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Research paper

CSR & Greenwashing within the Fashion Industry

A comparative analysis of a manufacturing company and
a Reseller (Sweden)

Bachelor Thesis

Geneva Business School

Business of Administration Major in International Management

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Date: 07/06/2021

Word count: 11373

Declaration of Authorship

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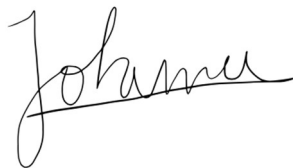
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Acknowledgements

First of all, I am thrilled to have completed this study as the chosen topic. I mainly want to thank my supervisor, Nicola Jackman, for making and taking her time to contribute to my data collection and support me and guidance throughout every research and writing phase.

I would also like to thank the participation interviewees, including current and previous employees at the two fashion companies significant for my topic. It has been a pleasure to listen to their points of views and get a deeper understanding of the organizations.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have been an enormous support and made me complete my work during these short but intense months.

Johanna Vasquez
Barcelona, Spain
07th of June 2021

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Abstract

The fashion industry is one of the largest industries in the world, with the projection to grow to 2.25 trillion dollars by the year 2025 strengthening or arguing that the demand for clothes and footwear is on the rise. Nowadays, there are many fashion companies on the market that state they invest in sustainability when it comes to production, human rights, and how they handle animal welfare. A sustainable brand is one that has successfully integrated environmental, social and economic issues into its business operation.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the clothing and textile industry through the award for CSR. There is a lot of secondary literature on corporate social responsibility in the fashion industry and greenwashing. First and foremost, the study will examine how two companies in this sector treat and anchor companies' social responsibility and motives for implementing CSR in Sweden's clothing / fashion industry. One of the Swedish fashion brands is a retailer and the other company manufactures. However, both companies manufacture their brands and the reseller (NA-KD) also sells endless brands from other companies. The approach has been to get a better understanding of the different methods used by these two companies.

There has been a clear gap in secondary data where there is a comparative analysis between the different types of industries examined in this research. The main findings show that CSR at NA-KD was never there when it was founded, included in the philosophy, the criteria, the values for the company. On the other hand, the other company, Filippa K, was definitely one of the foundations of the company.

keywords: CSR, Fashion industry, Greenwashing, NA-KD, Filippa K. Human rights, Animal Welfare, Sweden.

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of the study.

The fashion industry is one of the largest industries in the world, with the projection to grow to 2.25 trillion dollars by the year 2025 strengthening or arguing that the demand for clothes and footwear is on the rise. If we break down the industry into regions, Europe is one of the most attractive markets for fashion worldwide. Germany's industry was representing the highest value with approximately 63.17 Billion dollars in 2020. (Shahbandeh, 2021). The European fashion industry is the second biggest exporter after China, which covers 29% of the total global market. Exported women's clothing consist of 40% and 23% for menswear. The countries that have the biggest clothing industries when it comes to production in the EU are Spain, Italy, Germany, and Portugal, with a total of 75% EU production value. ("European clothing industry", 2021). The textile industry in Europe employs a total of 1.1 million workers across the whole Europe, with 130,000 companies. 99% of these companies are either small or medium-sized ones. Furthermore, 81% of the workers across Europe in the clothing industry are dominated by women. ("Topic: Clothing and apparel market in Europe", 2021).

It is a complex industry, as the main drivers accelerating the growth are unique, according to McKinsey & Company's Industry Prospects, a rise in environmental awareness, aspiration of symbolic lifestyles, rising investment, and radical experimentation. The above-mentioned environmental awareness, which can also be translated to *consumers' demand for a clean-up*, together with new regulations forcing this high-energy consumer, high waste and pollution producer has reinforced the global fashion industry to accelerate its CSR and sustainability engagement.

According to many experts, the fashion industry cannot continue to ignore its customer preferences, even if "what they (consumer) say & what they do does not necessarily coincide." (Joy, Sherry Jr, Venkatesha, Wang, Chan, 2015) Society today is characterized by a greater awareness and according to scholars and academics, demands corporations to become more transparent and address their potential environmental and societal impact in order to mitigate/reduce their carbon footprint while, at the same time, respond to the UN Sustainable development goals. However, irrespective of the stakeholder pressure from an environmental sustainability perspective, the fashion industry as a whole has taken steps to address their impact. Still, the progress is very modest, as this progression is being led only by a handful of brands through R&D and radical experimentation, mainly focusing on synthetic and re-engineered fibers, bio fabrication leather and e-textiles, stopping the destruction of unsold good, introducing recycling of used garments, repairs, etc. On the fashion industry, does it really have a direct impact on improved performance?

This research paper aims to analyze the reality of CSR and the greenwashing that is carried out by many different companies in today's fashion industry. The study will examine the literature to understand what criteria is used for fashion brands to implement corporate social responsibility within their corporate philosophy (mission,

vision and values) and consequently identify the potential advantages and disadvantages of CSR from a performance perspective. Consumers' perception of CSR has become an important factor to study. There has been an increase in attention from managers and researchers in the area of consumer perception of CSR. (Arli & Lasmono, 2010), the issue is that consumers are often not familiar with the concept of CSR and therefore unsupportive. This is the opposite conclusion of consumer perceptions in developed countries, where most consumers are engaged and willing to support corporate social responsibility.

This paper - Revealing the truth behind CSR within the Fashion Industry - aims to address the impact of CSR by analyzing the performance of two Swedish fashion brands -NA-KD & FILIPPA K- the first one being what can be considered a "brand reseller" but also with important collaborations with influencers who design their own garments, and Filippa K, a company that designs, manufactures and commercializes its own collections.

