REUSING GARMENTS
– AN INVESTIGATION OF INFLUENCERS TO RETURN USED GARMENTS

Thesis for One-Year Master, 15 ECTS
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Abstract

Background: A sustainable economy becomes more and more important for most parts of the society. Especially the fashion industry is being criticized for wasting resources and being non-sustainable. Therefore, some textile producers started to implement programs that are aiming on a reuse of garments.

Aims of research: The purpose of this research is to discover how customers can be motivated to return unwanted garments, also considering possible hindering factors. To gather this information it is necessary to build a theoretical framework with customer-based theories. The thesis explored how a second hand multi-brand retailer can take active action in encouraging customers to return unwanted textiles.

Method: This research was conducted as an inductive qualitative research. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with several second hand retailers. The analysis was carried out following the Giogia method.

Results: The thesis revealed that the garment disposal behavior is affected by various influences. Influences on the disposal behavior of garment consumers are personal values and believes. The dispose of unwanted garments is often influenced by an ease of handling and the same behavior is followed over the years simply because individuals are used to a certain garment disposal behavior. The largest hindering factors why customers do not return garments to retailers are caused by a lack of information as well as insufficient transparency. This behavior can be affected by second hand retailers by providing improved communication and a motivation to return garments by offering benefits for the customer. The size of the company does not play a major role

Keywords: Sustainability, Fashion retail, Extended producer responsibility, Post-consumer textile waste, Second hand retailing
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1 Introduction

The following chapter introduces the reader to the topic discussed in this thesis. It provides an insight to the characteristics of the today's fashion industry and draws attention to the garment disposal stages and alternatives. In addition, the problems resulting from garment consumption and the aspect of sustainability in context to the fashion industry are illuminated. After a short introduction to the topic, the purpose of the thesis is justified and the research questions are named.

1.1 Problem statement

This century is marked by great changes with enormous economic, social, and environmental developments as well as challenges. The progressive technical possibilities, the steady population growth, and the increasing material demands of the world population cause global changes of the environment. Climate change is just one consequence of that. In order to counteract such consequences of human actions and to avoid them in the future, the importance of thinking and acting in the sense of sustainability has increased in recent years (Fletcher, 2010).

In the textile and fashion industry, one of the major causes of environmental pollution, sustainability issues seem to have gained importance. But is sustainability there just a marketing tool of the corporations or something that people actually aspire to? The textile and fashion industry has undergone a change in recent years. Fashion trends are changing much faster, fashion designers are creating up to twelve collections per year and they are already working on the next fashion show before they have finished the last (Fletcher, 2010).

The value chains as well as the product life cycles of clothing are shorter than ever. In order to keep prices low, goods are manufactured in developing countries, where large quantities can be produced at a low price. Customers buy more clothes because costs are low. The problem is that the fibers, from which the clothes are made, continue to have the same growth cycle. In order to protect the environment, these aspects should also be taken into account (Fletcher, 2008). As the textile and apparel industry grows, the environmental damage it causes increases. This environmental damage is not only caused by the production, but also by the consumption behavior of the customer, such as by the amount of clothing that is purchased and the type of garment disposal (Niinimäki and Hassi, 2011).

Based on the above-mentioned factors, it can be concluded that consumer behavior plays an essential role in reducing the environmental impact of the textile and fashion industry. Consumers have control over what clothes they buy, how long they wear their garments, and when they discard them (Chen and Burns, 2006). Eco-conscious reused clothing in this work refers to garments that receive a second life instead of being discarded and, thus, have a less negative impact on the environment. It is relevant to consider whether consumers would buy reused garments if they had more knowledge about apparel, its manufacturing process and environmental impact, and would be better informed about alternatives. For this reason, it is important to identify the factors that affect consumers when consuming sustainable clothing.

The textile and fashion industry is one of the biggest polluters, responsible for seriously damaging the environment. According to the United State Environmental Protection Agency (2013), 12.4 million tons of clothing and non-durable products were produced in 2013, with a recovery rate of only 14.8 percent. Cotton, for example, needs more than ten tons of water to grow enough cotton for one pair of jeans. Therefore, uneconomic use of water within the cotton production can lead to water scarcity. In addition, the use of pesticides in cotton growing can lead to various ecological problems, as well as harm the health of cotton farmers. Every year, $ 2 billion worth of chemicals are used to cultivate cotton, which does not only destroy farmland, but can also penetrate into food (Fletcher and Grose, 2012).
While the negative effects of traditional fiber production are growing and affecting human health, attempts are being made to produce under more sustainable conditions. In addition, the growing knowledge about the negative impact of the textile and apparel industry on the environment causes customers to rethink sustainability. Supporters of sustainable products assume that the interest in more sustainable clothing will increase just as much as the interest in organic food, which has come to the fore from the niche market (Cervellon and Werner, 2012).

Currently, the market for sustainable textiles is still quite small. However, it is expected to grow significantly in the upcoming years, with more people showing interest in the Slow Fashion Movement (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). According to the International Association of Natural Textile Industry (2015), annual sales of reused textiles have already risen by an average of five percent in recent years. It is important for suppliers of reused textiles to understand which factors or variables influence the consumer when making a purchasing decision and discarding of old garments. However, as the experiences with regard of the purchasing behavior of customers as well as the barriers connected to it differ, no clear recommendation for action can be given (Kollmus and Agyeman, 2002).

In addition, consumers of reused garments are dissatisfied with the poor quality and lack of information on how to properly use and care for their clothing. Consumers are demanding more services from providers, some of which are not fulfilled (Niinimäki and Hassi, 2011). The question is whether sellers and buyers can have an impact on a more sustainable product lifecycle by engaging in the development of the use and disposal phases.

1.2 Goal setting

Taking a closer look at the industry of textile and fashion, it can be recognized that the disposal of used garments is a central problem. The University of Borås is involved in the Re:textile project, which focuses on developing circular processes within the textile and fashion industry with the aim to develop new business opportunities. By cooperating with organizations and companies, new ideas for redesign processes are discussed and business models are developed to save planetary resources (Re:textile, 2017). The Swedish company Aplace is one cooperation partner of this project. They offered to support a research project investigating the textile backward supply chain as well as conducting research on factors which motivate consumers to return unwanted garments to fashion retailers in order to be resold.

As far as the author is concerned, in the academic world it is only little known about aspects that motivate customers to return garments. Accordingly, the topic around returning second hand garments is investigated in cooperation with the Swedish multi-brand retailer Aplace, offering support by providing insight to their second hand concept.

The paper is exploring clothing reuse in theory as well as in practice. Since there is little known about garment reuse concepts for second hand fashion retailers, a specific focus is to identify possibilities of how customers can be encouraged to bring back their cloth instead of disposing of them. Here, also hindering factors why customers chose not to return unwanted garments are investigated. In connection with that, possible actions carried out by retailers in order to increase the awareness and willingness to return used clothes are investigated, i.e. the communication with their customers.

Through an inductive research similarities and differences of second hand concepts within the three Swedish retailers Aplace, Filippa K and Houdini are analyzed. The aim of this thesis is to identify reasons why consumers might not return their garments. Furthermore, the paper aims to find possibilities for second hand textile suppliers to encourage consumers to return their garments for the purpose of reselling them.
1.3 Research questions
The problem mentioned above leads to the following research questions that are formulated from a company’s perspective and aimed to be answered during the thesis:

Research question 1: How can consumers be motivated to return unwanted garments? Which are possible hindering factors?

Research question 2: How can a second hand multi-brand retailer take active influence on increasing the consumers' willingness to return unwanted garments and avoid hindering factors?

2 Definitions and theoretical frameworks
Today, apparel companies and consumers are confronted with the terms “sustainable”, “organic”, “green”, “fair trade”, “ethical”, “eco”, and “eco-friendly”. Terminologies such as these must be understood by the consumer in order to know what it means for a product and, thus, make a right purchasing decision. If consumers were better informed, they could be more enthusiastic about sustainable garments and make their own contribution to their dissemination. The following chapter explains theoretical as well as conceptual foundations that serve as a basis and provide guidance for a better understanding of the thesis. In order to understand the purchasing behavior of sustainable clothing, it is essential to examine the attitude of consumers and their behavior. In the second section, the relevant consumer behavior theories are discussed regarding their relevance for the research purpose and questions.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Fashion industry
Today's fashion industry is criticizeable due to its low predictability, high volatility, its consistence of short life cycles and determination by high impulse purchases (Christopher et al., 2004). The fashion industry is furthermore characterized by unsustainable consumption practices of consumers (Niinimäki and Hassi, 2011). What is more, rapidly changing fashion trends and unlimited options to satisfy customer needs and wants results in unlimited production of often low quality products, offered for low prices. The fast fashion trend followed by companies such as Zara supports short product life cycles and a permanent replacement of garments (Fletcher, 2010).

2.1.2 Textile supply chain
To understand the supply chain processes, Muthu (2014) chronologically introduces the various stages within the fashion industry, also known as the forward supply chain, through which a product passes. The textile supply chain starts at the raw material stage, followed by yarn and fabric production processes and manufacturing, before garments are distributed to the retailer, where they are sold and used by the customer (Muthu, 2014). The forward supply chain is also known as linear economy. On the contrary, a closed-loop supply chain is defined as the "taking back of products from customers and recovering added value by reusing the entire product, and/or some of its modules, components and parts" (Guide and Wassenhover, 2009, pp. 10). This definition is supported by Krikke et al. (2014), according to whom there exist three options to close-the-loop. The first option is to reuse the garment as a whole. Secondly, only components of the garment are reused and the last option is to reuse the
material of a textile product. Moreover, the authors point out that the closed-loop process contains of the forward supply chain plus the so called reverse supply chain which attempts to closes-the-loop (Krikke et al., 2014). Products can be reintroduced into downstream activities within the reverse supply chain. They will then flow through the forward distribution systems of the forward supply chain (Talbot et al., 2007).

This thesis focuses only on the reuse of complete garments to extend their lifetime. The terminology of extending the supply chain is used to describe this phenomenon and is further described in the following section.

Figure 1 illustrates how the forward and reverse supply chain can occur in the textile and apparel industry. The forward supply chain starts with the process of research and development, followed by the design and engineering of the product. Further, procurement and production take place, before the product passes the marketing department and products are finally distributed. After-sales service is the last step included in the forward supply chain. The reverse supply chain involves further processes such as testing, recovery, repair and reuse activities. Remanufacturing and component extraction are further steps that follow within a backward supply chain. Material recycling is another option at a later point in time. Incineration and landfill are essential parts of the backward supply chain as well. Not all processes necessarily appear for all textiles, but provide options to be taken before the product
is reintroduced to the forward supply chain. What is not included in this illustration is the collection process, which has to take place in order to enable the reverse supply chain. After at least some of these procedures have taken place, the product can be reintroduced into downstream activities. Those can take place at several points, which are marked by dashed arrows. As one example, after repairing the garment it can be postponed to the marketing department (V7 to V4) continuing its life cycle once more. Apart from this, the presented thesis focuses on the activities visualized on the right side of the figure, especially V4, V5 and V7.

Besides, it is distinguished between post-industrial and post-customer waste (Pui-Yan Ho and Choi, 2012). Post-industrial waste is reintroduced after the production process, which is visualized by the dashed arrow at V3 in figure 1. The focus for this thesis is on post-customer waste, excluding any kind of waste before the point of sale.

2.1.3 Garment disposal

The following figure briefly illustrates the relevant steps that a garment passes through before its disposal. After its production it is sold to the customer who is using it. At some later point it is disposed of. The lifecycle of the product ends when it is disposed to landfill. Choi et al. (2015) criticize the garment disposal to landfill since all materials including raw material and energy used during the manufacturing are wasted. That is why alternative approaches are considered. Instead of discarding the product to landfill, the garment can be returned and resold to consumers. Thereby its lifecycle will be extended. Another option worth mentioning, even though it is not in focus in this thesis, is the recycling of fibers, which can then be reintroduced at the garment manufacturing stage.

![Garment lifecycle](source: own illustration)

The usage and disposal of textiles is dependent on the ecological and functional properties of the garment as well as determined by consumer behavior. Depending on the consumer's behavior garments either end up in landfill or they can be reused or recycled, whereas the last option occurs seldom (Muthu, 2014).

The easiest way for consumers is to discard old garments through normal household waste. Another option is to donate them, which can be for instance done by returning them to textile containers or have them picked up at defined days of the year in front of the house. Donating them is a better alternative to waste disposal, but it is unclear what happens to the garments.
Second hand sale is another possibility. This can either take place directly by the individual or by a second hand trader (Monar and Seuring, 2007).

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Theory of reasoned action (TRA) and theory of planned behavior (TPB)

The theory of reasoned action (TRA), see figure 3, and the theory of planned behavior (TPB), see figure 4, which was formulated by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), aim to better understand consumer behavior. Reason for the research was the inconsistent findings in relation to whether specific behavior models can be predicted from the attitude. In order to better understand human behavior, the TRA considers attitudes in reaction to the behavior in focus, as well as the subjective norms that influence relevant persons or groups of people (Rossmann, 2011).

Settings or attitudes generally describe relatively stable evaluations of an object and consist of cognitive, affective, and conative components. The cognitive component allows the presentation of an object, the affective component is responsible for an emotional response to a feeling or an object, whereas the conative component refers to the behavior. However, TRA assumes attitudes towards the behavior. This refers to a positive or negative evaluation of a behavior or even a cognitive, affective or conative response of behavior. The subjective norm describes the individual perception of the social ambient pressure to perform or refrain from a certain behavior (Rossmann, 2011).

Attitudes and subjective norms are normally the same. Accordingly, individuals tend to purchase sustainable apparel if they feel that the behavior is positive and their environment supports it. If this is the case, it is likely that a person intending to buy sustainable textiles (behavioral intention) will ultimately also buy sustainable garments (behavior). Intention is a conscious goal of humans to behave in a certain way. With the intention of behavior, therefore, a measure of the likelihood that an individual wants to engage in a certain behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) is meant.

The TPB extends the TRA by a further component: perceived behavioral control. Perceived behavioral control has an indirect influence on behavior (Rossmann, 2011). This describes the assumption of an individual regarding the difficulty of executing a specific behavioral alternative. Belief in the possibility of feasibility may be related to former positive experiences or information from a social group. The perceived behavioral control furthermore explains how much influence someone has to do something regularly (Ajzen, 1991).

