc.
	Durability	Stressing that the clothing is long-lasting
Social	Economic benefit	Stressing the low price of the clothing or value, given that price
	Symbol of social status	Emphasizing that the wearer of the clothing will appear as a high society member. Position, rank and wealth (within the context of the group) are stressed
	Personal expression	Emphasizing that wearing the clothing will allow one to demonstrate one's unique style. Taste and difference in ads are stressed
	Dress for success	Emphasizing that wearing the clothing will make one succeed
	Approval by others	Stressing that the person(s) who the wearer considers important accept or like the clothing
Emotional	Happiness	Suggesting that the wearing of the clothing itself makes one happy via images of happy people
	Beauty	Suggesting that the wearing of the clothing enhances or creates the beauty of its wearer
	Elegance	Suggesting that the wearing of the clothing enhances the elegance of its wearer
	Freedom	Showing that wearing the clothing leads to relaxation, de-stressing, and escape from the constrictions of ordinary life
	Sentimentality	Tying sentimental images and their resulting feelings to the clothing in order to evoke an emotional connection to the clothing
	Feelings of the exotic	Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's exotic appearance and therefore its wearer's appeal
	Feelings of the fresh	Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's feelings of the fresh and new
	Feelings of the daring	Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's feelings of courage or daring
	Feelings of the sexy	Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's sexual appeal
Epistemic	Pursuit of new fashion	Stressing that the clothing is the most contemporary or avant-garde fashion available
	Pursuit of the unique	Stressing that the clothing is rare or unique and gives its wearer a unique look

Figure 16 Fashion values and variations (Ko et al., 2010, p. 457)

By having a closer look at the different values, one can see that all values are positive in their nature. This matches the statement of Wrong & Malone (2016, p. 55) who clarify that **positive advertising** is beneficial, as it “provokes affirmative emotions, such as excitement and arousal; the consumer is likely to have a favourable perception of advertising”. In contrast, negative advertising that leads to negative emotions such as being afraid, mad or frustrated, lead to unpopular perceptions. The evocation of positive emotions in fashion advertisement seems to be crucial, as “fashion is a promise not only for freedom but also of happiness” (Meneses & Rodriguez, 2010, p. 84). Fashion communication should focus on **personal fulfilment**, **convenience** and innovativeness, on “the never seen, of the **imaginary** and, most of all, of **the new**” (Meneses & Rodriguez, 2010, p. 84).



3.1.4.2 Visual vs. textual communication

According to Carroll (2009, p. 150), a classic way to communicate brand messages in fashion is through **story telling** “as a narrative/ verbal process primarily concerned with cognitions, meaning and persuasion”. In relation to the increasing marketing literacy, this technique has started to show its limits.

Wiley et al. (2007, p. 120) finds that “**visual content** in advertising is just as capable of influencing consumers’ product attitude as verbal content”, and that advertising literature is full of evidence how impactful it is when attractive people promote and assess brands. Likewise, Carroll (2009, p.150) states “that the use of visual signals may currently be more effective where the aim is to create impression rather than to convey meaning”. This technique should lead to **emotions** and an instinctive dipping into sentiments. When processing visual aspects, people must reflect actively in order to **interpret symbols** and using them for their identity. Through this process “the brandscape becomes a backdrop for aesthetic expression” (Carroll, 2009, p.150).

3.1.4.3 Celebrity endorsement

In relation to the importance of emotions in fashion, Carroll (2009) argues that the **use of celebrities** in advertisement is a highly effective technique of communication, differentiation, and establishment of desired brand associations in the minds of customers. Similarly, Lahiri & Siddika (2014, p.73) point out that emotional approaches like celebrity endorsement are one of the most effective ways to positive influence purchase behaviour and “just like a secret weapon to **attract the mass consumers**”. Celebrities “represent ideal vehicles for self-identity and self-articulation” (Carroll, 2009, p. 150) as within a few seconds people can convey characteristics from the celebrity to the product which immediately gives the brand an unmistakable face. The impact of celebrity endorsement is influenced by factors like the authenticity and fit of the celebrity relating to the product (Carroll, 2009). Quoting Yves Saint Laurent (1984 in Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2011, p. 133):

“A good model can advance fashion by 10 years.”

3.1.4.4 Channels

The importance of **word of mouth** when it comes to fashion is highlighted broadly (Chen & Chen, 2014; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2011, Kinley et al., 2010). Chen & Chen (2014, p.104) state that “with respect to methods of communication for product information [...] apparel consumers suggests that friends are viewed as providing the most reliable information”. Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar (2011) point out that the direct communication between humans is crucial when it comes to dissemination of knowledge and awareness of fashion brands. Touchette (2015, p. 108) states that fashion brands can entertain (potential) clients through offering “contests, sweepstakes, interactive games and word play, events, videos, audios, and downloads” on



their Facebook page. This so called **branded entertainment** can lead to the desired interplay between (potential) customers, delight them and thus, arouse **positive emotions** in the context of the brand (Touchette, 2015).

3.1.4.5 Conclusion

All in all, to communicate fashion effectively several components should be considered. Fashion advertisement should convey positive personal values (Ko et al., 2010). Especially the evocation of emotions seems to be crucial in today's fashion communication which is facilitated through using visual content (Carroll, 2009). In that sense, it is considered as highly effective when attractive people (Wiley et al., 2007) or especially celebrities promote a fashion brand (Carroll, 2009). Fashion brands should entertain, make fun (Touchette, 2015) and entreat consumer to enter the realm of aesthetic dreams (Carroll, 2009).



3.2 Conceptualization

The section seeks to synthesize the gathered knowledge about the investigated concepts in the literature streams. The interplay between those will be crystalized into an analytical framework. The process of conceptualization refers to contextualizing concepts by which the meaning and understanding is deepened. In other words, we are moving the identified dimensions and variables of persuasive sustainable fashion communication to the more abstract, and identify relationships. This process allows us to create understanding and meaning of our complex phenomenon, and eventually, provides the broader base for critically analysing the empirical reality (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015).

3.2.1 Discussion of literature streams

First, the insights of the three literature streams are discussed. The persuasive communication of sustainable fashion brands appears to be of challenge for businesses due to the **lack of confidence and knowledge** about the ways of designing their messages to grow visibility and business outside the green niche. The green consumers are found to be responsive to green message, hence, the communication does not appear to be as crucial compared to the unconcerned mass market. Here, the communication of sustainability appears to be a **complex and sensitive issue** associated with the discussed problematic of lack of knowledge and trust when it comes to green marketing resulting from greenwashing. Furthermore, green marketing myopia is problematic, meaning that marketers focus too much on the environmental values instead of the personal benefits. This hinders reaching the mass consumers (Ottman et al., 2006).

Thus, the incorporation of personal benefits is essential. We can see that in sustainable fashion communication, the interplay of personal and environmental benefits is crucial. Especially, as sustainability and fashion are two fundamentally different concepts. Consequently, marketers take different approaches to marketing communication. Fashion, more than any other product like food or cleaning products, relates to the ego, creation of own identity and self-realization. Even though the product as such is of low complexity compared to technology products, the **involvement** is especially high due to this symbolic importance. As fashion is considered as a transformational product, an **implicit** communication is regarded as more effective (Yan et al., 2012). This is consistent with our findings, that the communication of fashion emphasizes the creation of favourable **visions** and **emotions**, thus letting people dream, which is associated with a rather implicit communication. Fashion advertisement focuses on **positivity, interactivity, personal values, and entertainment** (Touchette, 2015). Driving a **high visual - low text strategy** can be especially persuasive as visual communication is addressing the senses and emotions (Visser et al., 2015). Pictures have the immeasurable power of an intuitive, rather **unconscious** processing of stimuli that invites the viewer to create their own world



and imaginations in the context of the brand (Carroll, 2009). In summary, fashion advertisement sells identities and dreams through attractive people (Wiley et al., 2007) or especially celebrities (Carroll, 2009).

In contrast, we see that in sustainability communication, the literature focuses on **textual** communication, message content and design respectively. Due to the need for credibility and creation of trust, we observe a focus on educational messages, and facts/ statistics, so that the communication has a more **rational, conscious** and **explicit** character. Visser et al. (2015) consider textual communication as catering the mind of the consumer. This is a sharp contrast to the emotionality and implicitness of the fashion communication, and can be related to Lorek & Lucas' (2012) observation of fashion being a romantic love story, and sustainability the interruption of it through stating divorce rates. Thus, we can see that adding **emotional benefits** in form of feeling good by doing good, considered as altruism, is important (Grimmer & Woolley, 2014; D'Souza, 2015). Grimmer & Woolley (2014) point out that this is especially relevant for **high involvement green products** with higher prices. This is interesting in relation to **sustainable fashion**, as fashion has earlier been characterized as a high involvement product category and often pricier compared to fast fashion (Yan et al., 2012). Therefore, we conclude that especially in the context of fashion, it is crucial that sustainability advertisement is **emotional appealing** in order to create a favourable brand image (Villarino & Font, 2015; Visser et al., 2015; Nagar, 2014).

In summary, both concepts, sustainability and fashion, are sensitive and complex issues to marketing communication due to their natures per se. The communication is additionally difficult when aiming to communicate the combination of both. Yet, the evoking of emotions seems to be crucial for an effective communication of fashion as well as sustainability. Thus, despite the differences this appears to be the red thread between both concepts. However, effective strategies towards that goal seem to be different: When it comes to fashion, especially pictorial communication is used with happy and desirable content showing attractive and/or successful people (celebrities) to create emotions. Whereas, in sustainability communication, especially textual messages that trigger a feeling of moral satisfaction by acting altruistically to create emotional benefits are utilised. The following figure visualises the differences between fashion and sustainability in relation to its communication.



Figure 17 Differing natures of concepts

3.2.2 Strategic approaches for communicating sustainable fashion

A direct comparison of fashion and sustainability, reveals the contrasting natures of the concepts. Finally, we can understand the reasoning behind the difficulty for marketers to communicate the combination of both, in an effective, persuasive way. Throughout the literature, we identify **two approaches** towards a persuasive communication of sustainable fashion to address the mass market. Businesses choose between a **muted sustainability communication** approach, also called low disclosure strategy (Soler et al., 2015; Da Giau et al., 2014), and a **double benefit approach**, also called a high commitment approach (Da Giau et al., 2014, Visser et al., 2015).

Muted sustainability refers to a strategic **non-communication of environmental information**, thus sustainability is not used as a sales argument. If mentioned, those aspects are represented in separate section on the website, independent from the collections, web shop and products (Soler et al., 2015). The two main arguments that we found for this approach, are related either to fear of being accused of greenwashing (Da Giau et al., 2014), or unwillingness to position the brand as green (Soler et al., 2015). The phenomenon of muted sustainability appears to be unique to the fashion industry, as we can only observe this strategic approach in this industry within the utilized literature. This again, can be related to the identified conflicting natures of fashion in relation to sustainability.

A **double benefit strategy** refers to incorporating both benefits related to sustainability and fashion into the communication. Within the literature a **focus on personal benefits** which customers gain when purchasing a



particular fashion item is recommended. Sustainable benefits, which presents mostly no personal benefits, should only communicated secondarily. Thus, we consider this strategy as Fi-Fa Strategy (First-Fashion strategy). Advocates of this approach argue that sustainability functions as a competitive advantage in terms of differentiation (Ottman et al., 2006). In contrast, communicating a double benefit with a focus on sustainability, is found to be an approach limited to green consumers (Kim et al., 1997). The following figure shows the two strategic approaches of communicating sustainable fashion that are considered as persuasive when addressing the mainstream market in the literature.



Figure 18 Strategies to sustainable fashion communication

3.2.3 Analytical framework

In order to be able to address the two strategic approaches, we construct an analytical framework by synthesizing the theoretical insights.

We come to identify **four dimensions of sustainability fashion communication that form the elements for the theoretical framework**. That we refer to as **value profile**, the **message dimension** including message content and design, **credibility**, and **channel**.

Concerning the choice of channel there is an observed tendency towards more interactive channels such as social media online communication as a means to facilitate interactive exchange and dialogues. Traditional communication approaches that aimed at persuading were diagnosed to be unsuccessfully in convincing consumers to purchase sustainability products (Minton et al. 2012). In relation to sustainable fashion, web channel communication is especially important as to share sustainability content and influence the customers' purchase intention (Da Giau et al., 2015). Furthermore, several authors emphasize on the importance of web based communication on websites of firms (Villarino & Font, 2015; Visser et al., 2015), especially in relation to the two mentioned strategic approaches for communicating sustainable fashion, muted sustainability strategy



and Fi-Fa strategy (Soler et al., 2015; Da Giau et al., 2015). For many consumer the internet is the main source for sustainable products (Minton et al., 2012). As especially the web channel is highlighted as a valuable platform for communicating sustainable fashion brands, thus we focus our research on the content analysis of websites (also see section 4.1.3). Thus, we delimit ourselves from the channel dimension in our analytical framework.

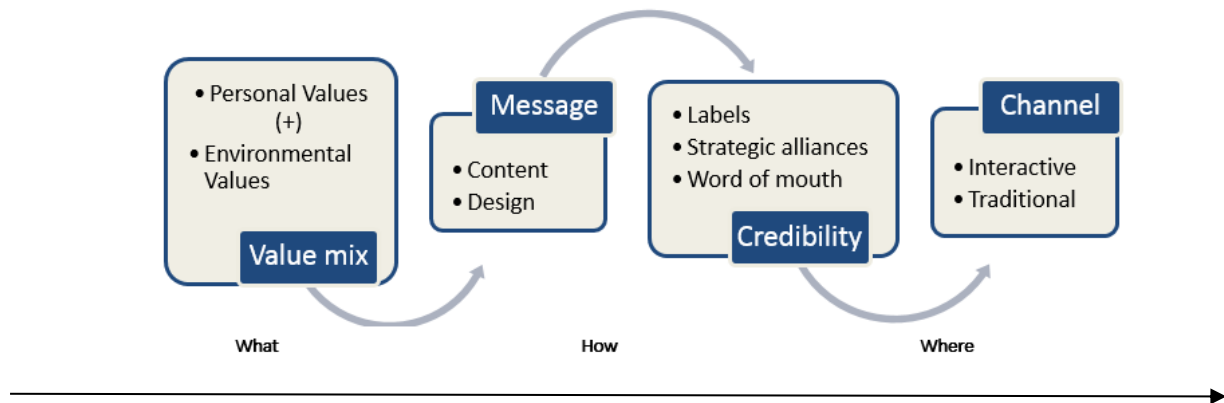


Figure 19 The communication process of sustainable fashion

3.2.3.1 The value profile

The **value profile**, is the first initial dimension, and covers the predominant topic of decision concerning the values chosen to communicate sustainable fashion brands. It addresses and captures the types and combination of benefits communicated from the sender to the receiving consumer. In the area of fashion and sustainability, we find a dense set of values that can be combined. Thus, we come to name this dimension the **value profile**. It is the **determining factor** for the strategic approach of communication. Across the different values, we could not observe findings concerning tendencies what values combined will be more persuasive than other combinations. The following section unites the values identified, and synthesizes them into a comprehensive value map.

Regarding **fashion**, Ko et al. (2010) reveal a large variety of **personal values to be used in fashion communication**. There are four types of personal value categories: **functional**, **social**, **emotional** and **epistemic** customer benefits. Within every category, one finds specific values which are illustrated in the following figure.

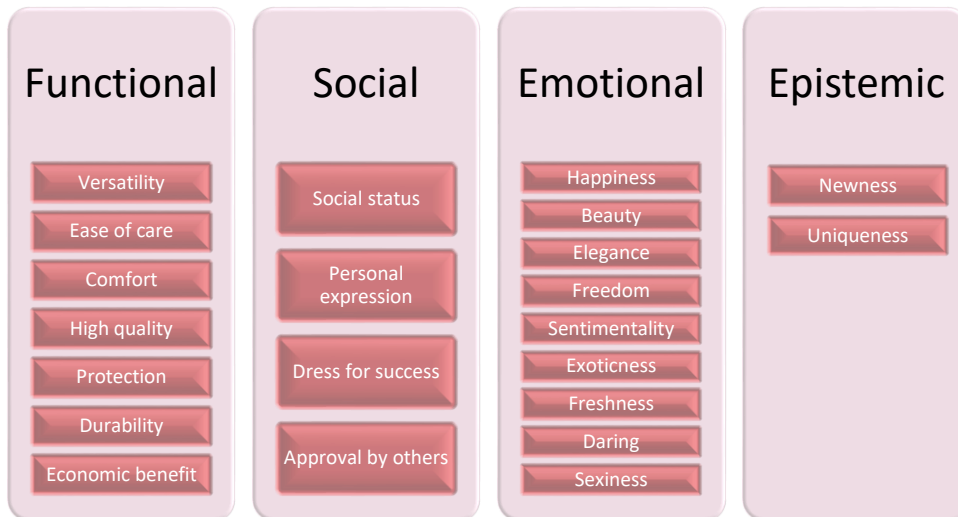


Figure 20 Value map - Fashion

In the area of **sustainability**, we see an extensive discussion of the interplay between personal and non-personal benefits. As stated in chapter 3.1.1.3, D'Souza (2015) distinguishes between **functional benefits** and **non-functional benefits**. As the former one is related to the product and its characteristics, **environmental benefits**, and **social-ethical benefits** are considered as functional benefits in the context of sustainability (D'Souza, 2015). Similarly, Da Giau et al. (2014) state that sustainable benefits can be split into environmental, social, and local sustainability referring to human rights, working conditions and country of origin. The sustainability communication stream presents **environmental values** in four categories such as product orientation, process orientation, image orientation and environmental facts (Carlson et al. 1993 in Polonsky et al. 1997). According to D'Souza (2015), **non-functional benefits** include experiential benefits, respectively emotional benefits, in form of moral satisfaction (feeling good by doing good), also considered as **altruism**.

Furthermore, different authors emphasize on personal values in the context of sustainable products or services. Referring to chapter 3.1.3.2, Grimmer & Woolley (2014) note values that are related to direct impacts that the consumer experiences such as reduced power bills because of using green appliances (cost saving). Likewise, Ottman et al. (2006) refer to five categories of personal values such as convenience, performance, symbolism, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. However, those are related to general product categories, and not fashion in particular. A comparison between the personal values mentioned in sustainable articles with the found fashion values by Ko et al. (2010) reveal, that all personal values mentioned in the sustainable area are covered by the identified fashion values. The following figure illustrates the identified values in relation to sustainability.

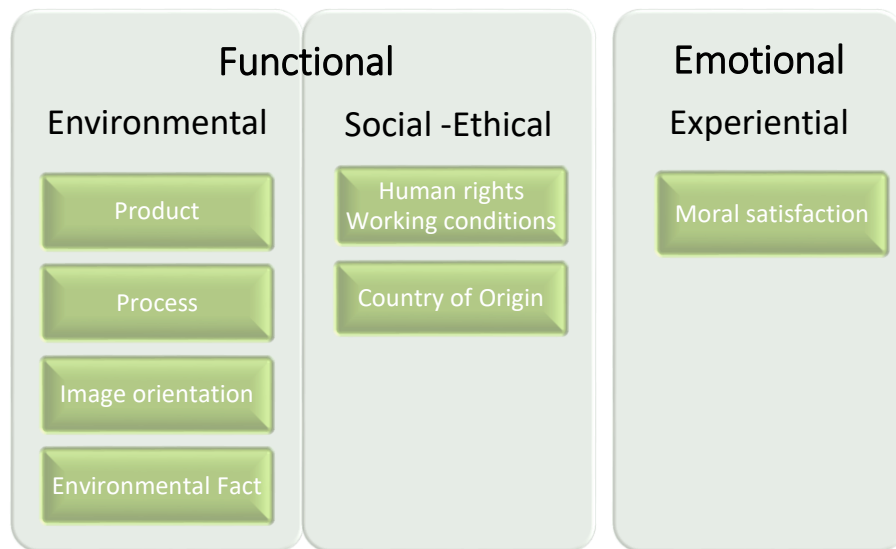


Figure 21 Value map – Sustainability

3.2.3.2 The message mix

The **message dimension** refers to the messages transmitted, their content and design, respectively the form of verbal communication between a brand and a (potential) customer. Generally, fashion communication has a strong focus on **imaginary**, visual communication (Kim et al., 1997; Carroll, 2009). In contrast, we do not find this aspect in the sustainability literature, which is more marked by a focus on detailed textual communication variables. This shows tendencies towards textual rather than visual communication.

The **fashion stream** reveals a limited amount of options concerning the message content. A focus can be found on **storytelling** and **brand entertainment** (Carroll, 2009), whereas the former is seen critical in the literature. Messages should be designed positively (Wrong & Malone, 2016; Meneses & Rodriguez, 2010), and in a rather implicit manner (Yan et al., 2012). The following figure shows our findings on effective message communication in relation to sustainability. The variables in bold should mirror recommendations based on the literature.

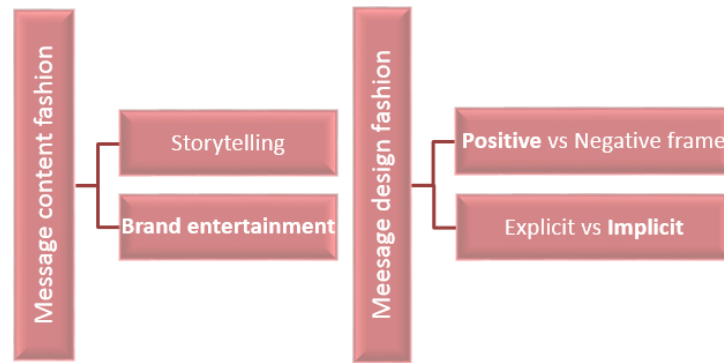


Figure 22 Message content and design – Fashion

The **sustainability stream** reveals a detailed field of message content and message design variables. Message content variables are facts/ statics (Davis, 1993, Tu et al., 2013), frame of reference (Davis, 1993; Ottman et al., 2006), social norms (Villarino & Font, 2015), educational message (Kim & Damhorst, 1999; Ottman et al., 2006; Yan et al., 2012; Noonan & Coleman, 2013; Tu et al., 2013), real life examples (Villarino & Font, 2015; Nagar, 2014), environmental activism (Kim & Damhorst, 1999), environmental correctness (Kim & Damhorst, 1999), and moralizing (Villarino & Font, 2015; Ottman et al., 2006). Identified message design variables are message explicitness (Yan et al., 2012), messages specificity (Davis, 1993), connotative versus denotive expressions, message frame, call to action, and message appeal (Villarino & Font, 2015).

In terms of the message content, positive influence on persuasion likelihood is found for **frame of references, social norms, educational message**, using **real life examples**, and **environmental activism**. Moralisation is advised against. There are different views on using statistics, and environmental correctness. Sustainability communication is expected to have an increased likelihood of persuasion when the message is framed positively and come along in a **specific, explicit, denotative**, and **active manner**.

As stated in chapter 3.1.3.2, Tu et al. (2013) and Davis (1993) highlight specific data like statistics in green marketing communication, which we associate with a rather logical appeal. In contrast, Villarino & Font (2015), Nagar (2014), and Visser et al. (2015) argue for emotional, appealing messages. Villarino & Font (2015) point out that logical messages that transmit solely data like statics do not ‘capture’ the viewers’ attention. Rather they recommend to use of an appealing message design which create positive feelings (Villarino & Font, 2015). Likewise, Hartman et al. (2005 in Visser et al., 2015) find that purchase intention for green products are positively related to an emotional strategy. As stated above, especially in the context of fashion the marketing and communication is dominated by the creation of emotions. The following figure sums up our findings on



effective message communication in relation to sustainability. The variables in bold mirror recommendations in the literature.

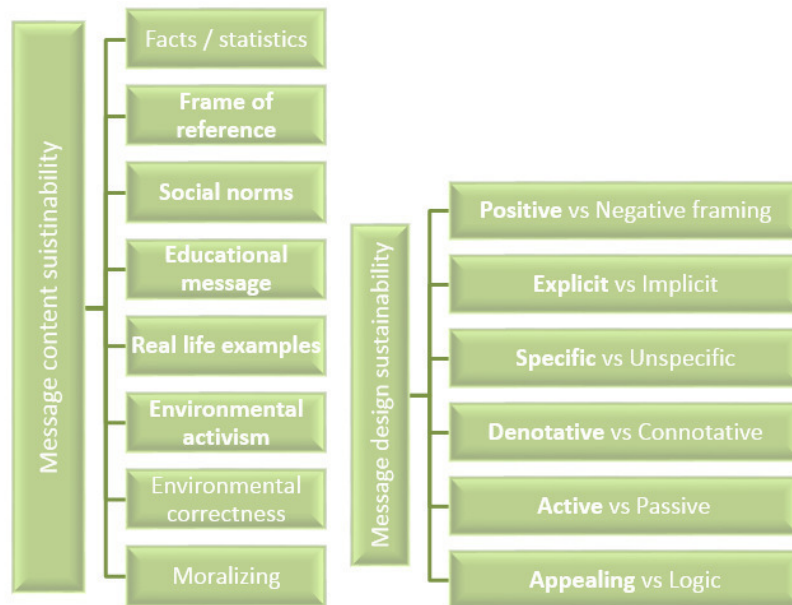


Figure 23 Message content and design – Sustainability

3.2.3.3 The credibility creation

Due to the complexity of sustainability communication in terms of challenges related to marketing myopia, greenwashing and lack of trust, the **dimension of credibility** could be identified. Thus, the third level refers to communication elements as a means to establish credibility, which is important for both fashion and sustainability. For the former to address marketing literacy and overcome consumer scepticism, and the latter as a means to establish trust, overcome consumer scepticism in terms of greenwashing.

In the fashion area, credibility can be established through word of mouth/ mouse, and through endorsements by attractive people, especially celebrities (Carroll, 2009; Lahiri & Siddika, 2014; Weisfeld-Spolter & Thakkar, 2011). In the sustainable area, credibility can be established through 3rd party endorsements such as eco-labels (Kim and Damhorst, 1999; Ottman et al., 2006; Lorek & Lucas, 2012; Purohit, 2012; Pittner, 2014), strategic alliances (Chan, 2013; Kumar, 2014), or celebrity endorsement (Ottman et al, 2006). Also in relation to sustainability, word of mouth/ mouse is an important credibility source (Ottman et al., 2016). Again, the variables in bold are recommendations based on the literature.

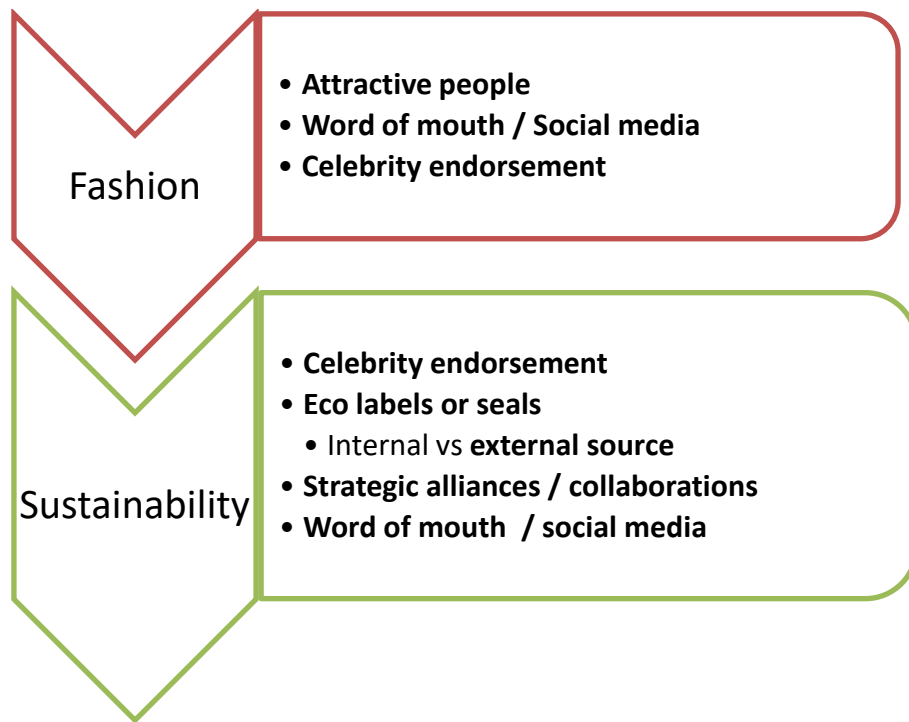


Figure 24 Sources of credibility in Fashion and Sustainability



3.2.3.4 The model

In summary, for the thesis, the analytical framework is made up of three dimensions, and several variables that influence the likelihood of persuasive communication of sustainable fashion. The framework gives an overview about the process of strategic design for sustainable fashion brands, however it misses to show which variables are utilised and how they are most persuasive. Additionally, there are conflicting arguments in the literature. Thus, even though the analytical framework shows tendencies for increases persuasion likelihood, the framework needs to be considered a working framework until it faces empirical reality that can reveal strategic practical approach.

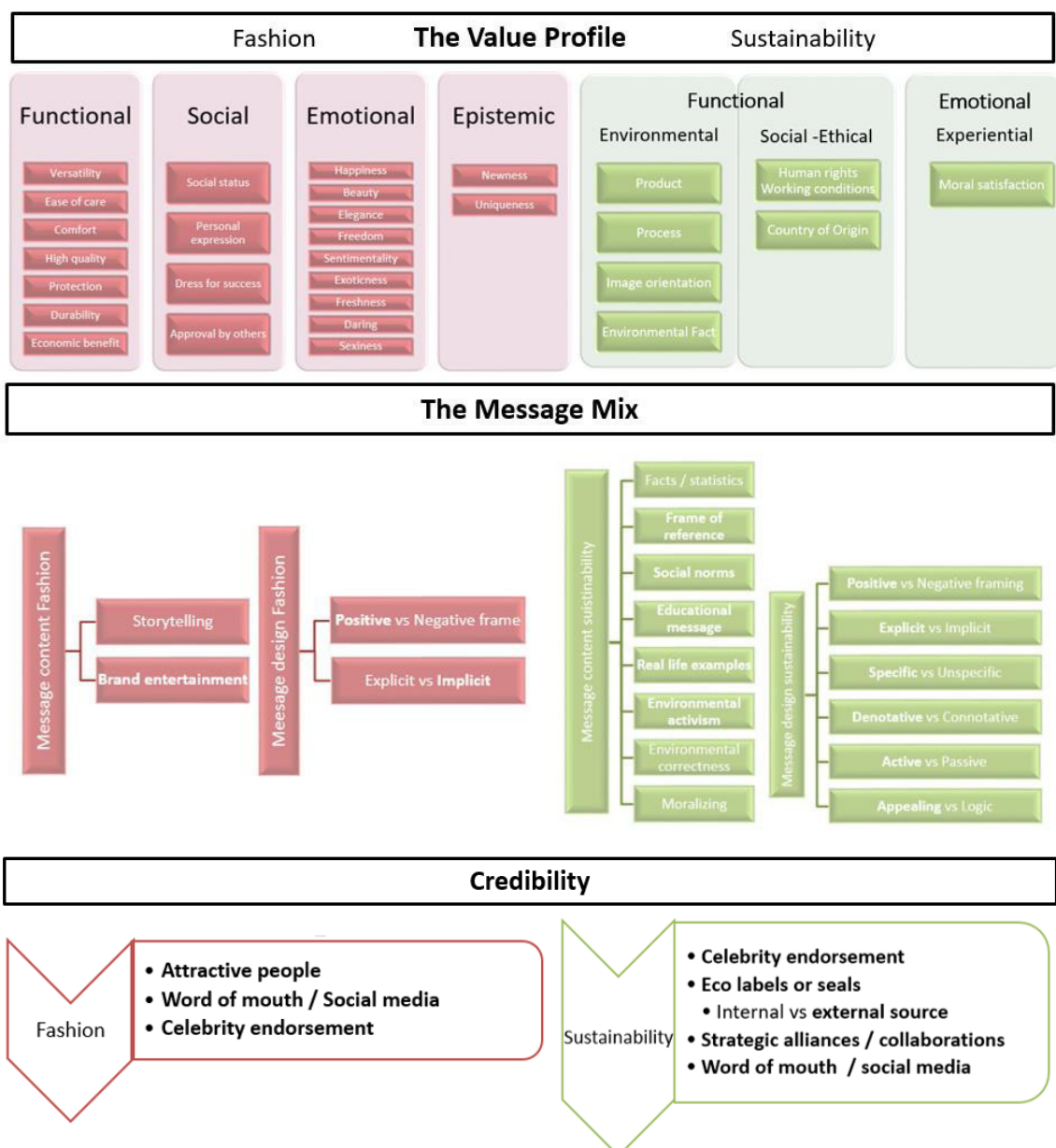



Figure 25 Analytical framework of sustainability fashion communication



CHAPTER IV

Research Design

This chapter is dedicated towards the research design and incorporates the justifications for the choice and use of the selected research process. The research design is representing the strategic framework that guides our execution of research method and the data analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The research design gives a detailed plan about how we are going to execute our research, how we interpret our observations and how it supports to answer the research objectives.



The research design is the guide for the empirical research to answer our research objective of creating knowledge on persuasive communication of sustainable fashion brands, and enhancing BWF's communication. The research design for our thesis is a qualitative and comparative one. Specifically, this thesis is a **multiple-case study** with a specific focus on **smart practice research** through a **directed qualitative content analysis** on **corporate websites** (illustrated in Figure 25). In the following, the techniques of multiple case study, smart practice, and qualitative content analysis will be presented and discussed in relation to this thesis. Hereafter, we will illuminate the **process of research** and considerations concerning the employed **case selection**, and **collection** and **analysis of data**. Lastly, we consider criteria of trustworthiness of the thesis to evaluate the research process and findings.

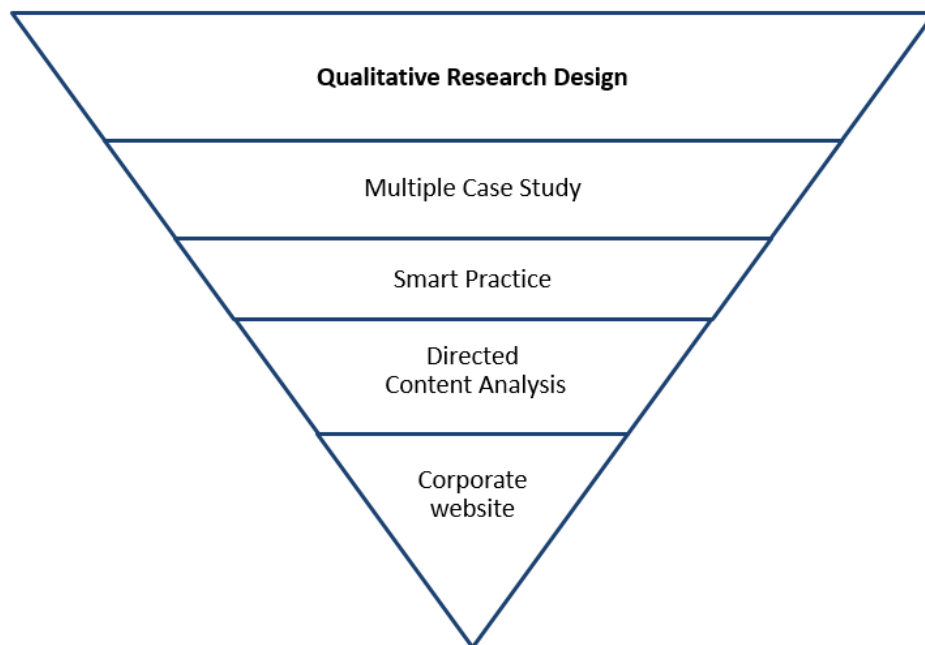


Figure 25 Research design overview

4.1 Multiple case study research

Scientifically, case studies enjoy increasingly employment in social science research, as they offer a highly relevant approach to reveal knowledge about a given phenomenon, especially when it is rather unexplored (Kuada, 2010). According to Creswell (2006, p. 73) a “case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system”. Creswell (2006, p. 74) differentiates between three types of case study: “the single instrumental case study, the collective or multiple case study, and the intrinsic case study”. While the single and intrinsic case study refer to the analysis of one specific case, the multiple one analyses several cases to answer the research question (Creswell, 2006).