The criteria for choosing two different fashion companies in Sweden is to support and better understand the challenges behind embedding CSR within companies that are positioned at different levels of the fashion industry, and subsequently recommending how Corporate social responsibility policies, correctly implemented, could potentially help, or not, to consolidate and ensure sustainable growth of the company. The research question could be synthesized as: Does a sustainable approach improve the performance of fashion brands? Carrying out a comparative analysis of the two Swedish companies mentioned above will hopefully reveal that there is a still long road ahead when it comes to achieving an overarching sustainable approach in the fashion industry, which goes further from legal compliance/regulatory laws and by-laws, but a change in mind-set of the industry and the end consumers.

1.2. Outline of the study.

This research paper is structurally divided into several parts:

Chapter 2 - Literature review

This chapter will delve into the hypothesis which the authors wish to address through secondary research. In order to delve into how this problem has been identified and addressed, the authors will evaluate previous academic and scholar research on the topic, identifying the gaps that this report will attempt to address.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This section of the paper will attempt to propose solutions by critically analysing primary and secondary sources. The use of rigorous qualitative research methods can enhance and support the design and development of quality measures and that of quality comparative reports, which is the goal of this research paper. Through the author's research evaluation - the process in which the purpose of the research carried out, - together with the methodology chosen (qualitative), data collection and analysis, the authors wish to ascertain their effectiveness and validity of their primary and secondary research, but most importantly to reach the objectives set out in the paper, as well as to reinforce the significance and contribution of this research paper to the field of research.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The aim of this report and associated conducted research is to identify the benefits of introducing corporate social responsibility approaches throughout all the value chain of the fashion industry, in this case based on two significant Swedish fashion brands: NAKD & FILIPPA K, the first has not introduced or addressed sustainability within its corporate philosophy, while Filippa K, on the other hand is a brand heavily influenced by the importance of sustainability and addresses CSR approaches within its culture.

2. CASE STUDY COMPANY PROFILES

2.1. Introduction

Although important steps have been taken by fashion to embed sustainability and social responsibility into their business strategies and their corporate culture, academic and scholar research papers and reports have highlighted that SMEs and larger corporations do differ in the way they “walk the talk” and that companies targeting less visible segments, such as middle markets, tend to engage less with CSR. (Mariachiara Colucci, Annamaria Tuan, Marco Visentin, An empirical investigation of the drivers of CSR talk and walk in the fashion industry, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Volume 248, 2020). However, we also need to understand that a high number of end consumers do not walk the talk either, thus potentially questioning the overall benefit of introducing sustainability into their strategies and values.

A high number of studies carried out focus on corporations and CSR experts, yet for the purpose of this paper, the authors have opted for a different approach: interview senior management/executives in fashion brands and their customers, to understand the purchase motivation and the impact that sustainability has on their final decision making. The authors have chosen two top fashion brands in Sweden: NA-KD and FILIPPA K, the first brand has not embedded sustainability into their strategy, while the second brand, sustainability and CSR represent the values and are present throughout the corporate and operational strategy of the enterprise.

2.2. Case Study Profiles

2.2.1. NA-KD Brand Group

NA-KD Brand Group, (AKA NA-KD) is a Swedish specialized digital intimate, swimwear and clothing company. Selling exclusively on the online market until a few years ago, when it opened a number of physical stores in Sweden, Netherlands and Germany. Founded in 2015 by Jarno Vanhatapio, former founder of NELLY.com., NA-KD is one of Europe’s top 20 fastest-growing fashion companies in today's apparel industry. The company also offers a range of brands and products from companies such as Calvin Klein, Levis, and Mango.

The company reflects a modern Scandinavian creative, which they represent via a range of social media platforms. NA-KD’s mission is to break the mold by emphasising the uniqueness and individuality of each customer, in other words, what it means to be unique and stand out from the crowd. The company's vision is to be the leading player of the global e-commerce market for clothing, footwear, accessories, and lifestyle products by offering all kinds of product options with the latest fashion trends.

NA-KD's marketing strategy is similar to the fashion companies Boohoo, Missguided, and ASOS. NA-KD stocks around 100 external fashion labels on its website, and ships

to 115 countries from its warehouse in The Netherlands. In 2017 NA-KD started to expand into brick-and-mortar, they opened their first physical store in The Netherlands, followed by their second store in Germany in 2018. In Sweden, there were two stores, one in Stockholm and one that recently closed in Gothenburg.

NA-KD has become a well-mentioned brand on today's Swedish social media, and is well-known due to their many collaborations with influencers and celebrities.

Table: 1 Income statement of NA-KD

ITEM	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	5-YEAR TREND
Sales/Revenue	1.84M	2.86M	76.94M	59.18M	52.27M	
Sales Growth	-	55.25%	2,590.15%	-23.08%	-11.67%	
Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) incl. D&A	1.48M	1.92M	52.84M	43.92M	35.82M	
COGS Growth	-	30.02%	2,649.75%	-16.87%	-18.45%	
COGS excluding D&A	1.46M	1.92M	51.2M	36.96M	30.14M	
Depreciation & Amortization Expense	13.22K	-	1.64M	6.97M	5.68M	
Depreciation	13.22K	-	1.48M	6.58M	5.38M	
Amortization of Intangibles	-	-	158.79K	387K	299.1K	
Gross Income	364.2K	938.41K	24.1M	15.25M	16.45M	
Gross Income Growth	-	157.67%	2,468.11%	-36.71%	7.86%	

Source: Marketwatch

According to MarketWatch NA-KD's sales revenues from 2018-2019 enjoyed an exponential growth, from from 23,762,167 million Swedish krona in 2018 to 6,392,521,430 billion Swedish krona in 2019, a growth of over 15% in one fiscal year.