Figure 3: Basis model Theory of Reasoned Action (source: Ajzen und Madden, 1986)
2.2.2 Stimulus-Organism-Reaction (S-O-R) model

To study buying behavior, it is essential to understand how buying decisions are made. Therefore, the Stimulus-Organism-Reaction (S-O-R) model, which can be seen in figure 5, functions as an explanation. The model illustrates that the purchasing behavior of a person is influenced by certain stimuli. This could be, for example, an advertising message or a price change. Chang, Eckman and Yan (2011) furthermore point out, that the buying decision process takes place in the organism and, therefore, cannot be observed. Individual factors, such as changes in desires or attitude, are processed in the organism and influence the mode of action of a stimulus. These stimuli lead to different reactions (responses) (Chang, Eckman and Yan, 2011).

The buying behavior satisfies the needs of consumers and is purpose-oriented. It is influenced by external factors, which include cognitive and activating processes that go far beyond a merely shopping. A particular stimulus, such as an advertising message or a price change, affects an organism and has a direct impact on the purchasing decision. In addition, the particular background of the consumer, such as the social stratum or the culture or, influences the individual buying behavior. For example, taste preferences differ when buying apparel. Members of culture punk differ significantly from the subculture Hells Angels. Similarly, peer groups, such as friends and family, have a direct impact on the consumer. The behavior of an individual is always situational. Therefore, it has an impact whether the consumer is under pressure to buy the product or if the product is to serve a particular purpose, such as a gift (Chang, Eckman and Yan, 2011).

2.2.3 Green fashion versus eco-fashion

Environmental friendly clothing is also referred to as green fashion, eco-fashion, ethical fashion or sustainable fashion. Terms of sustainability can have different meanings in different contexts and confuse due to the fact that the same term is often used differently.
Therefore, an explanation of the most relevant and commonly used terminology follows in order to understand the terminology in the following thesis. A central term in this context is sustainability. However, there is no single, precise definition for the term sustainability. Fletcher defines sustainability as the integration of human well-being and natural integrity (Fletcher, 2008). Thomas describes the term as something that fulfills the needs of the present without depriving future generations of the opportunity to meet their own needs (Thomas, 2008). Therefore, in the following thesis, sustainable textiles are understood to mean garments, the production of which is handled responsibly and resources are produced as gently as possible. Mainly sustainable materials are used in production with no chemicals. So the garment as a product is strongly linked to climate change, pollution, and environmental issues.

The difference between green fashion and eco-fashion is marginal. Fashion in general is a changing style or a kind of imitation to understand. It connects social classes. Moreover, it separates them from others, if the fashion style is not accepted (Simmel, 1957). The term eco-fashion has its origins in the 1990s and refers to trends and fashion that have little or no impact on the environment (Thomas, 2008). In media, the term “eco” is often used as an indicator for something that is related to environmental issues: eco-textile fiber, eco-friendly t-shirts or eco-jeans (Thomas, 2008). According to Cervellon and Hertj (2010) eco-fashion is always related to terms such as organic, ethical, fair trade and green. Terms are used interchangeably, although they have different meanings. Therefore, eco-fashion companies should agree on uniform definitions in order not to unnecessarily confuse consumers. Eco-fashion refers to all clothes that have been produced environmentally friendly. Eco-friendly means that the environment is only minimally or at best not damaged. In the production of organic eco-fashion garments are made of sustainable materials. Examples for sustainable materials are hemp or non-textiles such as bamboo or recycled bottles (Mintel, 2009). Henninger et al. (2016) further state that attempts are being made to save water during production processes and to generate as little chemical waste and CO2 as possible. Additionally, no chemicals are used. As a result, eco-fashion is not only environmentally friendly and sustainable, but also better tolerated (Henninger, Alevizou and Oates, 2016).

The term green fashion, hereinafter referred to as GF, stands for the use of sustainable materials and fair manufacturing conditions. Furthermore, the term describes a “green lifestyle” (Henninger, Alevizou and Oates, 2016). For consumers, not only is the right style, but also the price an important purchasing criterion. Conscious consumers are willing to change their buying behavior and pay a higher price. As green fashion is produced according to sustainability standards, a large part of the costs are spend for materials as well as in production. GF mainly uses organic cotton, silk, and hemp (Henninger, Alevizou and Oates, 2016). It is already possible to speak of eco-fashion here, since non-toxic textiles are produced sustainable and under fair conditions. If the benefit of the consumer is to be maximized, i.e. value placed on the well-being and health of the society, one speaks of ethical fashion. The aim is to treat workers fair and minimize environmental pollution (Cervellon and Carey, 2011).

### 2.2.4 Slow fashion versus fast fashion

Other relevant terms and topics to be investigated are the ideas of fast fashion versus slow fashion. The term fast fashion is a term used to describe fashion companies who aim to bring trends to the store as quickly as possible. These companies have a high garment turnover rate. Their goal is to provide fashionable apparel to customers as quickly and cheaply as possible (Beard, 2008). The author further describes how consumers are becoming more and more
accustomed to the availability of fashion-oriented garments that are extremely cheap and, therefore, have no responsibility for disposing of their clothes. Good examples of fast fashion brands include Primark, Forever 21, H&M, Zara, C&A, New Yorker and Pimkie. The high availability of apparel lowers the ethical value of the brand. Therefore, a shift towards a more sustainable textile industry is needed in order to reduce waste and damage to the environment. The use of synthetic material does not solve environmental problems due to the fact that they are not biodegradable and are mostly disposed of in landfills (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009).

Caused by the fact that the textile industry has a major impact on the environmental pollution it is attempted to enlarge the life cycle of garments in order to reduce required resources. Against the growth-obsessed development in the textile industry a contrary more sustainable movement is slow fashion. Slow fashion is a socially conscious approach, focusing on quality instead of quantity with the aim to change consumer behavior towards less frequent purchases of higher quality products (Fletcher, 2010).

Slow fashion is based on sustainability and, thus, on high quality, regional products, small lines and fair working conditions (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). Slow fashion has its origins in the slow food movement in the 1980s, in response to the fast-growing fast food lifestyle. Current researchers differ in their definitions of slow fashion. According to Fletcher (2010), one of the leading scientists in her field, slow fashion looks at sustainability in the fashion sector based on various values and goals to date. In order to reduce the volume of goods, a changed infrastructure is needed, as well as long throughput times and a focus on design classics. Slow fashion stands for deviating from goals and values of growth-based fast fashion (Fletcher, 2010).

Slow fashion urges textile and clothing companies to strive to eco-friendly, incorporate sustainable, and ethical practices in their design and to select production methods that value quality, well-trained workers, and craftsmanship. In addition, it educates consumers to play an active role in consciously choosing apparel (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013).

2.2.5 Circular economy versus linear economy

The current economy is determined by a linear take-make-dispose system which depends on continuous material supply. This system is known for a resource intensive consumption. In contrast to this consumption-based system, a restorative economic model is based on reusing and regenerating its resources in the most efficient way and avoiding all sources of waste, which can be compared to a closed-loop system. In order to extend the life of a garment two principles developed by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013) are introduced. The power of inner cycle and the power of circling longer have the goal to increase the material productivity and operate as a source of value creating within a circular economy. The power of the inner circle is the proxy for the principle of minimizing material usage within the supply chain. According to this system, the cycle has to be as tight as possible in order to save materials, energy, labor and capital needed for the investment. All costs related to textile treatment activities, such as collecting and sorting, have to be lower compared to the linear alternative in order to be profitable. By following the power of the inner circle, environmental impacts such as emission, water and greenhouse gas are reduced, compared to a larger circle. The power of circling longer represents the principle of increasing the number of times a material or product is reused, remanufactured or recycled (MacArthur Foundation, 2013).

In order to implement concepts of circular economy, Pui-Yan Ho and Choi (2012) identify a concept called the Five-R framework, considering the following aspects: re-imagine, re-design, reduce, reuse and recycle. Starting by taking a look at the first two aspects re-imaginution and re-design of processes and products, the aim is to encourage a more environmental creative thinking to enable the development of new opportunities which in the
long run will increase the value of the company (Pui-Yan Ho and Choi 2012). Re-design additionally includes the consideration about product design to reduce environmental impacts within the product life cycle (Esty and Winston, 2006). Reducing as the third aspect of the Five-R framework concentrates on the source as well as it aims to prevent waste. Waste is rigorously to be avoided. Reusing products is a further component included in the Five-R framework. It proposes to use the product in its original state repeatedly in contrast to disposing of it in order to prolong the life of the garment (Pui-Yan Ho and Choi 2012). Recycling is considered as the last element, but is not explained further in the scope of this research.

2.2.6 Sustainable consumption concept in the textile and fashion industry

The independent variables include, among others, eco friendly or environmental behavior and commitment as well as the environmental concerns of consumers. Environmentally conscious behavior refers to a behavior, in which one consciously tries to reduce the negative influences of one's own actions on the environment, for example by saving energy and water and by reducing waste (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). Consumer environmental concern considers how much an individual cares about this matter. The variables indicate whether and how many customers consume, which has been studied in numerous studies (Gam, 2011; Kim et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2011; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2013; Ha-Brookshire and Norum, 2011; Park et al., 2013; Kim et al., 1997; Kim and Damhorst, 1998). Gam (2011) and Park et al. (2013) have found that high environmental interest leads to a purchase of environmentally friendly products. The higher the environmentally friendly behavior, or the environmental concern, the higher the purchase intent of sustainable apparel.

In contrast, Butler and Francis (1997) found that most consumers, while showing environmental awareness, rarely or never consider the environmental impact of their buying behavior. They conclude that the divergence between consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior might be due to the fact that consumers justify their apparel purchasing decisions predominant on factors such as style, fit, price, and fashion trends. Shen et al. (2011) contribute that consumers are more concerned about human rights than environmental concerns. More emphasis is placed on preventing exploiting companies than on protecting the environment.

Furthermore, the environmental concerns of consumers buying garments are generally relatively limited (Kim and Damhorst, 1998; Butler and Francis, 1997; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2010; Hiller Connell and Kozar, 2012; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2013). In their study Butler and Francis (1997) state that 90 percent of consumers rarely or never consider the environment in their clothing purchases. Kozar and Hiller Connell (2010) found in their study that only 41 percent of the participants were willing to pay premium prices (referred to below as PP) for green fashion. Under PP, price surcharges are to be understood. Only a third of respondents reported that companies’ environmental performance impacts their purchasing decisions. This also explains why only twelve percent of the respondents actively sought the environmental policy of the companies.

In another study by Hiller Connell (2011), environmentally conscious participants were asked about their sustainable behavior when purchasing garments. Respondents constantly questioned their personal needs and focused only on the purchase when there was a real need. Study participants put value on garments made from ecologically desirable textile fibers. In the end, the participants reported that they bought garments based on environmental friendliness either from second-hand sources or from companies that are environmentally friendly (Hiller Connell, 2011). Health conscious customers are another dedicated group of
individuals interested in sustainable textiles. They buy sustainable clothing motivated by health benefits and to support organic farming (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009). Studies show that consumers who have already bought organic food show a lower willingness to purchase conventionally produced cotton t-shirts and have a greater willingness to buy GF (Ellis and McCracken, 2012). Consumers are familiar with the benefits that organic offers, such as the superior quality of products (Ellis and McCracken, 2012). Another study shows that customers are more likely to purchase organic food than ethical clothing, as food directly affects their health and, therefore, offers a direct benefit to the customer, while buying clothes does not directly affect their health. In sum, consumers show more ethical commitment if their health is directly positively influenced (Joergens, 2006).

According to Ceballos Ochoa (2010), there is no evidence for a direct link between the consumption of organic products and the willingness to purchase sustainable garments. Nonetheless, the willingness to buy organic foods is crucial for consumers to perceive soft, high quality, and pesticide-free cotton as important to their individual quality of life. It can be said, according to Ceballos Ochoa (2010), that the consumption of organic food facilitates the transition to bi-clothing.

Hill and Lee (2012) state that organic garments are bought for the benefit of health and to support organic agriculture, but some biodegradable materials divide garments into the most important, less important, and least important.

As with organic food, there are two motivations for consumers to purchase GF. First, it provides direct benefits to the consumer and his health, such as residue-free materials. Second, it offers indirect benefits to the consumers, such as the welfare of cotton farmers (Ceballos Ochoa, 2010; Wier and Calverley, 2002).

Eco-conscious knowledge is factual knowledge about the environment. Environmentally conscious consumers have more knowledge about environmental issues. Consumers' knowledge is low with regard to sustainable garment consumption and, thus, to sustainable textiles as well. As the result of various studies, a scale was developed, which shows that the low environmental awareness of consumers negatively affects the purchase of GF (Kim and Damhorst, 1998; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2010; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2013). The studies used a knowledge scale of environmental apparel. These are knowledge of chemical pollutants arising from the processing and manufacturing of textile fibers, the biodegradability and the recyclability of goods, and government-defined standards for clean air and water to be imposed on manufacturing companies (Kim and Damhorst, 1998; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2010; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2013). Recycling is given when a garment is discarded by the first owner and receives a second life as second-hand textile (Thomas, 2008). However, the term recycling is also frequently used for garments made from trash, such as plastic bottles. Hiller Connell (2010) and Hill and Lee (2012) confirm that consumers generally have little knowledge about the textile industry's impact on the environment. On the other hand, the knowledge about environmental pollution on the part of the textile industry is an important factor for many consumers in buying sustainable clothing. The problem is that many consumers do not have this knowledge. The problem with the lack of knowledge of consumers is that the low level of environmentally conscious knowledge limits environmentally conscious behavior (Hiller Connell, 2010). Only little or no information about various garments are provided to the consumers, which is needed to make a sustainable buying decision. In the future, more emphasis should be placed on customer education in order to increase the knowledge of eco-fashion and to raise the willingness to purchase GF (Shen et al., 2011).