We employ a **comparative research design**, thus a **multiple-case study**. A comparative case study assumes that the analysis of several cases results in a broader understanding of the investigated phenomenon. When conducting a multiple case study, the researcher applies the same procedure to several selected cases (Creswell, 2006; Bryman & Bell, 2007). Generally, “qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalize from one case to another because the contexts of cases differ” (Creswell, 2006, p. 74). Therefore, the investigation of several cases is regarded as beneficial to increase the ability of generalization (Creswell, 2006). However, in line with our positioning and research objective, we do not strive for theory building in the first place, but to create the optimal tool for analysing cases with the aim to **recommend a strategy** to Better World Fashion.

Hence, the reasoning for multiple cases lays in the fact that it allows us to identify what is unique and what is common across cases. In relation to this thesis and the research objective, the research approach allows us to compare and contrast the marketing communication strategies used by successful sustainable fashion brands. This allows understanding if any fundamental differences or common patterns exist concerning this phenomenon, and what we can learn in the sense of smart practices, which will be discussed in the next section below.

4.1.1 Smart practice research

More specifically, we strive towards benchmarking the findings of the multiple case study in the sense of a best practice research (BPR), smart practice respectively. Francis et al. (1999) refer to “best practice benchmarking” as a widely used technique of management practices aimed at improving organizational performance particularly in terms of strategic and competitive advantage” (Francis et al, 1999, p. 106). Essentially, the research method is based on the idea that companies can increase performance by learning from the successful practices of others (Francis et al, 1999). The method of best practice emerged in the consultancy sector, but is also used in the academic sector (Bretschneider et al., 2005). Best practice research is especially beneficial in highly competitive markets (Bretschneider et al., 2005), which applies to the fashion market (Yan et al., 2012). The objective of BPR is the enhancement of a business’s practices by learning from identified principles of a more successful business. Vesley (2011) refers to target and source sites in BPR. The target site is the organisation to be improved, hence Better World Fashion, while institutions that are providing guidance for changes based on their principle are called source sites.

There are different methods concerning BPR. Vesley (2011) differentiates between two basic streams of BPR, such as the quantitative microeconomic BPR, and case study-based qualitative BPR. Quantitative BPR focus on the selection of one best practice through a systematic process. This requires a complete set of all possible



cases which can be compared to each other. The aim is to develop a causal theory to crystallise causes based on statistical techniques. In relation to our thesis, this is not in line with our positioning and research objective.

Therefore, we consider the qualitative approach as it uses case study to reveal mechanisms (Vesley, 2011). According to Bardach (2004 *in* Vesley, 2011), best practice is a misleading terminology as the possibility of truly identifying the one best practice is questionable, and such research will show at best a “good practice”. Nevertheless, good also is a highly subjective word, and depends on the context and setting. Bardach (2004 *in* Vesley, 2011, p. 106) therefore works with the terminology “**smart practice**” to acknowledge that there are “smart or interesting idea in a given practice” in sites outside the target. Hence, the researcher seeks to gain knowledge about the smartness of practices to verbalize and evaluate, and eventually to apply them in the context of the target site. The focus is not, like in the quantitative research, on a causal theory behind a “smart practice”, as we see the social world as complex and socially constructed, and phenomenon are interrelated. Instead, the term **mechanism** is used, that is “an explanation of a phenomenon at the medium level of abstraction” thus being less abstract than a fixed law or regulation, yet more abstract than a sole description (Vesley, 2011, p. 107). However, the smart practices still emerge from within its context and surrounding, which needs to be taken into consideration when making any transfer from source to target site (Vesley, 2011).

Vesley (2011) refers to the conversion of the gained experience and understanding to the target side as extrapolation. Rather than being a mere replication of practice, it should be seen as a “creative and flexible application in the target site of a **carefully examined mechanism** discovered in the source site” (Vesley, 2011, p. 108). Thus, it essentially is related to the process of **learning** in line with the primary aim of finding a practice suitable for the target site.



4.1.2 Directed content analysis

In order to identify smart practice communication strategies of sustainable fashion brands, we have chosen a qualitative content analysis design with a specific so-called directed approach leaning on Hsieh & Shannon (2005). Content analysis is a widely used method in the field of qualitative research, and represents a technique to analyse textual content. It holds the advantage of being an unobtrusive method that allows to collect data without for instance social desirability biases (Payne & Payne, 2004). Researchers differentiate between quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The main difference lays in the fact that the “**qualitative content analysis** goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). It aims at **attaining knowledge** and **understanding** of the phenomenon. Hence, it can be defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying **themes** or **patterns**” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Additionally, Payne & Payne (2004) state that content analysis refers to data sources of both **textual** and **visual** nature.

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) differentiate between three types of qualitative content analysis, such as conventional, directed, and summative content analysis. The main difference lays in the starting point of analysis and where variables are derived from. In a conventional approach, variables are deducted from the data analysis. In this way, a researcher can create a rich understanding of a phenomenon through inductive category development. The challenge here is that it possesses the risk of not capturing a complete picture of the phenomenon. The summative approach is characterised approaching texts not as a whole, but as single word or in relation to particular content. The researcher identifies patterns that lead to an interpretation of the contextual meaning of specific terms or content. With a directed content analysis, existing theory and research are used to develop the initial coding scheme before the analysis of the data. As analysis proceeds, can efficiently extend or refine the theory.

We are utilizing the directed approach for our thesis. This technique begins with a theoretical perspective as a guide to create initial categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It is appropriate to employ this approach when there is existing theory or research about the phenomenon that however is not complete and needs further insights. Essentially, the purpose of a directed approach is the conceptual validation or extension of a theoretical framework or theory. The directed approach generally is characterized by a structural procedure taking upon existing research to identify key concepts and variables that represent initial coding categories (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). In relation to our thesis, the incorporation of empirical reality investigation seeks to address the third research objective of applying the conceptualized research findings of



sustainable fashion communication to successful, **smart cases**. Those are chosen based on their **relevance for BWF** and their establishment in the market, to draw from their practices in order to **inform the theoretical insights with practical ones** and learn from these cases in the sense of smart practise research.

As suggested by Hsieh & Shannon (2005), we use the theoretical research insights to identify a preliminary coding scheme, analytical framework respectively, with initial relationships among our communication variables. This can also be called **deductive category application**. This is followed by operational definitions for each variable. The conceptual framework, will guide the discussion of the findings. Newly identified categories offer either contractions, or can extend and enrich the framework. This is where the strength of the directed content analysis lays, it allows to **support** or **extend knowledge** (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Approaching data with an informed view, has advantages and disadvantages. On the one side, having former insights about the phenomenon under investigation is important in order to ensure best possible analysis in interpretative research. On the other side, it increases the risk that the researcher is more likely to find supportive rather than non-supportive elements of a theory. Hence, this refers to the risk of being blinded by prior research and overemphasize on those conceptual variables of the phenomenon (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For example, referring to the analytical framework, the discussion about the forms and combination of consumer values presents a central element of the literature review. The risk exists that the acquired knowledge might influence us in the way we look at the web content for example by putting too much emphasize on consumer values and underrate other aspects which might be important. In order to counteract these risks, we create awareness by operationalizing all dimensions and values that should ensure equality within the different identified dimensions and values. This provides us with a structured process guided by clear definitions that increases transparency and objectivity in the data analysis. Furthermore, we make use of the fact that we are two researchers for the thesis. Hence, we introduce procedures between each other, to encourage objectivity in the process. For instance, we perform the data collection and analysis first separately, and then discuss the results, to come arrive at an informed result.

4.1.3 Unit of analysis - the corporate website

According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), data analysed in the process of content analysis can origin from various sources, such as verbal, printed or electronic ones. As marketers are convinced that “an online presence could offer advantages to their customers, while providing a shopping experience similar to the traditional bricks-and-mortar store” (Corley et al., 2013, p. 177), the website is considered as a valuable electronic business channel. Online stores are always available, independent from their geographic location of the viewer, and allow a direct communication to people. The expenses of data collection are low (Weare & Lin, 2000). For



companies, the online world can be “a virtual storefront where products are sold directly to the customer” (Corley et al., 2013, p. 177). Several authors emphasize on the importance of web based communication through company's' website in the area of sustainability (Villarino & Font, 2015; Visser et al., 2015; Soler et al., 2015). Referring to the fashion industry, Da Giau et al. (2015) especially highlight the importance of the webpage as a valuable platform for communicating sustainable fashion brands and characterizes it as a good tool to influence the customer's' purchase intent. Web content combines old traditions with modern technology that holds a great research potential (Kim, 2010).

Furthermore, especially for comparatively new companies, the online world is a potential business channel due to low costs and worldwide reach. Likewise, the start-up BWF is a pure e-commerce which makes the corporate website the main communication and purchase channel. Therefore, its web communication is crucial for its success. The communication should be designed in a smart and well-thought manner as it is an important touchpoint with the brand.

Consequently, for the thesis, we have chosen to focus our research on the analysis of corporate websites of sustainability fashion brands to learn from their smart communication practices. Rather than utilising interviews with companies to capture their communication practices, we have decided to use a qualitative content analysis of the brands web-based communication which enables us to capture the firm's' outside appearance in a very direct way. The objective is to **outline the “what” and “how”** of the communication strategy of the brands. This knowledge can be obtained through a thorough and structured analysis of content available on the webpages. The implementation is efficient, as the data is already in place (Kim, 2010). We only utilise publicly and openly available texts on the companies' websites, and therefore did not ask for permission from the companies themselves.

As already stated, from a researcher's' point of view, the online world holds many opportunities as it presents a valuable platform for providing information and get in contact with people. Thus, especially for content researcher, the web is an interesting and arising research field that provides the possibility for getting valuable information and insights (Weare & Lin, 2000).

“The rise of the WWW as a major communications medium should be warmly welcomed by the community of content analysis researchers” (Weare & Lin, 2000, p.289)

However, the online world is often unstructured, chaotic and boundless, and provides a complex amount of information, which changes rapidly. This makes the analysis of online content difficult (Weare & Lin, 2000). In contrast to the analysis of traditional media like newspapers, the analysis of websites is challenging as ‘natural’



boundaries with a clear start and ending point are often lacking. Through the usage of interlinkages on websites, marketers can forward the viewer of the website through clicking on a link. This leads to the question of how many interlinkages the researcher should follow and how much content should be analysed (Rössler, 2000). Similar, Weare & Lin (2000) state that scientists need to be precise about the determination of the unit of analysis. Thus, it is crucial “to define the scope of the message under investigation” (Weare & Lin, 2000, p.281), which depends mainly on the research question. Many online content researchers “focusing on single web pages as defined by URLs—either homepages (e.g., the first page presented when entering a Website) or randomly drawn pages” (Weare & Lin, 2000, p. 281). Homepages present a source of valuable information, as crucial elements are illustrated (Weare & Lin, 2000).

Margolis & Pauwels (2011) give recommendations about how to analyse website content in detail that follows a logical sequence by running from superficial to deeper levels. Among others, the researchers distinguish between two phases. First, researchers should describe the core elements of the website like its structure and mentioned content categories. This can be a section in which the organization presents itself (‘About us’) or a section in which the organizations presents its products. Furthermore, striking characteristics should be listed as charts or feedback areas. In the next step, researcher should have a detailed look on certain aspects, explore and interpret them. Researcher should analyse the meaning of textual and pictorial content regarding “topics and issues that are being dealt with and the expressed positions” (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011, n.p.). This step is considered as “the central and no doubt most encompassing” (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011, n.p.).

4.2 Research process

We combine several research techniques in order to design our research process, and address the research objective, such as comparative research design with a directed qualitative content analysis and smart practice emphasis. We design the process by integrating typical outlines of the utilised approaches.

Kim (2010) refers to initiating a content analysis through conceptualisation, and a following operationalisation that refers to the coding scheme. This is in line with Hsieh & Shannon (2005) process for the specific directed content analysis. Dasgupta (2015) gives guidelines for the process of conducting qualitative case study research. According to her, first organizations as units of analysis must be selected, which is considered as **sampling strategy**. Afterwards, researcher should **collect** and **analyse** the data that enables the **discussion of results**. This is illustrated in the following figure.

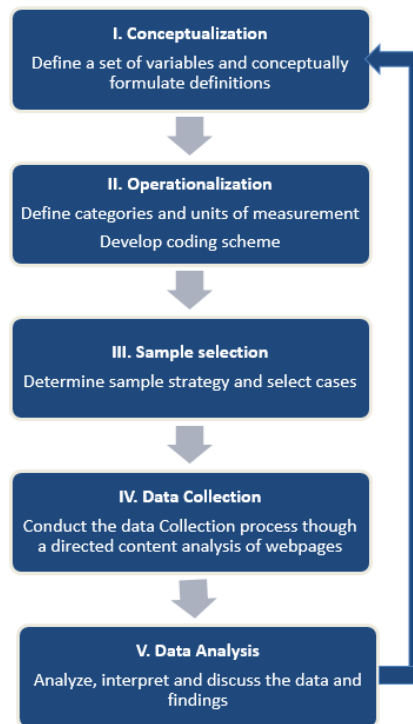


Figure 26 Process of a case study (inspired by Dasgupta, 2015; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kim, 2010)

4.2.1 Operationalization

In order to capture communication strategies of sustainable fashion brands on its corporate homepages, we need to operationalize the analytical framework and its variables. As discussed earlier, this refers to the development of a coding scheme that will guide the data collection. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) point out that the **coding process** is the crucial part in relation to the success as well as trustworthiness of a content analysis. The coding refers to content categories, which are patterns or themes expressed in the text or through pictures. An essential step within the process is the development of a **coding scheme** as it represents our guide to make decisions in the analysis of content. The scheme can be compared to a **translation guide** and ensures that the data analysis is systematic, logical, and scientific.

During the analysis, additional codes can potentially be identified within the different cases. The purpose of adding is to create the best possible framework, as the quality of the frame correlates with the quality of the recommendations ('the better the frame, the better the recommendations'). However, our objective is not to refine the framework as a means to create generalist theory, but to create the foundation to give reflected well-grounded recommendations for BWF. We aim to ensure that all cases are analysed with the same framework. Thus, the additional variables (codes) that we identify during the analysis of the different cases will be added to the framework. After the completion of the analysis of all cases, we skim all cases again to see



whether the new variables are also used in the other cases. Through that, the order in which we analyse the cases has no effect on the findings. The operationalised framework can be found in Appendix 1, the revised analytical framework can be found in section 5.6.

4.2.2 Sample selection

Designing a sampling strategy is a crucial step in the qualitative research process. An unbiased and robust sample selection frame is the basis for unbiased and robust results (Wilmot, 2005). In the context of case study research, Wilmot (2005) states that **purposive sampling** is a typical technique utilized in **qualitative research**. Within this strategy, the focus does not lay on the sample size (quantity focus), but on a selection of valuable case through appropriate **selection criteria** (quality focus). Dasgupta (2015, p.152) states, “the cases are selected because they are particularly **suitable** for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs”. Likewise, Creswell (2006) advises to select cases that are **most valuable**, respectively cases that enable to gain the most insights for the phenomenon under investigation.

Specifically, in relation to **best practice research**, Vesely (2011) distinguishes between *target sites* and *source sites*. One must first **characterise the target site**. Afterwards, the researcher has to look for **source sites from which** the target site can learn, considered as smart practice (Vesely, 2011). It is important to discuss which factors qualify a case to be **valuable**, and **smart**.

Referring to the amount of selected cases, Creswell (2006) states that researcher must think carefully about it. As presented, the analysis of several cases is beneficial, however, the downside of using several cases is, that it thinness the analysis process: “the more cases an individual studies, the less the depth in any single case” (Creswell, 2006, p. 76). Creswell (2006, p.76) explicit states that there is no required number of cases within a multiple case study approach, but he recommends using “no more than four or five cases”.

In relation to our thesis, we chose a purposive sampling strategy along with the smart practice focus. We employ selection criteria and a funnel process to ensure we are working with valuable, relevant organisations. Leaning on Vesely (2011), we therefore, profile the target site, Better World Fashion, as a means to identify criteria that can guide our selection of source sites. This does not only ensure that we can identify relevant, smart firms, but also is an important filter as a means to reduce the high density of sustainable fashion brands available online.



4.2.2.1 Source site characterization

BWF is a Danish e-commerce start-up founded in 2016 by Reimer Ivang, Karsten Lund and Kresten Thomsen and is headquartered in Aalborg (Denmark). The brand is offering sustainable leather jackets. The website is available in English and shipping is global. The leather is sourced from second hand clothing that has been donated to NGOs in Denmark. The production takes place in Poland. The brand offers three male and three female models, which are all unique due to the different sewing patterns and leather sources used. The brand strictly avoids selling products that are made from new materials. The product can be obtained through two models: Classic purchase the leather jacket with the option of the brand buying back the jacket once it is no longer in use with a 50% discount off the next purchase. Alternatively, customers can lease jackets through a monthly leasing fee. Summarising, the business model is a circular one. Concerning the price segment, the brands ranges on a higher price range with a price of 390€. BWF works with a storytelling approach in the format of an app. Customers can add events to a jacket's story, which means over time the story of a jackets grows and the next owner can follow and add to the jacket's story.

We extract the following profile criteria from this:

- **Global company** (with worldwide delivery)
- **E-business** (web as one sales channel)
- **English website** available
- Focus their product segment on **clothing** (excl. other fashion categories such as shoes or accessories)
- Sustainable focus in their products concerning the incorporation of **recycled material (in favour of just organic cotton, or other materials)**
- Range on a **higher price range** outside high-street prices

We conduct two searches. First, we seek the maximum closeness to BWF by focusing on the same product category of leather jackets. We search the internet for search results and articles concerning "recycled leather jackets" and "sustainable leather jackets" and identify three brands that follow all criteria. Those are **Pelechecoco** from Denmark, **Wolf and Lamb** from the US, and **Deadwood** from Sweden. As a means to determine the success of the brands and potential as a source site, we compare their social media follower size on Instagram. As visible below, the three brands all have at least twice as much follower as BWF. We argue like this, with being aware that follower size does not translate into consumer size, but it is an identifiable approximation that we can access and compare.



Table 2 Comparison of Instagram followers (accessed 20.06.2017)

BWF	Pelechecoco	Wolf and Lamb	Deadwood
5,151	10,400	12,100	13,2000

During a first assessment, we can see that Wolf and Lamb is rather non-transparent in their practices (Buzzwords as sustainable and green without any justification of claims or any details on sustainability). Moreover, Deadwood and Pelechecoco, offer closer characteristics in terms of practices, as both rework old leather materials into new jackets. Therefore, we decide to exclude Wolf and Lamb from the sample.

Stella McCartney (4,2 Mio.)

Patagonia (2,8 Mio.)

Reformation (718 000)

ReDone (193 000)

Filippa K (142 000)

Nudie Jeans (127 000)

People Tree (58 700)

Alternative apparel (41 400)

Fat Face (31 200)

Armedangels (22 000)

Pactorganic (16 300)

Mudjeans (14 400)

Jannjune (11 800)

Hereafter, we conduct a second search following a **purposive sampling** approach. We aim for smart practices to address the mainstream market, which leads to the reasoning to include big and well-known players into the sample. Hence, we employ an internet search concerning “sustainable fashion brands”, and use the above-discussed sample criteria identified based on BWF’s profile. This search stream therefore does not narrow the product category down to leather jackets. We identify a big pool of sustainable fashion brands. The model below shows an exemplary variety, and does not include all the smaller brands found.

When examining the companies closer, we identify different degrees to which recycling as a sustainable practice is employed. Some companies like Patagonia, which is a well-known and established brand in the field, focuses on outdoor clothing which relates to a specific segment and apparel function outside the more generalist character of BWF. Stella McCartney has an extensive follower base; however, the brand’s success might be based on the celebrity background of the founder, so we see another origin compared to BWF.

Figure 27 Sample Pool
(Accessed 20.06.2017)

The third biggest follower base has the American brand Reformation that has a broader product palette offering, and appears to be one of the main mainstream leaders in the sustainable fashion market. The brand employs different sustainability practice among others also recycled material. We think we can gain valuable insights from a highly successful sustainable business.



Additionally, we find **Re/Done**, on the fourth rank. The brand focuses on reworked Levi's Jeans, hence the concept is similar to BWF, but focuses on another fashion item. In combination with the high follower size, we believe that Re/Done is a valuable source site. Lastly, we chose to select the Dutch brand **MudJeans** which also works with jeans as a product focus. Not only are jeans and leather jackets similar products, but MudJeans also operates with a circular business model like BWF. The brand claims to be only brand that works completely according to the principles of the circular economy, which makes it a relevant target site for the case study.

In total, we end up with a sample of five sustainable fashion brands, which appears to be in line with Creswell's (2006) recommendation of a sample size of maximum five cases.

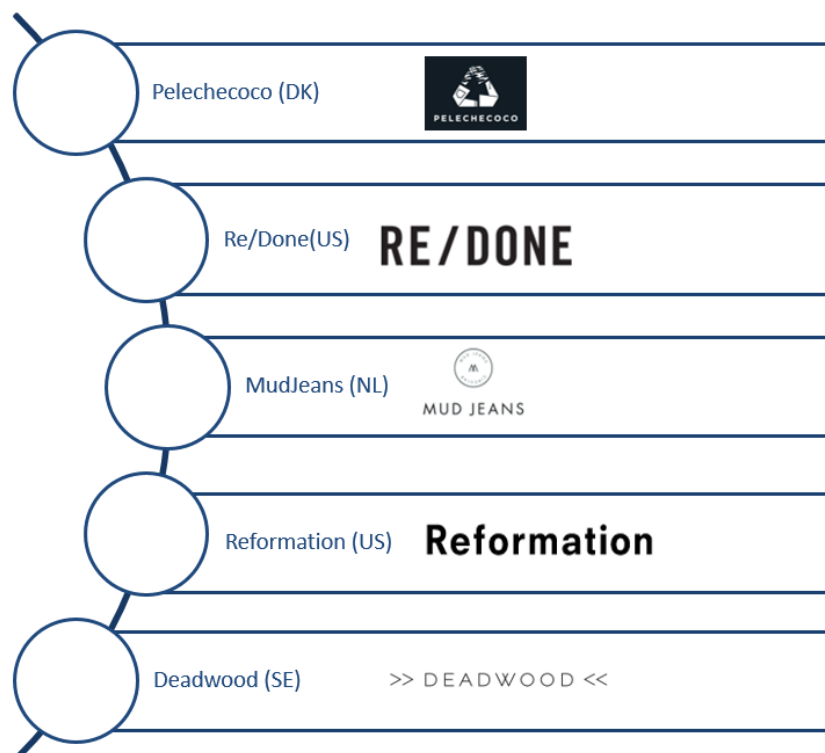


Figure 28 Smart practice sample

4.2.3 Data collection

As noticed by Gering (2015), the analysis of content of a webpage has the advantage of direct availability. However, due to the complexity and interconnectedness of web-texts there is a "seemingly endless nature of corporate texts". Gering (2015) highlights that a qualitative analysis of homepages is complex and iterative, and suggests narrowing down the scope of analysis, instead of looking at the complete webpage. As pointed out in section 4.1.3, Weare & Lin (2000) state that scientists need to be precise about the determination of the unit of analysis. Thus, it is crucial "to define the scope of the message under investigation" (Weare & Lin, 2000, p.281).



For our thesis, we chose **four units of analysis**, such as the **brand name** and **logo** of the brand, the **start page**, a specific **product page**, and the **about page**. There are several reasons for the selection of these units of analysis.

- **Availability of all units:** All units have a high likelihood of being identifiable on almost every webpage. Having the same units of analysis is important for the cross analysis of the cases. Generally, also the inclusion of an ad video would have been interesting, but those are not identifiable for all cases, and could therefore not be part of the data collection.
- **Brand name and logo:** As stated in section 3.1.2, when it comes to fashion, often solely the brand name is used to express meaning to people and is therefore a crucial part of communication (Yan et al., 2012). Hence, the brand name expresses an important meaning and additionally can give cues about a sustainability focus, thus is related to the muted or Fi-Fa approach to sustainable fashion communication. The same applies to the logo, dependent on its utilization by the brand and its visibility.
- **Start page:** As stated by Weare & Lin (2000) in section 4.1.3, many researchers focus on the start page as it presents the most crucial elements and is the heart of the of the webpage.
- **About page:** As stated in section 3.1.2.1, muted sustainability brands are found to communicate sustainability through their websites in *separate sustainability sections*, and separately from their collections and online shops, rather than on products (Soler et al., 2015). This shows that sustainable values or practices are not visibly in the foreground of the communication, but rather hidden as they do not present a sales argument that is exploited. Therefore, about pages are relevant as a unit, as they display additional information and often include separate sustainable sections. Moreover, the about page relates to how the brand generally chooses to present itself, which is important to capture a more holistic picture of marketing communication.
- **Product page:** Especially related to the statement above, it is of interest to explore if and how sustainable product attributes are communicated in the shop system of the brand. Thus, it is necessary to capture the communication practices on the product page, to identify which focus is chosen and if sustainability is utilised as a sales argument. If applicable, a leather jacket is chosen as the product. If the brand does not offer leather jackets, a product category, which is close to jackets such as jeans will be taken. We follow the rule to select an exemplary product based on choosing the first product listed in the women's section.

As a further limitation, we decide not to include interlinkages for initial pages into the data collection. This means that when we analyse a page, we do not follow possible interlinkage to capture additional information, as we must delimit us from too many elements to ensure comparability of practices. It additionally sets the same



scope for all cases. For scenarios in which a unit of analysis consists of additional subpages, the main page will be analysed in detail, while subpages will be skimmed and only values, and message content and design elements that have not been observed before will be captured.

4.2.4 Data analysis

In the initial step of data analysis, a **profile of the selected case** is given in terms of basis information concerning origin, age, focus, and practices. Afterwards, the communication practices of the specific case are captured on the chosen units through the analytical framework. This is considered as '*within-case analysis*'.

Leaning on Margolis & Pauwels (2011), the within-case analysis is separated in two parts: In the first part, a short description on a superficial level is given, including:

- Structure of the web page
- Content categories, referring to either fashion or sustainable communication
- The balance between visual and textual communication

In the second part, which presents the key collection process, we utilise our analytical framework to capture pictorial or textual values, the message mix in terms of content and design, as well as credibility aspects of fashion and sustainability communication. Steaming from the literature review, we utilise the following questions in relation to the within cases analysis:

- Do we identify additional variables that need to be coded and added to the analytical framework?
- How do brands communicate in the sense of visual-textual communication ratio?
- How does the communication differ between the units of analysis?
- What communication strategy does the brand utilise?
- How is the value profile composed?
- What is communicated and how (referring to message content and design)?
- How do brands attempt to establish consumer trust and credibility?

The within-case analysis is followed by "a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case-analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case" (Creswell, 2006, p. 75). As specified in section 4.1.1, we strive to benchmark the findings of the multiple case study in the sense of smart practices of sustainability fashion communication. Because a pattern is a frequent incidence, a practice is defined as smart when it is observed in the majority of cases. For this thesis, this means in at least three out of the five cases. We utilise the following questions in relation to the across case analysis to identify smart practices pattern:

- Which overall communication strategy is used?



- Are there differences in the communication across the different units of analysis?
- What is the ratio between visual and textual communication?
- Which amount of values are communicated, and how are the values composed?
- What is the ratio between personal and non-personal?
- How is the message content characterized across the cases?
- How are the messages designed across the cases?
- How is credibility established?

To answer these questions, it is useful to differentiate between an overall analysis level, and the different units of analysis. The following picture visualises the structure of the analysis process to identify smart practices.

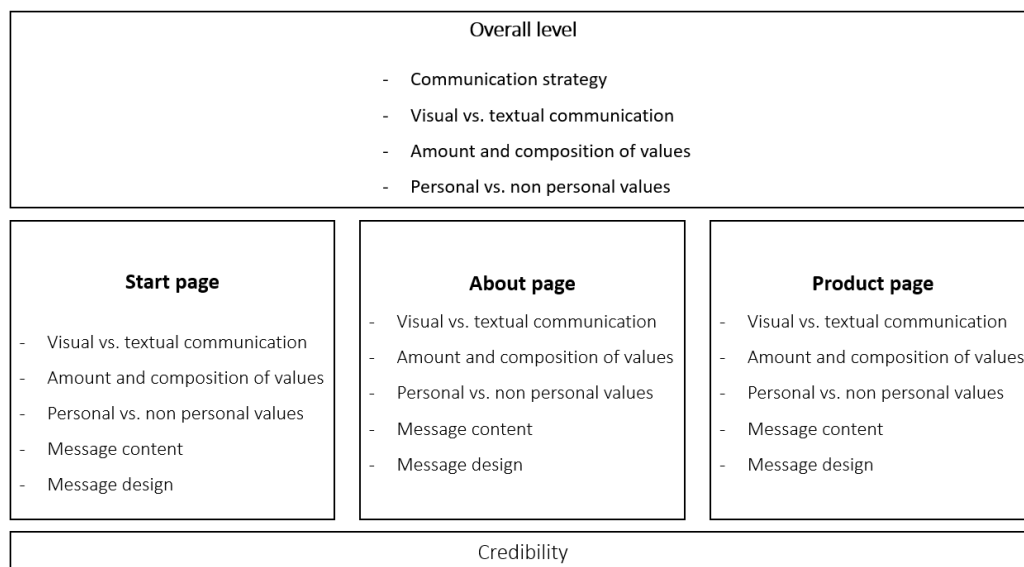


Figure 29 Analysis guide for cross case analysis

Additionally, within the qualitative research paradigm of the smart practice research, smart is also considered as **interesting practices** (Bardach, 2004). Hence, we aim to point out interesting, eye-catching practises, which do not necessarily occur in the majority of cases. This can for example include remarkable or outstanding elements, or contradictions between literature and practice. In the last step, the identified smart practices are synthesised into a **smart practice guide** for BWF. The interesting practices are left separately, as they present a possible addition.

The last step of analysis refers to the communication analysis of BWF that captures the status quo of current communication. The practices are contrasted with the smart practice guide to identify smart elements as well



as areas for improvement. This results in the last chapter that is dedicated towards specific recommendations for a future of sustainability fashion communication of the target side.

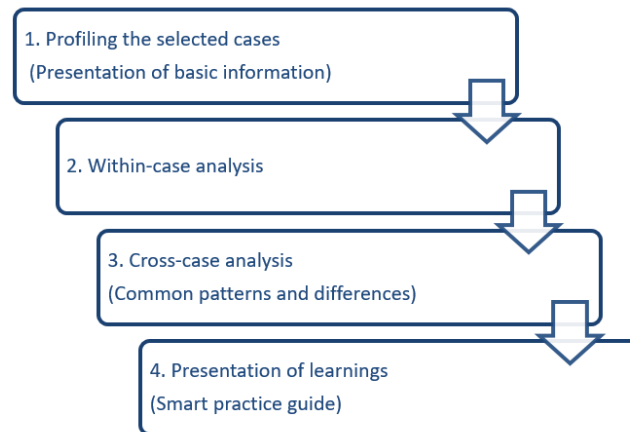


Figure 30 Data analysis procedure

4.3 Discussion of scientific criteria

Research studies need to be evaluated in relation to the processes and techniques used to arrive at the findings. Case study research should meet certain scientific criteria in order to create trust and confidence towards the findings, especially when the findings are used for practical implications (Riege, 2003). Criteria for evaluation differ between quantitative and qualitative research. As we utilise a qualitative research tradition, quantitative criteria such as reliability and validity (Bryman & Bell, 2007), are not relevant as they postulate an absolute account to a single social reality in line with a positivist assumption. As this thesis is built on the assumption of reality being constructed socially, and this is a qualitative and interpretive research, we chose different criteria for the judgement and evaluation in accordance with the research design. In the context of qualitative case study research, Riege (2003) refers to four criteria to assess the research effectiveness such as “tests of confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability” (Riege, 2003, p. 81). Furthermore, we add and apply scientific evaluation criteria such as contextualization, principle of dialogical reasoning, principle of suspicion introduced by Klein & Myers (1999). These criteria are especially useful for the evaluation of interpretative case studies that take a hermeneutic research stance, which is in line with our research positioning. These scientific evaluation criteria will be discussed and applied in the following.

4.3.1 Confirmability

Confirmability evaluates “whether the interpretation of data is drawn in a logical and unprejudiced manner” (Riege, 2003, p. 81). The findings should be gained and interpreted as **objectively** as possible and the reader should get a holistic picture about the study. Therefore, the **research process** should be portrayed in an



understandable and **explicit** manner, including providing **background data**. It is aimed that the research can be repeated by others (Riege, 2003).

To reach confirmability, we present our research process in a detailed way. Reasons and justifications are given for the selection of methods and research cases. The development of an analytical framework for capturing the phenomenon under investigation is based on existing literature, which is gained through an objective research approach (systematic literature review). Own conclusions are presented in a transparent way by illustrating our thought processes. The analytical process is conducted with the help of operationalized variables of the analytical framework which supports an objective procedure. The clear definitions of the operationalisation (Appendix 1) should enable the repeat the research.

4.3.2 Credibility

Credibility evaluates if the research is conducted in a believable and authenticable manner. This refers to the preciseness of explanations, the consistency of results, and the combination of concepts and its thematic connection. This can be reached through stating “the **researcher’s assumptions**, worldview” (Riege, 2003, p.83) and through self-supervision and **reflection** while gaining and analysing data. Another possibility is to conduct the research with **more than one examiner** (Riege, 2003).

Prior to the selection of the research design, we state the paradigmatic positioning of this thesis and associated assumptions. We reflect on our research design by considering advantages and disadvantages, like the risks of conducting a directed content analysis and the actions taken to address them. Furthermore, as two authors write this thesis, we are enabled to examine the different cases first independently, and then discuss it to determine the code of the text, which helps to increase credibility. Another technique to establish credibility is to take upon good practice of research; hence choosing well-established research methods in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Therefore, we have used relevant academic literature on qualitative research. Moreover, we discuss and justify the research methods explicitly for our thesis, so the reader can follow and evaluate our decisions.