2.2.2 Filippa K

Filippa K is a Swedish fashion company founded by Filippa Knutsson and her husband Patrik Kihlberg at their kitchen table in 1993 to find a solution to the stress of dressing. They saw the potential for simple, practical garments that answered the real experiences of everyday life through good designs, comfortable and stylish.

Since its foundation, Filippa K'sK's purpose has been to make clothes that last, both in style and quality. The company is known for its design of clothes for both women, soft sport, and men. The company's mission is to see simplicity as the purest form of luxury and inspire mindful consumption, minimalist lifestyle, and equality. Style, simplicity, and quality are three values that run through everything the company does. Filippa K wants to encourage customers to focus on long-lasting quality and design, so customers have fewer and better pieces in their wardrobes. Filippa K is present in 20 markets globally through 25 brand stores, over 300 premium retailers, and department stores.

Ever since the company was founded, they have worked actively towards decreasing their production environmental and social footprint, increasing their use of sustainable

materials, and addressing social issues in their value chains. Filippa K has based its economic model on a circular economy framework 2014, with four standards that they constantly communicate through the 4 R equation: Reduce, Repair, Reuse and Recycle.

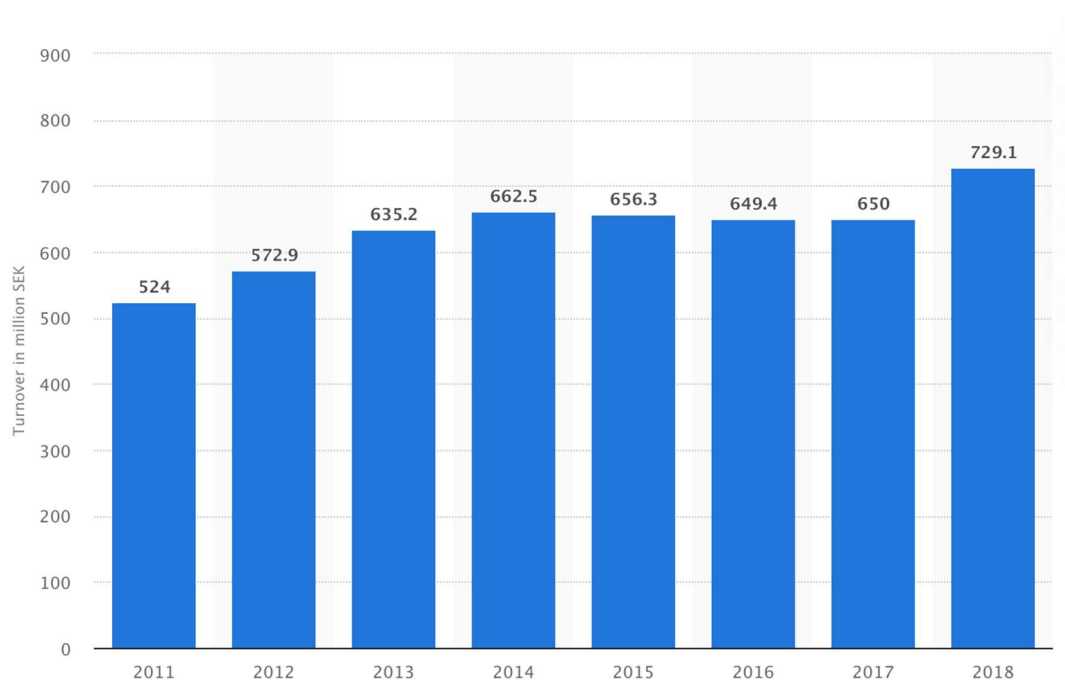


Table:2 Income statement of Filippa K. Source:Statista

The above table shows the turnover of the company from 2011-2018. The company's turnover has increased during the last 7 years, during 2011 the turnover amounted to 524 million Swedish Krona and grew until 2018 with a turnover of around 729 million Swedish Krona.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

Dickson and Eckman's definition of the socially responsible clothing business is that of: "An orientation encompassing the environment, its people, the apparel/textile products made and consumed, and the systematic impact that production, marketing, and consumption of these products and their component parts has on multiple

stakeholders and the environment. A philosophy that balances ethics/ morality with profitability, which is achieved through accountability-based business decisions and strategies, and a desire for outcomes that positively affect, or do very little harm to, the world and its people (Dickson and Eckman, 2006),

The aim of this paper is to study the clothing and textile industry through the prism of CSR. First of all, it investigates the ways in which two companies of this sector address and embed social corporate responsibility and the motivators to implement CSR into the apparel/fashion industry in Sweden. To undertake the task of research, we need to firstly review and look into the different theories and schools of thought regarding corporate social responsibility and then address the challenges of the global fashion industry. Finally the authors look into the motivators behind CSR at corporate level, but also at individual level as there is an unresolved paradox concerning the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in consumer behavior. Consumers demand more and more CSR information but research research indicates a considerable gap between consumers' apparent interest in CSR and the limited role of CSR in purchase behavior.

A systematic literature review was carried out, encompassing open-source academic publications and journals focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), sustainability, and fashion, covering the period 2019–2020.