This section compares different study results of the environmental aware attitude of customers. Research by Butler and Francis (1997), Kim and Damhorst (1998), Kozar and Hiller Connell (2010), and Kozar and Hiller Connell (2013) on sustainable garment

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consumption support the statement that most consumers are concerned about the state of the environment. Hustvedt and Dickson confirm this statement in their 2009 study, in which they found that a majority of customers recognize organic agriculture as positive for the environment. Participants in another study not only show general concerns about the environment, but also believe that industry, government, and every individual should work actively to improve environmental conditions (Butler and Francis, 1997).

In a study on the environmentally conscious attitude of American women over the age of 25 in terms of sustainable apparel consumption, factors influencing the attitude of garment buying behavior were examined (Butler and Francis, 1997). Although the behavior of the participants in the study can be described as predominantly environmentally friendly, they were rather indifferent when it comes to the topic of clothing and the environment. In another study, conducted by Hustvedt and Dickson (2009), the authors support the finding and conclude that consumers are more likely to have a neutral attitude towards sustainable garments.

Kozar and Hiller Connell (2010) found that the consumption of sustainable apparel is furthermore influenced by socio-demographic factors. While individuals with a higher level of education are more willing to purchase socially responsible goods and boycott brands or retailers that act against working conditions, this is less true for individuals from less educated backgrounds (Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2010).

Most studies in this field are based on the theory of planned behavior (Shaw et al., 2007). Hereby, desire serves as a mediator. A mediator checks whether the connection of the DV (dependent variables), as well as IV (independent variables) is mediated by another variable. The direct effect of DV and IV is explained by the significant indirect effect of the mediator (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The mediator variable is, thus, influenced by the IV and explains the connection of the other two variables. Shaw et al. (2007) found out that the desire conveys the effect of the attitude to the purchase intention as well as partly the effect of the subjective norms on the purchase intention. As shown in figure 6, behavioral intent also fully conveys the effects of subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control on behavior (Shaw et al., 2007).

![Diagram](source: Shaw et al., 2007)

The connection between the variables environmental awareness attitude, environmental awareness knowledge and environmental conscious behavior of consumers has been a much-researched topic for years and is being investigated in various areas, such as consumer behavior, marketing, psychology and consumer behavior. Some researchers found a positive
link between these variables (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2013; Yan, 2012), while other studies (Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2010; Butler and Francis, 1997; Hiller Connell and Kozar, 2012) show that even if consumers are knowledgeable and concerned about environmental issues associated with apparel production, distribution, and consumption, there is not always a significant positive relationship between the environmentally conscious knowledge, the environmental awareness, and sustainable consumption.

The study by Kozar and Hiller Connell (2013) shows that consumers who understand how clothing consumption affects the environment are prepared to pay a higher price for socially responsible goods. In addition, they try to reduce clothing waste by recycling textiles, buying second-hand clothes or by purchasing classic made garments. There are further indications of a positive relationship between an environmental aware attitude and an environmental conscious behavior. Environmental attitudes and garment consumption behavior in relation to consumers’ preferences for organic clothing are investigated. Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) come to a conclusion that, in comparison to the indifference of the average organic cotton consumer, areas of the market using biological ingredients in their garments are more supportive of organic farming, more informed about the environmental impact of clothing, and have a more positive attitude to purchase sustainable textiles.

In a study by Gam (2011), an attempt is made to find out whether the shopping-oriented, fashion-oriented or environmentally conscious behavior of consumers predicts the purchase intent of sustainable garments. The results show that consumers who buy eco-friendly clothing are well aware of the environmental impact. Thus, a positive effect was identified between environmentally friendly consumption behavior and environmental concern (Gam, 2011). However, due to the low availability of GF, Gam (2011) found out that consumers show only low experience with it. Similar to Gam, in 2000 Dickson came to a conclusion that there is a connection between the level of knowledge of consumers, their interest in a sustainable textile and clothing industry and greater support from socially responsible companies. The more concerns and knowledge consumers have, the higher the support.

Focusing on the relationship between clothing consumption behavior and environment-friendly attitudes, the impact of environmental awareness and knowledge is assessed (Kim and Damhorst, 1998). The level of knowledge among consumers about environmental issues related to the textile and apparel production is identified. Furthermore, the relationship between general environmental concerns, overall environmentally sustainable behavior, knowledge of environmental issues associated with clothing, and environmentally sustainable consumption is considered. The purchase of eco-friendly clothing and second-hand garments is taken into account in the study of environmentally sustainable clothing consumption. According to the conclusive findings, there is only a limited amount of environmentally sustainable apparel consumption among the study participants (Kim and Damhorst, 1998).

The study also found out that respondents had little knowledge of environmental issues in the textile and apparel industry and were not deeply involved in sustainable behavior within other areas of their lives. Therefore, many intervening factors disturb a clear and direct path of inclination between consumer behavior and attitude. Ecological knowledge and environmental concerns are not strongly associated with specific environmental behavior for garment use (Kim and Damhorst, 1998).

Studies by Kozar and Hiller Connell (2013), Koh and Noh (2009) and Yan et al. (2012) support that commitment of consumers and environmentally conscious knowledge has a positive influence on the intention to purchase green fashion products. Likewise, Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) show that consumers who buy GF have a more positive attitude towards sustainability and organic agriculture. In addition, they are more concerned about the impact of the textile and clothing production on the environment than other consumers. Hiller
Connell and Kozar (2012) found no significant relationship between the environmental awareness of students and their buying behavior of sustainable garments. Even consumers with a high level of knowledge about GF do not show greater commitment to purchase GF (Hiller Connell and Kozar, 2012). In another study in 2010 the same authors found out that even if consumers have knowledge about the influence of textile production, distribution, and consumption on the environment, the commitment to purchase environmental sustainable garments is still minimal. To sum it up, a lack of knowledge acts as a barrier for the consumer to make an environmentally conscious buying decision.

Demographic factors such as age, education, income and gender have been considered in several studies. An attempt was made to determine whether they have an impact on the buying behavior or willingness to pay for sustainable garments (Butler and Francis, 1997; Ceballos Ochoa, 2010; Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2010; Niinimäki, 2009; Park, 2013; Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013).

One of the most common studied variables is gender. Various studies show that women are more environmentally aware than men. In addition, they show a higher willingness to spend more on organic products (Ceballos Ochoa, 2010; Chan and Wong, 2012; Ha-Brookshire and Norum, 2011; Han and Chung, 2014; Niinimäki, 2009). However, other studies show no significant correlation between gender and environmentally conscious behavior (Antil, 1984; Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009). Nevertheless, it has been restricted that advertising for organic products is rather perceived by female consumers than by men. The greater the environmental concern, the higher the affective response to clothing advertising, regardless of whether or not the advertisement has an environmental message (Kim et al., 1997).

Another variable studied is age. Similar to the study of gender in connection with the environmentally conscious consumer behavior, there are also ambiguous results here. Younger consumers are more willing to consume ethical textiles due to their attitude towards the new (Butler and Francis, 1997). In addition, the product price is not as important to them when purchasing branded clothing as it is for older customers (Yan et al., 2012). Furthermore, younger individuals are more willing to pay more for organic cotton t-shirts (Ceballos Ochoa, 2010; Ha-Brookshire and Norum, 2011). However, other studies prove the opposite. According to Hustvedt and Dickson (2009), even older consumers were willing to purchase sustainable garments. As far as age is concerned, no clear distinction can be made in the willingness to purchase. However, the study results indicate a tendency for younger people to actively consume GF.

Apart from gender and age, socioeconomic factors such as education and income play an essential role in the context of environmental conscious behavior. Environmental conscious consumers are usually better educated, have a higher income and a higher living standard. They consider the environmental impact through the purchase of apparel more than people with less education (Butler and Francis, 1997; Chan and Wong, 2012; Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Niinimäki, 2009). Another study shows that consumers who purchase slow fashion have to spend a larger amount of their disposable income on what they do not consider “trendy” and, thus, an obstacle despite increased income and educational attainment (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013).

As mentioned above, because of their higher education, consumers have more information about work aspects of garment production and are, therefore, more likely to buy socially responsible goods. They are willing to pay a higher price for products that are produced under social responsible conditions. Understated are less affected by social responsible activities of companies in their apparel buying decisions (Kozar and Hiller Connell, 2010). So there are also differences in income and education. The willingness to pay more for sustainable garments furthermore depends on their origin. Asian students, for example, have a lower
willingness to pay more for organic cotton t-shirts than students from America or Europe (Ellis and McCracken, 2012).

Results of these studies show deviations between the ratios of demographic variables and the impact on the purchasing behavior of sustainable garments. While some studies state a positive relationship, others show a negative one. Comparing consumers from Germany and the United Kingdom, no differences in the ethical behavior of garments is noted (Joergens, 2006). Even if there is a difference between the Western world and Asia, geography seems to be of limited importance.

Another study shows that while Spanish consumers care about the well-being of local communities, they are not interested in the production conditions of fast fashion from other countries and, moreover, have only a low level of sustainable awareness (Karaosman et al., 2014).

Material as well as immaterial properties, such as packaging, brand, quality, color, price and service level of textiles have an external influence on consumers' purchasing decisions (see figure 7). Product and business related features are explained. Product-related attributes are visible and relatively specific features for consumers. A distinction is made according to such indicators as price, product design, quality and style (Chan and Wong, 2012).

![Figure 7: Hosting effect of premium price (source: Chan and Wong, 2012)](image)

The price of sustainable garments has been investigated in numerous other studies. Research shows that the price influences the purchase decision, but also color, fit, quality, style, or if there is a real need for new apparel has an impact on the decision. If garments are of high quality and kept longer, consumers are more likely to support GF, as they then see the price as justified (Niinimäki, 2010). As long as fashion and price are comparable to other stores, the majority purchases sustainable garments. However, since the price is too high, most would rather buy several conventional, instead of one or two ecological garments (Joergens, 2006).

In fact, the higher the price, the lower the demand. It therefore has a negative effect on purchase intent, buying behavior and attitudes to sustainable garments. Accordingly, this often acts as a barrier (Ceballos Ochoa, 2010; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Gam. 2011; Han and Chung, 2014; Kang and Kim, 2013; Karaosman et al., 2014; Pookulangara and
Shepard, 2013; Shaw et al., 2006). If the price of sustainable garments were at the same level as the price of conventional products, then it would rather be a decision to buy environmentally friendly products (Niinimäki, 2009). However, further research indicates that consumers are prepared to pay a premium price for ethical products (Shen et al., 2011). Other studies show that product-related traits have no impact on the purchase behavior of sustainable apparel (Chan and Wong, 2012). So it can be said that the price usually plays a major role in the purchasing decision of individuals.

Another category that belongs to the product-related characteristics is the quality of textiles. Customers who think GF has a better quality are more willing to make a purchase and pay a mark-up (Ellis and McCracken, 2012). Despite the fact that consumers generally pay attention to the price of products, they are willing to spend more money on products with good quality. Textile companies need to promote the quality of the products, not just the fact that it is GF. This is due to the fact that consumers spend money on quality, but not necessarily on GF.

Apart from quality and price, factors such as fashion trends and design influence the purchasing decision of customers (Niinimäki, 2009; Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). Pookulangara and Shephard (2013) found out that even if consumers are highly aware of ethical issues, such things as price, quality, and style have a greater impact on the buying decision. As soon as the product is unmoiled and the available design is unpopular, the item will not be sold any longer (Ceballos Ochoa, 2010; Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Gam, 2011; Kim and Damhorst, 1998; Shaw et al., 2006). Gam (2011) further demonstrates that design, quality as well as environmentally friendly strategies are important to potential customers of sustainable garments.

For US consumers, the aesthetic style and the aspect that the product is matching with the rest of the garments is of high importance and, therefore, influences their attitude towards GF. In turn, consumers from Korea feel a much lower psychological risk than US consumers (Han and Chung, 2014). To represent oneself about garments is, thus, for some consumer groups in the foreground. To achieve a favorable position in the marketplace, designers and salespeople should develop sustainable apparel that meets consumer expectations.

Store-related attributes are considered as characteristics of the business consisting of the four elements of customer service, appearance of the shop, manners of the staff, and comfort of the purchase (Chan and Wong, 2012)

Chan and Wong (2012) found out that study participants from Hong Kong show store-related traits that have a significant impact on the purchase behavior of sustainable clothes. Atmosphere, brand image, customer service, and store design are the main aspects of the store-related features. Accordingly, they have a positive influence on the buying decision on customers. However, this relationship can be mitigated by a PP. Consumers on a tight budget are discouraged by high prices to buy sustainable garments. Thus, studies show that PP negatively influences the connection between GF and store-related characteristics. Respondents believe that they pay top prices to improve store-related traits. These include, for example, employee training for an improved customer service or the renovation of the store in order to attract customers (Chan and Wong, 2012).

Thus, PP acts as a moderator and positively influences store-related traits. In addition, it moderates the relationship between store-related characteristics and the purchasing decision of GF. A moderator acts on the relationship of DV and IV. The influence, thus, changes the relationship between the two variables (Baron and Kenny, 1986). High PPs, thus, negatively impact the buying behavior of sustainable textiles on store-related traits (Chan and Wong, 2012).

Another study found that consumers are willing to pay more for GF when they are brand-oriented (Ha-Brookshire and Norum, 2011). Even negative news about apparel brands do not prevent UK study participants from purchasing from brands such as GAP and Nike due to the
fact that they like these brands. Young consumers are influenced by the brand image, the latest trends, and the price, when making their purchasing decisions (Joergens, 2006). Another study states that the brand name has no impact on the attitude towards advertising. In addition, the brand name has no influence on the brand itself (Yan et al., 2012). Therefore, it becomes clear that the price of sustainable garments has a high influence on the buying behavior of consumers. In general, customers are willing to pay more if they value the brand. However, perceived behavioral control is the most common reason why consumers are not purchasing sustainable products. Reasons are high prices and a limited offer of sustainable garments (Koh and Noh, 2009).

Since contradictions in various studies arise repeatedly, scientists examined internal as well as external barriers of consumers to purchase sustainable garments. At a personal level, internal barriers for every individual are unique and include beliefs, knowledge about sustainable garments, and personal attitudes, while external barriers that prevent consumers from purchasing sustainable textiles tend to be at the macro level. Therefore, they tend to be beyond the control of an individual (Hiller Connell, 2010).