4.3.3 Transferability

Transferability “refers to the extent to which the reader is able to generalize the findings of a study to her or his own context” (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). However, due to “small sample sizes and absence of statistical analyses, qualitative data cannot be said to be generalizable in the conventional sense” (Morrow, 2005, p.252). As this thesis aims to develop recommendations for a specific company (BWF), our overall generalization is very low which is unproblematic as a general transferability is not the purpose of the thesis.



4.3.4 Dependability

The aim of dependability “is to show indications of stability and consistency in the process of inquiry” (Riege, 2003, p. 81). To obtain dependability, researchers can conduct audits to survey and evaluate their research process by an external person who presents an important source for improvement (Riege, 2003). The “auditor examines whether the processes followed in the inquiry are in order, understandable, well documented, providing mechanism against bias” (Riege, 2003, p. 81). This project is supervised by Reimer Ivang and a regular and close interaction through meetings provide the basis for a high dependability.

4.3.5 Contextualization


The aim of contextualisation is to describe the social context in which the research phenomenon is embedded. This creates knowledge and understanding for both the writer and the reader of the thesis. Contextualization enables a better understanding of actions, interrelations and processes (Klein & Myers, 1999). Therefore, we give a profile of every case company before we analyse it. Furthermore, we use our broad theoretical insights to state possible explanations of major findings which we gained through the analysis of the cases.

4.3.6 Principle of dialogical reasoning

The criterion “requires the researcher to confront his or her preconceptions (prejudices) that guided the original research design (i.e. the original lenses) with the data that emerge through the research process” (Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 76). Klein & Myers (1999) point out that in the context of interpretative hermeneutic research, having former insights about the phenomenon under investigation is important in order to ensure best possible analysis and interpretation. This stands in a sharp contrast to objective research, in which prior insights are considered as a source of bias. The “critical task of hermeneutics then becomes one of distinguishing between true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones by which we misunderstand” (Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 76). Therefore, it is recommended that the researcher should be aware of its own prejudices and prior insights during the analysis (Klein & Myers, 1999). We constantly reflect about potential preconceptions, state risks and point out counteractions as for example done in regard to content analysis (section 4.1.2).

4.3.7 Principle of Suspicion

The criterion should ensure that the researcher has a critical view towards the gained insights (Klein & Myers, 1999). Applying this criterion to the thesis means that although we select aim to identify smart practices we should not lose a critical perspective. As we gained many valuable insights through an extensive literature review, we are in the position to question and judge communication techniques done by the cases.

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of several large, vibrant green leaves. The leaves have prominent veins and slightly wavy edges. The lighting is soft, creating a natural and organic feel.

CHAPTER V

Within-Case Analysis

This chapter contains the application of the analytical framework to the empirical reality. Thus, it is dedicated towards the within-case of the five selected source site cases. The four units of analysis, brand name and logo, start page, about page and product page, are captured on the brand's corporate website. The additionally identified variables of the empirical reality are merged with the initial analytical framework into the revised analytical framework.



5.1 Case I. Pelehecoco

We access the website of Pelehecoco (<https://pelehecoco.com/>) on the 30th of June 2017. Generally, the text contains only selected screenshots, while the rest can be found in Appendix II.

5.1.1 Profiling

Pelehecoco is a sustainable fashion brand that centres on recycled fabrics and was founded in 2011. It is based in Copenhagen with its store, and has a collaboration store in Los Angeles. The name Pelehecoco stands for the heroes of the founder Dan: **Pele**, the football player who is known for his skills, **Che** Guevara, who was known for being a rebel and standing up for welfare, and **Coco** Chanel, who was known for style. The three attributes form the cornerstones of Pelehecoco. The product palette focusses mainly on leather jackets, but also includes other items like leather bags and skirts, a few jeans, short trousers and parkas. The leather products are constructed from 100 % recycled leather, which is sourced from around the globe. The vintage clothing is reworked into attainable, on-trend styles. The sustainability practices focus on reusing materials, reduced water, and eliminating chemical in the production process. There are products for women and men that come in a range of colours. Due to the usage of recycled material, every product slightly differs from each other. Pelehecoco also has a special uniqueness line, considered as 'one of a kind', that offers completely unique leather jackets in terms of cut, colour and size. The prices of the leather jackets vary between 255€ and 365€. Pelehecoco is shipping worldwide.

5.1.2. Brand name and logo

The brand name Pelehecoco has no relation to sustainability, and is considered as an individual name without explicit associations. The brand logo is an adoption of the recycled logo, with three different jacket sleeves. It gives a reference to sustainability/ recycled focus of the brand.



Figure 31 Pelehecoco - Brand name and logo

5.1.3 Start Page

Page composition

The navigation bar on the top of the start page presents links to six different **product-related sections**: two sections are separated by gender (women/men), and four sections are separated by styles (one of a kind,



military, sukajan, denim). The content of the page is divided into five sections and with a dominant focus on visual content (**high visual-low text**). Several pictures and a video are presented that show attractive people wearing leather products, whereby the products are always in focus. The thematic focus lies on fashion itself, which is presented in form of pictures. Sustainability content is less present in textual form.

Communication analysis

In the presented **pictures**, we can identify all four **fashion** value categories (functional, social, epistemic and emotional). In the first two pictures, we identify a functional value through showing that the leather products are comfortable to wear (e.g. one jacket is half way thrown over the body). In the third picture, we identify a social value of personal expression through stressing individual taste and difference (unusual hair accessories; male model wears an earring), and an epistemic value of uniqueness through stressing that the clothes gives the wearer a unique look (models look remarkable). In all three pictures, we recognize emotional values in form of freedom (clothing leads to relaxation and destressing), and the feeling of the daring, enhancing the wearers' feeling of courage (models look you straight in the eyes; seem all to be confident). (Screenshots of the pictures are to be found in Appendix II)

We can observe **three messages** that focus on **sustainable** aspects. In the first two sentences, a **functional environmental** value in form of **image orientation** is expressed through stating hashtag buzzwords like '#recycle', '#slowfashion' and '#futurevintage'. The buzzwords are unspecific, rather connotative as the meaning of the words is not explained. The buzzwords are followed by an implicit sentence whereby the reader has to make inferences about the meaning of the texts on its own. The last text expresses an epistemic **fashion value** in form of uniqueness through stressing the individual nature of a product. Additional, we can observe the statement '100% REWORKED MATERIALS' which expresses a functional **environmental value** in form of **process orientation**. The message contains specific numerical facts. The footer contains newsletter subscription and contact information.

5.1.4 About Page

Page composition

The page is divided in four sections that all have a product-focused picture in the background and text in the foreground. Hence, we observe a balanced approach to visual and textual communication. While the pictures are all related to the fashion product, the text is related to both fashion and sustainable aspects.

Communication analysis

The four sections are information rich and characterised by different approaches to sustainability fashion communication. Therefore, we will shortly analyse the sections separately.



The first section called "REUSE AND BE ONE OF A KIND" is characterised by a dense use of various values from both fashion and sustainability, with fashion being in focus. We observe all fashion value categories being utilised. The focus lays on epistemic and emotional values. Specifically, the pursuit of the unique ("feel special", "unique", "individual", "one of a kind"), and personal expression ("personal style", "showing of your personality", "true to yourself") are highlighted. Additionally, also the functional values of high quality ("the highest quality"), and versatility ("play around with different trends and styles"), as well as the emotional ones concerning feeling of happiness ("happy"), and the feeling of sentimentality ("breathing new life", "can be loved again") are utilised. Moreover, we identify a new emotional value such as the feeling of proudness ("feel proud"). We define this value as "suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearers feeling of being proud". In terms of sustainability, we see functional environmental values concerning product orientation ("recycled product"), and image orientation ("good for the environment").

In summary, we observe a concrete focus on personal fashion values. The ability of personal expression and pursuit of the unique are combined with values of happiness, versatility and high quality (emotional & epistemic functions combined with functional). It is interesting, that the functional environmental value of recycled product is used in the context of a personal value: The environmental value is not embedded in a sustainable context; but in a personal one. The following picture shows the identified values. The green bordered sections relate to sustainability values, the red bordered sections relate to fashion values. This colouring technique will be used during the whole analysis chapter for selected screenshots. Green relates to sustainability, red to fashion.

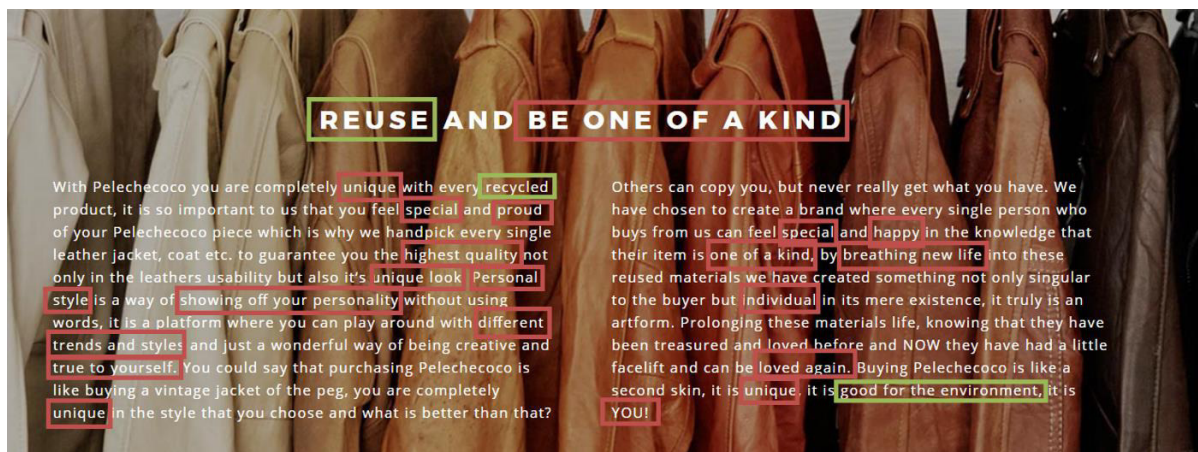


Figure 32 Pelechecoco - Values on about page 1

Concerning the message content and design, we see a focus on storytelling as a means of communicating the brand. Several causal links are used (e.g. "knowing that they have been treasured and loved before and NOW they have had a little facelift and can be loved again" are used. The message contains the aspect of



environmental correctness by stressing the recycled material of the product. The message is unspecific without further information. Overall, we see positive framing (e.g. “wonderful day”), and the usage of personal appeal (“what is better than that?”), which presents a new variable in message design as a linguistic element, a rhetorical question respectively. We code this as “questions asked in order to create a dramatic effect or making a statement rather than to get an answer”.

The second section “REWORKED & SUSTAINABLE” focuses mainly on the sustainability character of the brand. Yet, it is marked by a balanced approach between fashion and sustainable values, and direct connections between them. While the section title focuses on sustainability values, with reworked and sustainable referring to environmental product orientation, the text includes a dual benefit references. Specifically, we observe a connection of epistemic values, pursuit of the unique (“stand out”, “uniqueness”, “one of a kind”), and emotional values, feeling of the daring (“be the coolest person”) with the personal sustainability value of moral satisfaction (“be the most sustainably fashion conscious”). Sustainability wise, the functional environmental value of process orientation (“we don’t use any chemicals”, “no animals are killed in the process”) is emphasized on. Furthermore, the message stresses that the purchase of the good is coupled with belonging to a specific social group that contributes to sustainable development (“so join us”). This presents a new value that we consider as a social sustainability value in the form of a community feeling. We define this as “stressing that the purchase of the good, is coupled with belonging to a special social group that contributes to a sustainable development”.



Figure 33 Pelehecoco - Values on about page 2

We see that Pelehecoco uses facts/ statistics combined with frames of reference (“...new leather jacket 1.997 gallons of water, Pelehecoco uses 26 gallons in the production of 100 jackets”), educational messages (e.g. “The fashion industry is the third most polluting industry in the world”), combined with moralizing elements (e.g. “a shame to waste all of this”, “bad for the environment”, “we should look after things”, “to look after our planet should really just be common sense”) to active the consumers.



The text uses rather specific, explicit and logical designed messages. The moralising elements are negatively framed and combined with active messages (“So join us”) that call for action. Furthermore, the messages show signs of being appealing by the constant use of the word “our” (e.g. “look after our planet”; “take care of our future”).

The third section “CREATE MEMORIES - DON’T COMPROMISE ON YOUR LIFE” focuses on fashion. We identify all four fashion value categories being utilised, so the personal benefit of the costumer is highlighted. Specifically, the epistemic value of pursuit of the unique (“stand out and be unique”; “dress up your uniqueness”), the functional one of high quality (“great quality”), and economic benefit (“reasonable price”); the social one of personal expression (“dare to be different”, “let your style reflect who you are”); and emotional value of feeling of sentimentality (“spend your time and your money investigating in experiences that leads to memories”) are combined with each other. So, a pure fashion value mix is used combining functional and emotional values.

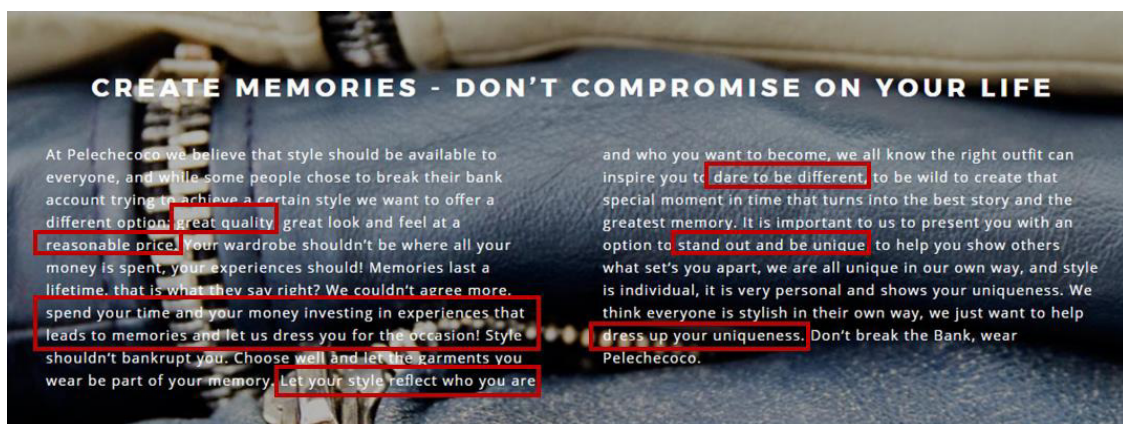


Figure 34 Pelehecoco - Values on about page 3

The section again uses storytelling (“We all know the right outfit can inspire you to dare to be different”) as it tells the story of how to create memories through the investment into a leather jacket. The message is overall positively designed with a personal appeal, directly addressing the reader through a rhetorical question (“what is better than that?”).

The last section “RETHINK & BE A VISIONARY” shows a new side, by stressing different sustainability values. Specifically, moral satisfaction is used as an environmental emotional value (“It is important to stand for something and standing up for using our resources wisely maximises our Planet’s life span, and that is cool”). The new social sustainability value of community feeling is used again (“Together we can make a difference”; “join the movement”, “join us”). Moreover, we observe two new environmental values. An emotional sustainable value of being visionary through the support of the sustainable fashion (e.g. “Be a visionary”). We



define this as “stressing that the owner of the clothes will enhance the feeling of being visionary, following new ideas, one-step ahead, avant-garde, forward thinking”. Secondly, an emotional sustainable value of individual impact is used. This one “stresses that the consumer actively contributes towards a sustainable, better future through the product purchase” (“Every bag and every jacket is paving the way towards a better future”).



Figure 35 Pelechecheco - Values on about page 4

Content wise the section focusses again on storytelling, as the whole text tells a story of how the customer is part of the process to create a better world by purchasing a product by using metaphors. We also see the element of moralizing as the brand highlights that “it is important to stand for something and standing up for using our resources wisely maximises our Planet’s life span”. Therefore, the consumer should “make the right choice”. Overall, the text is very actively designed, and Pelechecheco addresses the consumer directly with active messages like e.g. “be sustainable and help us kick pollutions dirty ass”. Additionally, rhetorical questions (“...isn’t that exactly what we need choice?”) are used again. The text also shows two new message design variables such as metaphors, thus “using figures of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable” (“...creating a peaceful army of fashion and fabric conscious ambassadors”). Pelechecheco also uses informal language (“help us kick pollutions dirty ass”), which we define as “using taboo vocabulary, shocking, informal expressions”.

5.1.5 Product Page

Page composition

The page is structured into five elements. First, we can see a close up of the product, then a section giving information towards different steps in the customer journey like product information, size guide, shipping information and consumer service. This is followed by a description of the product, and a section with reviews of the specific product by consumers. Lastly, there is reference to further products.

Communication analysis



The product information expresses a functional environmental value in form of product orientation by stating that the leather is 100 % recycled. The message is a specific fact. The description of the product contains fashion and sustainable values, by communicating a functional environmental value in form of process orientation ("not undergoing any chemical processes") which is expressed in a specific way. Additional, an epistemic fashion value in form of pursuit of the unique ("unique vintage leather"), and an emotional fashion value in form of sentimentality ("touch of years", "original") are expressed. Overall, the section contains storytelling in form of a personality description of the product e.g. where it comes from, how it feels.

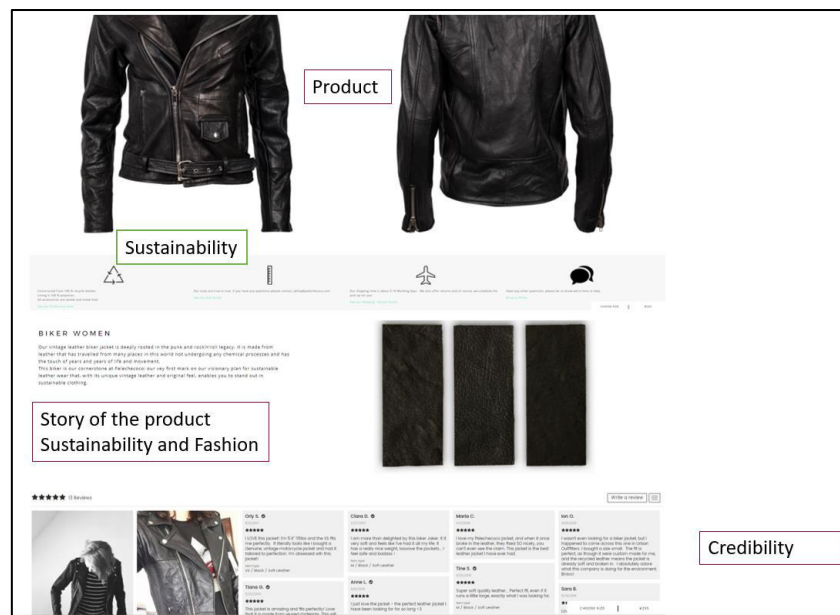


Figure 36 Pelechecheco – Product page

The last section includes reviews of the specific product by costumers, which we consider as consumer endorsement, and thus a new source of credibility establishment. The variable is defined as “using communication with costumers in the form of their opinion and review of the product or company”.

5.1.6 Conclusion

In summary, we identify seven additional variables. The feeling of being visionary, and the individual impact as two emotional sustainability values, and a social sustainability value. Furthermore, we see three linguistic elements in sustainable message design such as metaphors, rhetorical questions and informal language. Additionally, as a source of credibility, we find third party endorsement by the consumer through reviews on Pelechecheco.

Generally, we can summarize the communication strategy as a Fi-Fa strategy throughout the whole corporate website, and the four units of analysis. Sustainability even if not primarily, is always integrated into the



communication. This starts with the strategy of the neutral brand name and the sustainability-oriented logo, which gives indication of a sustainable character of the brand. Overall, we see a focus on personal fashion values that either stand alone, or are combined with personal or functional sustainable values. It is interesting, that the direct personal benefit of the customer is always highlighted. If functional sustainable aspects are mentioned, then combined with personal values. Emotional sustainability values are used without an additional fashion value. Furthermore, we observe that the brand chooses to communicate (especially textually) the two fashion values of personal expression (social) and the feeling of pursuit of the unique (epistemic) remarkable often, thus we consider these two values as the brand's core values.

Looking at the four units of analysis separately, we observe that they have different focuses in terms of communication. The *starting page* is marked with a high visual-low text strategy. The visual communication emphasizes different fashion values, whereby emotional values are stressed in every picture. The textual verbal communication focuses mainly on sustainable aspects, whereby functional environmental values in form of buzzwords and facts are expressed. The *about page* shows a more balanced approach between visuals and text, even though the pictures are in the background. While the first of four sections on the *about page* focuses on fashion with a minimal use of sustainability, the second covers sustainability more, yet still integrating fashion values. The third solely emphasise on fashion, while the last highlights sustainability values, however only personal ones. Throughout all sections, we can observe that all fashion value categories are communicated, most often emotional and epistemic values. Furthermore, all environmental values categories are used, whereas no value is dominating. The *product page* is marked by balance between text and visuals, and functional environmental values are combined with fashion values.

In terms of value profile, we summarise the visual and textual profiles as displayed below (Figure 38 and 39).

Fashion

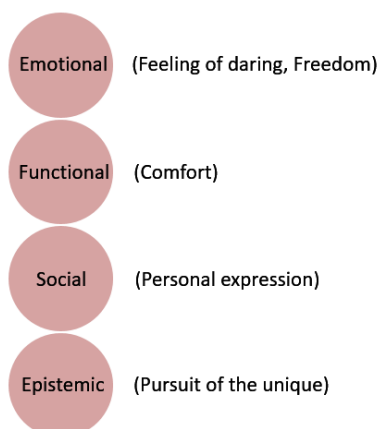


Figure 37 Pelechechoco – Visual value profile

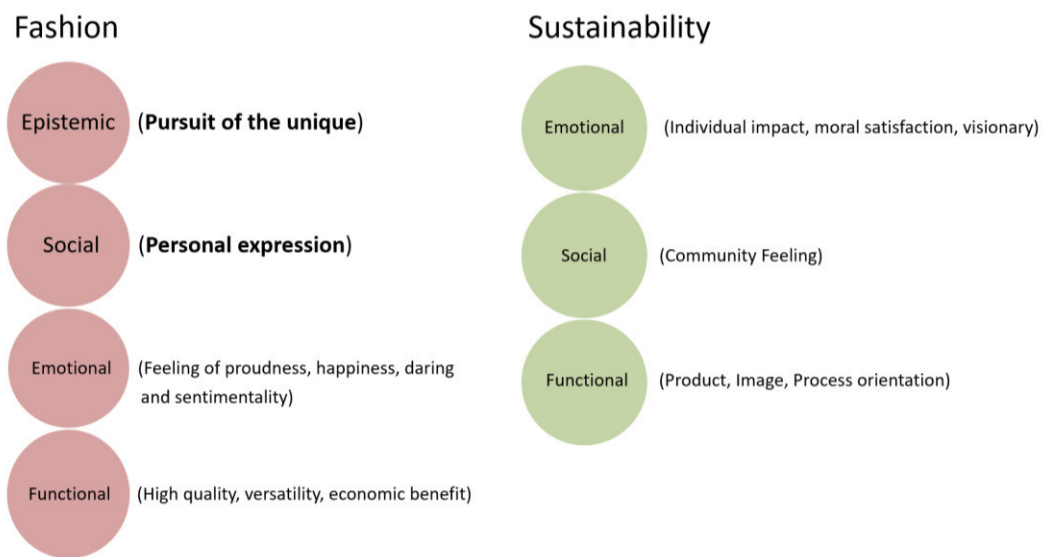


Figure 38 Pelehecoco – Textual value profile

The content focuses a lot on storytelling which is the red line throughout the whole corporate website. Sustainability is communicated through facts/ statistics in combination with frames of references, educational messages, and environmental correctness in a rather specific, explicit and logical manner. Overall, the text is marked by many active and appealing messages that address the consumer personally. Additionally, metaphors and informal language, rhetorical questions and a mix of moralizing and negative frames that create indirect pressure to the consumer to join the movement to not stay behind, are used.

The website does not focus much on credibility establishment, however, a consumer review element is used, so that the consumer who is interested in a specific product, can read evaluations on the products by other costumers.



5.2 Case II. Re/Done

We access the homepage Re/Done (<https://shopredone.com/>) on the 3rd July 2017. Generally, the text contains only selected screenshots, while the rest can be found in Appendix III.

5.2.1 Profiling

The American brand was founded by Sean Barron and Jamie Mazur in 2014 in Los Angeles. Re/Done utilises used Levi's jeans and deconstructs the denim to create new designs (considered as *vintage jeans*). Re/Done pays royalties to Levi's and they utilise a co-branded leather patch stitched onto the waistbands. A pair of jeans costs around 260€, and the founder considers it as a luxury fashion brand. To the brand's portfolio also belong jeans skirts, jeans jackets, pieces remade from classic Champion sweatshirts, and T-shirts in collaboration with Hanes. There are products for both women and men which are available online with worldwide shipping, and in select retailers around the globe. However, some products are sold exclusively online. The sustainability practices focus on using water conserving methods and no harsh chemicals during the production process. Furthermore, the brand alters the sourced Levi's denim in a factory in downtown Los Angeles. Due to the reworked material, every product differs from each other.

5.2.2. Brand name and logo

The brand name Re/Done gives reference to sustainable practices, particularly to the usage of recycled material. A logo cannot be identified.

Figure 39 Re/Done – Brand name

5.2.3 Start Page

Page composition

The navigation bar on top of the page presents links to four different sections: Three sections are product related: *denim* (female jeans section), *clothing* (female, other product categories like hoodies) and *mens* (male section). The last section relates to social media posts (*#MYREDONES*). The content of the page is divided into nine sections with a dominant focus on visual content (high visual-low text). Several pictures are presented that show attractive people or celebrities wearing different jeans products. The pictures lead directly to the web shop. The thematic focus lies solely on fashion itself. There is not sustainable content presented. We can



identify a section that displays Instagram posts of consumers wearing RE/DONE products who tagged Re/Done with its hashtag #myredones.

Communication analysis

In the presented pictures, we can identify three fashion values (functional, social and emotional). The first picture, displays the value of comfort (the model stretches her leg in the air), a social value through emphasizing personal expression, and an emotional value through freedom (the models looks distressed and relaxed, and as if she is independent and free to express herself). In the second picture, we identify an emotional value as the clothing enhance it wearer's sexual appeal (open mouth, full legs are naked) presented by a celebrity. The third picture shows an emotional value by presenting a feeling of freedom, as the clothes lead to distress and escaping from the ordinary life (nature background, picture taken in the movement of putting a leather jacket on). The fourth picture expresses the feelings of freedom and daring through the motorcycle next to the model. The fifth picture expresses that the clothes give a feeling of comfort (cross legs sitting position), beauty (through using a celebrity), and freshness (through cleanness in an empty room). The sixth picture shows comfort by presenting a celebrity couple. The seventh picture shows that the clothing makes the wearer sexual appealing. The usage of celebrities shows that the wearer of the clothes holds a certain social status (symbol of social status) and is approved by others (approval by others). (See the all pictures displayed in Appendix III).

Textual elements are limited to the name of product categories and the message ("Discover your perfect fit"). This presents a new functional fashion value in form of 'good fit'. The value "stresses that the clothing comes to the right size and shape to fit onto a person's individual body". Credibility is created through using celebrity endorsement by Alessandra Ambrosio (fashion model), Ruby Aldridge (fashion model and singer), and the celebrity couple Djuna Bel (celebrity stylist) and Nikolai Haas (artist). Furthermore, we identify social media linkages and a visual social media integration of costumers wearing the Re/Done products, respectively customer endorsement as customers who wears a Re/Done product can share a picture in which they tag the brand with the #MYREDONES. The footer contains social media linkages, customer information and a newsletter subscription.

5.2.4 About Page

Page composition

The page is divided in two sections, starting with a close-up of the back of a jeans, thus a product-focused picture. This is followed by a text section. Hence, we observe a balanced approach to visual and textual



communication. The picture is related to the main fashion product of Re/Done (jeans). The text is predominantly related to fashion as well, yet still includes sustainability values.

Communication analysis

ICONIC. SUSTAINABLE. INDIVIDUAL.

RE/DONE is not a denim company. RE/DONE is the first luxury label that was born online and grown as an e-commerce brand, founded by Sean Barron and Jamie Mazur. But more than that, RE/DONE is a movement - a movement to restore individuality to the luxury fashion space, a movement to keep heritage brands relevant, and a movement to create sustainable fashion.

Vintage Levi's denim carries, within its stitching, stories of years of wear - a history of a past life. Its travels have been recorded in the frayed pockets, the whiskered coloring, the torn knees, and the faded denim. These pre-loved jeans have circulated owners and changed hands over the past few decades, transforming them and giving them a life of their own. Like a fine wine, the Levi's denim only gets better with age.

Our RE/DONE jeans are a celebration of the Levi's jean's past and a continuation of the jean's individual story. We take the vintage denim apart at the seams, repurposing it as the fabric of our new jeans. We launched with one mid-rise modern skinny fit, and one irreverent, perfectly slouchy, borrowed-from-the-boys relaxed fit and have since added a perfect belly-button skimming high-rise cut. We are proud to manufacture our jeans in Downtown Los Angeles using water conserving methods and no harsh chemicals. Quantities will always be limited since each pair is handpicked, hand cut, and distinctly one of a kind.

RE/DONE is committing to giving our customers the completely unique experience of self-curating their vintage denim purchase. The pair you select on our website is the pair that you will receive at your doorstep. We simplify the tedious process of searching for hours or days to find the perfect looking vintage jeans, then having to find a "denim" tailor to modernize the fit, yet give you that same personalized experience, ultimately taking individuality a step further than anyone else.

These jeans have both vintage character and modern fit. With them, you'll never have to sacrifice personality for shape.

WE ARE RE/DONE, AND WE'RE PROUD TO MAKE JEANS AS UNIQUE AS YOU ARE.

Figure 40 Re/Done – Values on about page

The *about page* of Re/Done displays various values. The focus lays on personal values related to fashion. We observe that Re/Done uses a mix of epistemic, social, and emotional values by highlighting, personal expression ("taking individuality a step further than anyone else", "personal expression"; "Individuality") and uniqueness ("unique experience", "distinctly one of a kind"). The brand highlights the iconic character which we relate to the social value of approval by others, as iconic refers to a product or brand that is widely recognized and well established. Emotionality wise, sentimentality is created through highlighting the history of the jeans ("a history of a past love", "pre-loved jeans"; "heritage brand", "transforming them and giving them a life of their own"). This emphasis on the revival of the jeans ties sentimental images and emotional connection to the clothing. Additionally, we identify a new epistemic value of the pursuit of luxury fashion, as Re/Done stresses the luxurious character of its brand. We define this variable as "stressing that the clothing is a luxury good".

Sustainability wise, the communication is limited to functional environmental value referring to product orientation ("Sustainable", "Sustainable fashion), and process orientation ("using water conserving methods



and no harsh chemicals”). Moreover, the country / city of origin is highlighted in the sustainability context (“manufacture our jeans in Downtown Los Angeles”).

The content is storytelling focused by highlighting the past life of the jeans and how it is getting a new purpose now (“transforming them and giving them a life of their”; “continuation of the jean’s individual story”). The story is told with a positive frame (e.g. “celebration”, “pre-loved jeans”) in a vivid language (“Its travels have been recorded in the frayed pockets”; “Like a fine wine, the Levi’s denim only gets better with age”). Vivid language is added as a new variable in message design, and defined as “language that describes something very vividly, thus evoking images in a person's mind”.

The sustainability content focusses on environmental correctness. The claims are implicit and vague (“using water conserving methods and no harsh chemicals”), which giving no information on what exactly the saving effects are or, what chemicals are used. The sustainability content is appealingly designed (“We are proud to manufacture our jeans in Downtown Los Angeles...”).

5.2.5 Product Page

Page composition

The product page is structured in three sections. The first focuses on a product description, a product individual ID and two pictures showing the unique product and an example of the product style on a model. The relation between visual and textual is balanced. Re/Done encourages electronic word-of-mouth by giving customers the opportunity to share the product on various social media channels. The sections thereafter, display first other unique jeans in the same size, and then including again the Instagram section with pictures posted by costumers. Thus, credibility is sought to be established again through consumer endorsement and electronic word of mouth.

Communication analysis

Generally, we do not observe a high focus on value communication on the product page, and solely fashion values can be found. The functional value of good fit is used again (“A few hours of wear is all it'll take to make these your new favourite jeans.”). Moreover, epistemically the pursuit of the unique is used again in a rather implicit way as it is highlighted that the product is not mass-produced. (“These jeans fit differently than the stretchy, skin-tight mass-produced jeans you might be used to”). We observe storytelling in form of a personality description of the product e.g. where it comes from, how to wear it, how it feels. The country of origin is used independently of the sustainability context, so we add it as a new value for fashion as an emotional value (“made in the American South, Re/Done in Los Angeles”). It is defined as “stating the country



or region of origin either to evoke patriotic feelings from domestic consumers or to make use of the positive stereotypes that customers have about products from that country, region or city”.

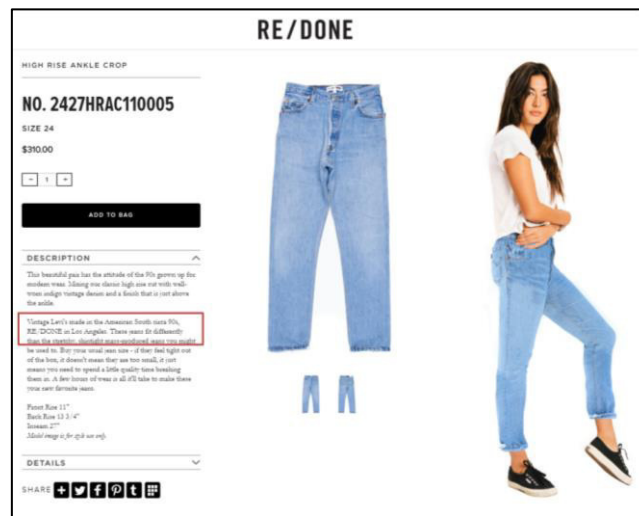


Figure 41 Re/Done – Product page

5.2.6 Conclusion

In summary, we identify four additional variables, whereby three are related to consumer values. A functional fashion value in form of a good fit, an emotional fashion value in form of the country or origin, and an epistemic value in form of the pursuit of luxury fashion. We also identify a new variable in the message design as the usage of a vivid as a linguistic element.

The communication strategy of Re/Done is characterised as a muted as we observe sustainable content is solely used on the ‘about’ page and not as a sales argument. If sustainable elements are mentioned on the about page, then briefly through the usage of buzzwords and claims that are not further explained. The start page has a clear high visual low text strategy, while the about and product page have a balanced approach between pictures and text elements. Sustainability is not communicated visually. Furthermore, we observe that the brand chooses to communicate (especially textually) the two fashion values of personal expression (social) and the feeling of uniqueness (epistemic) remarkable often, thus we consider these two values as the brand’s core values.