3.2. Corporate Social Responsibility, Theories and Schools of Thought

CSR definitions, theories and models were investigated by many scholars. Reza Safar zad defined the CSR concept as a legal requirement for a company which includes continued commitment towards the community, adding that the main goal of a company is to increase the efficiency and productivity of its operations and to maximize its shareholders' profit. But all this must be done by integrating the community ethical and environmental expectations into the company economic processes (Safar zad, R. (2017). Corporate Social Responsibility Theories and Models, Applied mathematics in engineering. Management and technology journal, 5, 38).

On the other hand, Milton Friedman argued that companies' management has only one responsibility which is to maximize the profits of its owners and shareholders. He argued that social problems should be resolved independently by a free market system mechanism. (Friedman, M. (1962) The Capitalism and Freedom. University of Chicago Press.

Another scholar, James Brusseau opted for a dual definition for CSR. In first instance he saw it as the general name for any theory of the corporation that emphasizes both the responsibility to make money and the responsibility to interact ethically with the surrounding community. Next, he defined CSR as a specific concept to achieve profit for a company while it plays a role in community welfare. Brusseau concluded that CSR, as a specific theory was composed of four corporate obligations:

1. Economic responsibility to make money;
2. Legal responsibility to adhere to rules and regulations;

3. Ethical responsibility to do what's right even when not required by the letter or spirit of the law;
4. Philanthropic responsibility to contribute to society's projects even when it's independent of the particular business.

According to Susith Fernando, PhD Senior Lecturer at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, (Sri Lanka) and Stewart Lawrence, PhD Emeritus Professor Department of Waikato Management School University (New Zealand), in their research paper A Theoretical Framework for CSR practices: Integrating Legitimacy theory, Stakeholder Theory and Institutional Theory (2014) "CSR literature reveals that corporations, regardless of their geographical location or the developmental status of their operational country, are increasingly adopting CSR practices (ACCA 2010; KPMG 2011), but no commonly agreed theoretical perspective exists in explaining corporate behaviour in relation to CSR practices". (Gray et al. 1995a; Deegan 2002; Belal 2008; Gray et al. 2010).

3.3. Greenwashing vs CSR

The term Greenwashing comes originally from the Environmentalist Jay Westerveld in the 1980's. Jay describes that companies by then were making false claims and overstating the environmental or the ethical benefits of what they were selling or their products. (Purcell, 2020).

A sustainable brand is one that has successfully integrated environmental, social and economic issues into its business operation. However, there is many fashion companies on the market that says they invest on sustainability, when it comes to production, have strict rules about human rights, and how they handle animal welfare in their company strategies, and this is what many company actually follow, but there is also many other companies that represent the "greenwashing" type. Moreover, most companies that consider themselves as sustainable only meet one-third of the definition. (Council, 2021)

Greenwashing is not a recent phenomenon. Since the mid-1980s the term has gained broad recognition and acceptance to describe the practice of making unwarranted or overblown claims of sustainability or environmental friendliness in an attempt to gain market share. In recent years, it has escalated as fashion brands strive to meet escalating consumer demand for greener products and services, according to advertising consultancy TerraChoice Environmental Marketing. Last year TerraChoice issued its second report on the subject, identifying 2,219 products making green claims—an increase of 79% over the company's first report two years earlier. TerraChoice also concluded that 98% of those products were guilty of greenwashing. (EHP Environmental Health Perspectives, 2020)

In 2010, Ogilvy & Mather advertising agency released a handbook designed to guide managers in how to avoid green-washing charges and called upon them to adopt a policy of "radical transparency" in green advertising campaigns. (Ogilvy Earth from

Greenwas to great: A practical Guide to Green Marketing (without the Greenwash) 2020).

3.4. The Fashion industry

The clothing/fashion industry was the first industry to become genuinely global. (Perry & Towers, 2013) It has been reorganised consistently since the 1970s (Diviney and Lillywhite, 2007). Globalisation has enabled gradual reduction of trade barriers and made the flow of goods, services and labour more unrestrained. As a consequence, the garment industry is focused mainly in the hands of large corporations with widespread supply chains, based on outsourcing production.

The Journal of Corporate Responsibility and Leadership Positive Management and Leadership in Socially Responsible Organisations, manufacturing clothes is highly labour-intensive and companies look for cheap workforce all around the globe, therefore the production process is commonly transferred to countries with dense population and low wages, like China, India, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Turkey, Sri Lanka, within other or India (Diviney and Lillywhite, 2007). This global situation permits companies to create various conditions in different parts of their structure, mostly not consistent with what we can state as commonly accepted ethical norms.

3.5. Fashion Industry and the CSR challenges

The fashion industry is capricious and is constantly under the pressure of the low price syndrome. Competition is fierce and brings the companies to strain for high profit margins. In turn, this leads to further outsourcing and offshoring (Perry and Towers, 2013). Customers expect to find diverse clothes in multiple styles at a low price, which pressures apparel companies into lowering costs and making the lead times shorter. Under these conditions it might be difficult to abide by CSR rules in clothing factories. (Książak, 2017).

According to Paulina Ksiezak (2016) clothes, which normally should be characterised by their endurance and long life, are completely redefined. In the modern world, the “desire for fast fashion has created demand for 80 billion new garments per year, which represent a consumption hysteria that far exceeds human needs and planetary boundaries” (Abreu, 2015, p. 2). This need for constant variation of people’s appearance leads to overproduction and waste and unless there is a 180 degree change in the way people purchase fashion, this situation will potentially worsen, irrespective of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development goals. The fashion industry as a whole, but more specifically, but not exclusive to fast fashion, relies on a labour intensive industry, which currently can be found in developing countries. These nations heavily rely on the fashion industry since it considerably contributes to the GDP, however, changing the consumer mindset to a more sustainable consumer approach means that the impact on these nations will be important. Having said this, according to the author, the financial interests are so great that there is a considerable lobby to ensure continuity of fashion consumer hysteria.