The lack of knowledge is one of the personal obstacles to buying sustainable clothing. These consumers have limited knowledge about the relationship of environmental issues to apparel production and consumption (Hiller Connell, 2010; Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). Limited knowledge means that these individuals are not aware of the full range of sustainable garments and sources available. Therefore, they cannot consider all alternatives in their purchasing decisions (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Goworek et al., 2012; Hiller Connell, 2010). Furthermore, they do not have sufficient knowledge about garment disposal. These facts hinder consumers with a lack of knowledge to purchase GF, since there is little knowledge about environmental consequences (Birtwistle and Moore, 2007). The second internal barrier results from attitudes of consumers who relate certain characteristics to ecological garments. Consumers do not want to buy these clothes because they do not suit their fit, style or quality demands. In contrast to conventional apparel, consumers perceive sustainable clothing as not stylish enough. In addition, garments made from ecological fibers are perceived as being uncomfortable and, therefore, are not bought by those consumers (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Hiller Connell, 2010; Hiller Connell and Kozar, 2012; Niinimäki, 2010).

Kang and Kim (2013) state that perceived risk in behavioral intentions is influenced by consumer attitudes. The authors divide perceived risk into five subcategories: compliance risk, financial risk, psychological risk, social risk, and physical / physical risk (Kang and Kim, 2013). Research results show that negative effects of the perceived risk represent a major barrier to the customer's decision to purchase such products. It has also been found that attitudes act as a mediator between the perceived risks and the behavioral intent (Kang and Kim, 2013). Therefore, young consumers should be persuaded to reduce their environmental impact and make better decisions. Financial risk means that the higher the price of an item, the less consumers purchase it. The settlement risk has a negative impact on hiring because of the doubts about the functions of GF and that the product does not fulfill the expectations. Result is inconsistent with that of Kang and Kim (2013). Because they have shown that the performance risk does not influence the attitude towards GF (Han and Chung, 2014).

As can be seen from figure 8: Summary of results, Han and Chung (2014) also show that the attitude acts as a mediator. Risks of buying intent are mediated by the attitude of consumers.
Limited availability of information on sustainable garments, economic resources, store availability, as well as social norms has a negative impact on the purchase of sustainable apparel. The limited availability of sustainable clothing in stores is one of the significant variables that sustainable textiles are not bought. More specifically, consumers find it difficult to purchase garments, as only a few mainstream retailers offer sustainable products in their range of goods (Hiller Connell, 2010; Hiller Connell and Kozar, 2012). Since GF is currently difficult to obtain, it is rarely bought. Ethically valuable products can mainly be ordered online for an increased price. As a result, consumers need more information about GF and where it is offered in order to have the opportunity to act in an ethical way as well as to increase investments for sustainable products (Joergens, 2006). Niinimäki (2010) supports the findings that the availability of GF plays a major role. Consumers are confused by the availability of fast fashion apparel and thus cheap clothing. It prevents them from buying expensive clothes and therefore to invest in better quality and sustainability. If ethical garments were available on the main streets, consumers would also buy more sweatshop-free clothing (see Shaw et al., 2006). Furthermore, limited choice of clothing and the lack of attire for work make ethical textiles less common (Shaw et al., 2006).

Another negative impact on the purchase of sustainable garments is the lack of information about GF. Unreliable and insufficient information about the impact of textiles on the environment prevents consumers from buying it when making a purchasing decision (Hiller Connell, 2010). If consumers would have more information about sustainable clothing, such as what GF is and where it can be bought, more customers would buy it. This finding is supported by Gam (2011).

As mentioned before, economic resources are another obstacle to purchase sustainable garments. Study participants state that their financial circumstances do not allow them to buy sustainable textiles due to the fact that they are too expensive (Hiller Connell, 2010). However, they still try to be environmentally friendly by, for example, purchasing second-hand clothing (Hiller Connell, 2010).

Another external barrier is caused by social norms. These neither change regularly nor can be controlled by individuals. Consumers see the expectations of their environment as limiting their sustainable garment consumption behavior, especially through the sporty style of eco-friendly apparel and the limited availability of business clothing (Hiller Connell, 2010). Kim et al. (2012) found that social standards have a greater impact on eco-friendliness than environmental concerns. Therefore, market traders should segment consumers not only about their knowledge and their environmental concerns, but also about the vulnerability of social influences. Moreover, Shaw et al. (2007) found that the more the consumer perceives

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**Figure 8: Summary of results (source: own illustration)**

- Perceived advantages
- Fulfilment risk
- Psychological risk
- Financial risk

- Attitude Toward Act of Behavior
- Subjective Norm
- Purchase Intention
normative pressure on others, such as not purchasing garments from sweatshops with respect to the decision, the stronger the intention to buy no clothes from sweatshops. Han and Chang (2014) found in their study that peer pressure can lead to the purchase of sustainable garments.

According to Ceballos Ochoa (2010) the lack of stylish apparel and overpriced product are the two main barriers to the purchase of sustainable clothing. As mentioned before, the price is a sensitive factor for potential customers interested in sustainable garments.

A study by Kim et al. (2012) shows that environmental marketing claims act as moderators and moderate the impact of environmental concerns and injunctive norms on the intention to purchase (Kim et al., 2012). Injunctive norms in conjunction with extrinsic claims have a stronger effect on the buying intention than they are accompanied by intrinsic statements. On the other hand, environmental concerns have a stronger effect on the purchase intent associated with intrinsic statements, rather than extrinsic ones.

![Figure 9: Marketing claims (source: Kim et al., 2012)](image)

According to Ha-Brookshire and Norum (2011), consumers who care about washing conditions or lighter care are rather willing to pay more for sustainable garments. However, Hill and Lee (2012) found that consumers perceive information about washing and caring as unimportant because they believe washing has little impact on the environment.

Shaw et al. (2007) show that the stronger the attitude to avoid purchasing apparels from sweatshops, the stronger the intention to avoid buying them. Further influencing factors were discovered by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012). They show that consumers who buy GF spend too much time and energy, so they end up with no further desire to buy it. Sustainable clothing is difficult to access and understand, so the study participants were dissatisfied with green fashion (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012).

In addition, in 2006 Shaw et al. found out that there are usually no oversized ethical garments and therefore some customers cannot buy them. According to Hill and Lee (2014), the majority of garment owners consider aspects such as energy efficiency, controlling water use and reducing factory waste in production. If these meet the expectations of consumers, the willingness to purchase sustainable garments is increased. In addition, Hill and Lee (2014) found out that consumers act environmentally friendly when they realize that it influences
them personally. Like Ha-Brookshire and Norum (2011), Hill and Lee (2014) found that consumers are convinced that washing has only little environmental impact. Therefore, information about washing and care is least important to them. Last but not least, Karaosman et al. (2014) show that lack of interest in the manufacturing process prevents the purchase of GF.

2.2.7 Take back models

In contrast to other industries, such as the car industry, extended producer responsibility is not a widespread operation within the textile and fashion industry. Textile end of life waste is not commonly regulated by the producer (Morana and Seuring, 2007). Nevertheless, fashion companies in the USA have already started to collect worn garments in the 1960s. In exchange for returning old clothes, fashion companies provided a discount on new items (Packard, 1960).

Nowadays there are some companies collecting garments for reuse and recycling. For instance, Patagonia, Marks and Spencer, Filippa K, Houdini, Aplace and Boomerang offer miscellaneous in-store take-back options. This growing trend has its roots in rather environmental than social concerns. Besides, fashion companies engage in prolonging the product life of garments through reuse alternatives and second hand retail channels (Hvass, 2014).

To give a current example, a common practice is the return of textiles in any condition to a fashion retailer which offers take-back stations. In exchange for returned garments customers receive a discount voucher which they can use for the next purchase at the retailer. Companies such as H&M, Puma, WEEKDAY and Name It have started to collect textiles accordingly in their stores. The collected garments will be used for recycling purposes. The mentioned companies collaborate with the global company I:Collect, which is in charge of all reverse logistics processes. Consequently, the fashion retailer is only responsible for the process of collection. Although this has several advantages, it can be criticized that the discount voucher is supporting anew purchase instead of guiding the consumers to an overall more sustainable behavior (Hvass, 2014).

A further alternative to enlarge the use of clothes is to develop resell platforms for second hand garments. By reselling the products their value is placed back in the cycle. For instance, the American fashion brand Eileen Fisher started the Eileen Fisher's Green Initiative, which collects garments and offers upcycling workshops for their customers. Another example is the Swedish company Boomerang, which is upcycling unwanted textiles into new Boomerang products (Hvass, 2014).

Companies such as Filippa K have started to take back garments which are sold on commission at their second hand store (Filippa K Second Hand, 2017). This concept will be discussed more in depth in the present thesis.

To sum up, the fashion industry is resource intensive and can be criticized due to its negative influences on the environment. Negative influences do not only occur through the processes the industry is responsible for, such as manufacturing and distribution activities, but also at the use and disposal stage of the apparel products (MacArthur Foundation, 2013).

Taking all aspects into account, the following paper investigates how garment return can be increased. This is analyzed from company perspective. Moreover, it has been recognized that there is more scientific literature published concerning the purchase of second hand garments. Since the second hand customer becomes the supplier of the reused textiles, also this perspective is integrated. The difficulty is to determine ways to change the textile consumer behavior in order to counteract the increase of landfill.
2.3 Fashion companies offering second hand products

2.3.1 The Rag Bag
The Rag Bag is a shopping bag that provides customers the chance to do something good. The idea developed by the inventors is to hand them out to a selected number of fashion retailers for apparel. By simply turning the bag inside out it provides a further function after its original function as a shopping bag has expired. Instead of going to waste, it can do well. Worn out and unwanted garments can be placed inside the Rag Bag. By bringing it to the post the garments are donated to a charity of choice. The address is already written on the Rag Bag and the postage is taken care of. Accordingly, the only effort behind this concept is to pack unwanted garments inside and taking it to any post box (The Rag Bag, 2014).

2.3.2 Houdini
Houdini is a Swedish outdoor company which was founded in 1993 providing functional and sustainable outdoor apparel. According to Houdini (2017), they aim to provide the full experience for individuals without leaving environmental impact thoughtlessly. Houdini’s Reprojects integrate not only product renting, repairing and recycling in their business model but also reusing garments. The goal is to extend the lifecycle of the textiles to decrease the environmental footprint and reuse second hand clothes. In addition to that, it is a demonstration of the high quality and long lasting design of their products. Customers can return their worn clothes to them and get half the purchase price if the garment is sold plus the possibility to get a twenty percent discount on a newly purchased product (Houdini, 2017).

2.3.3 Filippa K
Filippa K is a Swedish fashion brand founded in 1993 by Filippa Knutsson (Filippa K, 2017) and Patrik Kihlborg offering high quality and long lasting apparel (Hvass, 2015). Each year four collections are released. Their products are sold in 30 countries around the world through their website. Moreover, they have some 50 brand stores. Furthermore, their products are sold through about 600 premium resellers (Filippa K, 2017). Filippa K has a production volume of approximately one million pieces a year and a turnover of about 70 million Euros. In 2008 Filippa K opened their first second hand store in Stockholm, offering reused cloth in combination with sample pieces from their collection. The concept was developed in collaboration with a local entrepreneur, who opened a second hand store before and is familiar with the location (Hvass, 2015). The holistic approach provides consumers the opportunity to return their cloth and gain 40 percent of the purchase price on commission. If it will not be sold after 30 days, it will either be returned to the customer or forwarded to charity (Filippa K Second Hand, 2017). Thereby a closed-loop mindset is attempted, shifting from a linear to a circular economy to reduce waste, save resources and enlarge the product lifecycle. The principles of reducing, repairing, reusing, remaking and recycling are core aspects within their philosophy. It is pointed out that 74 percent of the Filippa K customers maintain their clothing for more than four years. Conversely, 26 percent keep their cloth for a shorter period than four years (Hvass, 2015).

2.3.4 Aplace
Aplace started as a Swedish fashion magazine in 2005. Later, they continued by organizing the event +46 during the Stockholm fashion week before they opened their first fashion retail store in 2007. Today they sell their products through four retail stores and their own website, offering mainly Scandinavian fashion brands (Aplace, 2017). In April 2017 Aplace opened its
first second hand retail store "Pearl" in Stockholm. Their attempt is to raise awareness of good quality garment value as well as improving the sustainability approach of the company in order to shift their business model to a more circular one. Consumers can return worn garments from the brands offered by Aplace plus additional further brands. Customers receive 40 percent of the revenue for the items that can be resold within a defined time frame (Andersson, 2017).

3 Methodology

The methodology chapter provides disclosure about the process of this thesis and the used methods. In the first part of this chapter the reader is introduced to the method selected, namely the expert interview. The second part discusses the interview guide and puts it in connection with the research questions. The third section explains the choice of the data collection method. It furthermore clarifies the decision for the data analysis method. Last but not least, this chapter reviews the quality of the research by taking a look at the aspects of validity and reliability.

3.1 Presentation of the method selection: Expert interviews

For this thesis the method of expert interviews is applied. This methodology is an application of empirical social research, dealing with the scientific analysis of social action. The aim of the research is to investigate and explain human action. In this case the procedure is to understand and interpret action, what is achieved by making use of expert interviews. In empirical social research, a distinction between qualitative and quantitative survey methods can be made. Quantitative methods are based on frequencies and numerical data, which have to be interpreted. In contrast, qualitative methods are based on verbal descriptions that allow the interpretation of social issues. Consequently, statistical methods rely on causal relationships in quantitative methods, and causal mechanisms on cause and effect in qualitative ones. The used method of expert interviews is a qualitative method of social research and allows the generated knowledge to be considered according to the principle of openness in its entirety. Quantitative methods only allow results on suspected conditions and require a high number of results for their informative value (Bogner et al., 2009).

Due to the fact that the field of sustainable fashion to be examined has only little theoretical knowledge so far, it does not make sense to forecast in advance facts. The collected data of the expert interviews has to be considered individually and in their entirety. In addition, the study should not be dependent on the amount of people interviewed. Furthermore, the experts are given the opportunity to freely share their individual knowledge. Therefore, the survey method should include all unforeseen information. Taking all the above mentioned aspects into account, the method of expert interviews was selected for this survey.

Based on these results, an interview guide for the empirical investigation of the expert interviews is developed. The method of the non-standard interview is chosen for the interviews.