Visually, Re/Done uses a mix of functional, social and emotional fashion values, whereas the latter is dominant.



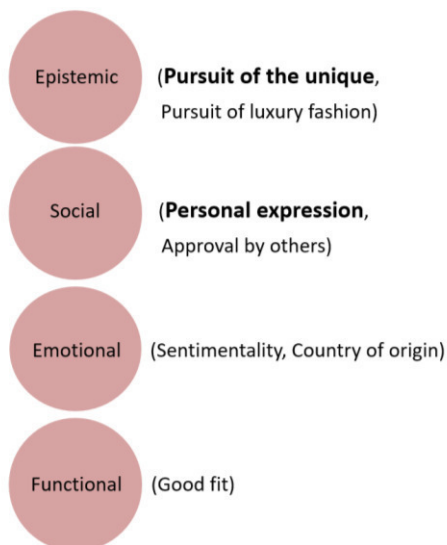
Fashion



Figure 42 Re/Done - Visual value profile

Textually, Re/Done utilises all four personal fashion value categories in its communication with a focus on self-expression (social) and pursuit of the uniqueness (epistemic). The sustainability values are only functional ones.

Fashion



Sustainability

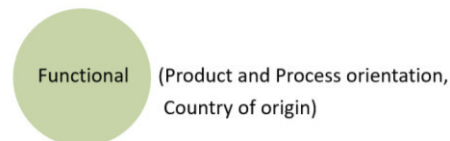


Figure 43 Re/Done – Textual value profile

Looking at units of analysis separately, we observe that they have different focuses in terms of communication. The *start page* is marked with a high visual-low text strategy. The visual communication focus on functional, social and emotional fashion values, whereas emotional values are dominant. Sustainability content is not used. The about page is characterized by a balanced approach of visual and textual content. The page contains sustainability and fashion content. In the text, we identify epistemic, social, and emotional fashion values and



functional environmental values. The product page shows a balanced approach between text and visual, as well. Only fashion values are communicated (functional, emotional, and epistemic).

It is interesting that sustainability is related to the production process in terms of water saving and chemicals, but it is not related to the recycled material of the product. The brand uses the term “vintage” and not “recycled”, which is more related to fashion and less to sustainability. The heart of the brand, the *one of a kind jeans*, are in the communication not connected to being sustainable, but just as having a history and being unique. Sustainability is connected to the process of products, such as water saving and chemical usage.

In relation to the message mix, storytelling is used in the about page within a positive frame and in a vivid language. The few aspects of sustainability are communicated through buzzwords and claims that are appealing, but implicit and vague.

We observe that the brand uses techniques to evoke emotions on the fashion level through celebrity endorsement, which is associated with the creation of emotions, and values of sentimentality in line with storytelling. Credibility and trust are attempted to be created through celebrity endorsement and social media consumer endorsement.



5.3 Case III. Mud Jeans

We access MudJeans webpage (<http://www.mudjeans.eu/>) on the 4th July 2017. Generally, the text contains only selected screenshots, while the rest can be found in Appendix IV.

5.3.1 Profiling

MudJeans was established in 2012 by Bert van Son and is headquartered in Almere (Netherlands). Its main product category is jeans. The brand's portfolio also include shirts, sweaters, bags and hats for both women and men. The products are available online (worldwide shipping) and in a limited number of sustainable concept stores around the globe. The sustainability practices focus on a circular business model. There are two different forms how customer can acquire a pair of jeans, such as conventional way purchase, and a leasing concept. Mud jeans offers *newly* manufactured pair of jeans (out of organic cotton and recycled denim) or a so-called *vintage jeans*, which are returned jeans that have been worn, and can be rebought and upcycled. A pair of new jeans costs around 100€ and a pair of vintage jeans costs around 70€ (+ upcycling 30€). The other possibility is to rent a pair of jeans for 7,50€/month with a membership fee of 20€. After the renting period of one year, consumers can change them for another pair and continue leasing, return them for recycling or upcycling purposes, or keep them. During the renting period, jeans are repaired free. Worn out jeans are shredded and new denim jeans can be produced as a last step of circular economy. The production takes place in so called 'fair factories' in different countries like Tunisia, Italy and Spain. Furthermore, the production process is characterized by a reduction of water and CO² emission. Several awards were assigned to MudJeans like the *Sustainability Leadership Award* and the *Peta Vegan Award*.

5.3.2. Brand name and logo

The brand name MudJeans has no relation to sustainability and is considered as an individual name. The logo illustrates a circle, which includes the name and the word *circular* that refers to the business model. Hence, it gives reference to sustainable practices. However, the logo is only displayed very small on the webpage so that the word *circular* is not properly readable; mainly the *M* in the middle is visible, so that the reference is not valid.



Figure 44 MudJeans— Brand name and logo



5.3.3 Start Page

Page composition

The navigation bar on top of the page presents links to five different sections. Two sections are product related and lead to the *shop* and to *lease a jeans*. The others lead to the *about* page, to a *store* selection page (where to find stores that sell MudJeans), and one to *blog* (company posts about internal and external sustainable practices, topics, and events). The content of the page is divided into six sections. The first section presents a picture and leads directly to the web shop, the second is a company statement, the third relates to product attribute with pictures, followed by a section including external quotes about the company published in magazines and newspapers. Thereafter, a section displays certifications and partners with their logos follows. Lastly, an Instagram section shows the latest photos posted by MudJeans. Overall, there is a balance between visual and textual elements. The thematic focus lies on sustainability, which is presented visually as well as textually, while fashion content is less present in both visual and textual form.

Communication analysis

The beginning of the page is dominated by two rotating pictures (see appendix xy). We can identify a functional fashion value in form of comfort as the models have different movements and positions (e.g. raising the leg, walking, putting on a jacket, sitting) which stresses that wearing the clothes is comfortable. Furthermore, we identify a social value in form of personal expression as the model looks confidently in the camera, and freedom as an emotional fashion value as the model appears relaxed and distressed.

The company statement focuses solely on sustainability by stressing functional sustainability values in form of image orientation (“we make impact”) and process orientation (“produce them in the most sustainable way and recycle them when worn down”). An emotional sustainability value is conveyed through emphasizing the moral satisfaction, which the consumer experiences when using the product (“only enjoy life when...”). This is expressed through a moralizing message (“only enjoy”) within a positive frame (“when next generations can enjoy this world too”) and using an appealing design (“we believe”). Furthermore, environmental correctness is used (“sustainable way”, “recycle”).

We believe you can only enjoy life when next generations can enjoy this world too. We make impact by taking the most popular item, a pair of jeans, and produce them in the most sustainable way and recycle them when worn down.

Figure 45 MudJeans - Values on start page 1



In the third section, three texts and pictures are interrelated. The first text-picture-pair relates to a functional fashion value in form of quality (“quality jeans”). The reader can get to know more about this values through clicking on the statement. The second text-picture-pair relates to a functional sustainability value in form of environmental product orientation (“vegan”). The claim is further explained in the following and is designed in an appealing manner (“Because we care about our impact on the earth”). The last text-picture-pair refers to a functional sustainability value in form of environmental process orientation (“recycling”) which is further explained, also through stating facts.

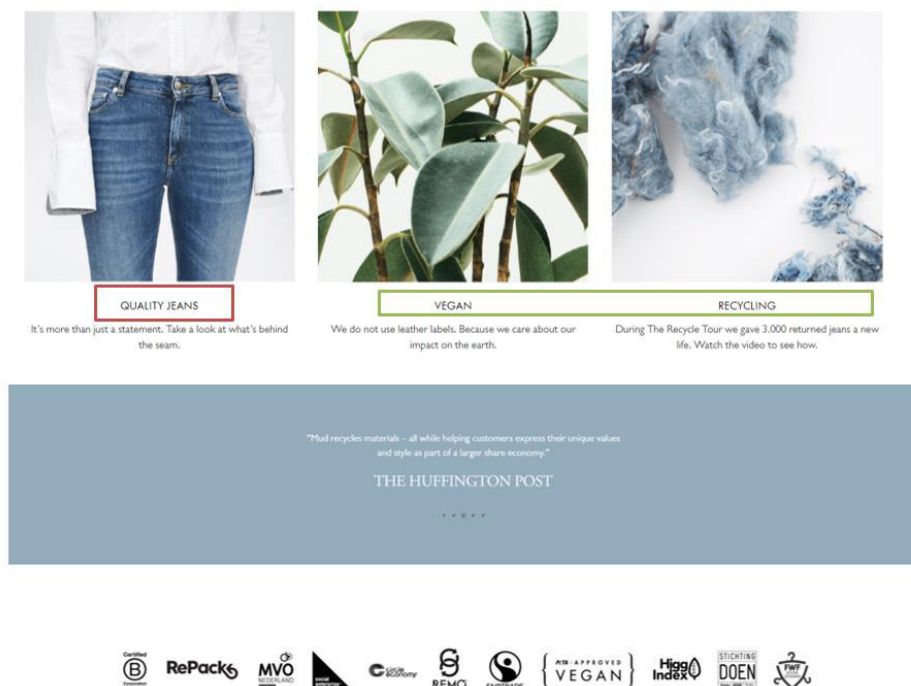


Figure 46 MudJeans – Values on start page 2

The next section contains external quotes about the company published in (mainstream) magazines and newspapers, considered as a form of endorsement by a third party. Hence, media endorsement presents a new variable within the credibility dimension of sustainability as well as fashion, as it increases trustworthiness of the brand. It is defined as “using quotes or statements made in magazines or newsletters as a means to appear credible and trustworthy”.

Afterwards, logos of the brand’s certifications and the brand’s partner are listed. Besides the presentation of external certifications in form of social and environmental labels (e.g. vegan, Fairtrade, circular economy), business partners (e.g. RePack) and memberships, the label of a foundation which MudJeans founded (Stichting Doen) is shown (internal certification). Certifications aim to increase the trustworthiness of the brand. The last section is devoted to social media where the brand’s own Instagram content is displayed



visually which also aims to increase the brand's credibility. We define this as the new variable of visual social media content defined as "integration on webpage (own Instagram account reference, or costumer posts)".

The footer contains social media linkages, payment options, newsletter subscription and links to different consumer information sections.

5.3.4 About Page

Page composition

Generally, there are five different *about* chapters. The *about* button as such leads to the "our story" page, which we therefore refer to as the main *about* page. Thus, as stated in chapter 4.2.3 we mainly analysis this page. Subpages are skimmed and only additional variables are listed. The page is built up into six sections, including a history section, an environmental fact section and circular business sections. We observe a balanced approach between visual and textual communication. Sustainability is both communicated visually and textually, while fashion is only communicated visually.

Communication Analysis

In general, the whole page is dedicated towards communicating and explaining the curricular business model that the brand operates with, starting with the statement 'a world without waste', followed by detailed explanation about the business operations.

Visually, we observe that two pictures are dedicated towards fashion. The first one is a close-up picture of a model who wears jeans and white sneakers shoes, which is shown at the beginning of the page. We categorise this as a functional value of comfort, due to the relaxed standing positing. Additionally, we categorize it as an epistemic value of pursuit of new fashion, as jeans are rolled-up with white sneakers can be associated with a contemporary trend. The second one shows a girl running towards the sea on the beach with arms wide openly stretched. We categorise this as freedom and happiness, thus emotional fashion values that are being connected to the jeans. However, those are not very strong and distinctly. All other visuals used on the page relate to sustainability and focus on functional environmental values of process orientation by showing different stages of production process.

The text includes serval values that focus on sustainability with a minor mentioning of fashion. The sustainability values focus around a functional environmental value of environmental process by explaining sustainable circular business model ("reused") and a social sustainability value of community feeling ("Lease a jeans and become a member of the MUD community"). Especially highlighted is moral satisfaction as an



emotional environmental value (“innovative approach to offer guilt-free consumption”) in combination with epistemic fashion value of pursuit of the new (“while looking fashionable and modern”).

The messages include real-life examples by focusing on the personal experience of the founder as a way to communicate how the brand was founded. The fact section includes five different educational messages on the negative impact of fashion on the environment that are specific and logic due to presenting facts and statistics. We also observe vivid language which makes the communication appealing (“his is how a new denim yarn is born”, “we”, “our”).



Figure 47 MudJeans – Values on about page 1

Moralizing is used (“it doesn’t make sense to keep the jeans you don’t longer wear in your wardrobe. Nor does it make sense to throw them away. We all know that our resources aren’t unlimited, that’s why we most of all have to be smart.”), as MudJeans highlights that is smart what they do, imply that other actions are not and they don’t make sense. Credibility elements are observed in the form of mentioning awards that MudJeans has won (“Sustainability Leadership Award and Peta Vegan Awards”). This is a new credibility variable and defined as “using visual or textual elements to communicate that the brand has been awarded a prize or recognition for its sustainability efforts”.

As mentioned, there are four more pages that are subpages to the *about* page. We will briefly capture and analyse these to get an overview about what MudJeans communicates additionally and in what manner.



The first subpage, VINTAGE PROJECT, introduces an upcycling project of how three designers have created their own jeans. MudJeans uses an appealing message design (“The R&B music fuelled his creative flow”) to express real life moments of these people.

The second subpage, called REVIEWS, focuses on reasons to buy MudJeans products and reviews by costumers (consumer endorsement) posted on various social media channels that create credibility. Furthermore, we observe the MudJeans highlights four values: the functional fashion value of high quality, combined with personal emotional sustainability value of moral satisfaction (“No need to feel guilty, just be happy”), as well as the social and emotional sustainability values of community feeling and feeling of being visionary (“join a community of forward thinkers”).



Figure 48 MudJeans – Values on about page 2

The third subpage is called and focuses on SUSTAINABILITY. The page gives detailed information of sustainability practices connected to cotton growth, water & CO₂, washing techniques, fair factories, recycling, circular economy, and trash free packing. All the sections focus on: functional sustainable values (process orientation, environmental facts and social-ethical values). Generally, we observe a structure following the procedure of educational messages on how bad a situation is or what it is important to take care of this aspect so that the negative impact is highlighted, followed by how MudJeans proceeds. Those claims are supported by facts and statistics, frame of references on how MudJeans is more sustainable compared to the standard and the progress achieved as well as future goals are given. Social sustainability in terms of fair factory conditions is pointed out.

The last subpage, OUR FACTORIES, focuses on social-ethical sustainability values (“protect their rights and ensure a safe and friendly work environment”).

5.3.5 Product Page

Page composition

The product page includes two sections, first focusing on the product as such, and then giving further product recommendations. The focus is on the on product by presenting one big picture and three smaller picture of the product. Many sustainability product details are given and the option to either buy or lease. The consumer



have the possibility to give reviews. Only sustainable values are communicated, we do not find any fashion values on the product page. Generally, many of the main values are taken up again, such as functional value of product orientation (“60% organic cotton and 40% recycled jeans”), country of origin (“The recycled denim used for this pair of jeans comes from Royo.”); process orientation (“This means no chemicals are used in the process of growing the cotton”); social-ethical (“Not harming the lives of hardworking farmers”). We find an appealing message design (“We are proud to be using organic cotton in our sustainable clothing”). “

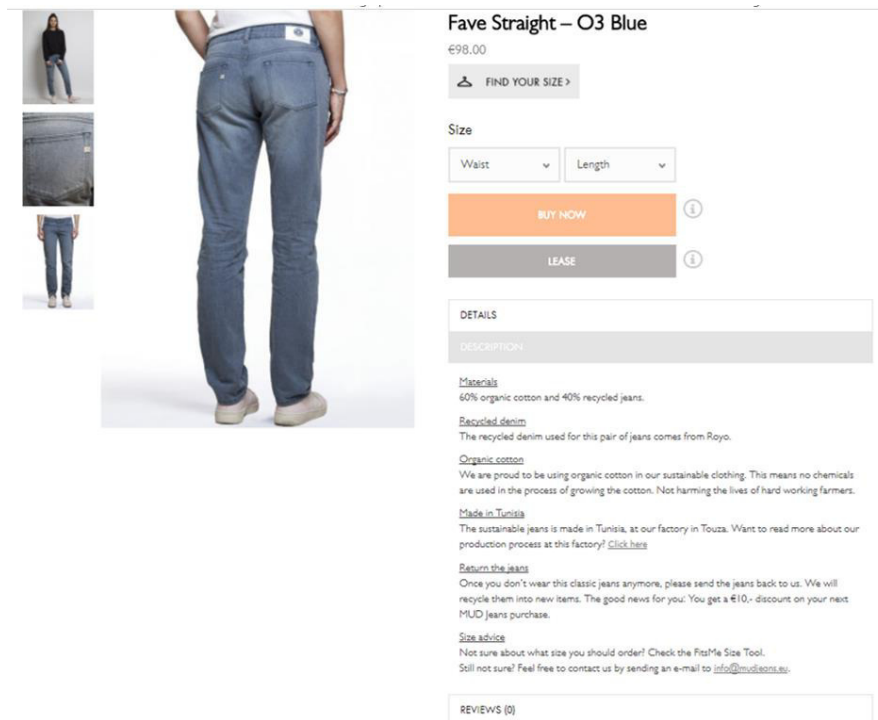


Figure 49 MudJeans – Product page

5.3.6 Conclusion

In summary, we identify three additional variables in the credibility dimension. One is media endorsement, which presents comments or quotes about the company published in (mainstream) magazines or newspapers to create credibility. The second variable is the presentation of logos or names of received awards. The last one refers to integrating the brand’s Instagram content on the page.

Generally, we characterise the communication strategy as double benefit strategy with a focus on sustainability (first sustainability, thus Fi-Su strategy) throughout the units of analysis. Fashion, even if not primarily, is only partially integrated into the communication. While the *start page* and *about page* mainly include sustainability values, the product page is solely characterized by sustainability values. It is interesting that all sustainability values (functional, emotional, social) are communicated with a dominant focus, while



fashion values are only rarely used, each mentioned once throughout all units of analysis functional (quality, comfort), epistemic (new) and emotional (freedom). Textually, fashion is only associated with quality, and as modern (new fashion), while MudJeans continuously emphasises on the environmental process orientation and guilt-free consumption (moral satisfaction).

Looking at the four units of analysis separately, we observe that they have similar focus in terms of communication. All three units show a balance between visual and textual elements. On the starting page, both, sustainability and fashion values are communicated visual and textual, whereas the rare fashion values are mainly communicated visually. On the *about page* sustainability is communicated visually and textually, while fashion is only communicated visually. On the product page, only sustainability values are communicated. In terms of value profile, we summarise the visual and textual profiles as displayed below.

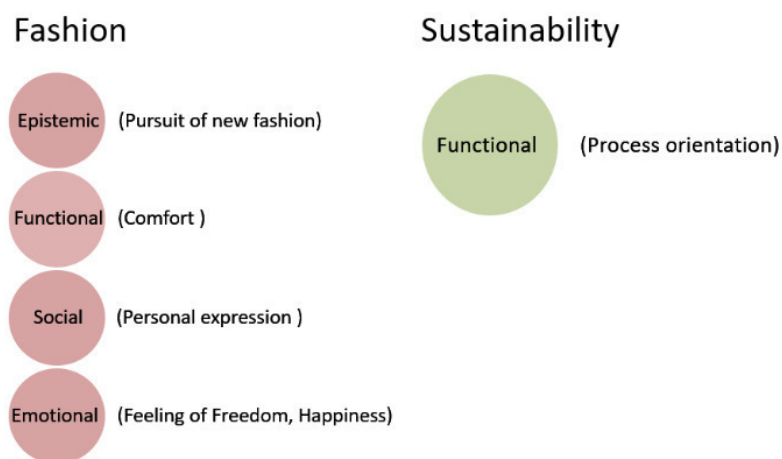


Figure 50 MudJeans - Visual value profile

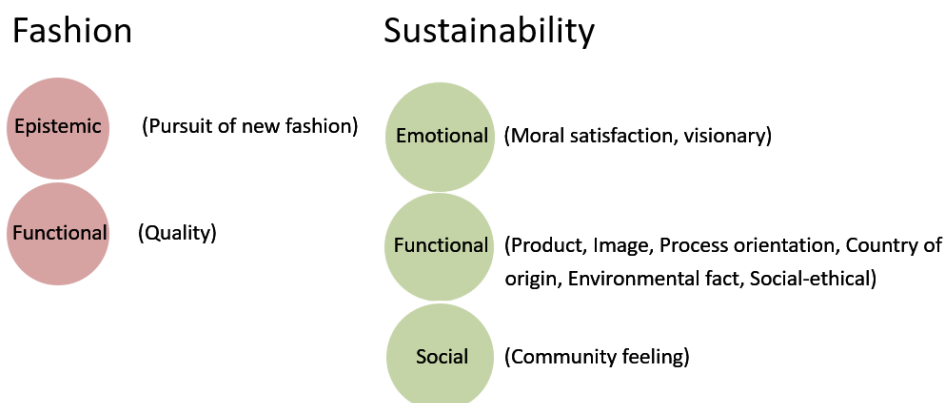


Figure 51 MudJeans – Textual value profile



The sustainability content focuses significantly on educational messages in form of facts/ statistics and frames of references, which are presented specifically and logically. Furthermore, we identify moralizing messages, within a positive frame and real life example. The messages are mostly designed in an appealing manner by using vivid language.

We observe that MudJeans focuses significantly on building credibility and trust by using various sources of credibility, such as media and consumer endorsements, social media inclusion and showing internal and external certifications and received awards. Furthermore, social media linkages are presented.



5.4 Case IV. Reformation

We access the webpage Reformation (<https://www.thereformation.com/>) on the 6th July 2017. Generally, the text contains only selected screenshots, while the rest can be found in Appendix V.

5.4.1 Profiling

Reformation was established in 2009 by Yael Aflalo, a former model, and is headquartered in Los Angeles. The brand offers a wide range of women's apparel, especially dresses (from 90€ up to 440€), but also jeans (from 80 up to 130€), skirts, tops, shoes, jumpsuits and accessories. Furthermore, seasonal collections are offered. The products are available online (international shipping) and in its stores in East Hampton, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Reformation follows a comprehensive sustainability approach. The majority of the clothes are produced in the own factory in Los Angeles; other garments in the US or abroad with sustainable methods and materials. The production process is characterized by the usage of vintage garments, deadstock materials and eco fabrics. The factory and the stores are designed in an environmentally friendly way. For online purchases, packages are made of sustainable material and consumer additionally receive a "RefRecycling" label that allows clients to send in their clothes if they don't want to wear it anymore so that the clothes can get reused by Reformation.

5.4.2 Brand name and logo

The brand name gives reference to the protestant reformation, hence indicating that its stands for something new or a renewal. The logo leans on the recycled logo, but in a more minimalist design. Still, this gives direct indication of a sustainable character of the brand.



Figure 52 Reformation – Brand name and logo

5.4.3 Start page

Page composition

The navigation bar on top of the page presents links to four different sections: Three sections are product related which lead to *New products*, to *Clothes* and to *Stories* which include different topic-related (season/occasion) collections. The last section *Who we are* presents the *about* page.



The content of the page is divided into three sections: The first section presents a rotating picture with 12 different illustration of models, leading directly to the web shop. The second section is a company statement and the third section is a triple divided section with a combination of texts and pictures. Overall, there are more visual elements than textual elements (high visual-low text strategy). The thematic focus lies on fashion, which is presented, visually. Sustainability content is less presented in a textual form.

Communication analysis

The beginning of the page is dominated by the 12 rotating pictures of models that are switching over from one to the other. We can identify several emotional fashion values, in form of feelings of the daring as the models look all confident and appear independent e.g. besides or on a car. Furthermore, we identify the value of freedom due to a distressed look of the models surrounded by elements out of the nature e.g. flowers. The pictures show women with a lot of naked skin; some models do not wear a bra and the breast is covered with a plant, thus expressing beauty, sexiness and femininity. We categorize this as values of beauty, freedom and the feeling of sexiness.

The second section is a text that expresses the functional environmental value of product orientation (“we are sustainable”). The message is presented in a humorous manner which is considered as new content design variable in the sustainability context (“Being naked is the #1 most sustainable option”). It is defined as “messages designed in the way that it causes amusement”.

In the third section, three texts and pictures are combined. The first and third text-picture-pair relates to Reformation’s fashion stores, the second pair relates to the possibility of a factory visit. We categorize this as a functional environmental value of being social-ethical as the brand indicates that it cares for workers by making the working environment transparent and accessible. The footer contains newsletter subscription, links to different consumer information sections and social media linkages.

5.4.4 About Page

Page composition

The main *about* page is characterised by a general green design layout with a green leave picture as the background of the whole page. We find one company statement followed by four sections leading to four subpages ‘Our stuff’, ‘sustainable practice’, ‘impact of fashion’, ‘wash smart’. As stated in chapter 4.2.3, we mainly analysis this main *about* page. Subpages are skimmed and only additional variables are listed. Generally, the communication is balanced between visual and textual communication. While the background picture



gives a reference to sustainability in the form of a functional value ('image orientation'), the text combines fashion and satiability values.

Communication analysis

Looking at the values communicated by Reformation, we observe several sustainability values such as social sustainability value of community feeling ("#jointhereformation"), functional ones of social ethical responsible ("manufacturing partners here in the US or abroad"), and process orientation ("sustainable methods and materials"). Moreover, we find a combination of the fashion value of beauty ("beautiful styles", "Fashionable") with the environmental value process orientation ("styles at a fraction of the environmental impact of conventional fashion"). Other fashion values utilised are emotional in the form of country of origin (Los Angeles) and epistemic in form of pursuit of the unique ("limited edition collections").



Figure 53 Reformation – Values of about page

The messages are rather vague in the statement; however, the claims made are further elaborated in the specific subpages. We observe a frame of reference ("at a fraction of the environmental impact of conventional fashion"). We find a new variable of the message content in sustainability, such as a mission and vision statement, in which "the brand explicitly states their goals towards sustainability" ("it is our mission to lead and inspire a sustainable way to be fashionable"). In relation to the subpages, we will briefly capture and analyse these to get an overview about what Reformation communicates additionally and in what manner.

The "Our stuff" subpage is comprised of information on the design of reformations clothes and the material. Reformation highlights first the functional value of good fit ("we believe the perfect fit is the most important part of our clothes", "We spend hours fitting on different bodies and have a meticulous approach to our fits",



“These capsules based on body types are just the first steps in our quest to make sure women of many shapes and sizes can wear Ref.”), and the epistemic value of pursuit of new fashion (“Most fashion is designed 12-18 months before it’s released, but at Ref a sketch becomes a dress in about a month”).

Message mix wise, the content focuses on educational message including, explanations of their own production process, facts and statistics. Additionally, Reformation uses a technique within educational messages to give definitions of sustainability terms in the form of popping out elements (see figure 54). The messages are very specific and explicit.

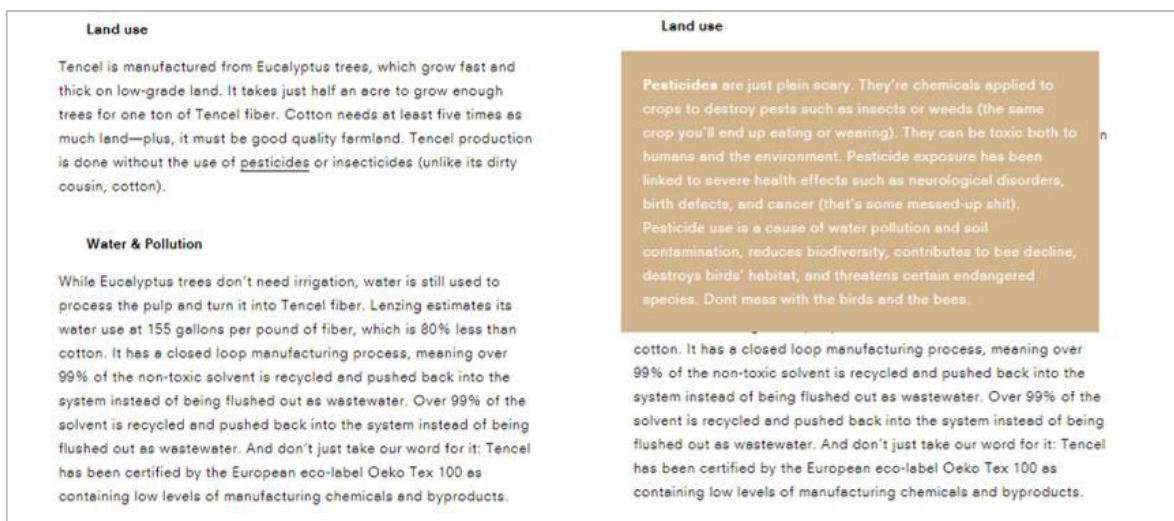


Figure 54 Reformation – Use of definitions

Additionally, we find many vivid language elements (“bringing those designs to life quickly”, “rescued deadstock fabrics”, “fabric is the magic”). We observe a new element of sustainability content that we refer to as self-reflection statements. Those statements that include self-criticism on current actions and show that the brand is aware of room for interpretation, stating plans to improve (“Room for improvement”; “Even though viscose is made from natural fibres, it still has a lot of the same issues as synthetic fabrics. In other words, it’s not our forever fabric. We are looking for a partner who will work with us to develop a woven fibre like viscose with an improved environmental impact”). Reformation highlights their achievements, but also stays critical and point out that there is room for improvement.

The “Sustainable practices” subpage emphasises on the greenness of Reformation with a focus on educational message, which are logical, often combined with humour and informal language (“It’s all about math, and we’re super into it. The whole equation follows the lifecycle of clothes”; “The Earth be like, thank you”, “(roar!)”). Moreover, self-reflection and environmental activism are combined (“in exchange for the emissions



and water used by our clothes, we help plant forests to naturally capture CO₂ from the air, invest in clean water solutions, and purchase landfill gas offsets"). The messages are generally appealing ("we're proud to say, for once it felt really good to be judged"). An element of credibility is found which consists of the reference to an external certification 'B Corp' ("Reformation was certified to meet these requirements").

The third subpage "impact of fashion" solely refers to the education on the negative impact of fashion on the environment. The messages are not related to Reformation.

5.4.5 Product Page

Page composition

The page consists of three sections. There is an equal balance between pictorial and textual elements. We observe that only sustainability values are communicated.

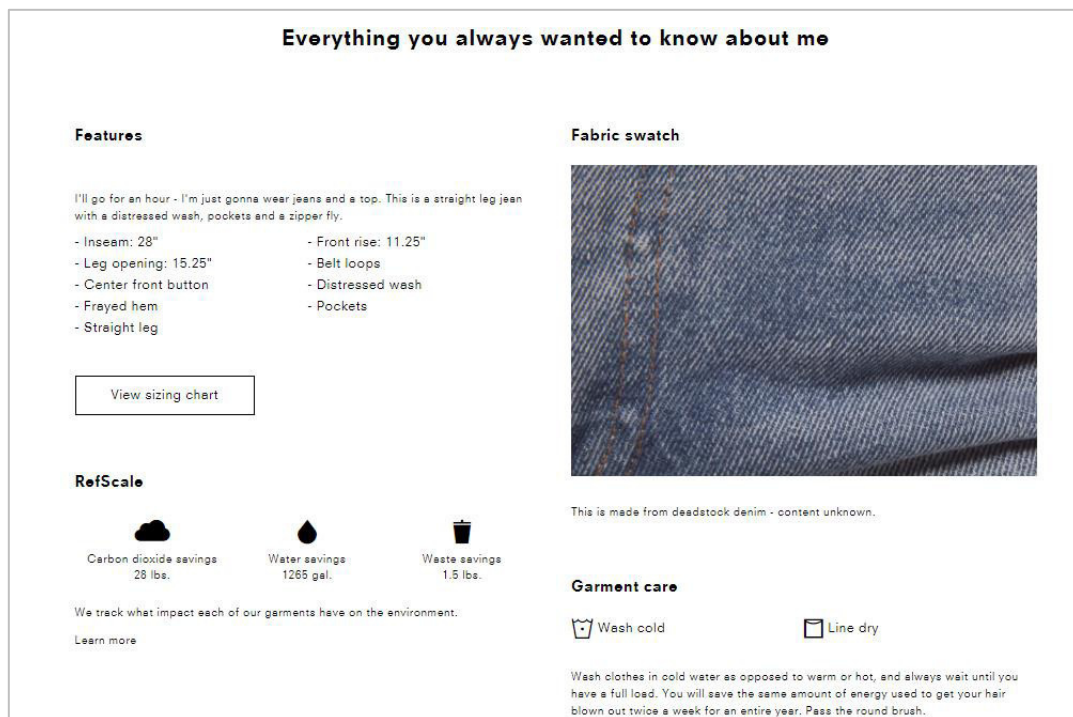


Figure 55 Reformation – Product page

Communication analysis

The beginning of the page is dominated by five rotating close-up pictures of the product. The second section states product information. We observe a sustainability functional value of process orientation ("This is made from deadstock denim"). The firm's own *RefScale* lists carbondioxid, water and waste savings of the product



compared to the industry standard. This presents a frame of reference. Furthermore, we can identify an educational message (“Wash clothes in cold water as opposed to warm or hot, and always wait until you have a full load”) The messages are designed specifically and logically. The last section included other product proposals.

5.4.6 Conclusion

In summary, we identify three additional variables. Two message content variables within the sustainability context in form of self-reflection statements and a vision and mission statements. The third variable is a message design variable within the sustainability context and addresses humour, meaning that the messages is designed in the way that it causes amusement.

Generally, we can summarize the communication as a Fi-Fa strategy, meaning that the brand utilised both fashion and sustainability values with a slight focus on fashion benefits. Even though the name in combination with the logo gives an indication of a sustainable brand character, the start page is more dominated by emotional fashion values, whereas the about page and its subpages is mainly combining both. The product page contains sustainability values.

Looking at the four units of analysis separately, we observe that they have different focuses in terms of communication. The *starting page* is marked by a high visual-low text strategy. The visual communication emphasizes on emotional fashion values, whereas the textual communication expresses functional sustainability values which are partially designed in a humorous manner. The main about page and the information rich subpages are structured with a balanced visual-textual approach. All sections focus on sustainability textually and visually, whereas functional and social sustainability values are expressed. Fashion values are integrated in both forms, but to a low degree. The fashion values are a mixture of emotional, functional and epistemic ones. The product page illustrates an equal balance between pictorial and textual elements. Only functional sustainability values get communicated. In terms of value profile, we summarise the visual and textual profiles as displayed below.