3.6. CSR & Fashion Industry

CSR has been an effective management tool to strengthen the organizations' results through a better image in the minds of stakeholders and also because of their responsible behavior towards society and the environment. (Mohtsham Saeed & Arshad, 2012). CSR is the responsibility of management, it is not only to maximize financial profit but it also represents humanitarian social causes. CSR is associated with employees' organizational identification Interest and commitment. The growth of fast fashion is connected to a higher risk of unsustainability, this makes the garment and textile companies enhance a sustainable CSR model through implementing a sustainable leadership and integrating a strong corporate culture.

3.7. Greenwashing & The Fashion Industry

The different definitions of CSR within the fashion industry can be related to a company's main ideology, and it can be perceived as market demand and customer needs, but CSR is more than just that. CSR within the fashion industry can be associated as a tool for powerful public relations, which can result in "greenwashing". CSR, in the fashion industry among others, has a lot to do with greenwashing because of its carbon footprint, the low labor cost, abusive and unethical work environment (exploitation), low salaries, and so on. (Lein, 2018). (*"Corporate Social Responsibility | Introduction to Business [Deprecated]"*, 2021)

3.8. Consumers and fashion today

Albeit the fact that it is impossible to offer a specific profile of fashion consumers due to demographical, educational, economic, and socio-political external factors, most scholars and academics distinguish between fast fashion and luxury fashion, the latter having a clearer determination towards sustainability. Fast fashion is the response to the overall global changes in fashion. Fashion is defined as an expression that is widely accepted by a group of people over time and has been characterized by several marketing factors such as low predictability, high impulse purchase, shorter life cycle, and high volatility of market demand (Ferne and Sparks 1998). Thus, in order to be profitable in the industry, fashion apparel retailers need to take the 'speed to market' approach to capitalize on fashion that is not in the stores of their competitors. It has been further emphasized that market responsiveness and agility through rapid incorporation of consumer preferences into the design process in product development increases the profit margins for retailers (Christopher, Lawson, and Peck 2004).

As the consumer market is fragmented in terms of consumption patterns, fast fashion is gaining in importance among consumers. With such developments, researchers should identify the full spectrum of consumer behaviour towards fast fashion. The literature on fast fashion highlights various aspects of supply chain management, supported by supply chain theory to improve the business model of fashion retailers. It is worth noting that not many studies have addressed fast fashion as a consumer-driven approach, leaving this an under-researched area. Information and trends are moving around the globe at tremendous speeds, resulting in consumers' ability to have more options and thus shop more often (Hoffman, 2007). Changes in lifestyle due to sociocultural factors and a need for uniqueness forces fashion retailers to renew

merchandise constantly to deal with the growing competition in the market (Sproles and Burns 1994). The constant, varying demands by consumers has impacted the process of forecasting and product planning shifting; towards replicating famous designs and styles from fashion magazines and fashion shows in small quantities more frequently (Christopher, Lowson, and Peck 2004). The perception of throwaway fashion varies among different generations. For example, young people of the population that constitute Generation Y would prefer a higher number of low-quality, cheap and fashionable clothes as compared to baby boomers, who would prefer to purchase fewer higher quality clothes (Crewe and Davenport 1992). From conservative consumers' perspective, fast fashion is viewed as a 'waste' because rather than buying one high-quality item to satisfy a wardrobe need, consumers buy multiples that are lower quality and then throw old merchandise away as quickly as they bring in new ones (Vertica Bhardwaj & Ann Fairhurst (2010) Fast fashion: response to changes in the fashion industry, *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 20:1, 165-173).

According to the latest Shopper Profile research by Power Retail, women aged under 35 are the biggest target audience for the clothing craze that's shaping the world of online retail. Fast fashion is one of the biggest categories in the retail game. According to the latest Shopper Profile report from Power Retail, fast fashion shoppers are defined as women under the age of 35. Fast fashion is one of the fastest growing categories in the online retail sector, with 63 percent of shoppers choosing to make a purchase as part of a sales event. There has been a lot of talk about fast fashion and its effect on the environment in recent months, but this hasn't stopped the influx of purchases made every day online. From small retailers to large marketplaces, there is a never ending supply of hot-off-the-runway choices for people to choose from. The findings of the report shows that 49 per cent of apparel purchases were made by omnichannel retailers, who also have brick-and-mortar stores, as well as an online platform.

3.9. Consumers and CSR

Today's consumer society has forced companies to work towards a sustainable society. Consumers consider a company's work with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as necessary and expect companies to work ethically. However, fast fashion consumers' also demand a low price and rapid changes in trends.

According to (Smith, 2009), Smith did an industry survey where he provided evidence that consumers were willing to buy from an organization that was engaged in CSR. The research showed that 88% of U.S. consumers support organizations with strong CSR. Research has shown that CSR has a positive effect on consumer's purchasing intentions despite any concerns about CSR. (Sen, Bhattacharya, 2001). In fact, consumers aim not to change their opinion or behavior when a company implements positive work with CSR (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

3.9. Why Fashion companies should invest in CSR

According to research that was conducted by the University of Varese, the research aims to show that CSR should not be considered as a bear as an economic social actor, it should be an investment for the company that will contribute to competitiveness and growth. According to (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). Companies can not only generate favorable stakeholder attitudes and better support behaviors like seeking employment, purchase, and investing in the company, they also have the opportunity, in the long run, to build corporate image, strengthen stakeholder-company relationships, and enhance stakeholders' defense behavior. Many companies are concerned with having to invest in CSR because it will look good for their employees, customers, and shareholders. CSR actions are primarily considered to be ethical because of their positive impact on employees, communities, the environment, and society.