3.2 Interview guide

The interview guide enables the author to structure the interview and helps the reader to understand the motivation behind the interview questions. It has been decided to create a partially standardized interview, for which the interview guide specifies a certain structure. The guided interview includes a certain number of questions in a specific order. However, it is not absolutely necessary to ask the questions in the same wording and in the same order. These characteristics have the advantage that during an interview, the individual answers of
the expert can be addressed and, where appropriate, responded to. Key questions imply the knowledge that is aimed to be collected through the expert interview in order to obtain information about the research questions. In this respect the following procedure was followed during the development of the interview guideline.

1. **What was the intention to start selling second hand garments and what are the main benefits for your company by selling these garments?**

   The first question helps clarify which consumers’ needs the retailer serves and points out which consumers are attracted by the second hand garments. Further, it provides disclosure about the brands intent by adding this product category to their portfolio.

2. **Do you sell the second hand garments in all of your stores?**

   If the second hand garments are sold only in several stores, it can be concluded that there might be no stable demand for them. The question further provides insight about the extent of the second hand concept, which demonstrates how much the company believes in it.

3. **How long are you keeping returned second hand garments in your stores? What happens if you cannot sell them?**

   Besides learning more about the second hand business model, it is important to clarify whether the second hand textiles that are not sold and, thus, are not demanded by consumers can be recycled or re-projected in any suitable kind. In this sense, it has to be clarified whether the interviewed retailer already does similar approaches or if they might consider an alternative solution for the future.

4. **How would you describe the customers who return as well as purchase second hand garments? Do you think that they are similar to average customers who purchase regular products from your stores?**

   A right definition of the consumers’ groups and their profiles helps to identify their motives to return and purchase second hand apparel and, for this reason, is relevant for answering the research question.

5. **Do you think that you can enlarge your customers’ group by offering second hand garments?**

   The question refers to the same “demand dilemma” since it helps to clarify whether green fashion based on the second hand garments might become a mass market with a large group of customers. Moreover, answering this question identifies relevant measures that second hand retailer should take into account in order to turn this segment into a profitable income source with an increased number of customers.
6. How does your communication with consumer look like? How do you inform your customers about take bake opportunities and how do you motivate them to drop off garments?

Since the second chapter clarified that customers need to be motivated to buy sustainable clothing and that the purchasing motives do not emerge themselves, the question asked emphasizes the importance of the communication process between the retailer and their customers. In addition, individuals must be informed about the opportunity to return their unwanted garments. Otherwise they do not return textiles and the retailer would not have products he could offer. The question aims to identify best practice examples in successfully communicating garment return options.

7. Do you think that there are many people who use take bake options? Do you receive a positive feedback?

Probably, one of the most relevant criteria of a customer-oriented green fashion strategy is the consumers’ usage of the take back options as well as a positive feedback from them. That would mean that the retailer delivers the right message to its customers and is able to activate their purchasing power for sustainable clothing.

8. Do you rent out garments as well? If so, do you also sell them afterwards? What is the distribution between the garments that you are renting and the ones that the customers bring in?

One of the problems in the second hand garment business is a great deal of apparel that remains unsold in the stores. Therefore, the question aims to achieve a solution for it. Additionally, the question tries to find out if renting out garments to customers can be a sustainable business opportunity for an apparel retailer. This is another important aspect of communication between customers and companies, and, hence, another opportunity to motivate them to participate in a more sustainable garment consumption approach.

9. When the customers want to return their garments, which criteria do you look at: the season, quality of the garments or a mix of both? Do you accept all garments or do you reject them sometimes?

This question is essential in order to understand the handling of the second hand garments as a product as well as to clarify which criteria they must fulfill to be sold on a regular basis. It further provides the companies definition of a second hand textile and gives disclosure about potential clustering strategies.

10. Do you repair some garments, which the customers bring in?

Just like in the question 3, this one emphasizes the role of redesigning and recycling, which gives the customers the possibility to purchase a unique second hand garment, either customized to their individual needs or simply repaired to its original state.
11. Do you put the garments brought in on sale right away or just sometimes like once a week? Do you shift them between your stores?

This question addresses the previously mentioned demand dilemma by defining how second hand garments can be handled in the most efficient way.

12. In overall, would you say that the second hand concept successful? Do you see an opportunity to enlarge the concept by opening new stores?

This question refers to the overall second hand concept and its practical implementation. Only specific experience of the green fashion companies can prove whether the theoretical foundations analyzed in the second chapter would be successful in the real fashion industry, because only a commercial success would motivate companies to enlarge this concept. In its turn, the enlargement of the second hand segment can push it beyond the marginal status and transform into the first prototype of the mass market.

Through this test, it was found that the formulation of the questions, as well as the structure of the collection of questions prove to be useful. The statements of the pretest provided the desired information, so that it was decided to include this interview in the evaluation.

3.3 Data collection

Second hand fashion retailers are contacted who are willing to invest their time and effort to answer the prepared interview questions. Those were conducted as an in-depth semi-structured interview. As explored by Bryman (2012) semi-structured questions allow the interviewer to be more flexible with the follow-up questions and provide the possibility to gain a holistic overview of the concept. In addition, by asking open questions the interviewees have the freedom to answer in their own terms and can therefore come up with unexpected and new responses (Bryman, 2012). The questions were clustered into topic categories to follow this interview guide in order to cover all specified topics. An advantage of doing so is to have a flexible question phrasing and order (Bryman, 2012) and to ensure the flow of the interview.

The second hand retailers are chosen according to the requirement that they include second hand concepts in their business model. The selected companies Aplace, Filippa K and Houdini resell second hand garments on commission. They have a similar concept and therefore are compared with each other. The interview questions are adapted for each company. The aim is to find out about relevant aspects for this thesis which have not been published. Since all companies communicate different aspects and differ in their processes it is not possible to use the exact same interview questions.

Out of four preselected companies three were willing to participate. The other one did not respond. One or two representatives from each company, who are familiar with the business processes and have profound knowledge in the area of the topic, answered the interview questions. The retail stores have been visited and the interviews were either taken at their office or a later phone call in order to talk to someone from the company who is familiar with the second hand concept and can answer the questions. They are the basis for the analysis part and contribute to the discussion, which intends to provide a theory suggestion. This suggestion is given in the conclusion of this research paper, aiming to answer the research questions and fill the identified literature gap.
3.4 Data analysis

After the companies have been interviewed the raw data is analyzed. This is done with the help of the Gioia method which structures the relevant statements from the interviewees’ answers in a simplified way. The statements are not analyzed in a chronological order but according to their topics and subjects that they have been categorized in. The Gioia method is applicable to qualitative, interpretive research. The purpose of choosing this method is to visualize the analysis of the gathered data. Therefore, the raw data is configured into a sensible visual aid. This provides a graphical illustration of the progress from the collected data to the condensed themes and terms. This is done in an organized and systematic way. It furthermore is a tool to demonstrate the linkage of the data to the insights of the thesis by building a model which is grounded in data. Thereby, it captures the respondent's experiences in theoretical terms. The Gioia method consists of the 1st order concept, 2nd order themes and the aggregate dimensions, which are the basis for building a data structure.

![Diagram of data analysis according to Gioia method](source: Gioia, 2012)

The 1st order analysis comprises the codes and terms used by the respondents. This level includes direct statements and quotes given by the respondents. The second step of the data analysis is done through the 2nd order analysis. It is a level of interpretation, resulting from the researcher centric themes and concepts. The third level is the aggregate dimension which attempts to condense the 2nd order themes. By using this method both, the informant and the researchers’ voice are illustrated. Findings from literature are not considered when applying the data analysis in order not to influence the results. The primary goal is the demonstration of the links between data and induction of new concepts (Gioia et al., 2012).

3.5 Quality criteria and research assessment

The main criteria that are looked into for the assessment of a scientific research are validity and reliability.
In detail, validity is divided into external, construct and internal validity. External validity refers to the generalizability of the findings conducted by the research (Bryman, 2012). According to the fact that the research focused on a specific concept and the information has been conducted from a small number of specialized companies with the focus on the European market it is only possible to generalize the findings to a certain extend. Since the focus has been on a Swedish independent small-scale high quality fashion retailer it might be possible to apply the result to similar companies, but not to global fashion retailers in general. The construct validity assesses the extent to which the applied methodology leads to a logical connection in order to answer the purpose (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, the topic of second hand concepts is an area that provides only limited scientific literature. The method of qualitative interviews was found most suitable to fill this research gap. To take both viewpoints into account, besides the highly relevant data provided by the companies also the consumer approach has been taken into consideration to be able to consider both angles and to gain a holistic overview. By applying the Gioia data analysis method, a systematical and structured analysis illustration can be provided to ensure that the research questions are answered to the most fulfilling extend. Internal validity assesses the connection between the findings and the conclusion and evaluates the provision of a logical argumentation (Bryman, 2012). Reliability is provided when the replicability of a research is given (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, the used methodology is explained in detail. The conducted research is a cross-sectional research. A cross-sectional research captures the processes at a specific point of time but cannot capture changes of any kind (Neuman, 2006). Accordingly, if the research is repeated at a later time it is possible that the outcome is different to the outcome of this thesis due to changes within the interviewed companies. Since the discussed topic is currently relevant in particular for the interviewed companies it is also possible that a social or economic change results in a different positioning of the relevance of this topic and therefore results in a different outcome. Therefore, the findings gained from the research only reflect the viewpoint analyzed at the specific point of time.

4 Interview outcome

The next chapter will analyze the conducted interviews and build a bridge between theory and practice by referring to the theoretical framework explained in chapter two.

4.1 Interview results of second hand retailer

4.1.1 Houdini

This section will provide an overview of the answers of the interview given by the responsible person from Houdini. Theory and the answers will then be linked whenever possible. As part of their re-projects Houdini started to offer second hand products. By doing so they want to demonstrate how durable their products are. This step indicates that Houdini implements a marketing strategy by guaranteeing high-quality and long-lasting products. This reasoning stimulates the customer and makes him think that the product must be a high-quality and long-lasting product; why else the company should make this offer. As a response the customer will trust the brand and purchase their clothes. In other words, Houdini manages to trigger the S-O-R scheme by their customers. Most of the Houdini customers wear their clothes over years. Houdini describes their products to be expensive and exclusive. That is the reason why garments are sorted out mostly when customers grow out of their garments. The high price is strongly connected to a higher perceived value by the customer. Consequently, the buyer appreciates the product and treats it with more value. As a result, the consumer
behavior becomes more sustainable. This can be proved by the fact that Houdini’s customers wear their garments over years.

As children grow fast, Houdini started by offering second hand garments for kids. Today there are Houdini stores in Stockholm and Gothenburg offering children second hand clothing but they also added garments for women and men. The company describes their second hand apparel as a possibility for customers who desire Houdini garments but cannot afford the original price. Therefore, they see it as an option to enlarge their customer group. At this point Houdini again tries to influence the consumer behavior. The target group that is not able to afford high-price garments would actually be no paying customers, but by influencing the consumer behavior the fashion brand manages to turn interested consumer into customers. Those who are interested in the Houdini garments accept a second hand product just in order to be able to afford it. Moreover, the customer feels like he acted sustainable and his consumption behavior can be interpreted as a role model for other consumers.

The textiles Houdini resells are either handed in by their customers or come directly from the company, such as garments that have been rented previously. After collecting the customer's contact details the garments are usually placed in the store straight away. In order to have an attractive shop appearance, they have decided only to take back garments that are in good condition. Depending on their condition the price for the garments is determined. Accordingly, the textiles are inspected to ensure that they have neither stains nor holes. Houdini offers to repair worn garments. However, this service is mainly used by customers that get their garments repaired in order to enlarge the garment life time and continue wearing them themselves. The repair of the garments enables the customer to feel like an individual that is contributing to the circular economy. In addition to that, the customer has a stronger relation to Houdini, because he visits the store in order to repair the product.

In case a customer decides to return garments, this can be done at any of the Houdini stores even if no second hand garments are offered in that store. In this case the garments are sent to a store offering second hand garments. Besides forwarding returned items to another store in order to be sold, garments are not exchanged between stores. Depending on the demand, items are kept for half a year until up to one year. When a garment is sold, the customer is contacted and receives his portion of the earnings. As experienced so far, customers are pleased to return worn garments. They have also tried the concept of a pop up store once, which tuned out to be a success. When Houdini started to take back worn out garments they received a large amount of items. Houdini’s approach is to continue an active communication regarding the second hand concept as they do so with all of their re-projects. In general, their active communication about their projects is fundamental to them. Occasionally Houdini uses social media channels such as Facebook to give insight to their second hand concept and current activities. For the future, Houdini pursues the target to extend their re-projects, including all defined aspects: renting, repairing, reusing and recycling of Houdini textiles. By 2020, the company hopes to generate three to five percent of their income through their re-projects. The approach made by Houdini indicates the clear intention to focus on a circular economy. As mentioned in the theoretical framework the circular economy could be described by the five R’s (re-imagine, re-design, reduce, reuse and recycle). Mainly, the company manages to reduce textile waste and to reuse the worn clothes. Furthermore, they create a sort of reimagining by their re-projects. They even calculate that a small percentage of their total income could be generated by their re-projects. Overall, one can sum up that the company Houdini manages to adapt the customers’ behavior for its purpose. Furthermore, it is important to notice that the strategy of Houdini is based on the theoretical framework referred to this thesis; so far, the strategy seems to be successful.
4.1.2 Filippa K Second Hand

The Filippa K Second Hand store is located in Stockholm. It is positioned next to Judits Second Hand, which previously received many second hand Filippa K products. That is why an own store has been opened, offering Filippa K garments only. The textiles they sell are either handed in by consumers or are samples from the Filippa K headquarter. In addition, sunglasses from Monokey as well as jewelry from various designers are offered. Visitors of the Filippa K Second Hand stores are both, regular Filippa K customers and general second hand customers and tourists. As stated by the store manager the sustainable aspect behind the concept is important to many visitors who return their garments but also to those who buy them. Obviously, the customer behavior pushed the company to this strategy. Customers are willing to wear second-hand garments in order to establish sustainable consumption and slow fashion. It seems that the customers are seeking sustainability in the garments; also, they want products that are sustainable in a way that they allow a take back. Furthermore, the interviewee noticed that it is a good opportunity for consumers to dispose their unwanted items by returning them. The main channels of communication are email and newsletter. These communication tools are used to inform them about marketing campaigns and especially to communicate the opportunity to return worn garments. Occasionally the Filippa K Second Hand website and Instagram account are used for communication purposes. However, this is done rarely due to a lack of time. The garments take back process works as follows: individuals return their garments and leave their name and contact details. The last pick up date is determined in order for the customer to come back and receive either their part of the earned money or the unsold garment. Usually, products are directly inspected, the price is determined and the items are placed in store. Experiences show that the number of returned items varies. When customers return many garments at the same time and the store is highly attended the store personnel assess the garments at a later time. Conditions for garments to be accepted are that they are suitable for the upcoming season as well as in overall good condition. The clothing collection is strict. Sometimes garments are rejected. Filippa K Second Hand has no problem to source enough garments. On occasion, they cannot accept products because the store has only a limited capacity. This fact indicates that the customers demand is greater than the offered spaces to sell the second-hand garments. One can assume that the demand of second hand garments is lower than the supply. Consequently, an oversupply exists. As a result, it seems that the consumer behavior towards a sustainable consumption somehow pushes the companies to establish the second-hand sales. Consumers want a slow fashion in a circular economy. In comparison to Houdini, the findings of Filippa K indicate that the company was somehow surprised by the high demand by customers willing to sell and buy their second-hand garments. Their concept is, compared to that of Houdini, more customer driven.