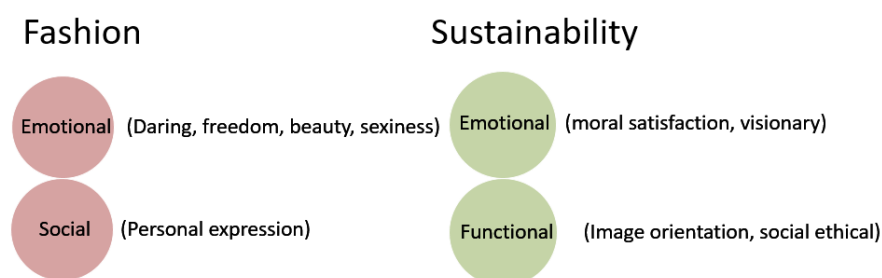


Figure 56 Reformation – Visual value profile

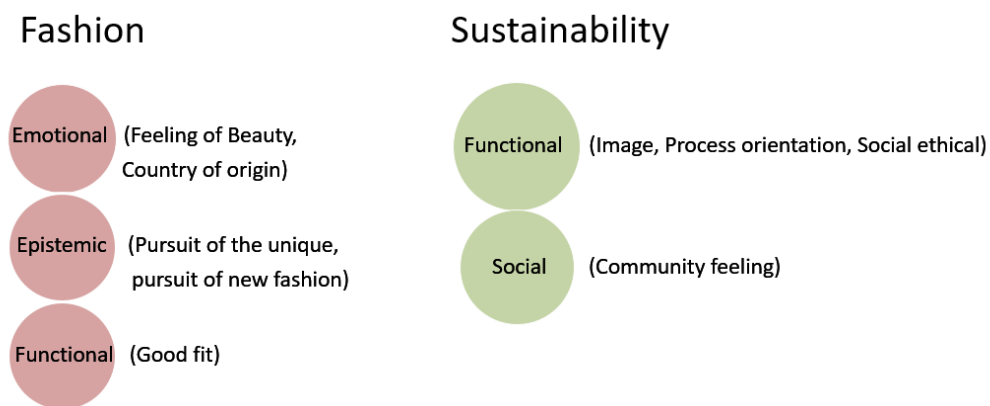


Figure 57 Reformation – Textual value profile

The messages focus on transparency, by included many facts/ statistics, educational elements, frame of references and logical arguments. Furthermore, the brand states its vision and mission and reflects on their room for improvement. It is interesting that the design often includes a combination of logical facts and humorous elements, informal language and/or vivid language. Through that, the educational content is made appealing and is partially even amusing and entertaining. Credibility is established through social media linkages and reference to an external certification 'B Corp'.



5.5 Case V. Deadwood

We accessed the webpage Deadwood (<http://deadwood.se/>) on the 7th July 2017. Generally, the text contains only selected screenshots, while the rest can be found in Appendix VI.

5.5.1 Profiling

Deadwood was established in 2012 by Carl Ollson and Felix von Bahder, and is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden. Its main product category are leather jackets. Besides that, the brand's portfolio also includes leather bags, t-shirts, scarfs, gloves, hats, sunglasses, bracelets and rings. There are women products, men products and unisex products. In 2017, the company launched its first children's collection. Due to the usage of recycled material, every leather jacket slightly differs from each other. The price of a leather jacket varies between 240€ and 310€. The brand has a collection in corporation with the French alternative skater brand 'wasted paris', and with the British artist Laurie Lee. The collection with Laurie Lee offers completely unique leather jackets in terms of colour and size. The products are available online (worldwide shipping), in the flagship store in Stockholm, and in more than 150 retailers around the world. The sustainability practices focus on using recycled leather. The production takes place in Bangkok.

5.5.2 Brand name and logo

The brand name Deadwood has no relation to sustainability and is considered as an individual name without explicit associations. The logo only consists out of the brand name with two arrows before and after the name. There is no sustainability reference visible.



Figure 58 Deadwood - Logo and brand name

5.5.3 Start Page

Page composition

The navigation bar on top of the page presents links to nine different sections. Two sections are product related leading to the online store and a look book. Some sections lead to company information like to the *about* page, *contact*, *retailers*, and the *flagship store*. The last three sections present linkage to social media pages. The content of the page consists solely of three rotating pictures (see Appendix VI), thus only visual



communication takes place (high visual-low text). The thematic focus lies solely on fashion itself. There is no sustainable content present.

Communication analysis

The presented pictures are constantly switching from one to the other. We can identify three emotional fashion values. One in form of the feeling of the daring through the sharp contrast between the environment (a castle) and the appearance of the models (unconventional look e.g. androgynous look; punk related look), which might express the break of traditions. Furthermore, we observe the emotional value of freedom, as wearing the leather jackets symbols the escape from ordinary life. The unconventional, however confident appearance of the models emphasize that the wearing of the clothes will allow demonstrating a personal, unique style. We categorize this as the social value of personal expression.

5.5.4 About Page

Page composition

Deadwood's *about* page is a pure text page, with high density of textual elements. It consists out of two sections, one section called 'about us' and one section with frequently asked question, considered as FAQ'S. The text refers to sustainability content, yet also includes fashion values.

Communication analysis

The section 'about us' contains information on the company's history and purpose statement. We observe the following values: Sustainability wise, Deadwood highlights the functional value of process orientation ("mainly recycled materials"; "post-consumer waste, basically chopping up old leather garments that have reached their expiration date"). Moreover, we identify the emotional sustainability value of feeling of visionary (e.g. "antithesis of fast fashion", "Deadwood is about reinventing how we think about fashion").

The emotional fashion value of beauty ("aesthetics") is combined with functional environmental value of image orientation ("green cause"). The text then highlights several fashion values such the emotionally, the fashion value of beauty ("new beautiful looking jackets") and the value of sentimentality ("vintage soul"), functionally the value of comfort ("gives the jackets a soft worn-in feel"), and socially the approval by others ("iconic styles"). A dominant value highlighted throughout the text is the emotional fashion value of feeling of the daring ("rebellion against worn out dogmas"; "antithesis of fast fashion", "reinventing fashion"; "rebooting iconic styles").

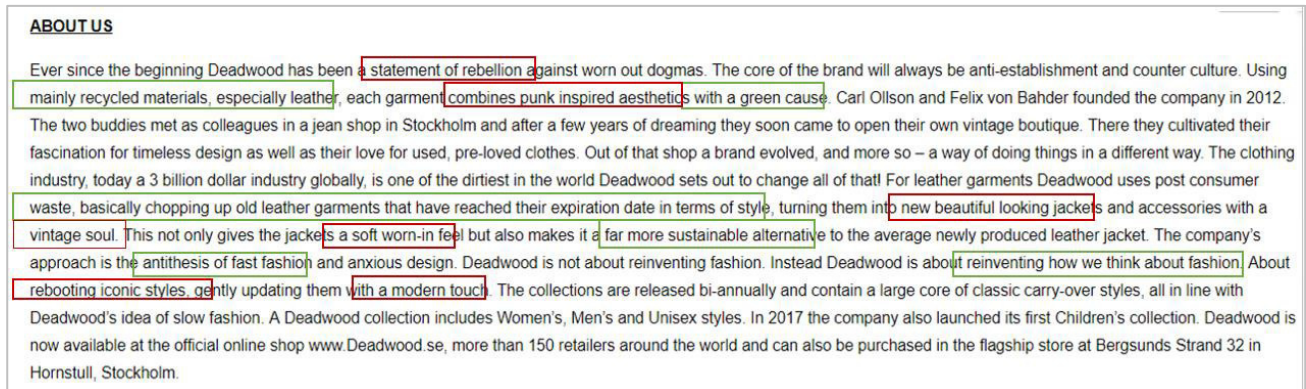


Figure 59 Deadwood - Values on about page 1

The message content includes unspecific environmental correctness (“far more sustainable alternative to the average newly produced leather jacket.”), storytelling as the general guide of the section by retelling the story of the origin of the brand and its founders. Deadwood combines educational message (stating specific facts) and vision and mission statement (“The clothing industry, today a 3 billion dollar industry globally, is one of the dirtiest in the world - Deadwood sets out to change all of that!”). The messages are rather informally design (e.g. “The two buddies”), as well as appealing, (“dreaming”, “fascination”, “pre-loved clothes”), and are characterized by the usage of vivid language (“vintage soul”).

The FAQ’S-section contains five frequently asked questions and Deadwood gives answer to it. The questions all refer to sustainability: the first three questions are environmentally related, while the fourth and fifth question is related to social-ethical issues. The values utilised in this section are both fashion and sustainability related. Deadwood uses functional environmental value of product orientation (“leather jackets are made of 100% recycled leather”), and the social-ethical value (“This means not only fair wages and an absolute no-child labour policy”). Several emotional fashion values are utilised such as the feeling of the fresh (“stunning new products”; “new more fashionable products”), country of origin (“vintage markets of Bangkok, Thailand. Besides being one of the coolest cities”), and beauty (“new beautiful leather jackets”).

Generally, we observe that Deadwood hence raises critical issues; the answers however remain **vague** (“it depends”; “Nobody’s perfect.”). The messages are **implicitly moralizing** by highlighting how bad the leather industry is within a very **negative frame** using appealing words like “ugly”, “killing”, “bloody” and then pointing out how they are themselves not harming animals and the environment, hence how good they are (“project is good for the world”). The positive frame when writing about themselves, presents them as being morally superior.

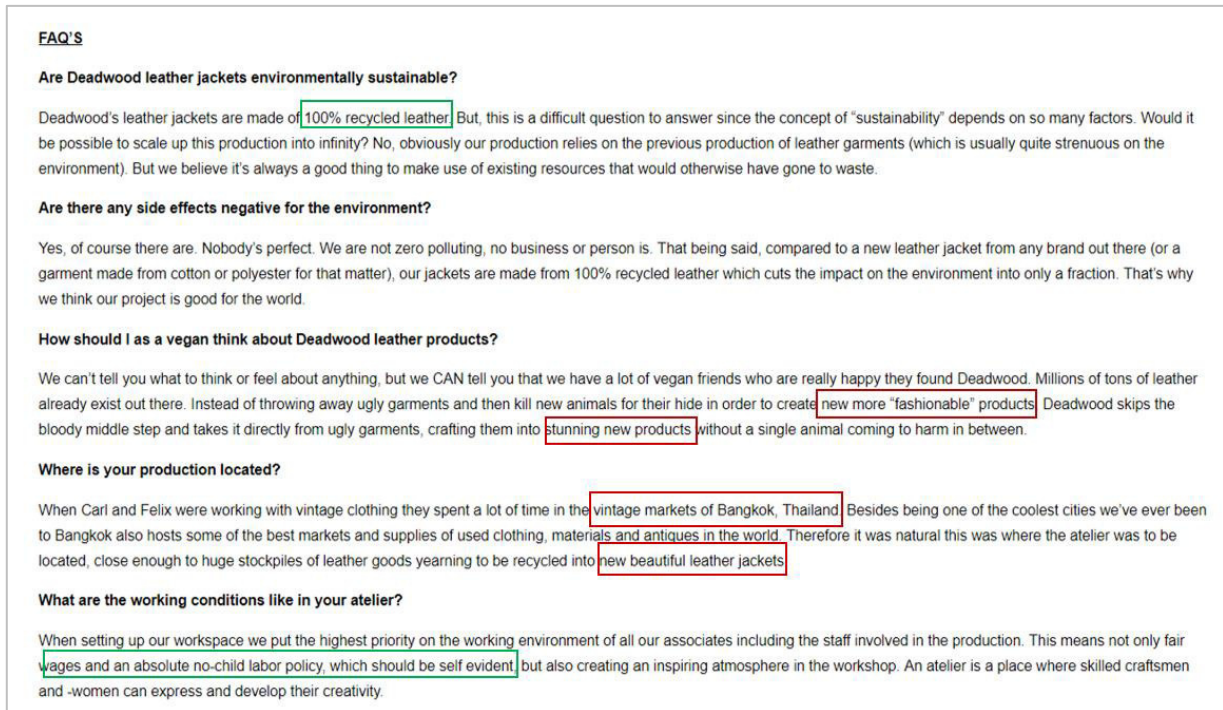


Figure 60 Deadwood - Values on about page 2

5.5.5 Product Page

Page composition

The page is structured into two sections, with one big picture of the product, which is rotating, and a product related text. We observe a balance of sustainability and fashion values.

Communication analysis

Deadwood decides to use the epistemic fashion value of the pursuit of uniqueness ("You are unique, so is this product."; "That's what makes them unique."), and functional value of comfort ("For this one we looked for juicy soft lambskin"). Sustainability is included in the form environmental product orientation ("recycled leather"), and personal emotional value of moral satisfaction ("for a better world.")

We observe storytelling in form of a personality description of the product e.g. where it comes from, how it feels. The text is designed using vivid language ("juicy soft", "it is a wonder"), but remains rather vague, unspecific ("bypassing most of the negative aspects of the fashion industry").

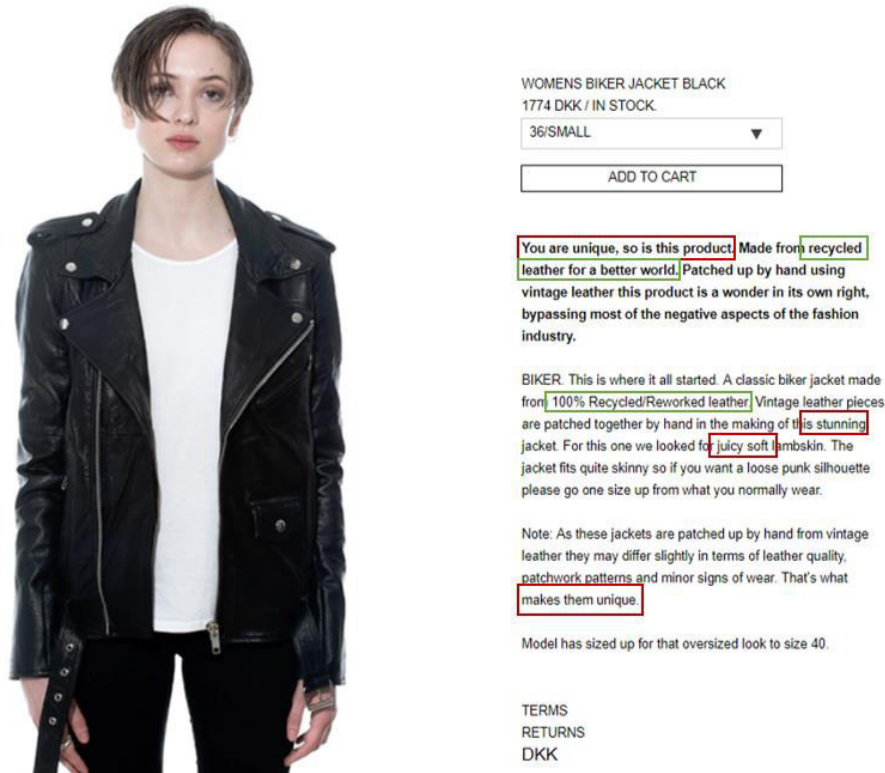


Figure 61 Deadwood – Product Page

5.5.6 Conclusion

We did not find any new additional variables in Deadwood's communication. Generally, we can summarize the communication approach of Deadwood as a Fi-Fa strategy, as we observe a usage of both fashion and sustainability values with a slight focus on fashion. The start page only expresses fashion values, whereas the about page and product page expresses sustainability and fashion values. Furthermore, we observe that the brand chooses to communicate (especially textually) the fashion value of the daring (epistemic) remarkable often, thus we consider these value as the brand's core value.

Looking at the four units of analysis separately, we observe that they have different focuses in terms of communication. The *starting page* is marked by a high visual-no text strategy. The visual communication emphasizes on emotional and epistemic fashion values. Sustainability is not communicated visually. In contrast, the about page is characterized by a high text - no visual strategy. The textual communication follows a balanced approach between sustainability content and fashion content. In both sections of the about page functional sustainability values as well as functional, emotional and social fashion values get communicated, whereas emotional fashion values are dominant. The product page shows a balance of sustainability and fashion values. Epistemic and functional fashion values are combined with functional and emotional sustainability values.



In summary, the visual and textual communication is marked by the following value profiles.

Fashion

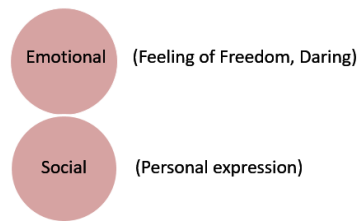
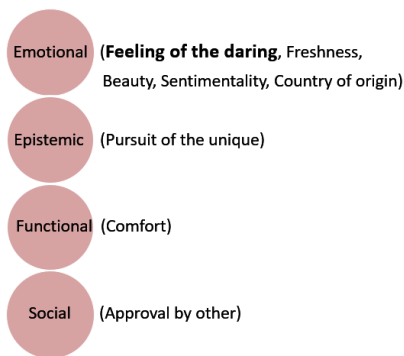


Figure 62 Deadwood – Visual value profile

Fashion



Sustainability

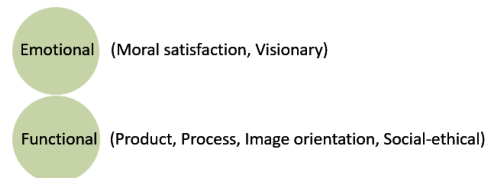


Figure 63 Deadwood – Textual value profile

Interestingly, Deadwood emphasises on its purpose as a rebellion, anti-thesis to fast fashion and a way to rethink fashion. Even though this related to sustainability, it is not explicitly stated. Instead Deadwood combines the values of daring with visionary, and giving it even a political character with the wording (“rebellion”, “punk-inspired”, “anti-establishment”).

The message content is characterized by environmental correctness (e.g. buzzwords), which is not further explained and thus, is considered as unspecific and vague. Furthermore, there are educational messages, storytelling elements, and a vision and mission statement. Interesting is that the method of moralizing is used in a rather implicit way within a negative frame. The messages are often presented in an appealing way by using vivid and informal language. Through that, emotions can get activated.

In relation to the credibility dimension, we only observe linkages to social media pages, which is related to encouragement of word of mouth. Other than that, no emphasis on the establishment of credibility can be found.



5.6 Revised analytical framework

This section is dedicated towards the integration of the newly identified variables within the three dimensions of the analytical framework presented in section 3.2.3. In total, the analysis of the five selected cases identified 17 new variables.

We find seven new values in total. Three belong to sustainability, which are community feeling as a social value (Pelechecoco / MudJeans /Reformation), feeling of being visionary (Pelechecoco/ MudJeans), and individual impact (Pelechecoco) as emotional ones. The remaining four represents fashion related benefits in the form of three emotional ones such as pursuit of luxury fashion (Re/Done), feelings of proudness (Pelechecoco), and country of origin (Re/Done, Reformation). Moreover, one functional value is added as good fit (Re/Done, Reformation).

Message content is increased by three new variables in a sustainability context, such as storytelling (Pelechecoco), self-reflection (Reformation) and a vision & mission statement (Reformation).

We find five new elements in message design. For fashion, we observe humorous message design (Reformation). Within the category of linguistic elements, we have three fashion variables such as metaphors, rhetorical questions, and informal language (Pelechecoco) and one sustainability related one such as vivid language (Re/Done/ Reformation).

Lastly, four variables are added to the credibility dimension. In the sustainability area, media endorsement (MudJeans), and sustainability awards (MudJeans). In relation to fashion, we find costumer endorsement (Pelechecoco) and visual social media content (Re/Done / MudJeans)

The figure below shows the revised analytical framework (Figure 64).

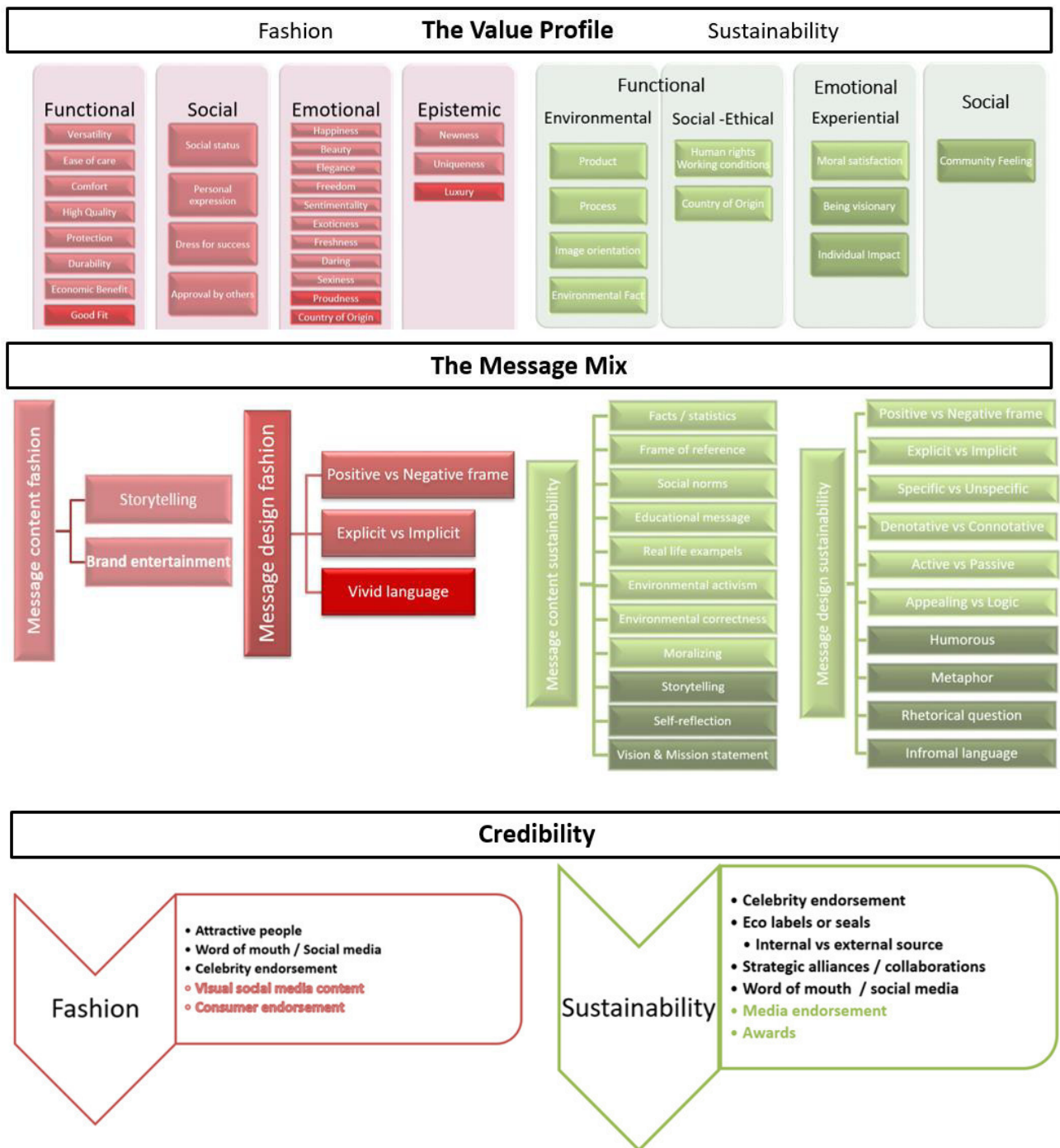



Figure 64 Revised analytical framework for sustainability communication

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of green leaves, likely from a plant like a philodendron, with prominent veins and a slightly glossy texture. The leaves are layered, creating a sense of depth.

CHAPTER VI

Cross-Case Analysis

The within case analysis is followed by a cross case analysis, which aims at identifying mechanisms, in the form of semi abstract explanation of the investigated phenomenon. Hence, this chapter is devoted to identify the common patterns which are synthesised into a smart practice guide for sustainability fashion communication. For that the findings of the within-case analysis are contrasted and discussed in relation to the theoretical literature insights. The chapter is split into two parts. First, the smart practices are exposed in terms of common patterns across all cases and the specific unit of analysis level. For orientation, the analysis guide shown in section 4.2.4 is used. Afterwards, interesting eye-catching differences, or specifically interesting practices are discussed. The findings are synthesised and visualised.



6.1 Company profiling

Overall, we observe that all brands are relatively new, in other words not older than eight years. Thus, the cases can be considered as relatively young companies. All are based in western countries, more specifically in the US and Europe. The majority (3/5) offers female and male products, have their own store, and use selected retailers to sell the products besides online sales. The brands show different degrees of sustainability practices across the sample (from focusing only on recycled material usage, to water reductions, the usage of no chemicals, local production, sustainable packaging and store design). Interestingly, the majority (4/5) of brands uses individual brand names that do not specifically refer to its sustainability character in the first place. As discussed in the literature review, Yan et al. (2012) emphasise on the importance of the brand name as a communicator in the fashion sector that creates meaning to the consumer. Interestingly, Re/Done is the only one that is found to follow a muted sustainability approach, utilises a brand name that gives reference to its recycling practices.

6.2 Value profiling

We discuss the value profiles of the brands holistically and per unit of analysis, as we identify quite different findings when looking at the units separately (start, about, and product page).

6.2.1 Overall value profiling

Strategy

Three brands are found to follow a **Fi-Fa strategy** to sustainability fashion communication, respectively communicating dominantly fashion values and sustainability values secondarily. The findings confirm the recommendations found in the literature how to communicate effectively sustainability to the mainstream market. The strategy is considered as beneficial as it focuses on fashion benefits first, which are personal benefits and thus, address directly the consumer. Sustainable benefits can add value, however present mostly non-personal benefits and thus should communicated secondarily. One brand follows a muted sustainability strategy, meaning not communicating sustainability issues as a sales argument which also got theoretical backup. Remarkable is that one brand follows a double benefit strategy with a focus on sustainability (Fi-Su strategy), which is found to be an approach to address green consumers, thus a niche market and not the mainstream market (Kim et al., 1997).

Visual - textual communication

Throughout the units, we observe that **fashion** is mostly **expressed visually**, whereas **sustainability** is mostly **expressed textually**. This can be related to Visser et al. (2015) who states that sustainability is mostly



communicated textually due to the need of for credibility and creation of trust by having a rather rational and conscious character. As fashion aims to create emotions it is beneficial to rather use pictures (Carroll, 2009).

Amount and composition of values

Generally, a **high density and diversity of values** are utilised. Specifically, at least five of the total eight different value categories are combined either related to fashion or sustainability, or both. Thus, we find that it is common to address the consumer from different benefit perspectives and offer a mixed value profile. Relating to the literature, this is in line with Yan et al.'s (2012) claim that to reach beyond the niche market a multifaceted approach should be taken. However, we see that in most of the cases (3/5) the brands choose to repetitively highlight (especially textually) one or two forms of fashion values, which we can identify throughout the units. Hence, choosing **one or two core values** appears to be a smart practice to make the brand distinctive within the competitive landscape of fashion.

Referring to **fashion values**, we find a pattern of **visually** communicating **emotional** fashion values (Freedom 5/5, feeling of the daring 4/5), **social** fashion values (personal expression (5/5), and **functional** values (comfort 3/5). **Textually**, emotional values in terms of **country of origin** (3/5) and **sentimentality** (3/5) are expressed. **Functional** fashion values are always used, whereupon no values are dominating, but two brands emphasis on good fit and quality. Furthermore, the epistemic value of **pursuit of the unique** is used (4/5), and **social** values (5/5), whereupon no value is dominating.

Referring to sustainability, we find a smart practice pattern in terms of communicating the **emotional** values, especially **moral satisfaction** (3/5), and benefit of being **visionary** as a result of purchasing the brand (4/5). Furthermore, the social value of **community feeling**, becoming part of a group that stands for something respectively, is often expressed (3/5). The functional values such as **process orientation** (5/5), **image orientation** (4/5), **product orientation** (4/5), and **social-ethical** (3/5), are also used in the majority of cases. Hence, highlighting environmental and ethical sustainability benefits is a smart practice.

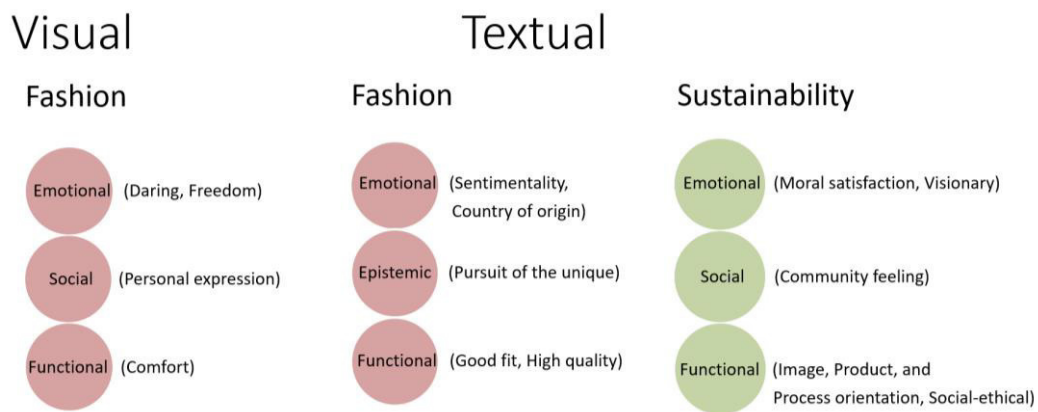


Figure 65 Smart practices - Visual and textual value profile

Ratio between personal and non-personal values

Generally, considering the relation between personal and non-personal benefits in the communication, the **emphasis** is clearly on **personal benefits** (fashion and sustainability related, 4/5). Thus, the consumer's personal value is always highlighted. Only MudJeans who is following a sustainability focus, has a more balanced approach between personal and non-personal benefits. The literature only considers altruistic benefits in the form of moral satisfaction as a personal benefit in relation to sustainability. However, we see that additional personal sustainability values are used in practice such as visionary and community feeling.

6.2.2 Value profiling per unit of analysis

First of all, in terms of relation between text and visual communication, we see a pattern of using a **high visual-low text** approach for the **start page**, a **balanced approach** for the **about page** and the **product page**. Only two brands utilised visual sustainability content on their webpages (Reformation / MudJeans).

Start page

Referring to the **start page**, a rather **limited set of values** is used, which is dominated by the amount of visual values (varies between three to eight forms of values), in contrast to a few textual values (varies between zero to three forms of values). Mostly all cases focus on **visual fashion** communication, expressed through **emotional** and **social fashion values** (4/5). In detail, it is common to use **freedom** and the **feeling of the daring**, and the possibility of **personal expression** through the fashion. Textual communication is rare and generally short. If used then mostly related to **functional sustainability values** (3/5). There is no dominant form of functional sustainability value, but it focuses on the environmental not the ethical side, and varies between image, product and process orientation. A high visual-low context strategy with emphasizing on **personal fashion**



values is in line with the literature and aims to evoke emotions, imaginations and facilitates an instant dipping into sentiments (Carroll, 2009). Visser et al. (2015) refer to it as an emotional positioning strategy.

About page

With regards to the *about page*, in all cases, **fashion** and **sustainability** values are communicated visually and/or textually. All brands chose a **dense value profile**, using at least four different fashion values and three different sustainability values. Referring to fashion, throughout all cases, the **emotional fashion** values are dominating. These are expressed in many different forms, most commonly in form of **sentimentality**. Referring to sustainability values, the **functional values** that dominate are **process** and **product orientation**. It is interesting that the brands often directly link emotional fashion values (direct personal benefit) with functional sustainability values (no direct personal benefits for the consumer). Thus, it is ensured that **non-personal benefits are connected with personal benefits**. Furthermore, it is remarkable that the emotional value of being **visionary** and the social value of **community feeling** are often communicated (3/5). Those are two new personal sustainability values identified during the data collection. This shows that besides communicating non-personal functional sustainability values, emotional and social sustainability values are important as personal benefits. This goes along with the importance of personal benefits in the fashion context and placing the consumer in the centre, as highlighted by Villarino & Font (2015). We conclude that the about page aims to evoke an emotional connection to the clothing and the brand by highlighting especially personal fashion and sustainability benefits.

Product page

On the product page, **values** are used **less**, both sustainability and fashion wise. If sustainability values are communicated (4/5), then mostly one or two that express **functional sustainability** in form of **product** and/or **process orientation** (non-personal values). If fashion values are communicated (3/5), we find patterns for expressing the **epistemic value** of **pursuit of the unique** (personal value). Thus, if the product is unique, it is highlighted here again.



6.3 Message profiling

As we identify quite different findings when looking at the units separately (start, about, and product page), we analyse separately per unit as well. The message content and message design is mainly captured through the about page, that is marked by more textual elements compared to the start and product page.

Start page

Generally, we observe that three brands communicate sustainability aspects on their start pages. The start page commonly is **not marked by a high information** character. If sustainability is used, then mostly buzzwords and environmental correctness are mentioned, but without specific information, thus claims are made that remain rather vague.

About page

However, on the about page we observe a **high density of information**. The messages contain sustainability as well as fashion content. The smart practice is to include **educational elements** (4/5), **facts/ statistics** (3/5) with **frames of reference** (3/5), the brands **environmental correctness** (3/5), and **moralizing** (3/5) into the message content. Furthermore, **storytelling** (3/5) is found as smart practice.

Thus, it is smart to give information on sustainability which is in line with the literature stating that **education** can support the establishment of a sustainable market for eco-fashion by creating awareness and knowledge for the mass consumer which are less interested in purchasing environmentally friendly products (Yan et al., 2012). A **frame of reference** facilitates the evaluation of the environmental attribute (Ottman et al., 2006). Environmental correctness should be communicated, but undermined with **specific claims** as they are more credible to the consumer compared to than generic claims that do not provide examples that increases the risk of consumer scepticism (Villarino & Font, 2015). The sustainability messages are generally found to be designed using specific and **logical information**, rather than being vague (3/5).

Interestingly, **moralising**, was advised against in the literature, due to the risk to push consumers away by being preachy and emphasise on a morally superior role. Still, we observe it as a smart practice in this research. A deeper look, reveals that in two cases negative frames are used to moralise by pointing out the negative consequences of fast fashion (Pelechecoco, Deadwood). Pelechecoco tries to activate the consumer to go green without directly referring to itself, whereas Deadwood clearly states how superior they are. The third case, MudJeans, shows a positively framed moralizing method, which refers to a worth living present and future, and uses real-life examples. Thus, one can conclude that when using moralizing it is important to connect it to past, present and/or future related (educational) statements about the environment and the brand's own practices and not solely state 'we are better'. In other words, when the brand takes a clear



position towards a topic and judges, then it should demonstrate its reasons and how it deals with the topic under judgment.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that the majority of brands uses **storytelling**, as Carroll (2009) discouraged the use of it, as textual communication is found to be less persuasive, and the increasing marketing literacy on consumer's side. Across the cases though, it is a smart practice to make use of storytelling when combined with vivid (4/5) and appealing language (4/5) that evokes emotions.

All in all, it is interesting that brands make use and even combine sometimes both, specific and logical sustainable information that addresses the rational mind, and stories with **vivid and appealing** design that address imaginations and emotions of the reader.

Product page

In terms of message profile, we find that three brands utilise **storytelling** (3/5) by telling the product's personal story including history, origin etc.