Furthermore, implementing CSR results as an outcome, as increased customer loyalty, willingness to pay premium prices, and lower reputational risks in times of crisis. (Shang, Peloza, 2010). Studies have argued that CSR is the key for innovation through the use of social, environmental, and sustainability drives to be able to create new business models, new products, services, processes, and new market opportunities. (Battaglia, testa, Bianchi, Iraldo, Frey, 2014).

3.10. Fast Fashion

The phrase “Fast Fashion” refers to the low-cost clothing collections that mimic current luxury fashion trends. (Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang & Chan, 2012) Fast fashion is a design and manufacturing that produces high columns of clothing. Garment production uses trend replication and low-quality materials to bring cheap clothes to the public. The cheap production of clothes has a high result on the environment. The wide movement towards overwhelming amounts of consumption. However, these results harm the environment, which refers to garment workers, child labor, the environment, and more people who shop without knowing the consequences. Many believe that the fast-fashion business is a model that cannot be changed, but Fletcher assures “We create it. We can create something else” (Fletcher, 2010). Many fast fashion companies are not doing a suitable effort to achieve sustainability, despite knowing the serious environmental pollution that is made by producing fast fashion. Fast fashion waits for the luxury brands to do all the creative work to replace it, as it was their creativity.

3.11. Slow Fashion.

The high-end luxury fashion industry has a different design/methodology and approach in comparison to fast fashion. High-end luxury fashion works more efficiently towards sustainability and the quality of the products. Slow fashion is a socially conscious movement that shifts consumers' mindset from rather buying products because of quantitative to quality. Slow fashion means slow production and consumption. Slow fashion does not use natural and human resources to speed up the actual production. Additionally, slow fashion consumption means a longer product life instead of a product that only lasts for a shorter period. (Jung, jin, 2014). According to (Stefko,

Steffek, 2018)) Slow fashion can be described as long-lasting, locally manufactured clothing that is produced from sustainably sourced fair-trade fabrics.

4. METHODOLOGY

PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

4.1. Introduction

The methods used to conduct this research were an analysis of literature concerning the subject and two case studies by examining their sustainability report and their website as well as the conduct of primary research through a number of surveys to staff and customers of the two Swedish companies. One of the companies, NA-KD is a reseller, offering over 150 globally renowned brands, while the second company, is a small Swedish manufacturer.

Surveys are conducted by distributing questionnaires to a number of respondents. For the purpose of this research, the authors identified two distinct groups. On the one hand, identify and approach staff and management at NA-KD and Filippa K and the second was to approach the buyers/final consumers of both brands. The goal was to understand the impact of ethical responsibility on the buyer's decision making process and also the impact of the buyer's criteria when purchasing at a definitive store and how CSR influences their decision-making process.

The authors opted for a mixed survey approach by introducing both open ended and closed questions. Open-ended questions are questions that solicit a written response from the survey respondent. This type of survey question is useful for assessing a study participant's true opinions or feelings on a given topic. Close-ended questions come in the form of yes or no questions and scales that ask participants to assign ranks to different response choices. This type of survey question is valuable for obtaining numeric data that can be used to compile statistical evidence.

4.2. Research Methodology

According to (Lindlof, Taylor, 2017) the strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the "human" side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent. When used along with quantitative methods, qualitative research can help us to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation and the implications of quantitative data. Although findings from qualitative data can often be extended to people with characteristics similar to those in the study population, gaining a rich and complex understanding of a specific social context or phenomenon typically takes precedence over eliciting data that can be generalized to other geographical areas or populations. In this sense, qualitative research differs slightly from scientific research in general. (Lindlof, T.R. & Taylor, B.C. (2017). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* 4th Edition. Sage Publishing.)

The primary methods for qualitative research are interviews, surveys and observations,

Interviews are conducted by holding in-person, telephone, or email conversations with the people or group of people you wish to study. During an interview, the researcher asks a series of questions to the interview participants and documents the answers. Surveys are conducted by distributing questionnaires to a large group of respondents. There are two main types of survey questions: open ended and close ended. Open-ended questions are questions that solicit a written response from the survey respondent. This type of survey question is useful for assessing a study participant's true opinions or feelings on a given topic. Close-ended questions come in the form of yes or no questions and scales that ask participants to assign ranks to different response choices. This type of survey question is valuable for obtaining numeric data that can be used to compile statistical evidence. Observations, on the other hand, Observations are when researchers make observations when they visually examine a person, event, or place and take notes on the details they witness. Observations allow the researcher to obtain information that subjects of a study might lack the objectivity to provide. Last, but not least, data Analysis involves the organization of data based upon criteria that is established by the researcher. This type of research is especially useful for identifying trends to describe a certain phenomenon.

4.3. Corporate Interviews

The purpose of the qualitative interviews with past and current employees at the Swedish fashion companies Filippa K and NA-KD was to get a deeper understanding of the company culture and how the companies associated with the CSR strategy. The criteria for using past and current employees was to identify whether “greenwashing” was being carried out within the company.

The collection of empirical data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. The participants will receive questions that are related to the topic, and depending on which question it is, the participants will have the option to respond in greater detail to enable the authors to obtain as much additional information as possible to support the purpose of this paper. The questions were previously established to the interview but depending on the development of the interview, and the responses obtained, additional supplementary questions may be included. The questions raised, and the subsequent transcripts, will be available in the Appendix. The interviews will be recorded with the interview subjects and then transcribed. Two of the interviews will be conducted in English, and the remaining two in Swedish due to language barriers.