4.1.3 Pearl

Pearl is a sub brand from Aplace who sells "pre-loved fashion and goods". Pearl is asking their customers to return garments, shoes and accessories. They accept not only brands they sell at the Aplace stores but also further international brands. Even though Pearl is offering a wide range of brands they have to limit the brands due to limited space. In addition to items which are returned by customers their range further contains outlet products. To complete the concept, the idea is to add further second hand items such as vases and other furniture as well as products which cannot be sold as second hand products such as soap to the product portfolio. The store is located in an attractive area of Stockholm, which is attracting a customer group interested in reused products. One of the main competitors in their neighborhood is Judits Second Hand, offering a similar concept. Notwithstanding, the owner of Pearl states this competition is not a disadvantage because the second hand market requires
different kind of players in order to be an attractive market for different kind of customer groups. To differentiate from their closest competitor, they accept more garments even if they might have to return a higher amount in the end. In contrast to that, Judits Second Hand is strictly selecting which garments they take back.

In addition, Pearl attempts to focus on a good customer relationship always knowing what customers are looking for.

So far, the customer feedback is excellent. A customer change can be recognized. The Pearl customer is between 20 and 50 years old which covers a large range and has enlarged the previous customer group. As stated by the store manager he notices that there are customers who come from other parts of the city only to visit Pearl. On the one hand, there are young people looking for supreme items. On the other hand, there are also parents that want to make a find. Besides, a new customer group of people who only consume second hand garments is added. In other words, the consumer behavior striving for second-hand garment purchases is clearly visible.

A range of 500 - 600 products is a good level for the Pearl store. If there are more products they need to be stocked at the Aplace storage and must be taken back to Pearl. The goal is not to generate stock. Accordingly, the ultimate situation is to receive the same amount of garments that is sold to keep a constant level of items in store. Visitors can return worn garments either at Aplace or Pearl. Most tend to return items directly to the Pearl store. Garments are only accepted when there is a potential that they can be resold. According to the company owner, the return of clothes in commission has been chosen due to the fact that this is the most common way second hand stores do it. Even if it might be more convenient for customers to sell all garments and to receive money, straight away the store would have to carry the risk of unsold garments. Accordingly, this is not an option. When they return their items a consignment card is created, including information such as their email address and phone number. Products are rated according to a guideline called "designer index" determining a resale price based on various factors. The guideline has been developed adapting price levels of competitors. Customers receive an email when their garments are sold or they can pick up their unsold garments after the period of one month. Customers can also donate unsold garments directly to charity. In general, there are enough garments that have been returned and Pearl is not worried about a shortcoming of second hand products.

The concept followed by Pearl differs to the Aplace concept. Whereas Pearl is a multi-brand second hand retailer Aplace is a multi-brand retailer for unworn clothes. As a result, it is attempted to separate both brands. On the other hand, it is an opportunity to have both brands working together in terms of communication and branding. Besides personal communication, Pearl regularly uses their website as well as social media to inform their customers about the option to return second hand garments. Pearl works in cooperation with customers by converting their unwanted and returned garments into money. As a result, the company can improve in customer loyalty. This indicates that the customer behavior towards buying sustainable is not depended on the size of the company. Comparing the business model of Aplace to that of Houdini and Filippa K Second Hand, more similarities to the one from Houdini can be found. Especially the importance of green fashion as an overall driver for both retailer is a remarkable commonality.

4.2 Key findings from the interviews

Summing up the key findings of the interviews and the linkage between theory and practice one can say that the companies’ strategies mostly worked and guarantee the enterprises higher profits. In the case of Houdini, the company managed to generate a stimulus and to receive a response from the customer. The sustainable image is in line with the behavior of their clients. Furthermore, the size of the company does not play a major role.
As explored in the conceptual framework the remaining value of a product after a certain period is determined by the marginal value of time. Due to the fact that the marginal value of time depends on the primary quality of the garment, the value of high quality garments has a higher remaining value after a certain time, which is calculated to be five to ten years for high quality garments. Accordingly, the reuse of apparel is primarily considered by high fashion and premium brands. The interviewed companies, which all provide high quality garments, choose to resell garments on commission. Houdini, Filippa K Second Hand as well as Pearl use a similar system of reselling garments which still provide a high remaining value after the first owner returns it. The aspect of encouraging consumers to buy new products by providing discount vouchers is avoided this way.

The chance for second hand garments to be resold increases by an increased popularity of the brand (Chan et al., 2015). This assumption is supported by statements given by Filippa K Second Hand, Houdini and Pearl, who state that their customers are seeking high quality products for a good price. Accordingly, the brand of second hand products is an influencing factor on its attractiveness for further users. Suppliers of reused textiles can use the brands image of their offered products in their communication to increase the customers’ motivation to visit their stores and return garments.

Every individual that comes in the store to return garments is automatically a potential customer of the offered second hand garments. The consumer might make a purchase of an item which he might return at a later time. Furthermore, by attracting individuals to enter the store they might learn about the option to return garments and come back with worn out pieces from their wardrobe. This process shows the buyer-purchasing cycle.

All three stores have pointed out that the logistical handling of the returned garments is a huge challenge. Time, space and manpower are needed to handle the apparel take back as well as to place them in store. Sometimes there are more garments returned than demanded. Accordingly, they might need to be stored instead of rejecting the textiles straight away.

To sum up the key findings in regard to the research questions, the interviews show that communication is most important to inform individuals about the possibility to return garments on commission. In all three cases this is done personally, but especially Houdini and Pearl communicate through their website and social media.

With regard to the second research question, Pearl, a second hand multi brand retailer, tries to adapt to the image and lifestyle of Aplace. The owner believes to gain the same popularity as the Aplace stores have simply by using their social media channels. In the Pearl store the employees practice a strong communication towards the concept of Pearl. All three retailers confirm that there is a large customer group that is attracted to second hand garments, which partly results from a general trend towards sustainability.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that those findings should be interpreted as a small overview. So far, there is no data providing huge amount of statistics verifying the key findings. To make general statements further studies in different countries with different customer behavior need to be elaborated. Moreover, there are no long-term findings for this kind of concept. Therefore, sustainable fashion and circular economy could be a trend which might not be accepted by the consumers over a longer period. However, the key findings of this thesis allow further research on this topic, especially in terms of market expansion. Further research could be done analyzing either similar or different concepts with the same purpose in other countries. With regard to the digitalization trend, it is particularly interesting to analyze the potential of the online market.

5 Discussion

The chapter discussion addresses all chapters that have been disputed previously. It reflects on the aspects brought up at the introduction, the conceptual framework as well as the findings.
from the conducted interviews. It discusses and connects the theoretical research with the results collected and analyzed during the interviews.

5.1 Sustainable fashion and its consumer profile

Sustainable marketing as a strategy seeks to meet the needs of current consumers without compromising future generations in their need satisfaction. For this purpose, the activities of the company in terms of its relationship with the customers must be examined and evaluated. The concept is based on the strategy that satisfies long-term consumer needs and is accompanied by a strategy to ensure the long-term survival of a company. Therefore, sustainability should not be seen as a cost but as a means to enhance brand value and profitability. It is important to note that businesses are increasingly challenged to meet society's environmental and ethical standards. The essential difference between environmental and social standards sustainable marketing concept lies in the temporal perspective. Socially oriented marketing is mainly concerned with the conflicts that currently arise from satisfying consumer needs with third parties. Sustainability-oriented marketing, on the other hand, places the impact of today's consumption on future generations and society as a whole, as well as future entrepreneurial action, at the center of consideration. In general, companies are finding themselves increasingly challenged to meet society's expectations of environmental and ethical standards. This requires not only entrepreneur-specific guidelines, but also clearly defined measures for their implementation. This was previously shown using the example of three companies, as they can be found in the media through their sustainability collections (Kotler et al., 2007).

As learned from the executed interviews, the customer purchasing at the second hand stores is not only the same that is buying regular products from the stores. All three retailer state that their consumer group has been extended by individuals that mainly consume second hand garments.

The conducted interviews and the literature review showed that specifically the Generation Y has differentiated and diverse ideas of sustainability in the fashion industry. Among others, organic, fair trade, second hand, recycling, reduction of production and consumption were mentioned in this context. Generation Y, according to its own statements, lacks the political framework for controlled certificates that are communicated and established by companies and media to keep them well informed enough to fulfill their role as powerful consumers. However, a clear hierarchical order in regard of the dimensions of sustainability could not be identified. In addition, Generation Y sees an attitude-behavioral deficit among consumers. The consumer trend towards Generation Y is supported by the perception by the store manager of Pearl, who has realized that they gain a constantly increasing amount of young customers. Nevertheless, there is still a large demand by consumer aged up to 50 years. Since no scientific research has been done on textile retailer that added a second hand concept to their regular concept it is difficult to compare this phenomenon with the theory. In any case, it seems to be an advantage to have an existing client base from an existing store that slowly can be transferred to the new store concept.

Sustainability, especially in the fashion industry, still plays a subordinate role from the point of view of these consumers. Criteria such as attractiveness of the fashion item, price, quality and fit are much more relevant to them since they are more suitable for the theory of the reasoned action analyzed in the second chapter. Nevertheless, the main drivers of sustainable fashion consumption are the feelings and good conscience as well as the encouragement that drives consumers to act sustainably, for example the elements of the so called planned behavior. A task for the companies consists in an ability to activate the consumers’ planned behavior by appealing to such motives as good feeling and conscience.
The barriers include the mistrust that derives primarily from non-trusted brands and certificates in the fashion industry. Moreover, there is a perceived lack of information and transparency in terms of brands and certificates. In principle, sustainable products are considered to be more expensive and are often avoided for this reason. Equally, consumers associate rational behavior with price decisions, which is perceived as a positive behavior. Thus, sustainable fashion, which as the main driver has a good feeling and conscience as an emotional product, would not be in the interest of most consumers. However, this would be in contradiction to Parment's (2013) study, which states that the buyers' decisions are predominantly emotional and they might get interested in sustainable clothing on a subconscious level.

5.2 Meaningfulness of prices and Rank a Brand

Sustainable products generally have a reputation for being expensive. However, this is not by chance, because the cultivation and further processing of sustainable products, such as organic textiles, are subject to stricter rules and regulations than the ones of conventional products, which affects the price. It can be assumed that sustainable garments have a higher price than textiles which can be purchased at discount store. This statement is not unusual. The important question is whether a more expensive product is automatically more sustainable than a low-priced one.

Environmentally friendly and fair production has a certain price. If a garment is bought for just a few francs in a discount store, the consumers must be aware that the sustainability of this product cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, these cheap stores are often questioned and avoided by critics. For clothes from luxury brands, consumers have to be prepared to spend a large amount of money, while it is close to the thought that at such high prices certainly a part for sustainable and fair manufacturing processes remains. However, this is a classic error because a high price does not automatically mean that the said products were produced more sustainable than those of inexpensive brands. Mario Dziamski of Rank a Brand even goes so far as to say that the price of a garment does not say anything about its sustainability (Rank a Brand, 2014).

Houdini, Filippa K as well as Place are positioned in the higher price segment. By adding second hand apparel to their product portfolio they are able to offer garments at a lower price. In contradiction to the assumption that inexpensive textiles cannot be sustainable the examples show that second hand products can be categorized in a lower price segment but are sustainable due to the fact that their product lifecycle is enlarged and passed on to a further consumer. Moreover, it can be recognized that their consumers keep their apparel for many years. As stated by Houdini, the second hand business is especially interesting for kid’s garments, due to the fact that children grow out of their clothes. The quality of the Houdini products is so high that they can be returned to the store and worn by another child. Extending the product lifecycle seems to be only possible for high quality items and that supports the assumption that sustainable garments are only available for a certain price.

Rank a Brand's FeelGoodFashion Report 2014 reviewed 368 companies for sustainability in the areas of environmental protection, climate protection, and fair working conditions. Some discount stores such as B. Primark (Ranking C) were better ranked than some luxury brands, such as Chanel and Louis Vuitton (both ranked E). (Rank a Brand, 2014). As an interim conclusion, it can be stated that the price cannot be closed to the sustainability of clothing, but a certain price has to be paid for ecological textiles. Rank a Brand provides an easy way to learn about the sustainability of garments. Furthermore, it allows finding out how well preferred brands can be compared to others. Nevertheless, the results of Rank a Brand should not be taken for face value for a variety of reasons. Initially, their evaluations are based on sustainability reporting by Brands Producers published on the internet. Furthermore, at Rank a
Brand, companies are analyzed by using a questionnaire. The more questions are answered with "yes", the better the ranking. If there is not enough information for the said questions, they are evaluated with a question mark, which equals zero points. This is exactly the same amount of points as if the question had been answered unambiguously with "no" (Rank a Brand, 2014).