6.4 Credibility profiling

Overall, we observe highly differing degrees of emphasis on credibility use across the cases. It is common to use **social media linkages** (4/5), and **consumer endorsement** (3/5) which are both not directly related to sustainability. Even though the literature highlights the importance of consumer trust and being credible, we do not observe a smart practice in relation to sustainability credibility establishment such as labels, certificates or awards. Only one case, the muted sustainability one, used this type of endorsement in its communication. When the emphasis is on sustainability (Fi-Su strategy), then the emphasis on sustainability credibility seems to be especially high. Thus, sustainability credibility seems to stand in the background which might be explained through the common pattern of following a Fi-Fa strategy. Celebrity endorsement, which was highlighted as an important element in the fashion and sustainability literature and is even as considered as a secret weapon for reaching the mass market (Ottman et al., 2006; Carroll, 2009), could not be identified as a smart practice in this study. The usage of consumer endorsement in the form of either social media posts of the consumer, or product/ company review elements, can be associated with both word of mouth and community creation.

6.5 Interesting practices

As stated above, in this section we cater interesting practices which are noticeable and worth to mention. Two cases use a vision and mission statement, stating directly what their vision and purpose in relation to fashion



and sustainability is (Reformation, Deadwood). Reformation generally, is very specific and detailed in its information on all various sustainability initiatives. However, they use a self-reflection statements, showing its potential for improving. Due to that, the brand still appears to be real and honest, and not like an untouchable perfectionist. A clear and honest position and a future outlook can create trust. Especially as the business models can be rather considered as innovative, such statements might be highly beneficial and thus, are considered as an *interesting practice*.

In one case (Reformation), the educational content is partially made appealing through humour and informal expressions, which can be characterised as amusing and entertaining. Thus, the brand does not solely position itself as an educator addressing the consumer from above, but creates a positive image. This might facilitate to remember the educational facts better, as it appeals to the logic and emotions. Furthermore, it might enhance the creation of a friendly relationship to the brand and thus, is considered as *interesting practice*.

Sustainability is mostly not communicated visually. However, if this is the case, functional values are shown such as product process pictures. This also applies to the design of the logo. Two brands use an aligned logo with the recycled sign that refers to a sustainability practice and is internationally known. Throughout all cases and pages, we, in total, only find two pictures of green plants which according to e.g. Visser et al. (2015) is typical a for a sustainable brand image communication. The fact that we find sustainability to be communicated mainly textually and not combined with visuals, can be explained by the risk of create negative perceptions when overemphasizing on sustainability by using green layout combined with communicating an environmental benefit.

6.6 Conclusion

Synthesising the smart practices, discussed above, we can identify an overall strategic pattern in terms of emotional and personal communication. Related to Lorek & Lucas' (2012) comparison for fashion and sustainability with a love story interrupted by divorce rates, an emotional positing in terms of sustainability can be observed as a smart practice. Not only is a high visual - low text strategy defined as an emotional positing, but also using storytelling with vivid and appealing language. We see that it is a smart practice to use personal fashion and sustainability values that again emphasize the consumer, and only add the environmental non-personal benefit secondarily.

Thus, the fashion love story is kept alive by communicating sustainability from a personal and non-personal perspective with a dense value set. Additionally, the focus on creating a community of consumers through consumer endorsement elements and emphasising on becoming part of a group or community by purchasing



a product can be associated with emotional positioning. The same goes for the personal sustainability value of being visionary or avant-garde that is defined as smart. Hence, even though the brands choose to educate and use facts, and even moralise, the emphasis on personal values in combination with appealing and vivid language as well as being informal at times is the smart way to communicate sustainable fashion.

The figure below summarises the specific smart practices and interesting practices (marked with *) discussed in the sections above.

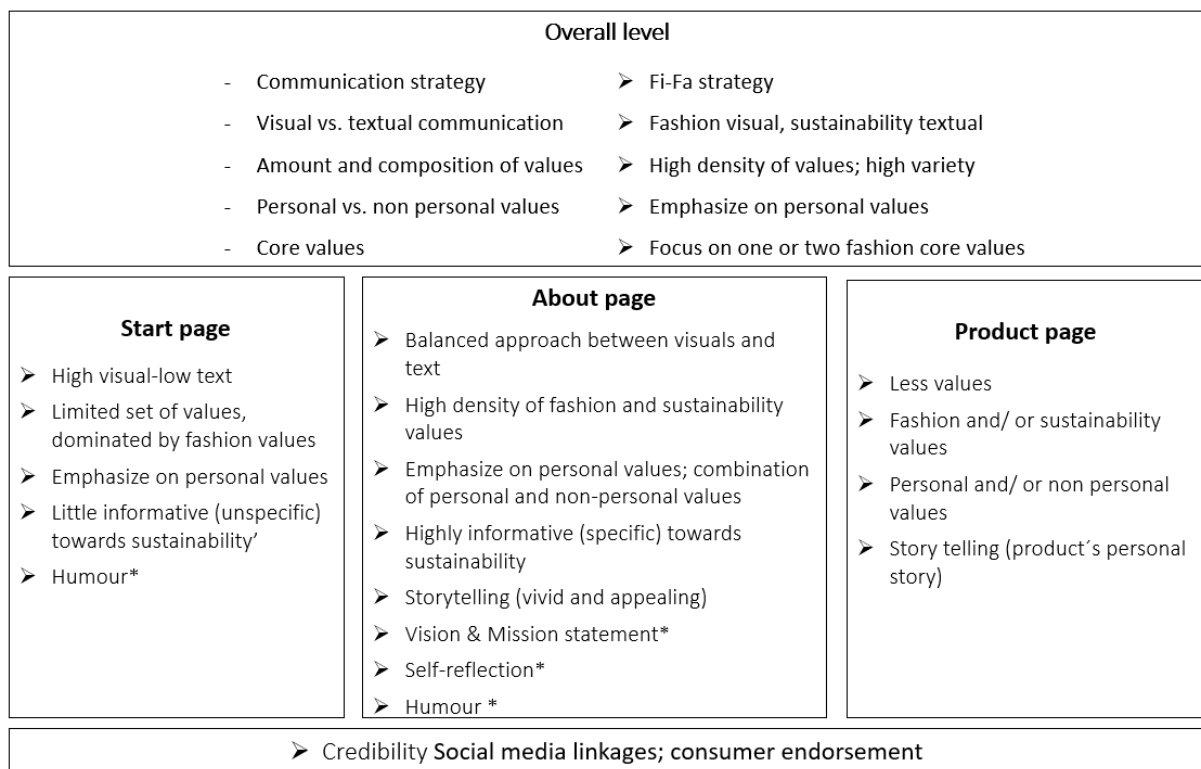


Figure 66 Summary of smart and interesting practices

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of green leaves, likely from a plant like a peace lily, with prominent veins and a slightly glossy texture. The leaves are layered, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is soft, highlighting the vibrant green color of the foliage.

CHAPTER VII

Extrapolation

This chapter is dedicated towards the conversion of gained smart practices onto the target side, also called extrapolation. For that, first, the target side BWF, is analysed in the same format as the source sides beforehand. Second, a contrasting discussion follows, which identifies strong and weak areas of current communication practices. This results in the last step of recommendations and strategic roadmap for sustainability fashion communication. This step in smart practice research is referred to as conversion of the gained experience and understanding to the target side. The findings of the target side analysis are contrasted with the smart practices. The identified smart practices are perceived as a reservoir of potential in the social reality that can be used, and are always embedded within their institutional, political, economic and interpersonal context.



7.1 Target side analysis

We access the webpage (<http://www.betterworldfashion.com/>) on the 17th July 2017. Generally, the text contains only selected screenshots, while the rest can be found in Appendix VII.

7.1.1 Profiling

See section 4.2.2.1 Source site characterization.

7.1.2 Brand name and Logo

The brand name BWF gives reference to sustainable practices, particularly indicating a wrong present that needs to be improved. Thus a better, more sustainable, fashion world is sought to be created through the brand. The logo gives reference to sustainability practices as well, through a minimalistic sign relating to a tree.



Figure 67 BWF- Brand name and logo

7.1.3 Start page

Page composition

The navigation bar on top of the page presents links to five different sections. The first section refers to the start page, the second to *new concepts* (information are given to e.g. circular business model), followed by a link referring to the *about page*, to the *product page*, and the *contact page*.

The content of the page is divided into 10 sections. Overall, both text and pictures are used in the communication with a slight **focus on text**, whereas some sentences are noted to be remarkably long. Thematically, we find fashion and sustainability content, whereupon **sustainability is slightly dominant**. Fashion content is mostly expressed visually, whereas sustainability content is expressed through text and supported by visualizations.

Communication analysis

The beginning of the page is dominated by a triple divided section containing three pictures. We identify an **emotional fashion value** of feeling of the daring (models look confident in the camera with wild hair, open shoes, unconventional look), and an **emotional value** of feeling of freedom (models look distinctively differs



from ordinary people, seem as they do not stick to the norms of ordinary life). The unconventional, however confident appearance of the models (e.g. pink skirt and leather jacket) emphasizes that the clothes will allow demonstrating one's personal, unique style. We categorize this as the **social value** of personal expression.

The following section presents how the products are produced and for whom the products are made (women and men). We observe two **functional sustainability** values in form of product orientation ("most sustainable leather jacket") and process orientation ("98% up-cycling", "melted metal"). Furthermore, the **functional sustainability value** of product orientation is combined with an **epistemic fashion value** of pursuit of the unique ("98% REUSE – 100% UNIQUE"). The message content is characterized by **facts/ statistics**, and emphasis on **environmental correctness**.

The third section consists of one long sentence that expresses the **epistemic fashion value** of pursuit of the unique ("leather jackets are as unique as our customers"), and the **functional sustainability value** of image orientation ("no impact on the environment"). The message design is characterized by the use of **vivid language** ("made to become a living record of the people"; "embark on their incredible lives"). Furthermore, a close-up picture from a part of a leather jacket is shown, which we categorize as a **functional fashion value** of high quality as the thoroughly sown seams are zoomed into.

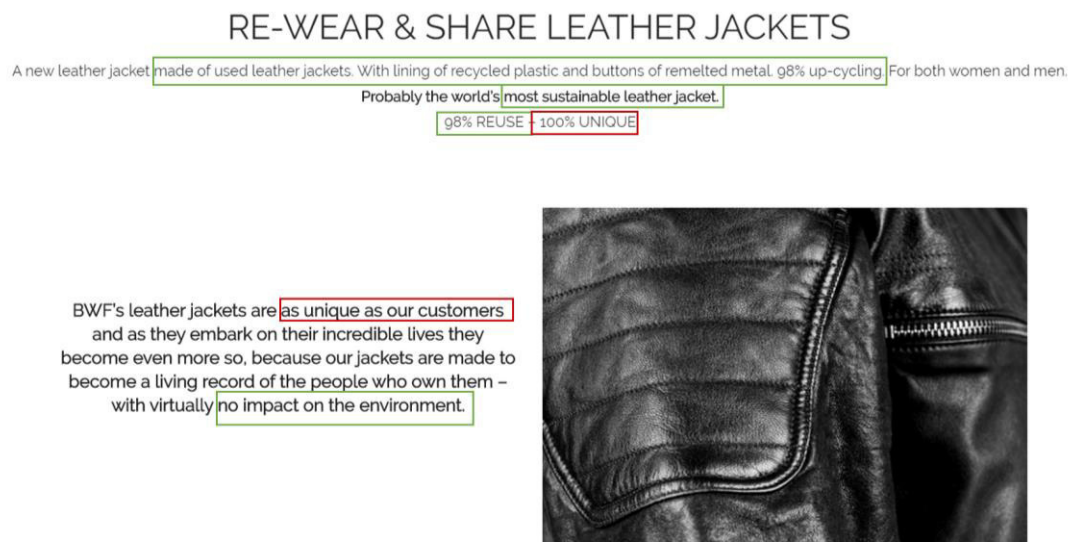


Figure 68 BWF – Values on start page 1

The fourth section gives a detailed product description. We identify several fashion values. **Functional fashion values** in form of durability ("a garment that goes on forever"), protection ("keeps you warm"). **Emotional values** in form of sentimentality ("eternally stylish") and beauty ("stunning jacket"). We also identify a **functional sustainability value** of product orientation ("all recyclable"). Furthermore, we observe again a double



benefit communication as the **emotional sustainability value** of moral satisfaction is combined with the **epistemic** fashion value of pursuit of the unique (“keep you in harmony with the zeitgeist and the environment”), followed by a **functional sustainability value** of process orientation (“reusing valuable raw materials and keeping waste to the minimum”). Another combination is made between the **functional sustainability value** of economic benefit and the **emotional sustainability value** of moral satisfaction (“supports your wallet and your environmental conscience”), followed by an **epistemic** one of pursuit of new fashion (“fashion sense”) which is presented within a **negative frame** (“without compromising your fashion sense”). The message content is characterized by **environmental correctness**. The message is designed through **vivid language** (“endless state of flux”), **appealing language** (“we’re proud”), and **unspecific information** (it is not explained how the recycle process works in detail).

Three Wishes – One jacket

We came up with something different – a garment that goes on for ever, keeps you warm and eternally stylish, a fashion industry first, a jacket in an endless state of flux. It can be redesigned to keep you in harmony with the zeitgeist and the environment while reusing valuable raw materials and keeping waste to the minimum. We reclaim, repurchase and revive – even recycling the lives of the jacket’s owners!

Our slogan is: **EVERYTHING CAN BE REUSED.**

BWF is a sustainable alternative, which supports your wallet and your environmental conscience – without compromising your fashion sense.

So how does it work?

Well, you can buy or lease our jackets – use your jacket as often as you like, take it around the world – BUT JUST remember when you have finished with it, bring it back, so we can buy it off you and put it into our recycling process to make another stunning jacket from it.

No one is 100 % sustainable – but we are very close!

So we’re proud of our first collection. Leather, lining and zips – all recyclable. Combine that with our business model.

and we think we can confidently say that the world’s most sustainable jacket has arrived!

[Read more here](#)

Figure 69 BWF- Values on start page 2

The fifth section addresses BWF’s storytelling approach. An **emotional** fashion value of sentimentality (“jackets are pieces of art!”), and an **epistemic fashion value** of the pursuit of the unique (“which makes it unique”) are presented. The message content is characterized by a **story** and a personification of the jacket (“jacket could talk! One might have travelled the world”). The message is designed in a **vivid language** (“stories live on in your jacket”).

The sixth section contains educational content. A **functional sustainability value** in form of process orientation (“we don’t use any chemicals and insignificant amount of water and no animal has to die”) is expressed. The message is characterized by **educational messages** (“The leather industry is one of the most toxic industries in the world”), which are rather **vague** and **unspecific** as the terms are not further explained. **Negative framed moralizing** is used throughout the section, as it is first stated how bad the situation is and then highlighted what BWF is doing better (e.g. “We refuse to believe that there are consumers who deliberately want to



pollute, since with BWF there is an alternative”). This implies that consumer who chooses a normal jacket, is willingly polluting, hence doing something wrong, which might create a guilty conscience due to the harsh statement, and presents BWF as morally superior. The messages are **actively** designed (“Buy a BWF jacket so we can hold on to the hope for a greener world.”). The picture next to the text expresses the **functional fashion value** of comfort (as the model has risen arms), and the **social value** of personal expression (model looks unconventional and futuristic with a silver shirt).

The seventh section addresses the circular business model that BWF uses. A **functional** fashion value of economic benefit (“save money”), and an **epistemic fashion value** of pursuit of new fashion (“cutting edge of fashion”) is expressed. Furthermore, a **functional sustainability** in form of product orientation (“recycling is key”) and an **emotional sustainability value** in form being visionary (“Be a green innovator”) is used. The message design is characterized through an **active message design** (“Be a green innovator- wear better world fashion”).

The eighth section shows acquisition options of the leather jackets. A double benefit communication is identified as the **emotional sustainability value** of moral satisfaction is combined with the **social fashion value** of personal expression (“your taste and your conscience”). The ninth section gives information about the product range. The tenth section states an **emotional sustainability value** of community feeling (“become part of the BWF Family”) and calls for signing up the newsletter. The footer contains contact information, social media linkages and calls for sharing them (“Then why not share it on: #BWF #BetterWorldFashion #joinBWF #weloveBWF”), thus presents an **active message** design.

7.1.4 About page

Page composition

The about page is structured in seven sections. In terms of visual-textual relation, we observe a focus on **more textual elements**. Both sustainability and fashion content is communicated visually and textually. There is a **focus on sustainability content**. Generally, we observe that sustainability values are often combined with fashion values.

Communication analysis

The first section shows a similar picture as on the start page, with two models. Hence, we observe the same values such as the feeling of the daring (**emotional**) due to the open shoes, wild hair, and confident looks, and freedom (escaping from ordinary life). Furthermore, we identify personal expression (**social**) due to the



confident looks into the camera, unusual combination of different styles together e.g. pink skirt and leather jacket.

The second section gives reference to what BWF believes in and how they aim to create change. We find the **emotional sustainability value** of moral satisfaction (“we have created a brand where you, the environment, the animals and everybody else win”). However, the whole section appears to be **moralising** as it judges what is right or wrong to do. The brand position itself as morally superior, as conventional ways of saving the environment are degraded, in favour of simply choosing a BWF jacket (see figure 53).

We believe in change

At BWF we believe in change, not compromise. We question the idea that environmental awareness is connected with taking shorter baths, biking instead of driving, turning off the lights etc. In short we have created a brand where you, the environment, the animals and everybody else win, each time you choose to wear your BWF jacket. This is not a choice of lifestyle it is about a style of life to benefit life.

Figure 70 BWF – Moralizing statement

The third and fourth section contains statements about BWF’s mission. We see that sustainability is communicated visually and textually. Visually, the green world with the leave refers to the **sustainability value** of image orientation. We observe **functional sustainability values** of image orientation (“We are eco-friendly”) and process orientation (“eco-friendly in each production stage”). The content includes a **mission and vision statement** (“At BWF we are determined to revolutionize the way the textiles are produced, used and disposed”, “we dream of a better world where natural resources are not overexploited and where concepts like waste are banished and it is seen instead as a resource”). **Moralising** is observed again (“making a desirable material rather than creating an environmental headache”).

The fifth section presents the three founders of the brand. We observe **functional fashion values** of high quality (“passion for high quality”), and **social value** of personal expression (“eye-catching designs”). The message content focuses on **education** (“increasing pollution and overexploitation of the world’s scarce resources and a dedication”). Again, elements of **moralising** are present (“Not three hippies, a guitar and a bonfire but three experienced businessmen who want their children to live in a better world”), as the brand distances itself from the stereotype of environmental hippies, but claims to do it right with their business which will make the world better. This, again, creates a superior picture.

The sixth section addresses the consumer and highlights that their help is needed. Visually, two models are sitting watching a green plant. The captured **values are emotional** from the **fashion** side such as the feeling of happiness (both models are smiling and seem happy), well as **emotional** from the **sustainability** side moral



satisfaction (the green plant that in connection with the text might symbolise the better world that they contribute two with their jackets). Textually, we find the **emotional fashion value** of beauty (“stunning jacket”), the **emotional sustainability value** of being visionary (“start to be the difference that you want to see in the world.”). The messages are designed to be **active** (“help us to grow”; tell your friends), and **appealing** (“we love our BWF jackets”). We find another **metaphor** (“only a drop in the ocean”). **Credibility** is strived to be established by encouraging readers to share the page and tell their friends.

The last, seventh section refers again to how the brand is a solution for the environment. It uses the **social sustainability value** of community feeling (“Be part of the BWF family and the solution to a global problem”), as well as **emotionally** moral satisfaction (“you can walk tall, happy in the knowledge”), and **personal impact** (“you are small part of a big change”). In terms of credibility we find a **celebrity reference** of a Mahatma Gandhi quotation, which we do not categorise as celebrity endorsement in defined sense as the quote is not related to BWF.

The about page includes a subpage called “Better world impact”. Just like in the source side analysis, this will be skimmed and additional values will be listed. Overall, the page gives **detailed and specific information** on how the brand saves resources and **explains technical terms**. The communication is only **textual**. We find the **functional value** of country of origin (“We only produce within in the EU”; “Manufacturing at our factory in Poland”). The messages are **specific** with many **frames of reference** (“Compared to a conventional leather jacket a Better World leather jacket saves the environment for: Water: 340 L”), **facts/statistics** (“Lower-impact, 100% recycled-content & recyclable packaging”), **specific educational messages** (“Based on recent Life Cycle Assessments up to 73kgCO₂eq”). Thus, the content is **specific** and **logical**. Credibility is observed in terms of **strategic alliances** (“Aalborg University, Centre for Design, Innovation and Sustainable Transitions”).

7.1.5 Product page

Page composition

The product page consists of three sections. A product section, additional information, and related products. It is possible to select a jacket with an individual ID. However, many individual product details are first shown after several clicks that requires to select size, material thickness and purchase option. This leads to 14 different pictures that give information to the jackets (designer, name giver, pictures of the specific jacket, resource saving, factory and production information), which is defined as hidden storytelling. However, we only consider the initial product page and not the further specific sections, as to ensure comparability.



Communication analysis

The product page without opening the pictures, uses the **functional fashion value** of versatility (“A jacket with many different faces. Wear it again and again”), and the **emotional fashion value** of feelings of the daring (“The cool details”; “give the jacket a rough look.”).

Dayana (Vintage Biker)

Buy Price: 2,900.00DKK

Rent Price: 189.00DKK

For international customers: Buy price is EUR 390 EUR or USD 416.

A word from the designer

A jacket with many different faces. Wear it again and again. The cool details like quilt in the sides and heavy zips give the jacket a rough look.

SIZE ⓘ

Choose an option

MATERIAL ⓘ

Choose an option

RENT OR BUY ⓘ

Buy

CLEAR SELECTION

← SHARE THIS PRODUCT

Figure 71 BWF – Product page

7.1.6 Conclusion

Generally, we can summarize the communication approach of BWF as a double benefit approach with a focus towards sustainability as both are communicated on all units, but sustainability is in the foreground. Fashion values are often found in a combined context with sustainability ones, rather than standing alone. Thus the brand utilises a **Fi-Su strategy**.

Looking at the four units of analysis separately, we observe that they have different focuses in terms of communication. The **start page** is marked by visual and textual elements with a **slight focus on texts**. The visual communication focuses mainly on fashion values, sustainability is expressed textually. The page contains a **dense set of fashion and sustainability values**, expressed visually (5 different values) and textual (13 different values).



The **about page** is characterized by both, textual and visual elements with a slight **focus on textual elements**, as well. The side contains an **immense amount of information and values**. Both, sustainability and fashion content is communicated visually and textually with a focus on sustainability content. Generally, we observe that sustainability values are often combined with fashion values.

The **product page** is characterized by a rather **balanced approach**, as the side contains several product pictures and product description. The communicated values are fashion related. In terms of value profile, we observe that BWF uses a strategy of **extreme high density and variety of values** from both fashion and sustainability. We summarise the visual and textual profiles as displayed below (Figure x and x).

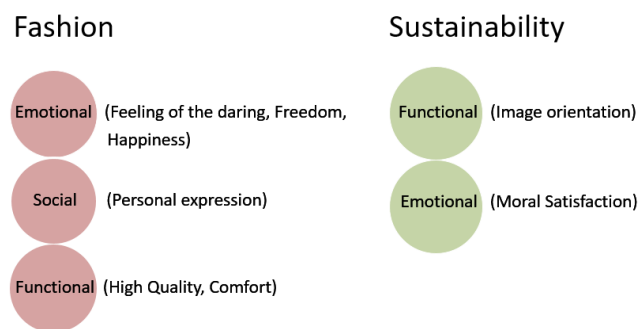


Figure 72 BWF – Visual value profile

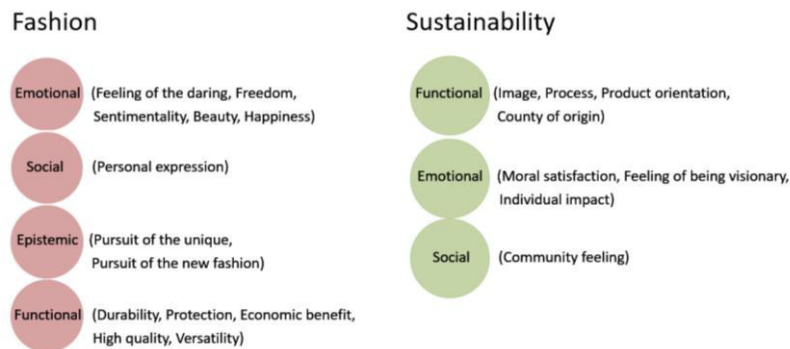


Figure 73 BWF – Textual value profile

The message content is characterized by facts/ statistics, frames of reference, educational messages, environmental correctness, and storytelling. Generally, we observe a focus on moralizing in explicit ways that appear harsh. BWF positions itself as morally superior by highlighting how other fail at being more sustainable and how they with the jackets succeed in creating a better world. Implicitly also the brand name goes into the



moralising direction, and with the usage in the web communication, this impression is further underlined. Furthermore, the messages are designed with vivid language, the usage of metaphors and through many active appeals. It is interesting that on the start page the information are rather expressed vague and unspecific, and on the main about page the information still remain vague, whereas on the subpage of the about page the information are specific and logic, even technical.

In relation to the credibility dimension, we observe that BWF does not emphasise in particular on credibility establishment. The focus lays word of mouth initiatives through encouraging readers to share the page and tell their friends. The brand also communicates the cooperation with Aalborg university in terms of measuring the savings achieved through their production process/ business model. This can be seen as a strategic alliance.



7.2 Recommendations

This step in smart practice research is referred to as conversion of the gained experience and understanding to the target side. The identified smart practices are perceived as a reservoir of potential in the social reality that can be used, and are always embedded within their institutional, political, economic and interpersonal context. This must be considered when making a transferral. The recommendations are also called extrapolation and are not a sole replication of a practice in another organization, but a creative and flexible application of a carefully examined mechanism discovered in the source sites. The findings of the target side analysis are contrasted with the smart practices as to identify strengths and weaknesses. This results in a strategic roadmap of communication for BWF, as well as two concrete branding scenarios with practical examples of communication.

7.2.1 Overall level

Strategy

In terms of overall strategic communication approach, BWF follows a **Fi-Su strategy**, meaning that the communication of sustainability aspects stands slightly in the foreground. With regards to addressing the mainstream market, sustainability therefore is found to be overemphasized on, while fashion is rather underemphasized. Thus, we find signs of '**green marketing myopia**' (Ottman et al., 2006). BWF could enhance its persuasion likelihood towards the mainstream market by shifting the focus towards its fashion values when communicating on its website in line with a **Fi-Fa strategy**. This also refers to the brand name and logo, which according to Yan et al. (2012) is a crucial element in fashion communication. In BWF's case, both are sustainability related which strengthened the green marketing myopia symptoms. A new brand name appears to be a rather drastic change. However, due to the identified problematic, this appears to be an important element to create a coherent Fi-Fa strategy and enhance the fashion character. Suggestions for such a change will be given within the next section in relation to the discussion of value profile and value positioning.

Value profile and core values

Generally, throughout the units, we see that BWF includes all visual **fashion values** defined as smart practices in its pictures (emotional - freedom, feeling of the daring; social - personal expression, functional - comfort). Also textually, the **fashion value** profile can be characterised as smart with all value categories present, such as emotional (sentimentality), epistemic (uniqueness), functional and social. In terms of textual **sustainability** communication, BWF also shows parallels to the smart practice sample such as emotional (moral satisfaction, being visionary), social (community feeling), and functional (process, product, image). The only difference lays



in the lack of social-ethical sustainability which is not communicated, even though the production takes under high and fair working standards. To stand up to smart communication, the value should be places on the about page. All in all, we observe **smart usage of personal values** outweighing non-personal ones, and a **multifaceted combination of values**.

However, the **degree and density of value variation** appears to be **extremely high** compared to the source sites. Specifically, BWF does not concentrate one or two **core values** in its profile, but uses different values in different sections without a coherent approach. This increases the risk of the consumer being overwhelmed or confused by the amount of information and values presented, without getting a distinctive picture of what BWF stands for. As stated in section 3.2.3.1 the selection of values related to the first initial communication dimension which is the determining factor for the strategic approach of communicating.

Therefore, BWF should clarify its value proposition towards the consumer and operate with one or two core values and a condensed value profile. In terms of concrete suggestions, we see the urgent need to distinctively position BWF on the mainstream market and to be silhouetted against its competitors. As branding is a crucial instrument to set apart from the competition (Da Giau et al, 2015, see section 3.1.2), this can be considered as rebranding strategy. Building upon the smart practices and the competitive advantages BWF holds, we identify and propose two potential scenarios as to enhance the brand's sustainable fashion communication. Looking at BWF, we identify the following key characteristics and strengths. The unique character of the jackets, the high quality, the circular business model, the reuse of material, the community through the app and the design made in Denmark. The smart practices in terms of value profiling showed preferences towards emotional and epistemic fashion values as a core value. Comparing the key characteristics with smart practices, we extract **two core values** as potential strategic starting points such as **pursuit if the unique**, and **country of origin**.

Pursuit of the unique is a smart practice, and beyond that used as a core values by Pelechecheco and Re/Done. Relating this value to the overall fashion concept, we see a strong connection to the symbolic, hedonic and identity constructing nature of fashion and the costumer value of uniqueness (Yan et al., 2012; D'Souza, 2015). Additionally, broadening the view towards the mainstream market, which is dominated by fast fashion with short product life cycles (Da Giau et al., 2015), and cheap mass production, uniqueness can be a competitive advantage to standout. BWF already uses the value of uniqueness in its communication, however it should become the key element. Thus, this re-branding approach can be considered as being close/ similar to the current communication as the value of uniqueness is already used and gets further exploited.



In this scenario, the core of the value profile should be characterized by communicating the **unique** character of the jacket and the resulting pursuit of the unique of the consumer throughout the units of analysis. In line with the necessity to condense the existing value profile, additional values which focus on individualism can be well integrated as **personal expression** (e.g. there to be different), **feeling of the daring** (e.g. be brave and show what defines you; stand for *yourself*; be proud and different), **freedom** (e.g. *self-realization*; follow your dreams). Sustainability wise, the value of **being visionary** fits well to this value profile, as it emphasises on following new ideas and being forward thinking which demands braveness, a strong own will and self-confidence. In accordance with this value proposition, we could imagine to rename the brand into “*Revival*”. This would be an individual brand name, but implicitly incorporating the recycling aspect in a poetic way. The jackets are reborn by using old leather, which makes them unique in their material and composition. Thus, the brand stands for a movement towards individuality, consciousness and fashionability. Revival also can be understood as to restore the earth's health by supporting its revival by making conscious choices in terms of fashion consumption. The name expresses that something old is given a new value, an added value respectively, which results in a superior, exclusive product. Thus, the sustainability character is implicitly embedded in a fashion context.

The **country of origin** value exploits patriotic feelings from domestic consumers or makes use of positive stereotypes that customers have about products from that country, region or city. We see that using the country of origin effect is a smart practice, used by the source sites on the city level (Los Angeles / Stockholm). BWF's city of origin is Aalborg in Northern Jutland, which does not hold a reputation which can be exploited in the fashion context. Thus, we recommend to use Denmark with its great reputation and positive stereotypes concerning the high quality and classic design which is known far beyond the borders (VisitDenmark, 2017). In particular, the “Danish design has become synonymous with timeless style” (VisitDenmark, 2017, n.p.). In this scenario, the core of the value profile should be characterized by communicating Denmark as the **country of origin** throughout the units of analysis (e.g. designed in Denmark). Denmark should be communicated as the origin of the product idea and product design, as well as the starting place for a sustainable movement. Owning a jacket makes people part of this movement. Thus, in line with the necessity to condense the existing value profile, additional values which focus on belonging to a movement and positive Danish stereotypes should be presented. This includes the sustainability value of **community feeling** (e.g. join a sustainable movement), the value of **high quality** (e.g. superior products, Danish products), the **value of versatility** (e.g. universal design for a party and the office), and the **value of durability** (e.g. timeless design). In accordance with this value proposition, we could imagine to rename the brand into “*Cirke*”. This would be an individual brand name, which refers to the Danish origin by using the Danish word for circle. The name implicitly incorporates the community aspects, as well as referring to BWF circular business model. Still, considering the global operations



of the brand, cirkel still is close to the English term circle. Thus, joining the sustainable fashion movement, means joining the “cirkel”.

Message mix

Another weak area on the overall level can be found in the employment of moralisation and morally superior positing of BWF to date. Even though moralising has been identified as a smart practice despite the discussion in the literature, BWF uses this content variable of the message mix to an overriding degree. It runs like a continuous thread through start and about page, which is in a clear contrast to the source site’s application. Especially, because the smartness of moralisation lays in a specific use of it in an embedded context and rather implicitly, which stays in a sharp contrast to BWF’s rather harsh and judging way, which is associated with evoking guilt. The feeling of guilt on the consumer site can be perceived as a marketing trick that can result in scepticism and aversion (Hassan & Valenzuela, 2016). Even though it is often combined with the value of moral satisfaction, we recommend to distance the communication from the current focus on moralising through the webpage, because the literature warns that consumer can perceive a brand vastly as too judgmental and morally superior, which can lower persuasion and thus a brand’s likeability (Villarino & Font, 2015). Thus, relating to the two scenarios introduced above, moralising could be used as follows. The uniqueness strategy could emphasise on the need for change in both the area of mass production of fashion in terms of possibility to be unique and stand out, as well as in the area of helping the earth to recover from the fast fashion damage. This offers good potential for a double benefit (e.g. A nobody swims in the dirty mainstream which is polluting our environment - don't be a nobody and shape a greener future). The country of origin strategy could emphasize on being part of a sustainable, respectively better community by wearing high-quality and stylish Danish jackets (e.g. We are a small Danish slow fashion brand with a big vision - join us to save the world from the soulless fast fashion giants).

7.2.2 Units of analysis separately

Looking at BWF *start page* to date, the visual communication in terms of amount and type of values can be evaluated as smart. However, in terms of the general text-visual ratio, there is a significant textual **information overload**. This not only stands in sharp contrast to the literature that emphasises on the consumer preference for clear communication, as “too much information in fashion advertising can be of disinterest – or even a distraction” (Yan et al. 2012, p. 162), but also stands out negatively against the smart practices. Such a text heavy communication is related to the risk of failing to evoke enough imaginations, thus failing to dip the



consumer into positive sentiments and creating an emotional connection towards the leather jackets and the brand (Carroll, 2009). Furthermore, BWF communicates a high amount of different textual information themes and values. In comparison to the smart practice sample, the variety of information also stands out negatively. This is associated with the risk of the consumer being unable to develop a clear, distinctive picture of the brand. Therefore, BWF needs to change to a “quality instead of quantity” approach. The textual information given on the start page should be shortened and reduced to the most important and essential values the brand wants to express (maximum three). We advise to present **functional sustainability values from the environmental side**. Fashion values should be rather expressed visually. The message content and design characterized by buzzwords and environmental correctness in a rather unspecific and vague manner, is aligned with the smart practice, however it should be condensed.

For the uniqueness scenario it is important to textually highlight the uniqueness aspects of the leather jackets, which can be combined with functional sustainable values from the environmental side in form of buzzwords (e.g. as already stated ‘reused and unique’). Furthermore, the brand name as crucial communication element should be linked to the core value (e.g. We *revive* vintage leather to express what you are - *unique*). For the country of origin scenario it is important to textually highlight Denmark, which can be combined with functional sustainability values from the environmental side in form of buzzwords (e.g. Timeless Danish fashion sustainably designed). The brand name can be linked to the core value (e.g. Circle - a sustainable Danish movement).