The interviews were conducted on the following dates and the platform used was that of Google Meet due to the geographical location of the interviewees (Sweden).

4.3. Customer Surveys

The customer surveys were conducted during the period of April and May 2021. The approach was random to ensure a fair and representative demographic. Open and closed ended questions were included in the questionnaire, some of which were strategically repeated using different narratives to see whether the topic of the research topic was influencing their responses. Surveys were conducted using Google Forms.

4.4. Limitations

As in many research papers, there are a number of limitations that the authors have listed below:

4.4.1. Sampling Error.

The authors are aware that potentially those who responded to the survey may not be fully representative of the customer base of the two companies chosen for this research paper and potentially will not reflect the general population.

4.4.2. Limited access to sample population

Due to geographical and pandemic constraints, the authors were unable to travel to Sweden to undertake the primary research through the issuing and collection of responded surveys. Using the Google Form platform limits access to the population as age and connectivity may inabilitate potential respondents from having access to the survey,

4.4.3. Insufficient sample size for statistical analysis

Due to the constraints mentioned above, the authors are fully aware that the sample size is not sufficient to conclude a valid research result, but believe that it is sufficiently representative for the purposes of this paper.

4.4.4. Time Constraints

Time has been a constraint when undertaking this research paper, mainly in terms of reaching out to the primary sources of information, since those initially contacted and identified for interviews were not available, thus reducing the number of corporate interviews that initially has been identified.

4.4.5. Cultural and Personal Bias

The authors are aware of their bias and have, within their means, tried to mitigate this biasness to ensure the legitimacy of this paper. Interview and survey questions were reviewed by a third independent party to ensure that questions raised were not guiding or enticing a specific response.

4.4.6. Methodology

The nature of this research paper would warrant a mixed methodological approach, ie. qualitative and quantitative, but the complexity of relating quantitative data and

statistics from CSR approaches to the overall performance of a company guided the authors towards a more qualitative approach as the external variables are too numerous to identify.

4.4.7. Limitation impact on this research paper

As seen above, this study has potential limitations which could be overcome in future research. The number of companies used could be increased, both manufacturers and resellers. Another aspect that could be improved would be to break-down the survey responses on age, gender, education and disposable income. The nature of CSR is an ever-evolving topic and clarity on the role and impact of each specific stakeholder should also be researched and analyzed in depth. However, the limitations, albeit limiting the validity of the study and cannot be generalized, are in consonance with the goal of this paper, which was to understand the impact of CSR in the company performance of the two specific brands.

4.4.8. Research Approach

This study is considered to be a research paper. It will present the importance of CSR within the fashion industry (Bell, Bryman, Harley, 2018, p.4). In the book “Business Research Method” written by Bell, Bryman & Harley (2019), there are different approaches for conducting business research. Those are deductive, inductive, and abductive. In this study, an inductive research approach will be applied. The inductive research approach potentially creates theories with help from empirical data collection and observations. It is common for the inductive research approach to collect data from interviews and focus groups, in other words, the grounded theory approach and qualitative data. To add on, the qualitative data is seen as the background of the theory (p.23).

As mentioned above, this study will use existing theories, the importance of CSR in the apparel industry, and link them with the collected qualitative data. This leads to the next chapter of the methodology, the research method used.

4.4.9. Research Method.

According to Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012) there are two different methods, quantitative and qualitative. The main difference between the two is often described among researchers as “*quantitative researchers count and qualitative researchers describe*” (Chapter 1, Historical Roots of Qualitative Research). The research method in this study will be based on qualitative data. For this study to be successful, there is a need to understand how important the role of CSR is in today's business world in order to succeed as well as possible. But in other words, the study's intention is to show what strategies these two Swedish fashion companies should implement to be more successful.

4.4.10. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are described as conversational and follow an informal tone where the answers by the interviewee are open (Longhurst, 2003). For this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. However, in this study, a total of candidates will be interviewed, two from NA-KD, one of them is still working within the company and one is not. The same will be in the case of Filippa K. The aim of these interviews is to gain a greater and deeper understanding if the companies have had any changes the last few years, and if yes, which ones. The four persons that will be interviewed will have the opportunity to answer more deeply if they feel like it, by asking supplementary questions.

4.4.11. Surveys

The surveys used to conduct the primary qualitative research for this paper used open ended questions as these are more conversational in nature and allowed the authors to gather more descriptive opinions from the participants. This approach was used for both the employees of the two Swedish fashion companies as well as that of the final/end consumers of both brands, enabling the researchers to understand the motivation and the decision making criteria prior to purchasing and identifying the brand(s) which they wished to buy.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

CSR, as a concept, has attracted the attention of many researchers that has led to different approaches for CSR. As seen above, for the purpose of this paper, the authors have chosen the stakeholder theory because of the nature of the fashion industry. The structure of this section is broken down into the following:

1. Empirical research on NA-KD & Filippa K
 - a. Questionnaire
 - b. Analysis of responses through the identification of key words
2. Empirical research end consumers
 - a. Survey
 - b. Analysis of responses through the identification of key words

5.2. Corporate

5.2.1. Introduction

In this chapter the author has opted for a schematic approach to the interpretation of the data. The author has chosen the term “interpretation” since the sample population, in this case just two companies, does not reflect the whole fashion industry in Sweden, but does provide an insight as to the challenges of corporate social responsibility depending on their position in the chain value. Firstly, the authors have justified their choice of questions by indicating the goals pursued. This is followed by the interpretation of the data, highlighting the key-words used by the four managers, representing their employers. Last, but not least, this sub-section of chapter 5 will offer an overview of the interpretation/findings obtained after careful selective analysis.