This is particularly relevant for the valuation of luxury brands, as these companies generally reveal little information about themselves. This should not defend these brands, but is an explanation why so many luxury brands in Rank a Brand with the worst score cut off. However, it should be noted that this is probably a strategic consideration of Rank a Brand. Their purpose with rankings is to make companies more transparent, to disclose more information about their production processes, and last but not least strive to make their production more sustainable. The poor valuation of luxury brands should encourage them to publish their information and show what they are doing to improve in sustainability (Rank a Brand, 2014).

Consumers should not be confused by prices. The price as an element of a theory of reasoned action should not be considered a crucial factor in making purchasing decisions. To sum up, it can be summarized that a garment for a very low price cannot have been produced under ecological and fair conditions. The reverse conclusion is that expensive garments not necessarily were produced sustainable. Accordingly, responsible consumers have no choice but to find out about the preferred brand (Rank a Brand, 2014).

As mentioned above, Rank a Brand is a useful platform for this because it makes it extremely easy for consumers to compare different brands with regard to their sustainability. In addition, the portal in its extend is unique so far. While there are countless platforms that deliberately suggest sustainable brands, there is no guide for comparing and testing brands in such diversity for sustainability. Nevertheless, the results are to be treated with caution. It remains to be desired that Rank a Brand will continue to expand its testing methods in the future and possibly, in cooperation with labels, evaluate these brands more critically and not only on the basis of their statements. This would make it easier for responsible consumers to gain information and make a conscious purchase decision (Rank a Brand, 2014).

5.3 Attitude behavior gap

The literature review has shown that besides the consciousness further other factors influence the consumption behavior. To point out one example, the experimental approach of Falk & Szech (2013) showed an attitude behavior gap in a simple market situation. Based on this, Falk & Szech (2013) deduce that an appeal to morality has only a limited influence on the improvement of consumer behavior. Furthermore, Devinney et al. (2010) investigated consumer behavior in several industrialized and developing countries in an experimental research project for more than ten years. Again, the results show that the major part of the consumer behavior does not correspond to the consciousness. Studies examining consumer behavior in sustainable fashion are few. In 2006, Joergens carried out a qualitative study, which was verified by quantitative methods. According to Joergens (2006), personal needs overlay the need to act ethically. In the area of fashion, consumption is driven primarily by trends, desires, feelings, and social acceptance. These findings are consistent with the results of this thesis.

In their investigations, Devinney et al. (2010) have shown recurrent explanatory patterns, with which consumers justify their unsustainable consumption behavior. For example, the overpriced price is a relevant argument against the consumption of sustainable apparel for the majority of consumers. Devinney et al. (2010) showed that this justification approach is very widespread. Thus, costs are the most crucial factor when purchasing fashion. Niinim (2010), on the other hand, argues that it is not the costs that are the problem of sustainable garments,
but their availability. Due to the low availability, consumers are currently required to take a great deal of initiative in their own efforts to find sustainable apparel (Niinim, 2010). The results of this work show that the desire for better consumers’ availability and consciousness is requested. However, the interviews indicate, that there is a demand for second hand garments. The importance is to be in the right place at the right time with a well-developed concept.

Straehle et al. (2016) describe that in Germany "eco" or "bio" is negatively associated in the context of fashion, whereas the analyzed second hand retailer state to have a high esteem. Additionally, the results of this work show a high demand for information campaigns to raise public awareness and transparent labeling. Consumers need to understand the impact of the conventional garment industry and sustainable fashion consumption in order to have the opportunity to make purchasing decisions based on that knowledge. According to research by Birtwistle & Moore (2007), consumer behavior may change as consumers become more aware of environmental and social impacts. For example, Falk & Szzech (2013) already pointed out that awareness-raising campaigns have only a minor effect on consumer behavior. Assuming that there is a wide choice of sustainable products, sufficient information is available, and the price / performance ratio is comparable to conventional garments, then, according to Ravasio & Pasquinelli (2013), the majority of consumers are willing to choose the more sustainable product. It becomes clear that comfort is a relevant factor in the decision-making process. This low willingness to self-initiative on the consumers’ part is also shown by some of the interviews in this thesis.

According to Vogel (2005) only a few products meet these requirements. Based on this, Ravasio & Pasquinelli (2013) derive a role for brands and retailers to provide consumers with easy access to sustainable garments. Moreover, the interviews of this thesis demand measures on the state level to intervene in a regulatory manner and support green fashion. Devinney et al. (2010) describe these demands as a lack of self-responsibility of consumers. This explanatory pattern, whereby consumers shift responsibility to the government and thus justify their unsustainable consumption, is, a phenomenon that is especially noted in social democracies (Devinney et al., 2010). However, Dohmen (2014) argues that the ability of consumers to influence production conditions is very low. According to Straehle et al. (2016), only at the political level a lasting change in the environmental and social conditions of all economic actors can be achieved. Furthermore, the authors argue that strong sustainability must be anchored in economic incentive systems and political institutions. Shifting agricultural subsidies to supporting organic farming rather than appealing to morality is necessary. Compliance with ecological and social minimum standards along the textile chain is to be enforced at the self-commitment level in the industry. The regulatory measures would not only support the green fashion industry, but also create purchasing incentives for consumers.

5.4 Consumption and buying incentives

The research indicates that fashion consumption is characterized by satisfying emotional needs and has little to do with rational choices. Although an influence of the consciousness on the consumer behavior could be proven in this thesis, this relationship is without linear relation. Rather, cases of consumer decisions are recursive. In addition to the awareness of the offer and the availability, the price and the design have a relevant role. However, the image of sustainable apparel also influences consumer behavior. Furthermore, the results have shown that factors such as environmental and social aspects along the garment supply chain are much more important to the consumers with a high level of awareness than to those without consciousness.
In addition to information about consumer behavior, the theoretical findings state reasons why an Attitude Behavior Gap on the consumers’ part exists. A lack of availability and a low supply are mentioned as a reason for it. Consumers are not interested in buying sustainable garments because the unsatisfactory design and high price of sustainable fashion, as well as a lack of information about it. The results from the interviews disconfirm the statement. Considering the well-known brands that have been interviewed, one can note that they gain sufficient second hand garments as well as recognize an increasing demand for second hand textiles. Taking both statements into account, the popularity of the brand as well as the location and communication seem to have a relevant impact on the success. Eventually, those retailers might not be as successful as they are now if they would have opened their stores in another country without having the experience and consumer base that they face in Sweden. Even in Sweden the success might vary by city and location.

The analysis of the problem of the conventional apparel industry has shown a complex structure of effects. Urgent fields of action have emerged. Working conditions are not sustainable, and the environmental impact is contrary to the principle of sustainability to preserve natural capital. The problem is compounded by the fast fashion phenomenon. Consumers try to satisfy their emotional needs by consuming material goods. There is a desire among consumers to constantly purchase new clothes. Increasing clothing consumption is accompanied by a certain disposable mentality. New reports of catastrophic working conditions in the textile industry are regularly circulating around the world, but sales of fast-fashion brands are steadily rising. As an alternative to fast fashion, the slow fashion movement was presented in this thesis. It is characterized by a reduced consumption of high-quality clothing with a durable design. Sustainable fashion means working in the interests of ecological and social aspects with efficient use of resources, but also in the sense of a conscious renunciation of consumption. New textile fibers, such as the milk fiber, show the possibility of making textiles from waste products very resource-efficiently. There are also opportunities for sustainable fashion consumption in the recycling and reuse of garments. These include lending and swapping clothing as well as upcycling, recycling, and the use of second-hand apparel. With the exception of upcycling and recycling, these opportunities are a very cost-effective sustainable alternative to fast fashion. This is an important factor, especially for the very price-sensitive consumers. Furthermore, the textile certificates IVN Best and GOTS have shown to be a recommendable guide for the consumer due to their high ecological and social standards. In addition, the certificates Fair Wear Foundation and Fair Trade Certified Cotton guarantee high social standards. However, these certificates are not frequently requested. This is caused by an increased price and the opaque labeling of the numerous certificates.

5.5 Customer relationship

As a result of the findings it is suggested that second hand retailer should use various channels to communicate with their customers and to build a good consumer relationship. This increases the customers trust in the retailer and results in loyal customers. Companies have to inform about their values and feel responsible to educate their customers. They should communicate three relevant aspects. Firstly, second hand retailers are clearly required to highlight the advantage of second hand garments in their communication. Secondly, they should inform consumers about their apparel take back concept. Thirdly, they should communicate that the consumers have the opportunity to sell second hand garments on commission as well as purchase them at the same store at the same time.

Story telling is one possible method to inform customers as it is considered to be an attractive opportunity to catch the attention of individuals, as the Instagram account of Pearl shows. In their communication through social media they keep consumers well informed about their
concept and share their current assortment with the user. This shows that social media is an appropriate channel to build a customer relation. Either through story telling or by simply informing customers about their concept and by giving updates on available products. Likewise, the image of a second hand store has a huge impact on the customer's perception. Thus, second hand retailers are required to create an attractive atmosphere and educate their sales personnel, because they are the ones who represent the retailer and are in direct contact with the customer. This is supported by the findings in the theoretical frameworks. By introducing a business model that attempts to close the loop by inviting customers to return garments, a new customer relation is created in which the interaction with the customer as well as the customer loyalty improves. The aim is that customers do not only enter the store for the intention of making a purchase but are encouraged to go through their own wardrobe and return unwanted garments.

5.6 Second hand customer categorization and motives
The motives for returning as well as purchasing second hand items depend on the customer. As defined in the conceptual framework it can be differentiated between four different groups of customers, who are driven by various motives to purchase second hand garments. This finding can be recognized by the experiences made by the second hand retailers that have been interviewed. As all three stores sell new garments as well as second hand apparel a difference in the customer group which they attract with their second hand concept can be identified. On the one hand, there is a customer group which is actively searching for second hand garments. They are targeting second hand stores. On the other hand, there are tourists which pass by and drop in due to an interest in the shop. Houdini places their second hand products in the same store in which they sell their latest collection. This way is an alternative for customers that have a lower financial frame, to be able to afford the desired brand. This statement is supported by further literature sources stating that economic reasons are the main driver for customers to purchase second hand garments. Both assumptions supplement each other. Nevertheless, not all customers link the consumption of second hand apparel to environmental aspects. Second hand fashion retailers have the responsibility to educate their customer’s and draw attention to the consumers’ awareness of giving unwanted garments the chance to be reused.

The aim behind the second hand concept is to draw attention to high quality products which can be reused several times due to the use of high quality materials. At the same time it justifies the price for the apparel. On the downside, there are garment consumers who value quantity over quality. They purchase garments to fulfill a want rather than a need. Those garment consumers are hard to educate about alternative dispose possibilities. Speculative it can be said that it is harder to turn this customers into second hand customers, but by creating an experience when visiting the second hand store it also fulfills their needs.

As presented by Goworen et al. (2012) customer behavior can be influenced through social media as well as at the point of sale. This statement is supported by the three cases of this paper and will be further investigated in the next section.

5.7 Customer decision making and social media
Social media is a cost efficient opportunity to reach a large target group. Apart from that, social media can be the trigger for individuals to recognize a want. Once they aim for something they start by gaining information about it. For a company to be considered it is necessary to have a professional online appearance. The Pearl owner states that they inform their customers about the products they offer through social media in order to attract customers to visit their store. So far, their social media strategy turned out to be successful and motivates customers to visit their store. Moreover, the purchase activity is often
influenced by recommendations, wherefore Houdini aims to create a unique store experience for every visitor which goes together with the overall sustainability approach. Visitors are invited to share their experience on their own social media channels. This increases the popularity of the brand without investing in own communication, but in contrast negative feedback cannot be avoided. Post purchase activities are statements given by customers who express their level of satisfaction. These statements influence other potential customers who inform themselves about several purchase possibilities. Here, the second hand retailer has to ensure that visitors are satisfied in order to ensure good reputation. The last decision in connection to the garment purchase is the disposal decision. When making a purchase the customer has to be informed about garment return options in order to avoid a disposal to landfill caused through a lack of knowledge. It has been recognized that the textile sale on commission is a motivating incentive to return garments to the second hand retailer. The same decision making process that applies to deciding about a purchase can be applied to garment return activities. According to the owner of Aplace and Pearl the image of Aplace will be transformed to the Pearl retail store. This supports the awareness of the store as well as the willingness to return garments, which have been purchased at Aplace when they are no longer wanted.

5.8 Consumer attraction strategy: Recommendations for action

First of all, it is essential to note that all consumer groups should be studied as much as possible in terms of consumer behavior, perceptions and attitudes. After analyzing the consumers, it is important to divide them into several groups, based on their main purchasing motives as explained in chapter 2. The main target group consists of individuals who do not prioritize the traditional dualistic price-quality stimulus, but base their purchasing decision on the planned actions, such as emotional attachment, lifestyle, self-expression or similar factors. For instances, companies should focus on consumers from the Generation Y. They live mostly in single or childless community households and, thus, have a low cost of living while pursuing a hedonistic lifestyle. For that reason they are a profitable target group. The Generation Y gets used to spending more money on garments and further things that might help them to emphasize their identity. Moreover, it should be noted that the Generation Y is aware of the concept and single facets of sustainable fashion. That is why the Generation Y rates the prices for sustainable fashion higher than for conventional fashion. Further improved communication can be encouraged to better represent and communicate the benefits of second hand apparel. The construction of trustworthy, holistic certificates can be supportive. The Generation Y wishes the relief by honest certificates. Therefore, companies can be encouraged to focus on sharing information about their quality and standards, as well as ensuring that they are secure. Nevertheless, the results show that for Generation Y, the classic purchase criteria such as appearance, durability, fit, price and quality are more important than sustainability criteria. This finding clarifies that the concept of selling second hand garments is not developed enough to attract the mass market. The trend is not adapted by the whole Generation Y, but continuously increases. This can be recognized though increasing customers shift towards a younger generation at the analyzed stores. Accordingly, only focusing on sustainable arguments is not a promising path. Rather, sustainable garments should provide a convincing quality in combination with being cost-effective. In addition, better information dissemination and processing through politics, media and education is required. Therefore, companies are asked to work more intensively with the relevant actors.