The *about page* is marked by a high density of fashion and sustainability values, which is considered as smart. However, the page lacks emotional fashion values that should be dominating. Thus, similar to the start page, the brand fails at evoking an emotional connection to its jackets and the brand. Therefore, more **emotional values** should be communicated and highlighted on the about page. Furthermore, to date no double benefit communication could be identified on the about page. Instead, it is used on the start page where the double benefit mostly refers to the combination of two personal values (uniqueness and moral satisfaction; economic benefit and moral satisfaction). It would be smarter to relocate double benefits mostly to the about page, and reduce them on the start page. Furthermore, in terms of double benefit design, it is expected to increase the persuasive likelihood when connecting personal (especially emotional fashion values) and non-personal values (functional sustainability values) with each other, as herein lies its smartness and strength. The content of the messages contain educational elements, facts/statistics, frame of references, environmental correctness and moralizing, and are designed in a rather specific and logical manner, as well as through vivid and appealing language. This makes the message mix in large part smart. However, the content on the about page does not



exploit storytelling, which is instead presented on the start page. Thus, we advise to relocate the storytelling from the start page to the about page to further reduce the information on the start page.

Thus, overall BWF should locate all its specific information on sustainability the brand wants to express on their website on the about page. This would relate to the circular business model and production. While the country of origin approach nicely creates synergies with the emphasis on the three founder and their story, the uniqueness approach is expected to increase smartness by presenting the founders namely and brief without a distinct focus. Depending on the selected scenarios, different emotional values can be emphasized on. The uniqueness scenario can be designed smartly by communicating emotional fashion values of personal expression, feeling of the daring, freedom as well as personal sustainability values of being visionary. The values can be combined with non-personal sustainability values (e.g. Born to be different - Born through 98% reused material). The country of origin scenario could highlight the design process made in Denmark, and emphasise on the personal sustainability value of community feeling. Furthermore, other important fashion values as the functional value of high quality and versatility and durability can be highlighted. These values can be combined with non-personal sustainability values (e.g. A classic Dane - Sustainable design that never gets old, but ripens with your great personality).

The *product page* is characterized by only a few fashion values (feeling of the daring, versatility) which is in line with the smart practice and addresses both scenarios. We recommend to additionally include the fashion value of uniqueness as this is a strong purchase argument for BWF, and is commonly used across the cases. Furthermore, we argue for the usage of storytelling, but in a less hidden way, meaning that the product's story and unique features should communicated directly on the first site, and not after the selection of several product options.

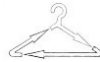
Concerning the last dimension of *credibility establishment*, we see that social media linkages are used, while consumer endorsement is not employed to date. Thus, it is recommended that BWF includes this into the communication. Specifically, the storytelling element with the app in which consumer share their adventures experienced with their individual jackets is one of the core aspects, but not included on the website yet. For the uniqueness scenario, the brand could achieve its consumers to share their individual story and style (e.g. #Irevive). In the country of origin scenario the feeling of belonging could be emphasized (e.g. #mycirkel #jointhecirkel #classicrodane).



7.2.3 Interesting practices

Looking at BWF from the viewpoint of the identified interesting (smart) practices, we find several aspects to be touched upon.

First, even though BWF uses a vision and mission statement, it does not come in one coherent manner. Instead it is divided into several sections that address different visions. Hence, it is recommended to unify this into one statement that clearly communicates what vision BWF has on the about page. In relation to the above discussed positioning as morally superior and ability to improve the fashion world that is evaluated as risky communication, the interesting practice of self-reflection used by Reformation could be applied. Self-reflection statements put the sustainability efforts clearly and specifically into perspective, but on the other side also addresses room and striving for improvement. Moreover, Reformation also has a high educational character, but combines it with humorous elements and gives recommendation how to be more sustainable in the everyday life. These techniques let the brand appear as a role model as it follows a comprehensive sustainability approach that goes beyond selling fashion, meeting the consumer eye-to-eye instead of being distant and preachy. This is especially important in the country of origin-scenario, as the brand appear as a friend who is connecting people which each other. Humour should be used to appear sympathetic and to create a feeling of closeness. Whereas, in the uniqueness scenario humour might be used slightly different in form of appearing cooler and special through cheeky and witty humour.



Chapter VIII Conclusion

The last chapter of the thesis is summarising the main findings presented throughout the thesis. Furthermore, a reflection on the implication of these findings in relation to our research objectives is given. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study, and give suggestions for further research within the area.

The background of the page is a close-up photograph of several large, green, serrated leaves, likely from a plant like a geranium. The leaves are layered, with some in sharp focus and others blurred in the background, creating a sense of depth. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the leaf surfaces.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

The last chapter of the thesis is summarising the main findings presented throughout the thesis. Furthermore, a reflection on the implication of these findings in relation to our research objectives is given. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study, and give suggestions for further research within the area.



8.1 Summary

This thesis is dedicated towards addressing the challenge of sustainability fashion marketing in the light of fashion being the second largest polluting industry worldwide, and has not yet managed to step out of the green niche market. The problem has its roots in the lack of understanding and knowledge on how to communicate sustainability effectively. Credible, **value-laden sustainable fashion** communication appears to be a difficult **balancing act**. Likewise, the sustainable fashion brand Better World Fashion struggles to communicate persuasively to the mainstream market. Thus, the thesis aims to create knowledge on persuasive sustainable fashion communication to **enhance the communication of BWF**. To arrive at the aim, the research addresses four objectives.

The findings of the **first objective** create an understanding about characteristics of persuasive sustainable fashion communication that increase persuasion likelihood through an extensive literature review. The review of literature crystallised the conflicting nature of concepts of fashion and sustainability. The former relates to the ego, the creation of own identity, and self-realization due to its hedonic and symbolic character which makes it a high involvement product. Consequently, fashion communication emphasizes the creation of favourable visions and emotions, aiming to give people identity and dreams through implicit and often visual-focused communication. This makes the communication process rather unconscious. Sustainability, in contrast, refers to taking responsibility and selfless actions without a direct personal benefit. Thus, the communication has a more rational character which appeals to the mind, and requires textual, explicit communication, that gives the sustainability communication a very conscious character. The contrasting nature is summarized by Lorek & Lucas (2012) with the observation that the fashion world is full of positive emotions and beautiful people, and environmental information is boring and distractive in this context. The bridging element though is found to be that both concepts require the creation of emotions for persuasive communication.

The main findings of the literature review are that the fashion mainstream customers can only be activated by being put in the centre through a communication strategy, which is either mainly based on fashion values (muted sustainability strategy), or comprises a double benefit approach in which fashion values are in the foreground and sustainability values are mentioned secondarily (Fi-Fa strategy). Thus, the benefit communication is a key element in sustainable fashion communication.

Relating to the **second research objective**, the identified characteristics of both streams, fashion and sustainability communication, are conceptualised into an analytical framework. The framework consists of three communication dimensions for both streams such as the value profile, the message mix and credibility



level. The value profile relates to consumer and environmental benefits of the consumption. The message mix relates to the message content and the message design, hence the “what” and “how” of communication. The credibility dimension addresses the techniques to create trust and credibility.

The **third research objective** addresses the identification of smart practices of sustainable fashion communication through a multiple case study smart practice research. Therefore, the analytical framework is applied to sustainable fashion brands that are selected based on their learning potential as being a valuable source site. The unit of analysis is determined as corporate websites (brand name and logo, start page, about page, product page), on which the visual and textual content, thus communication practices, is captured with the analytical framework. The results of the subjective interpretation of webpage content based on the operationalised analytical framework, are common patterns across the source sites which are defined as smart practices. Together with the interesting practices, those from the guide for sustainable fashion communication.

The empirical results partially confirm the findings of the literature review, include contradictions, and reveals new aspects. The smart practices relate to the overall communication, as well as the different units. Overall, it is smart to follow a Fi-Fa strategy, which puts the consumer and her/his personal fashion experience in the centre of attention. As sustainability can increase the emotional bond towards the brand, it should be communicated as an additional benefit. A dense value profile is found to be smart in order to address the consumer with multiple benefits as a means to emphasise on different purchase values and increase persuasion. Fashion should be mainly communicated visually. Contrary, sustainability should mainly be communicated textually. Especially, the choice of one or two core value is smart to confer a distinctive character on the brand.

As the start page is the most visited part of the website, here it is crucial to catch the visitor's attention through a high visual - low text strategy. Furthermore, a limited set of values, dominated by personal fashion values, ensures that the visitor does not feel overwhelmed by rational information and allows him/ her to enter the promising fashion world. The smartness lies in not digging too deeply into the sustainability character, but to leave the information at a rather general and unspecific level. The usage of humour can be an additional option to entertain and catch the attention of the visitor (interesting practice).

The smart about page is marked by a high information character about sustainability practices. Here, the information about sustainability which are mentioned in a rather general way on the start page should be specified. Therefore, it is beneficial to use a balanced visual-textual communication. Across the high variety of values, again especially personal ones should be communicated in order to keep the consumer's experience



with the product in the centre of attention. If non-personal values are used, then mainly combined with personal ones. Transforming information through stories with appealing and vivid language is a smart method, to create favourable cognitions and emotions. Interesting practices are found in the form of vision and mission statements, self-reflection statements, and the use of humour which helps to build up an honest and trustful image of the brand with human features. A smart product page contains less values which can be related to fashion or sustainability and thus, can be personal or non-personal. Storytelling is a smart element by presenting a product's personal story. Credibility is established in a smart way by presenting social media linkages and consumer endorsement.

The synthesis of the findings showed an overall strategic pattern in terms of emotional and personal communication. Related to Lorek & Lucas' (2012) comparison of fashion and sustainability with a love story interrupted by divorce rates, an emotional positing in terms of sustainability is a smart practice. Remarkable is that the literature only refers to one personal sustainable value such as moral satisfaction. However, the empirical smart practice research shows that there are more personal values such as, community feeling, being visionary, individual impact. Not only is a high visual-low text strategy defined as an emotional positing, but also using storytelling with vivid and appealing language. Thus, the fashion love story can be kept alive within a sustainable context by combining fashion values with sustainability values from a non-personal and especially a personal perspective.

The last, **fourth objective** of the thesis was to address BWF with the smart practices as a means to recommend strategies to enhance communication persuasion likelihood. BWF's current approach to communication was captured through the analysis with the revised analytical framework. This showed that the company to date includes some smart elements into its communication, but also shows concrete differences compared to the source sites that stand out negatively. The overall strategic approach as well as aspects of the value profile, message mix, and credibility were identified as areas for improvement. With regards to addressing the mainstream market, sustainability therefore is found to be overemphasized on, at the expense of fashion. Thus, BWF shows signs of 'green marketing myopia'. The recommendations centre on emotional positioning which includes shifting the focus of communication from high text and sustainable information, to more visual imagery and a Fi-Fa approach. To confer a distinctive character of the brand, a commitment to one or two core values is suggested which should be communicated throughout the whole webpage. Based on the key characteristics of BWF in alignment with the smart practices, two rebranding scenarios are proposed as to exploit BWF's competitive advantage and increase persuasion likelihood. The first centres on the core value of pursuit of the unique as to tap the potential that the unique character of the jackets hold due to the business model. This matches the identity constructing and symbolic character of fashion, and value consumers



predominantly seek its purchase. The second builds upon the core value of the Danish country of origin, as to utilise the positive stereotypes related to Danish quality and design as value proposition. While BWF should step down from its morally superior role, instead a clear vision and mission, as well as self-reflection statement, showing the brands sustainable effort combined with potential room for improvement, could enhance the persuasion likelihood.

This research contributes to the growing field of sustainability marketing, and its specific area of sustainable fashion communication. Several researches have addressed the issue from the consumer perspective, investigating their attitudes and behaviour through consumer studies. Yet, this has proven to not bring upon the desired solution as insights remained limited due to the challenge of intention - behaviour gap. Thus, the switch in perspective to the investigation of empirical practices in a comparative manner and smart practice research approach, adds values from a rather unexplored research perspective. Taking an interpretive stance, with a subjective positioning, the generalisations to be drawn from the thesis are significantly limited, as it is not the objective to create theory. The smartness of the practices lies in the choice of source sites tailored to the target site. Nevertheless, zooming out of the specifics, the thesis' literature review makes sense of the phenomenon in an extensive manner by accumulating and integrating insights on sustainable fashion communication. The resulting holistic framework for persuasive sustainable fashion communication creates new understanding as it reveals the landscape of communication strategies, dimensions, variables, which to date to our knowledge, no research has tackled in this manner. Additionally, the thesis adds value by offering an explanation to the communication problematic of sustainability and fashion through a contrasting juxtaposition. It delivers paths to address the marketing myopia dilemma of the sustainable fashion industry, by crystallizing emotional positioning in the communication as the connecting point between the two conflicting concepts.

8.2 Limitations

There are several possible methodological limitations that can affect the quality of the study's outcome and the way the research objectives are addressed. Therefore, it is important to be aware of such limitations and propose possible actions to overcome them in the future.

First of all, in terms of research design, results gained through an analysis of a few cases is very limited in its generalization. By taking an interpretative nominalist stance, we assume that a definite reality is not existing as reality happens through human beings. This means, that all observed cases are embedded in a specific context and thus, we are aware that a 'simple' transfer of the results to alternative contexts is limited. For the case that other brands aim to make use of the results, we therefore recommend to carefully reflect upon their



own characteristics compared to the source site, as to evaluate the smart practices in their context. As we revealed our research process in a very detailed way, we enable other researchers to evaluate if the possibility of a transfer exists or not. Specifically related to smart practice research, it should be highlighted again that we acknowledge that the smart practices are tailored to the target side due to the selection of source sites.

Second, the data is self-reported, meaning collected and analysed by us. Thus, the quality of the research is depended on our personal perception and research skills. Although we developed countermeasures to ensure objectivity through using the operationalised analytical framework, interpretative studies still hold the risk of perception mistakes. Furthermore, we conducted such a qualitative smart practice research for the first time. Our observation and analytical abilities could have been improved and strengthened through a specific research training before this thesis.

Third, specifically the content analysis is limited to the chosen units of analysis and does not encompass the entire corporate website. Hence, the smart practices need to be seen in the context of the units. However, as we argued for the choice of units in terms of their importance and frequent usage by consumers, they are representative units. Nevertheless, the limitation can be addressed by additional research to capture the whole website.

The fourth aspect is related to the overall limited control of findings. A content analysis by definition cannot capture persuasiveness of the communication in the sense of measuring it. Instead, the findings should be evaluated as to infer likelihood of persuasiveness. Even though communication has been confirmed in the literature as being as crucial factor in marketing sustainability as well as sustainable fashion, it cannot be determined as the sole cause affecting the persuasiveness, and even the complete marketing. Thus, it is not possible to draw a definite cause/effect from this qualitative study. This is related to the general challenge in smart practice research to explain what role the practice plays in source site's superior results. The communication is taken out of the context the company and its communication is embedded in. In other words, this means that a flexible conversion of a practices from one context into the other, does not ensure persuasiveness of communication, and translation into increased purchasing behaviour per se.

Therefore, research on the additional P's of the marketing mix could lift the findings out of context and broaden the knowledge on sustainability fashion marketing. Additionally, informing the findings by the consumer can further increase our understanding. Thus, future research could formulate hypotheses based on the smart practices and test them in consumer experiments as a means to determine its influence on brand attitude, buying intention and purchase behaviour.



Lastly, we want to reflect on the recommendations given for BWF in terms of the two scenarios. The scenarios should be taken as an exemplified practical application of the proposed strategic roadmap. Thus, those do not represent a holistic rebranding concept, but starting points and possible ideas for the implementation of future web-based sustainable fashion communication. The scenarios should be informed by the brand's internal view to evaluate their potential and preference for positing for a concrete holistic concept development.

8.3 Future research

The findings of the thesis offer several paths for future research. While some of those were already discussed above, as a means to address limitations of this research and its effect on the interpretation of findings, there are additional paths suggested as being beneficial to further explore the phenomenon and field of investigation.

On a narrow level, the smart practices and its understandings should be informed by direct contact with the people behind the businesses as a means to further explore the reasoning beyond the literature explanations for the choice of approach in the communication of the source sites. Personal interviews can be conducted to achieve to gain understanding of the motivation behind communication strategy and techniques and thus, could help to understand the context better.

Furthermore, the practices are limited to the web communication on the corporate website. However, the literature showed the growing importance of social media communication. Hence, capturing the smart practices in terms of social media communication will be an important addition to the picture. A further unit of analysis could be related to store communication. This can be the communication of sustainability engagements collected through in-store observations, as the store also represents a significant communication channel. We focused our research on the communication between the firm and the end consumer. However, firms can besides the direct channel also utilize the indirect way over a wholesaler. As seen in the source site comparison the majority of brands use selected retailers. Hence, the B2B communication of sustainable fashion brands addressing wholesalers should be object to research as well to complete the picture of sustainability fashion communication.

As for now we segmented the market into the mass consumer, and the green consumer, which is a necessary abstraction to conduct this research within its scope, but one needs to respect that the degree to which the mass consumer can be generalised to such a high degree is limited. However, the literature utilised, did not give differentiated insights in terms of the mass consumer differing characteristics, which increases our confidence on the chosen procedure. Still, a more specific segmentation of the mass consumer in terms of



specific characteristics and behaviours, such as different degrees of sustainability concern, fashion involvement, age, country of origin to only name a few, could be interesting for future research.

As a way to address the issue of generalisation and lack of general guidelines on persuasive sustainable fashion communication to the mass market, the analytical framework could be used to examine and map out the communication practices of a broader sample of higher diversity that could include market leaders, and newcomers. This is related to replication, meaning that in “qualitative research, various purposive sampling strategies that involve deliberate replication can be used to promote both analytic generalization and transferability” (Polit & Beck, 2010, p.1454). A higher diversity of brands combined with purposeful sampling selections of deviant cases could enhance the generalization of the findings as it could crystallise certain contexts under which patterns occur (Polit & Beck, 2010). This would outline sustainable fashion communication and also create scenarios based on factors such as size, age or product focus. Overall, the field appears to be of growing interest in research especially within the last years, and offers many paths for future research.

Generally, sustainable fashion brands can utilize the analytical framework for analysing themselves and competitors in order to contrast their communication strategies and identify strengths and weaknesses of current communication practices. The framework presents a holistic picture of communication dimensions which gives an overview about different aspects of sustainability and fashion communication. Researchers can use the framework insights and its composition as a source of inspiration as to which aspects of communication need more detailed attention and can be subject to future research. Despite the limits of generalization, brands can learn from the identified smart practices under the condition of careful reflections upon their own context and the context in which they smart practices are embedded. This allows to evaluate to what degree the possibility of a knowledge transfer exists or not.



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Appendixes

Appendix I Operationalised analytical framework

Dimension I Value Profile	
Variable	Example
Fashion	
Functional (Ko et al., 2010) Emphasizing clothing's physical functions and instrumental performance (p.456) Stressing the perceived utility acquired by consuming a good which performs functional, utilitarian, or physically advantageous purposes and possesses functional, utilitarian, or physically advantageous attributes (p.454)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Versatility: Stressing that the clothing can be used for many purposes ▪ Ease of care: Stressing that the clothing is easy to care for ▪ Comfort: Stressing that the clothing gives the wearer comfort ▪ High quality: Stressing that the quality of the clothing excels in one or more characteristics ▪ Protection: Stressing that the clothing protects the body from weather conditions, stains, etc. ▪ Durability: Stressing that the clothing is long-lasting ▪ Economic benefit: Stressing the low price of the clothing or value, given that price ▪ Good fit: (New Re/Done, Reformation) Stressing that the clothing comes in the right size and shape to fit onto a person's individual body. 	
Social (Ko et al., 2010) Focusing on social class, reference group , and cultural ethnic group (p.456). Stressing the perceived utility acquired by consuming a good which is generally coupled with one or more specific social groups, depending on whether positive or negative stereotypes are associated with the demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural or ethnic group (p.454).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Symbol of social status: Emphasizing that the wearer of the clothing will appear as a high society member. Position, rank and wealth (within the context of the group) are stressed. (This can be amongst others activated through celebrity endorsement) ▪ Personal expression: Emphasizing that wearing the clothing will allow one to demonstrate one's unique style. Taste and difference in ads are stressed ▪ Dress for success: Emphasizing that wearing the clothing will make one succeed ▪ Approval by others: Stressing that the person(s) who the wearer considers important accept or like the clothing (This can be amongst others activated through celebrity endorsement) 	
Emotional (Ko et al., 2010) Emphasizing consumers' positive and negative feelings (p.456). Stressing the perceived utility acquired by consuming a good, which arouses feelings or affective states. When goods are associated with, facilitate, or perpetuate specific feelings, they provide emotional value (p.454)	

<p>Happiness: Suggesting that the wearing of the clothing itself makes one happy via images of happy people</p> <p>Beauty: Suggesting that the wearing of the clothing enhances or creates the beauty of its wearer</p> <p>Elegance: Suggesting that the wearing of the clothing enhances the elegance of its wearer</p> <p>Freedom: Showing that wearing the clothing leads to relaxation, destressing, and escape from the constrictions of ordinary life</p> <p>Sentimentality: Tying sentimental images and their resulting feelings to the clothing in order to evoke an emotional connection to the clothing</p> <p>Feelings of the exotic: Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's exotic appearance and therefore its wearer's appeal</p> <p>Feelings of the fresh: Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's feelings of the fresh and new</p> <p>Feelings of the daring: Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's feelings of courage or daring</p> <p>Feelings of the sexy: Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearer's sexual appeal</p> <p>Feelings of proudness (New Pelechechoco): Suggesting that the clothing enhances its wearers feeling of being proud</p> <p>Country of origin (New Re/Done, Reformation): Stating the country or region of origin either to evoke patriotic feelings from domestic consumers or to make use of the positive stereotypes that customers have about products from that country, region or city.</p>	
<p>Epistemic (Ko et al., 2010) Relating to the pursuit of variety and novelty (p.456). Stressing the perceived utility acquired by consuming a good, which arouses curiosity, provides novelty, and/or satisfies a desire for knowledge. Goods provide epistemic value through possessing something new or different (p.454)</p>	
<p>Pursuit of new fashion: Stressing that the clothing is the most contemporary or avant-garde fashion available</p> <p>Pursuit of the unique: Stressing that the clothing is rare or unique and gives its wearer a unique look</p> <p>Pursuit of luxury fashion (New Re/Done) : stressing that the clothing is a luxury good</p>	
<p>Sustainability</p>	
<p>Functional: Stressing the inherent advantages of the consumption status of the product and correspond to attributes of the product (D'Souza, 2015)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental: (Polonsky et al. 1997, p.221) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Product orientation: stressing the environmentally friendly attributes that a product possesses ▪ Process orientation: stressing the organization's internal technology, production technique and/or disposal method that yields environmental benefits. ▪ Image orientation: association of the organization with an environmental cause or activity for which there is broad-based public support. 	<p>This product is biodegradable.</p> <p>20 % of the raw materials used in producing this good are recycled.</p> <p>We are committed to preserving our forests.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental facts: independent, factual statement about the environment at large, or its condition. <p>Social-Ethical (D'Souza, 2015; Da Giau et al., 2014): social sustainability practices that focal companies are mostly adopting in terms of workers, local communities, suppliers and philanthropy; ethical nature of their designer brands.</p> <p>Country of origin (D'Souza, 2015): "made in [...] The place or country of origin where clothing is designed and produced" (D'Souza, 2015, p.72)</p>	<p>The world's rain forests are being destroyed at the rate of two acres/ second. Referring to local production methods</p> <p>Locally produced in....</p>
<p>Emotional/ Experiential: Stressing the sensory pleasure, variety, or cognitive stimulation (Park <i>et al.</i> 1986: 136) achieved through the product. Experiential benefits relate to attributes of the product, and to what it feels like when wearing the brand (D'Souza, 2015, p.74)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moral satisfaction: appeal to reason and emotion, such as the intrinsic value felt by consumers when using eco-friendly products, the feeling of "warm glow" or by acting in an altruistic manner (D'Souza, 2015, p.74); experiential needs such as altruistic feelings or feeling good with the environmental choice (D'Souza, 2015, p.74) ▪ Feeling of being visionary (NEW Pelechecheco/ MudJeans) Stressing that the owner of the clothes will enhance the feeling of being visionary, following new ideas, one-step ahead, avant-garde, forward thinking. <p>Individual impact (New Pelechecheco) stressing that the consumer actively contributes towards a more sustainable , better future with the product purchase</p>	
<p>Social Focusing on social class, reference group, and cultural ethnic group. Stressing the perceived utility acquired by consuming a good which is generally coupled with one or more specific social groups</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community feeling (New Pelechecheco / MudJeans /Reformation) Stressing that the purchase of the good, is coupled with belonging to a special social group that contributes to a sustainable development 	

Dimension II Message mix	
Variable	Example
Message Content	
Fashion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling (Gilliam & Flaherty, 2015, p.133) A story is a discourse dealing with interrelated actions and consequences in chronological order. Actions and consequences may be understood as events, processes, situations, or states; a story exhibit a beginning, middle, and end like complex narratives. The causal linkage of events is a defining attribute of a story. • Branded entertainment (Touchette, 2015, p.108 f.) Involves a combination of entertainment and brand Types of branded entertainment: 	<p>Not that long ago our commercial cleaners were formulated to kill all bacteria. But research showed that there are good bacteria that will eat bad bacteria. Our newest formula encourages the growth of these good bacteria and so it is far more effective at odor control than the harsher cleaners of the past</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ contests and sweepstakes (Contests and sweepstakes offer rewards or prizes to participants and establish winners) ○ interactive games and word play (involve direct interaction among users, which may offer them enjoyment and relaxation) ○ Events (bring together a sizeable number of participants who share a common objective) ○ Videos, audios, and downloads (actively engage users and are used for a variety of purposes, such as to keeping participants occupied for a long period). 	
Sustainability	
<p>Facts/ statistics (Davis, 1993) Factual information</p> <p>Frame of reference (Davis, 1993) Comparison with comparable alternatives or likely usage scenarios (Ottman et al., 2006). Providing a context for evaluating the promoted environmental attribute. New product versus the same product's past packaging or formulation, versus specific competitive products or versus what is usual and customary within the product category</p> <p>Social norms (Villarino & Front, 2015, p.329) Stressing 'rules and standards that are understood by members of a group, and that guide and/or constrain social behaviour without the force of laws'</p> <p>Educational message Direct statement of green product's consumer benefits (Ottman et al., 2006, p.31). Information on the relationship between people, clothing and the planet; (Kim & Damhorst, 1997). Highlight the difference between green and non-green actions; adopt educational and promotional strategies to encourage environmental behaviours. These methods include offering various types of important information (Tu et al., 2013). Define technical terms, so that the reader knows what is talked about (carbon emissions, what is it and why it is harmful) (Davis, 1993).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Real life example Creating a compelling story and retelling the story to minimize audience effort and encourage audience participation. The contextualization of messages, by making them personal. ● Environmental activism (Kim & Damhorst, 1997) Stressing the brands involvement in cause-related marketing by linking sales of products with donations to environmental causes such as charity motivated donation, environmentally motivated donation 	<p>"Reduced emission by 21 %"</p> <p>"The product makes an environmental contribution (is better for the environment) compared to...because..."</p> <p>"The majority of guests reuse their towels."</p> <p>"Let's all learn how to be better to our environment."</p> <p>"I reduced my footprint by planting my own tree!" (plant tree contributes to the environment) unlike a without experience, such as '5 towels reused ¼ 1 tree planted'. (Villarino & Front, 2015);</p> <p>Medley cares about the environment. For every T-shirt sold, \$2 will be donated to the Arbor Day Association.</p> <p>"Medley cares about the environment. All our garment hang tags are printed on</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental correctness (Kim and Damhorst, 1997) The correctness of production procedure is stressed (product characteristics, e.g. the organic nature of the product material and the recycled nature of the product label) • Moralizing Claim to be morally superior (Villarino & Front, 2015), or the message is judging. The message reflects on or express opinions about right and wrong, especially in self-righteous or tiresome ways. • Storytelling (New Pelehecoco) (see storytelling fashion) • Self-reflection (New Reformation) statements that include self-criticism on current actions and show that the brands is aware of rooms for improvement, stating of plans to improve. • Vision & mission statement (New Reformation) Stating explicitly what the company has as a vision and mission (goals) relating to sustainability. 	<p>recycled paper". Buzzwords e.g. environmentally friendly, ethical and sustainable</p>
Message Design	
Fashion	
<p>Positive versus negative framing Framing is the process of embedding a message in a specific setting (Tu et al., 2013)</p> <p>Positive framing: the gains obtained from good actions are elucidated and the resultant customer benefits are clearly spelled out (Villarino & Front, 2015, p.331)</p> <p>Negative framing: emphasizing the work still to be done (Villarino & Front, 2015, p.331)</p> <p>Explicit versus implicit message</p> <p>Explicit message: provide more information and thus a high clarity (Yan et al., 2012) Stating a message conclusion (Villarino & Front, 2015)</p> <p>Implicit message: No specific information; consumer has to make inferences about the meaning of the message (Yan et al., 2012). There is no stated message conclusion (Villarino & Front, 2015), the full answer is not given away (Villarino & Front, 2015)</p> <p>Linguistic elements (New Re/Done, Reformation):</p> <p>Vivid language: language that describes something very vividly, thus evoking images in a person's mind.</p>	
Sustainability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit versus implicit message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit message: Provide more information and thus a high clarity (Yan et al., 2012) Stating a message conclusion (Villarino & Front, 2015) • Implicit message: 	

<p>No specific information; consumer has to make inferences about the meaning of the message (Yan et al., 2012) No stated message conclusion (Villarino & Front, 2015) Message is not giving away the full answer (Villarino & Front, 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific versus unspecific message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific message: provide detailed, useful and supported information on the advertised product's environmental attributes, "information rich", helping to determine the differences in products; ▪ Unspecific message: vague claims which leave a great deal of interpretation • Positive versus negative framing Framing is the process of embedding a message in a specific setting (Tu et al., 2013) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive framing: the gains obtained from good actions are elucidated and the resultant customer benefits are clearly spelled out (Villarino & Front, 2015) ▪ Negative framing: emphasizing the work still to be done (Villarino & Front, 2015) • Denotative versus connotative message (Villarino & Front, 2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Denotative message: expresses a definition of a word that is determined and agreed by a community (a 'dictionary meaning'). ' the message has limited room for misinterpretation. ▪ Connotative message: the message or terminologies can understood differently by different potential customers, abstract ; also environmentally friendly, ethical and sustainable can be understand differently • Active versus passive message (Villarino & Front, 2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active message: the message includes a call for action, calls for the receiver to do something, simple and clear. ▪ Passive message: Without telling the receiver what to do with the information, as it is not eliciting a given behaviour. • Appealing versus logic message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Logical message: communicating facts or statistics alone, which inform; (Villarino & Front, 2015); information appeal (Tu et al., 2013, p.1087); factual information; specific data; clear numeric descriptions of the product's environmental benefit (Davis, 1993) ▪ Appealing message: messages which include emotional appeals, which is vividly, (Villarino & Front, 2015); emotional (i.e., catering to the senses); 	<p>"Reuse your towel for the environment in order to reduce water wastage"</p> <p>"ecolodge"</p> <p>'Reuse your towel'</p> <p>We reuse our towels for the environment</p> <p>'5.5% reduction in energy use in 2015' "10 % less packaging" and "100 % recycled paperboard, minimum 35 % post-consumer"</p> <p>'Our 5.5% reduction in energy usage in 2015 makes us feel proud and motivates us to keep working'</p>
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<p>Humorous message (New reformation)</p> <p>The messages is designed in the way that it causes amusement.</p> <p>Linguistic elements (New Pelechecoco):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaphor: Using figures of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. • Rhetorical question: Question asked in order to create a dramatic effect or making a statement rather than to get an answer. • Informal language: Using taboo vocabulary, shocking, informal expressions. 	
Dimension III Credibility	
Fashion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive people: form of visual communication; showing person's physical features which are considered aesthetically pleasing or beautiful as facial symmetry, youthfulness, skin clarity, smoothness of skin, "vivid color" in the eyes and hair; healthy body. • Word of mouth/ Social media: message calls for reader to share content / share button, inclusion of links to MySpace, Twitter, and Facebook etc. (Touchette, 2015) • Visual social media content (New MudJeans) Integration on webpage (own Instagram account reference, or costumer posts) • Celebrity endorsement: Using visual or textual communication with individuals who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement; e.g. celebrities as a result of their roles in television, film, the military and athletics; pop-stars; film-stars; footballers. • Costumer endorsement (New Pelechecoco): Using communication with costumers in the form of their opinion and review of the product or company. 	
Sustainability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrity endorsement: Using visual or textual communication with individuals who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement; e.g. celebrities as a result of their roles in television, film, the military and athletics; pop-stars; film-stars; footballers. • Media endorsement (New MudJeans): Using quotes or statements made in magazines or newsletters as a means to appear credible and trustworthy. • Eco labels or seals (internal versus external) 	

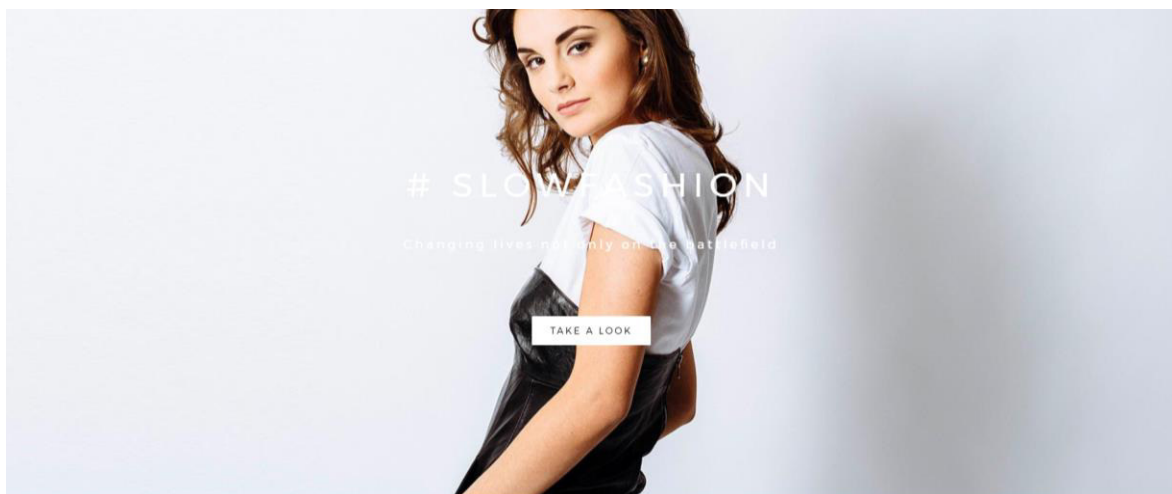
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seal of quality: Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) certifies specific product claims or provides a detailed “eco-profile” for a product’s environmental impact for display on product labels(Ottman et al., 2006) • Internal eco-seals: company develop their own eco-seal and use it (Bickart & Ruth, 2016) • External eco seal: taking the eco-seal from another source e.g. government (Bickart & Ruth, 2016) • Awards (New MudJeans) Using visual or textual elements to communicate that the brand has been awarded a prize or recognition for its sustainability efforts. • Strategic alliances/ collaborations: Alliances with environmental groups (Chan, 2013); promoting partnerships built with other firms to focus on shared priorities so that collective environmental performance goals can be set and achieved (Kumar, 2014) • Word of mouth/ Social media: message calls for reader to share content / share button, inclusion of links to MySpace, Twitter, and Facebook etc. (Touchette, 2015) 	
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Appendix II Pelechecoco

Start page (About and product page in section 5.1)



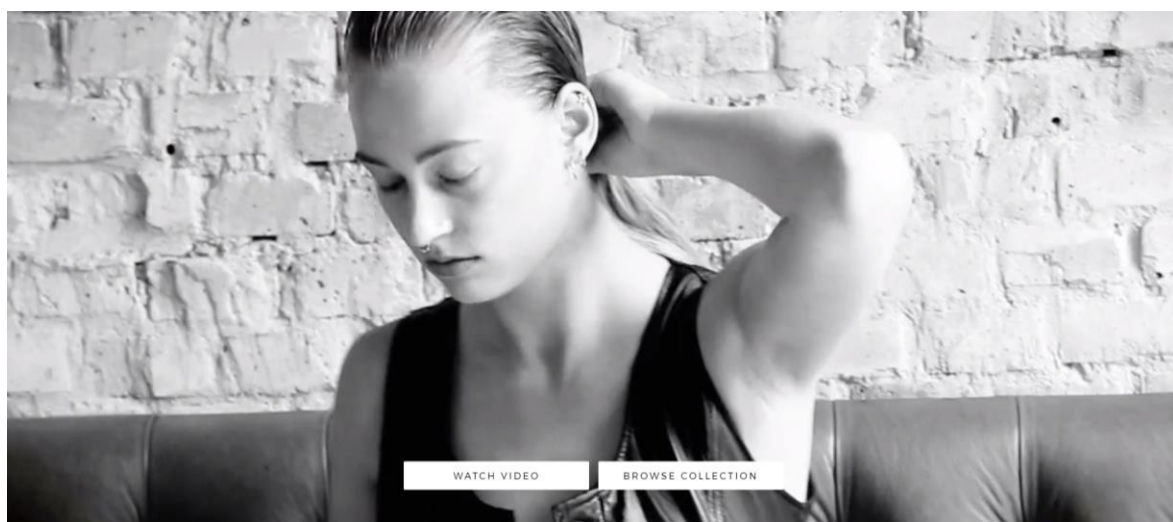
Screenshot 1



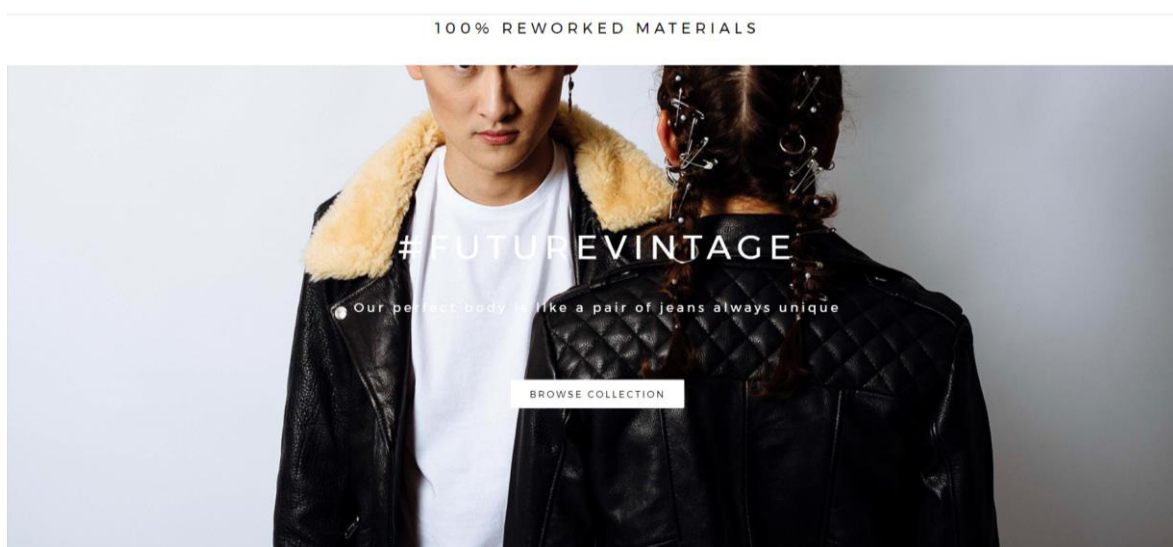
Screenshot 2



Screenshot 3



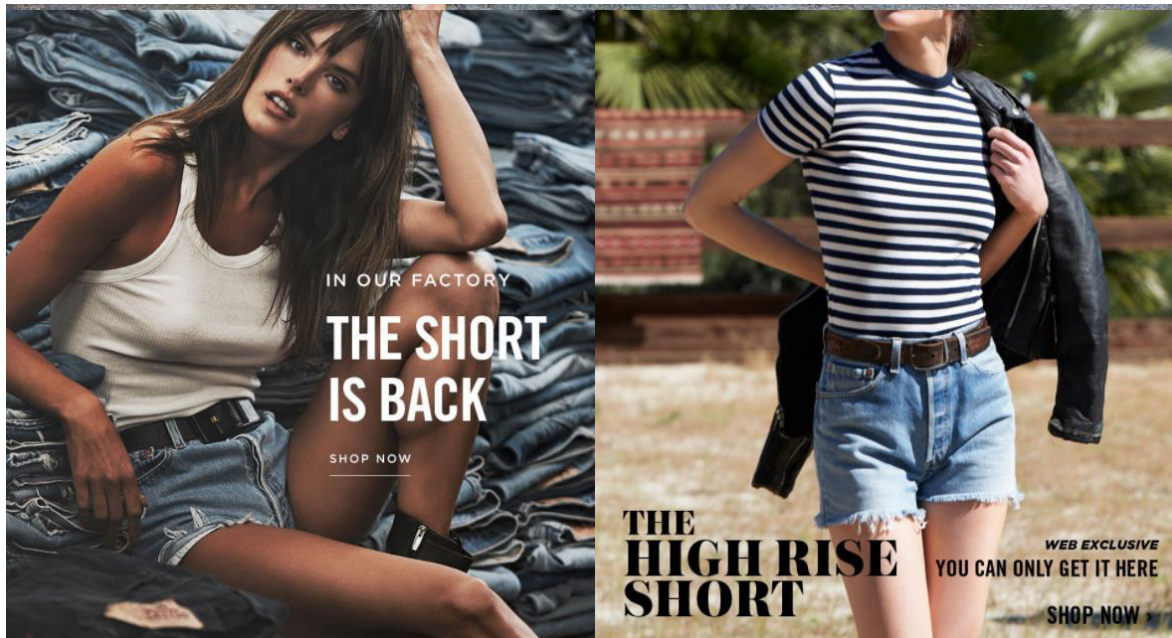
Screenshot 4



Screenshot 5

Appendix III Re/Done

Start page (About page and product page in section 5.2)



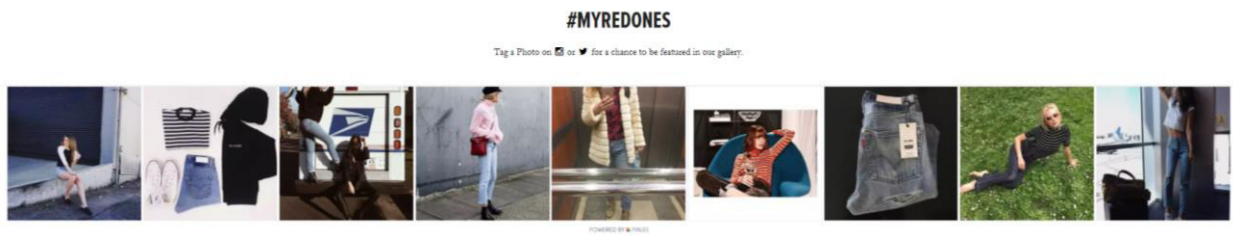
Screenshot 1



Screenshot 2



Screenshot 3



Screenshot 4

Appendix IV MudJeans

Start page



Screenshot 1

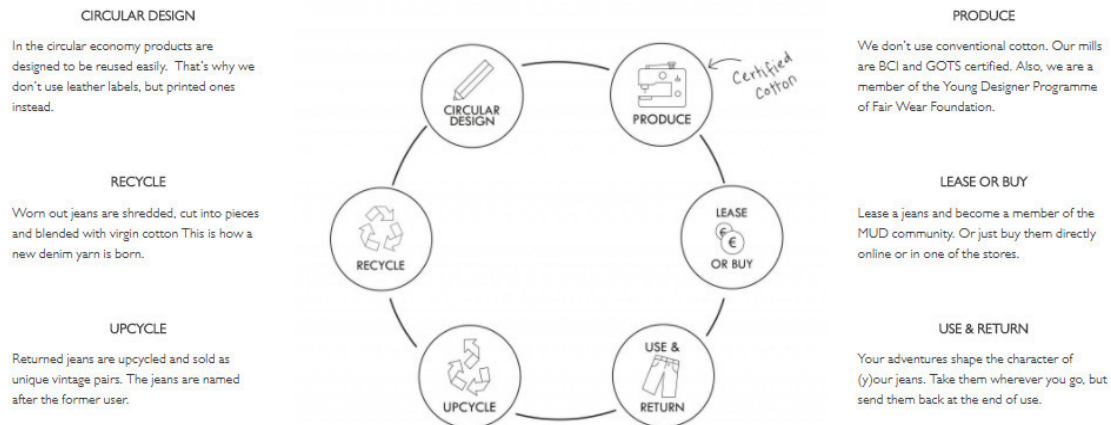


Screenshot 2

About page



Screenshot 3



Screenshot 4

WE DON'T WANT YOU TO KEEP THOSE
UNWORN JEANS IN YOUR WARDROBE

To us, it doesn't make sense to keep the jeans you don't longer wear in your wardrobe. Nor does it make sense to throw them away. We all know that our resources aren't unlimited, that's why we most of all have to be smart. The circular economy comes with a solution. In the circular economy waste is seen as a source of growth to make something new. We like the idea. That's why we create new jeans from our old jeans. The best part is that we make an environmental impact by cutting back on resource consumption. MUD Jeans is the only brand that works completely according to the principles of the circular economy.

Want to know more about MUD Jeans and recycling? Watch a [video](#) of the recycle process, filmed during The Recycle Tour past May, or read about the 6 steps below.



Screenshot 5

1. Cutting



First of all the metals are being cut out of the jeans. Because we don't have leather patches but printed ones, only the zippers and rivets have to be cut. Now the jeans are ready to be recycled.

2. Shredding



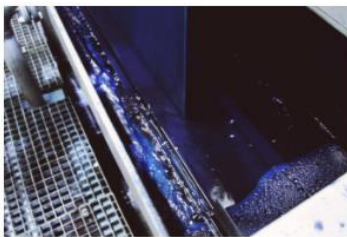
The old MUD Jeans are pulled apart and shredded into small pieces through a long way of machinery. And then processed back to cotton fibres that will be used later on.

3. Spinning



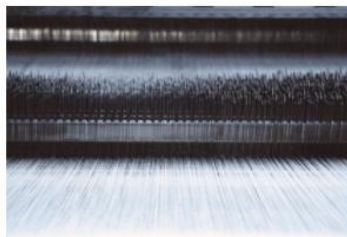
After the jeans have been shredded they are blended with virgin cotton, for strength and performance and are spun into new yarns. This all takes place at Recover, near Valencia.

4. Dyeing



When the cotton fibres were ready, the next step is done by Tejidos Royo. The yarns are dyed using Indigo colour and water. A water purifier is used to clean the water after the process.

5. Weaving



The real magic. This is where the cotton enters a high-tech (and very loud) place in the factory where special machinery weaves the yarns into one denim cloth.

6. Quality control



Finally the brand new denim is carefully checked for any defects. During the final inspection the fabric is checked on visual defects and any hazardous chemicals.

Screenshot 6

Isabeau



Dave



Marieke



HER BACKGROUND

Isabeau is an authentic Jeans School Student with roots from all over the world. Chili, Germany, China, Portugal, you name it! No wonder she has a good dose of inspiration that she used during this design project.

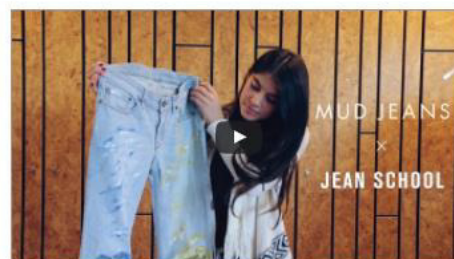
THE STORY OF HER JEANS

Name jeans: Janne

Best memory: Chilling at the beach after surfing in Chile

Favorite song: Vance Joy - Riptide

@brionxzilli



Screenshot 7



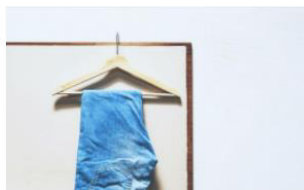
Screenshot 8

STILL DON'T BELIEVE US?

Check the reviews, listen to real people, with real stories.

The patched Vintage Jeans is truly marvelous and it fits like a glove. I believe it's becoming my favourite jeans.

— Christian, first Cut&Patch customer.



"...the material is firm, but smooth at the same time, the fit is very nice. Emphasises the legs and butt..."

(Translated to English)

— @vivacrasminn Instagram

Screenshot 9



SUSTAINABILITY – DID YOU KNOW THAT FASHION IS THE SECOND MOST POLLUTING INDUSTRY IN THE WORLD?

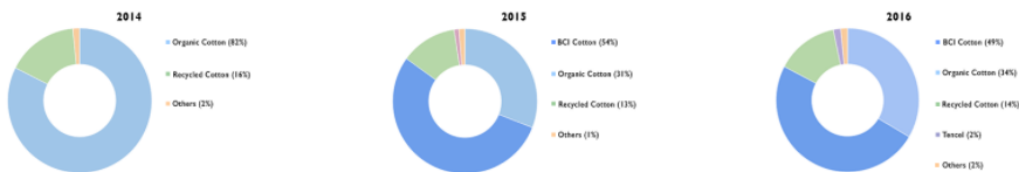
Sustainability is at the core of our company. Most of all we want the world to be a better place, thus we need a deeper understanding of the topic sustainability. Therefore we present you facts and figures about the different aspects we approach. Because just like our pair of jeans, it's what's inside that really counts.

Screenshot 10

First things first. It all starts with cotton growth. Cotton has the nickname 'a dirty crop'. Just 2.4% of the world cultivated land is planted with cotton, yet it accounts for 24% of the world's insecticide market and 11% of sale of global pesticides. Therefore it is the most pesticide-intensive crop grown on the planet.

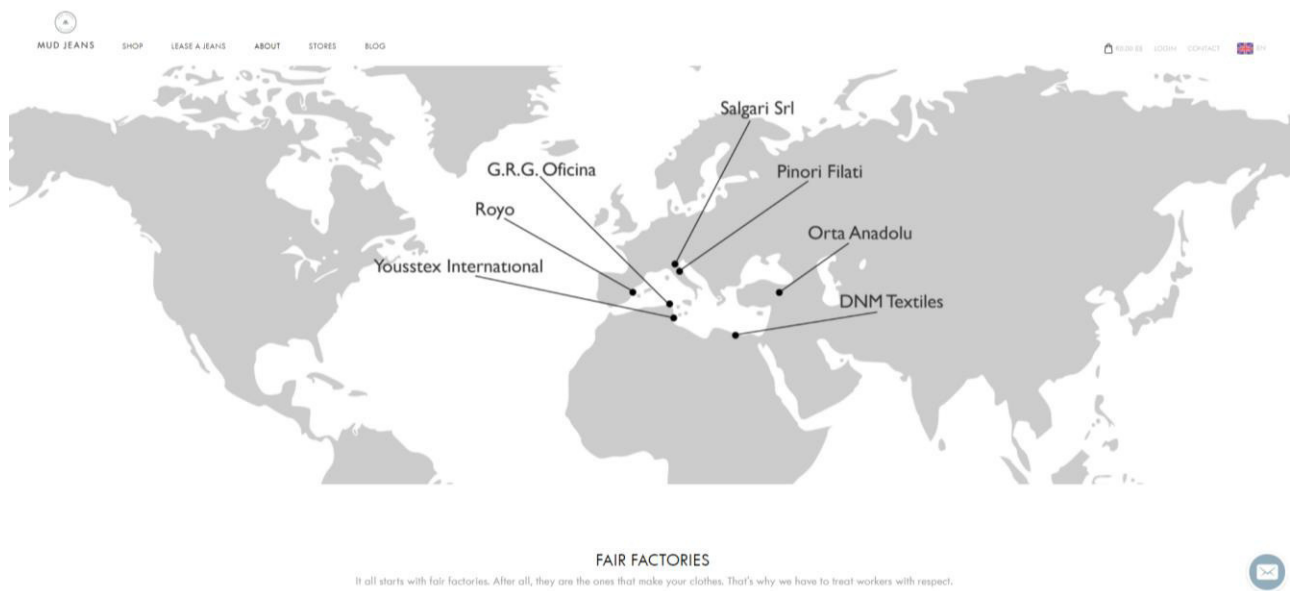
While **Organic** cotton uses no Genetically Modified (GM) seeds, there are two types that do. Conventional Cotton and cotton used by companies certified by [Better Cotton Initiative](#) do use GM seeds. Around 70 to 80% of organic cotton production is rain-fed rather than irrigated. As a result there's a lower water footprint in comparison to conventional Cotton. BCI pursues the goal of reducing the damaging effects of global cotton production on people and the environment. Although tangible results have been achieved, no exact data have been published yet. Recycled cotton typically saves 40% of water, also uses no pesticides or insecticides and eliminates landfill by disposed garments.

It's our goal to use the type of cotton that has the least impact on the environment and allows farmers to have a living wage. Ultimately we strive to use recycled cotton only for obvious reasons – to reach this we are working with several partners on techniques that enable us to increase the use of recycled cotton in our jeans and knits.



FASHION IS THE SECOND LARGEST INDUSTRY
FOR WATER CONSUMPTION, SUSTAINABILITY IS CRUCIAL.

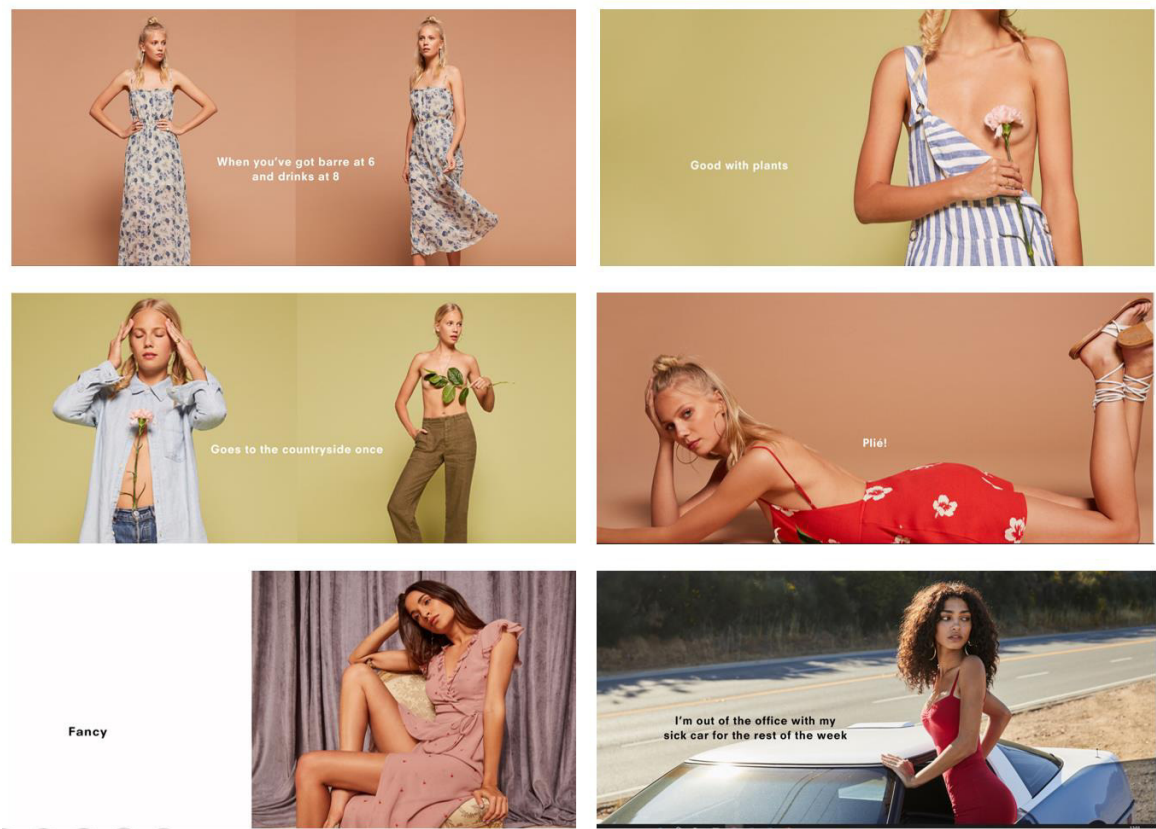
Screenshot 11



Screenshot 12

Appendix V Reformation

Start page



Screenshot 1 (Selection of rotating pictures)

Being naked is the #1 most sustainable option. We're #2.



Hi Melrose

Our new Melrose location is here! Come try on some clothes and turn on our sexy-time lighting at 8000 Melrose Ave.



We are Reformation

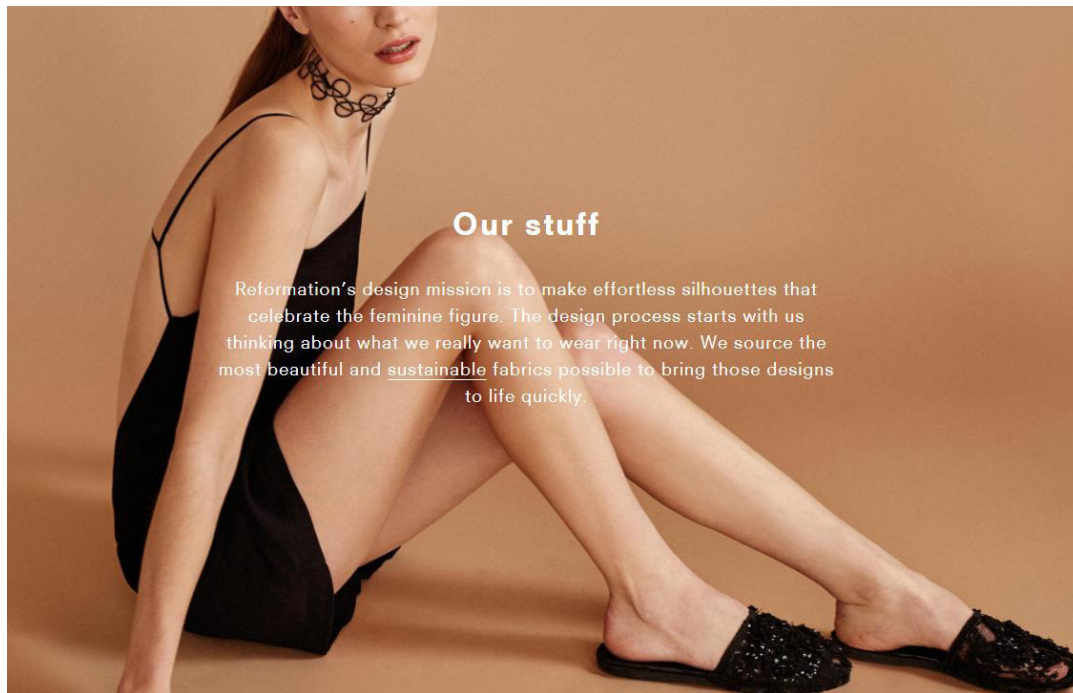
Starting Earth Day 2017, we'll be hosting tours of our factory, so you can see it IRL and meet the people who make your clothes.



Reformation Beach House

Our new pop-up just opened in East Hampton. Come by, say hi and maybe pick up something to wear to all those summer bbqs.

Screenshot 2



Screenshot 3

Design

Reformation's design mission is to make effortless silhouettes that celebrate the feminine figure. The design process starts with us thinking about what we really want to wear. Most fashion is designed 12-18 months before it's released, but at Ref a sketch becomes a dress in about a month. We're designing and making what you want to wear right now.

—

We believe the perfect fit is the most important part of our clothes. We spend hours fitting on different bodies and have a meticulous approach to our fits. Our main range is fit on multiple women that are between 5'6 and 5'10. We also launched a petites collection designed for ladies 5'4 and under, as well as a collection specially designed to fit women with a full C-DD cup. These capsules based on body types are just the first steps in our quest to make sure women of many shapes and sizes can wear Ref (and look damn good doing it).

Screenshot 4

Fabric is the magic

We make our pieces from super sustainable materials, rescued deadstock fabrics, and repurposed vintage clothing. As we grow, our goal is to push harder to create more sustainable fabric options.



Eco fabrics

Over half of our garments are made with stuff like Tencel, Viscose and recycled materials, which use way less resources than conventional cotton, and are less-polluting than oil-based fabrics to produce.

Vintage & Deadstock

About 15% of our fabrics are vintage or deadstock, which means we give a second life to fabric that may be destined for the landfill.

Screenshot 5



How it works

It's all about math, and we're super into it. The whole equation follows the lifecycle of clothes—everything from growing textile fibers and making fabric, dyeing, moving materials, manufacturing, packaging, shipping, garment care, and even recycling clothes when you're done with them.

Offset

We're not totally sustainable just yet - we need to invest in programs that actually replace what we've used and spent. So we give back to the environment in the form of offsets. Basically, in exchange for the emissions and water used by our clothes, we help plant forests to naturally capture CO₂ from the air, invest in clean water solutions, and purchase landfill gas offsets. (The Earth be like, thank you.)

The totals

We also publish the totals for all the resources we used, saved, and offset. We can't wait to see how all those little costs add up and actually make a big difference in the RefScale.

Read about all the details and methodology here.

RefScale	Sterling Dress	Industry standard	Savings
 Carbon dioxide	10 lbs	30 lbs	20 lbs
 Water	379 gal	4557 gal	4178 gal
 Waste	2 lbs	3 lbs	1 lb

Screenshot 6

Appendix VI Deadwood

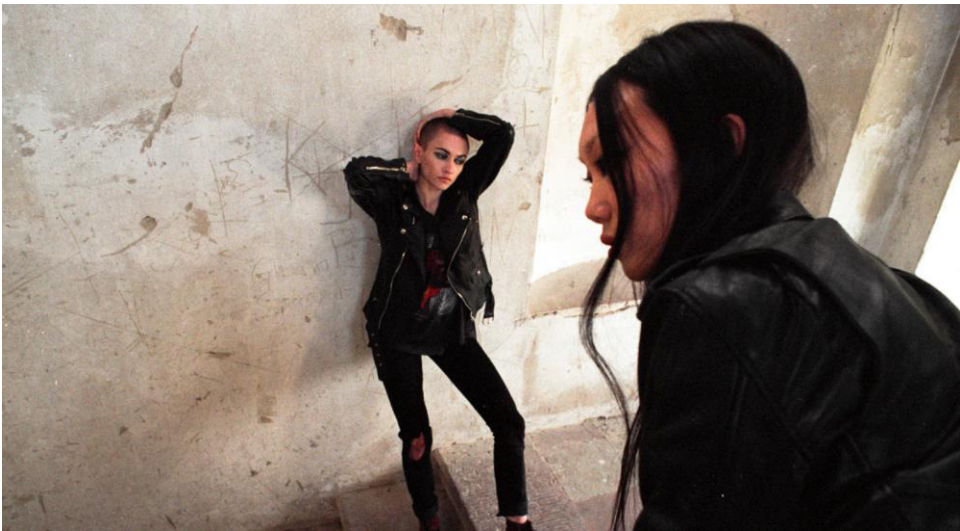
Start page



Screenshot 1



Screenshot 2



Screenshot 3

Appendix VII Better World Fashion

Start page



Screenshot 1

Storytelling

Can your jacket talk ?

Better World Fashions jackets are pieces of art! Each jacket is made from the leather of many different recycled jackets, which makes it unique. Every piece of leather has its own story.

Imagine if your jacket could talk! One might have travelled the world, another might have a love story from Paris and a third might have just been the wardrobe favourite.

The stories live on in your jacket. With our unique storytelling system, it is possible to add your experiences to your jacket's story and share it with the rest of the world.



Screenshot 2

Why leather?



There is still hope!

The leather industry is one of the most toxic industries in the world. Because of the chemicals it uses, it generates a huge environmental cost. Chromium, known to be carcinogenic, is used in large amounts, and the same is true for acids, sodium and ammonia salts – that's without mentioning the huge number of animals, who die in the process!

BWF is the alternative to traditional leather production because we don't use any chemicals and insignificant amount of water and no animal has to die. Buy a BWF jacket so we can hold on to the hope for a greener world.

At BWF we believe in people. We refuse to believe that there are consumers who deliberately want to pollute, since with BWF there is an alternative.

[Read more here](#)

Screenshot 3

New business concept

A new way to shop.

With us recycling is key! We create new out of old, reuse and develop a new life – again and again, a circular economy that underpins the central concept behind BWF. We have created payment solutions, which ensure the longevity of BWF jackets. This lets you save time and money protect the environment and stay at the cutting edge of fashion.

[Read more here](#)

Be a green innovator
wear better world fashion

Screenshot 4



How much does it cost then?

Our payment concept has two solutions – repayment or leasing.

Buyback: gives you the opportunity to buy one of our jackets for 2900,- with the option of our buyback scheme. This means that you can return the jacket when you have finished with it after use, and then get a 50 % discount on your next jacket. Perfect if you want the jacket for a while.

Leasing: lets you use our subscription model. Here you pay 189,- monthly, and you can change your jacket once every 6 months. Perfect for you, if like to change your clothes regularly!

Payment solutions are tailored to both your taste and your conscience.

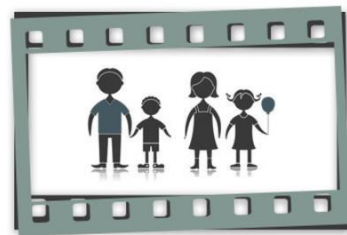
Screenshot 5

"The Better World Fashion Family"

We call our first collection of jackets, the Better World Fashion family, three women's jackets, and three styles for men.

To see them [click here](#)

[Women's jackets](#) [Men's jackets](#)



Screenshot 6

About BWF



Screenshot 7



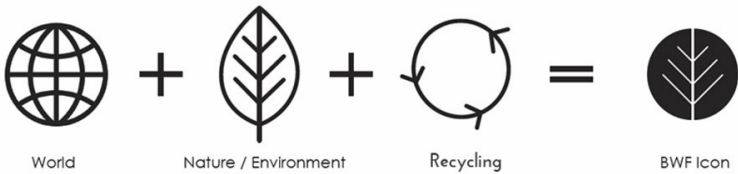
We believe in change

At BWF we believe in change, not compromise. We question the idea that environmental awareness is connected with taking shorter baths, biking instead of driving, turning off the lights etc. In short we have created a brand where you, the environment, the animals and everybody else win, each time you choose to wear your BWF jacket. This is not a choice of lifestyle it is about a style of life to benefit life.

Screenshot 8

The world needs Better World Fashion, and we need you!

At BWF we are determined to revolutionize the way the textiles are produced, used and disposed. We are eco-friendly in each production stage. We collect old leather products, which otherwise would end up in the dump and include them in our production process, creating jackets that say everything about you and – we hope – changing harmful industry processes for ever.



Screenshot 9

We dream big!

In short we dream of a better world where natural resources are not overexploited and where concepts like waste are banished and it is seen instead as a resource. Waste is simply that – a waste.

Our journey has begun with leather – something that only gets better with use – making a desirable material rather than creating an environmental headache.



Screenshot 10

Three men with big dreams

Karsten, Kresten and Reimer are the three founders of BWF, three idealists who want to make the planet a better place.



Not three hippies, a guitar and a bonfire but three experienced businessmen who want their children to live in a better world.

What they all have in common is their concern for the increasing pollution and overexploitation of the world's scarce resources and a dedication and passion for high quality materials and eye-catching designs. Their common interests, experience and abilities make them the ideal team to bring the ideas behind BWF into the new way of doing business for the clothing industry.

Screenshot 11

BWF is our baby – help us to grow

BWF is not just a company. It is literally a way of life, but we need you. Because even though we love our Better World Fashion jackets and we use them as often as possible, that will only achieve so much for the environment – a well meant gesture but only a drop in the ocean. That's why we are sharing our dreams with you, and hope that you will love your BWF-jacket as much as we do.

Help us to share the message – tell your friends and acquaintances about your amazing jacket, and start to be the difference that you want to see in the world.



Screenshot 12

Much more than just a fashion brand!

Better World Fashion is more than just a business. It is a hope for people and for nature. Put on a BWF jacket, and you can walk tall, happy in the knowledge that you are small part of a big change – part of the BWF family and the solution to a global problem.

As Mahatma Gandhi said:

*"Be the change that you wish
to see in the world."*

Screenshot 13

Product page

Dayana (Vintage Biker)



You have selected the gorgeous Dayana (Vintage Biker) jacket in small.
If you want to select a Dayana (Vintage Biker) jacket with a specific story attached. Please see below and select the one that you want.

☒ NO STORY

☐ DAYANA0011 -The unique id of this jacket is Dayana0011
SHOW IMAGES





☐ DAYANA0006 -The unique id of this jacket is Dayana0006
SHOW IMAGES

☐ DAYANA0006 -The unique id of this jacket is Dayana0006
SHOW IMAGES


ADD TO BASKET

CHOOSE DIFFERENT VARIATION


Screenshot 14


DESIGNER:
MIA KATHRINE THOLSTRUP




A BETTER WORLD JACKET,
SAVES THE ENVIRONMENT FROM
16.3 KG CO₂





SUCCESSFULLY FUNDED
CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN




A BETTER WORLD JACKET,
SAVES THE ENVIRONMENT FROM
3.75 KG CHEMICAL WASTE




A BETTER WORLD JACKET,
SAVES THE ENVIRONMENT FROM
340.48 L WATER



A BETTER WORLD JACKET,
SAVES THE ENVIRONMENT FROM
6.0 KG TRASH



Screenshot 15