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With regard to the demand side, there are various measures such as education, information, campaigns, and financial incentives to influence consumer behavior. For instances a discount coupon for the retailer in return for old garments can be handed out as an incentive (Pedersen and Andersen, 2015). The incentive provided by Filippa K Second Hand, Houdini and Pearl is that their sell returned garments on commission. Houdini additionally allows a discount. This is important to be communicated to the customers.

A first relevant step is to familiarize consumers with the definition of sustainable fashion. As a current example, the work of the fashion revolution can be taken, which uses social media to sensitize apparel consumers to the issue of precarious working conditions in textile factories with the aim of raising questions among them. In addition, thanks to a fashion index, which is a ranking of international fashion labels according to the transparency level of their supply chain, the consciously purchasing consumer is given a guideline for their purchases. Even fashion companies themselves can support more sustainable consumer behavior, as H&M does with its collection of used garments (Pedersen and Andersen, 2015). Houdini is another good example. They invest in the communication of their re-projects to their customers in order to inform them about their sustainable approaches.

The results of the interview provide relevant recommendations for action. However, as the textile chain consists of a complex system that includes many actors, it makes it possible to shift responsibility to various actors. The literature also assigns different responsibilities to the actors. On the one hand, consumers are responsible for their consumer behavior, but on the other hand, fashion companies should be accountable for their ways of production. Finally, politics has a responsibility to intervene regulative.

Despite of that a comprehensive education of the population is necessary. Otherwise they will not become aware of their own responsibility. In addition opportunities for sustainable consumption becoming more widely known and recognized. Furthermore, the task of the politic is to create an incentive system for consumers and companies. Probably companies will only switch to a sustainable garment production, if it creates advantages for them or disadvantages can be averted. Increased supply and production of large quantities can allow a price reduction while respecting social and ecological standards. Consumers strive to be more secure about compliance with environmental and social standards, beyond the greater supply and lower prices.

6 Conclusion

To counteract the unsustainable garment disposal habit of apparel consumers’ changes must be undertaken. In order to understand the customer’s behavior it is important to understand the theoretical framework connected to the topic. On the one hand, the apparel market has to change and products must become long lasting. As a result, customers feel to buy something valuable. Consequently, the product is more appreciated. Furthermore, second hand concepts must be implemented to ensure that garments will be used until their real life cycle ends. On the other hand, customer awareness must be appealed to change their behavior. In order to achieve a change in the customer awareness theoretical models about consumer behavior are advisable.

Research question 1: How can customers be motivated to return unwanted garments? Which are possible hindering factors?

To answer the first research question of this thesis, in the first step customer motivators will be pointed out. Motivators for customers to return worn garments are on the one hand of economic nature and on the other hand caused by environmental or social factors. Whereas some individuals donate their unwanted apparel, others discard them. Increasing the
simplicity of returning textile products is identified to have a positive impact on the readiness to further return unwanted garments to second hand retail stores. Therefore, transparent return processes are requested. For other individuals compensation is a motivation, which is provided through returning garments on commission or providing discount vouchers. It has been identified that the motivation increases when an emotional attachment to the retailer exists or a positive experience in connection to the garment return is created. Further, the sympathy for the brand increases the willingness to visit the store as well as it motivates consumers to return garments. What is more, personal communication as well as communication through social media is another tool to provide information about return options, which seems to be the most relevant aspects for individuals.

Two large hindering factors have been identified. One is a lack of transparency and the other one is the lack of knowledge.

Research question 2: How can a second hand multi-brand retailer take active influence on increasing the consumers' willingness to return unwanted garments and avoid hindering factors?

Generally, companies have to trigger the customer’s behavior by making the return and the product more attractive. It is possible to address to the consumer’s economical behavior. Therefore, companies should establish attractive commission rates. Furthermore, individuals can be attracted by an appealing online presence as well as through a store that provides a welcoming and inspiring atmosphere. As it has been identified during the interviews, second hand retailer aim to have their store look welcoming which seems to be a successful strategy to attract consumers to enter the store. Crowded, poorly organized or unpleasant smelling boutiques are more likely to deter customers. This is supported by the attempt of the owner of Aplace and Pearl who believes that image is a further important influencing factor to attract customers. He is convinced that his second hand retail store will gain the same popularity in terms of branding as Aplace. The idea is that customers connect the offered brands with the store, which will result in a certain image of the store. By offering items that are hard to get exclusivity can be achieved. Consumers generally appreciate the high value of a product. Consequently, it is less likely that the consumer will simply dispose garments of. By increasing the image of a retailer, the perceived experience from individuals returning their garments is more likely perceived as an experience that satisfies them. Satisfied customers convince further potential customers through (electronic) word-of-mouth to follow their behavior and return their unwanted garments as well. A further essential aspect is excellent communication.

Summing up is indispensable to mention that the communication plays a major role in convincing customers to reuse their garments. To be more transparent an active communication has to take place. One possibility to comply with this need is through social media channels such as Instagram, but also directly through websites or newsletters. What is more, direct communication with customers in store is a promising method to inform customers about take back options. This way the customer loyalty as well as the customer relationship can increase. To counteract the problem of returning items a postal return has to be considered. Similar to the concept introduced by the Rag Bag, shopping bags handed out at the Aplace and Pearl stores are an easy way to be used as a return bag when turning them inside out. This might be a simple strategy to allow an easy return of unwanted garments. In addition, since the owner of Pearl states that he considers adding an online second hand retail, a transparent guide on how to return items can be added there. Through developing a guideline, considering the brand as well as the garment condition, the amount of compensation provided to the garment owner can be made transparent by publishing the
Moreover, a concentrated action by the whole branch could be more effective than single efforts of various companies. In addition to that, politics could establish a bonus and malus system to encourage companies and customers to reuse their garments. The sale of reused garments could be exempted from VATs.

7 Limitations and further research

The research is limited due to its focus on high quality textile retailers. It is possible to transfer the findings to a similar multi-brand retailer in the textile sector. Nevertheless, the findings cannot be generalized for other branches. It has to be added that the number of interviewed companies is also not sufficient to make general statements. In addition, the research focuses on an already existing retailer who is familiar with the market and its customers. Consequently, the results cannot be transferred to another market in another country. The opportunity of entering the online market has not been studied in this thesis and requires further investigation. It might increase the amount of consumers returning garments by eliminating the boundary that occurs through long distances to the next second hand retailer. Moreover, the companies interviewed make use of existing communication channels. Consequently, the concept is not transferable to a startup company. Furthermore, the research is limited by the chosen methodology. As a qualitative interview method provides an insight to a predefined extract of the world affairs and the opinion of individuals, further research can be done by surveying a wider range of implemented garment second hand concepts to differentiate between various models and determine a best practice concept. In order to support the findings further research is recommended using a quantitative method to find out about consumer preferences. The applicability of the findings to a particular fashion retailer is another area that can be explored further.

8 References


Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013. Towards the circular economy. Economic and business rationale for an accelerated transition. Available at:


9 Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>statements Pearl</th>
<th>areas</th>
<th>topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>we are a privately owned quite small company</td>
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<td>Pearl being a sub brand of Aplaco</td>
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<td>&quot;pre-owned fashion and goods&quot;</td>
<td>image</td>
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<td>accept clothing, accessories, sunglasses and shoes</td>
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<td>sell some of outlet products</td>
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<td>products</td>
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<td>eventually products that cannot be sold as second hand (such as soap)</td>
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<td>garments I have seen have good quality, it's hard with shoes</td>
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<td>I am surprised that people have good quality products and accept low price</td>
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<td>at the moment we have around 600 products</td>
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<td>around 500-600 products is a good level to have</td>
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<td>our customer is between 20-50 so we cover a large spectrum</td>
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<td>noticed large change in our customer</td>
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<td>we have the kids that look for supreme stuff and also the mom who just want to do a find</td>
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<td>it feels like people actually come here to see what's new in the store</td>
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<td>people actually travel here from other parts of town</td>
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<td>people see it more in an emotional connection, doing it for a good cause</td>
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<td>we have not thought about customers which only consume second hand, one kind of customer that we now</td>
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<td>people are happy with change</td>
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<td>we have absolutely enlarged our customer group</td>
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<td>location of store is very good</td>
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<td>main competitor is Thrift second hand</td>
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<td>market needs different kind of players</td>
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<td>Pearl is a second hand - Aplaco is not</td>
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<td>company</td>
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<td>important to both separate brands but also try to find a way to have them work close to each other in terms of general interest in terms of second hand it's quite big and it's getting bigger and bigger, so we felt pretty secure we feel that the level of design is quite high compared to fast fashion</td>
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<td>accept a bit more and return a bit more instead of saying no</td>
<td>concept</td>
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<td>there are a lot of brands we are not able to carry</td>
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<td>only collect garments in Stockholm at the moment, but would make sense to collect garments in Malmö as we maybe also small and premium selection for sale in Malmö store</td>
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<td>this concept is great to build loyalty</td>
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<td>nice way to get close to customer if we now can actually make money for them</td>
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<td>one of main benefit is economics</td>
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<td>benefits of second hand</td>
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<td>financial, circular and the branding</td>
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<td>sales have been higher than we had it at the outlet store</td>
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<td>margins and business side looks much better for us</td>
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<td>economics</td>
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<td>we would not be able to have a second hand store just as a pilot and use it if it would be carrying by let costs everything we do must be balanced in terms of economics</td>
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<td>we are interested in the circular economics</td>
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<td>possibility to have some kind of sustainability within our company</td>
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<td>Aplaco represents Pearl but Pearl is the main name of the store</td>
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<td>Pearl will get to the same point like Aplaco in terms of branding</td>
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<td>branding</td>
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<td>if it's in medium condition customer will see it as new product and will make connection between that brand have a close relationship with the customer, know what customers are looking for customer relationship</td>
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<td>in terms of communication and events we are quite offensive, we offer these kind of values</td>
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<td>we did partnership with sustainability platform, they communicated it through their channels of course use our own platform, Aplaco channels</td>
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<td>we don't see that communication through Aplaco channels around Pearl is something bad</td>
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<td>we are having a Pearl Instagram account</td>
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<td>we did a campaign before opening Pearl to ask customers to bring in all stuff that they would like to sell those we signed up for a software as communication</td>
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<td>we have a newsletter sign up</td>
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<td>people can return their garments to Aplaco or Pearl</td>
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<td>we created a consignment card for customers that bring in their garments</td>
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<td>we gather phone number and email address</td>
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<td>people tend to go directly to the Pearl store</td>
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<td>we don't buy anything that we cannot sell</td>
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<td>maybe for customer it is better that he can come to store with 10 items and we buy them, so transaction is more create documents and guidelines &quot;designer index&quot; to explain what is a dirty garment</td>
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<td>pricing guideline based on looking at competitors</td>
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<td>next step to educate about brands - short list of brands</td>
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<td>we are not worried that we don't get the amount of items that we need</td>
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<td>statements Houdini</td>
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<td>It started with the kids cloth, because kids are growing out of garments so fast</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Our product is so long lasting, we wanted to show that by having a second hand shop in the shop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garments have a longer living period</td>
<td></td>
<td>product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people use garments for a long time, it’s more when they are grown out</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>We mix up customers and our own stuff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s both, those who just look at that new collection and other who go to the whole</td>
<td></td>
<td>customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We sell second hand garments in Gothenburg and in the Stockholm store in 1359</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had it in Norrlandsgatan [Stockholm] before, but it’s too small, so we did not have enough space</td>
<td></td>
<td>location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we started we had a huge push, but usually for our re-projects we talk a lot with our customers about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes we show what we have in our Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td>marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We don’t want garments stains or too many holes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We have realized that we just want the shop to look nice and have really good stuff, so we have rejected some</td>
<td></td>
<td>garment collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It depends on how they [used garments] look like and what they have been through, but especially the shells, usually we put out garments straight away</td>
<td></td>
<td>processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garments are not send between stores</td>
<td></td>
<td>inventory management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you come in to a shop where no resell is offered you can hand it in anyway and we transport it to a shop where</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes we take it [garment] for half a year, sometimes a year</td>
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<tr>
<td>It depends on how fast it goes, we haven’t set a time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We contact the customer when it’s sold</td>
<td></td>
<td>concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our garments are expensive and exclusive</td>
<td></td>
<td>strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We also repair things that we have got in and resell it for reuse</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We tried a little pop up selling used things and it turned out very well</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>So it’s possible for those who have not as much to buy them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>We can recycle it</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It is successful, but I don’t have numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We want to extend the whole re-projects: reuse, rent, recycle and repair</td>
<td></td>
<td>strategic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of our goals, in 2020 we want our income to be 3-5% from the “re”, so we want to expand in this part</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>statements Filippa K Second Hand</th>
<th>areas</th>
<th>topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People are suppose to feel like it’s new but with a better price</td>
<td></td>
<td>image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The garments we sell are only from Filippa K, but also some glasses from Moncler and jewelry from Italy and of</td>
<td></td>
<td>products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We also sell new clothes that are clothes from the sample sales</td>
<td></td>
<td>company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Filippa K cloth in Jadis Second Hand, so we decided to open an own one</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are always enough garments in the store, almost too much, so sometimes, we say &quot;no more&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers are both, Filippa K and other customers, many tourists and the in overall general second hand customers</td>
<td></td>
<td>customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers are happy to hand in clothes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication mainly through email and newsletter</td>
<td></td>
<td>marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website and Instagram, but we are not using it much, only when we have time available</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When customers bring cloth, we collect name, phone number and write down the last day to pick up the more</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 piece is easy, when customers bring a bag of garments and it is a lot to do, we just tell them we do it later, if</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The volume of the dropped off clothes reaches from 4 garments to 3 bags</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between the seasons the customers want to get rid of garments</td>
<td></td>
<td>garment collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes are collected by season, clean and with no holes</td>
<td></td>
<td>processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting is strict, people are trying to bring weird things;</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality is 50/50, sometimes we say no, but most okay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set price and place it in store directly</td>
<td></td>
<td>garment assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherwise the garments go to charity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The environmental aspect is important for our customers</td>
<td></td>
<td>sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The concept would definitely work in other &quot;regular store&quot;, but it is easier in Stockholm (because of the custo</td>
<td></td>
<td>strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a successful and good concept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand awareness supports the concept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>