5.2.2. Interview Questions

Table: 1. Corporate interview NA-KD & Filippa K

Number	Question	Objective
1	What is your position at the company?	The objective is to obtain background information of individuals' roles within the company.
2	Can you explain what your daily responsibility/tasks are?	The purpose of this question is to gain a better understanding of the person's daily work habits.

3	Can you share how you experience the company culture in the company?	Overview of values and their presence in the work environment.
4	What is the average age of employees at the company?	The purpose of this question is to get a better insight into the average age of all employees if it is young, middle-aged, older, or if there is a mixed age of the employees. As well as whether the employees have a tendency to stay for short-term periods or for a longer time.
5	What is the average age clientele of the brand?	The objective is in order to understand what kind of customers the company reaches the most.
7	What is the CSR role within the company	This question is asked because the main topic of this study is CSR. We want to get a better overview of how familiar the company with CSR, and how important it is within the company.
8	Can you tell me about your experience at the company?	This is done to understand how the individual has experienced or experiences her time as an employee of the company. This will help us to compare all the interviewers and get a clearer conclusion on how the business environment is for that particular company.

Table 1. Source: Own

5.2.3 Analysis of responses through the identification of key words

5.2.3.1 Introduction

To facilitate the interpretation and analysis of data, bearing in mind the different demographic characteristics of the participants, the authors opted for a criteria to reduce potential personal biases when reviewing the data through the identification of keywords.

5.2.3.2 Comparative Analysis - corporate interviews

Table 2: Comparative Analysis

Question	NA-KD Interview 1	NA-KD Interview 2	Filippa Interview 1	Filippa Interview 2	Shared Keywords /analysis
Q1: Role in the company	Human Resources	Deputy Head of Studio	People Manager (HRM)	Wholesale Manager	N/Applicable

Q2: Daily tasks/responsibilities	HR agenda / Solutions	Photo, styling, online merchandising, hair and makeup.	HR agenda, process.	Partnerships, customer experience, performance vs budget forecasts.	HR Agenda
Q3: Can you share how you experience the company culture in the company?	Tough, stressful atmosphere , Overtime work. No guidance/structure.	No structure, guidance, Overtime work, Voice heard.	Motivation; Empowerment; Strategy Well-being.	Motivation: pleasant environment simplicity Well-being.	We can conclude that the “reseller” NA-KD have not introduced CSR into the corporate values whilst Filippa K’s is a company where the CSR values are an integral part of the corporate philosophy
Q4: The average age of employees at the company?	20-28	28	32	28-50	This question has limitations as participants were not requested to state the age of employees and the organizational hierarchy. We can assume, from secondary data research, that the younger individuals are working on the floor, while those who are older, and consequently more experienced, have a more managerial and decision-making power
Q5: What is the age of your target customer?	15-35	16-25	25	25-45	We can conclude that the Fast fashion consumer’s age is younger than that of a higher-priced sustainable, classic fashion line

Q6: Would you describe the company as sustainable?	Fast Fashion, Textile waste, Bad supply chain	Fast Fashion, Textile waste, new sustainable goals for 2025.	Seeking best garments, Circular Fashion,	Seeking best garments, Circular Fashion, 4 R's. Reducing Repairing Reusing Recycling	CSR and fast fashion, as we can see, do not seem to be compatible
Q7: How would you describe your time as an employee in the company?	Not a safe environment, Stressful, a lot of pressure	Gain a lot of experience. Seen company growth 100% hectic environment.	Motivation Safe Environment, developed a lot, great experience.	Motivation Safe Environment, a proud workplace,	Contradictory NA-KD response, thus validity of interpretation/analysis can be questioned
Q8: How has CSR evolved in the company?	Not working actively. Not a current topic.	New hired CSR manager. In the process of improvement.	100% Transparency, Well-being of employees, sustainable,	100% Transparency, Well-being of employees, sustainable,	Clashing responses for NA-KD reseller, and hope is put on CSR to improve external perception. For the fashion manufacturer, on the other hand, a clear shared response.

Source: Own

5.2.3.3 Summary of Analysis

NA-KD is, as seen, a fast fashion company that remains highly hierarchical, with little or no obvious corporate culture. The company does not teach or train staff, leadership style is not constant throughout the operational and management structure. As a consequence, the challenges of introducing or developing a corporate culture are great and would initially require a change in management philosophy.

The company has recently recruited a CSR manager, yet, without first introducing values and principals to the overall company's mission and vision, this hiring of a new management member can and should be considered a greenwash approach. However, the authors of this research paper are not familiar with the terms of the recruitment and the initial tasks/responsibilities requested from the CSR manager, hence potentially he/she could be looking into introducing social values into the higher echelons of the organization.

According to the interviews conducted, there is a discrepancy when it comes to describing the work-environment. On the one hand, interviewee 1 states that the work environment needs to be improved due to the high turnover/rotation of staff, while the other responds that it is a good working environment for all employees. We could thus conclude that, depending on the position within the hierarchy, perceptions regarding the work environment are very different, thus emphasizing the clear lack of corporate culture.

In Table (2) above, the Deputy Head Of Studio Manager mentions that there is a before and after “NA-KD” . According to the interviewee the CSR manager has made a positive impact in the company, who has, according to the deputy head, introduced greater transparency when it comes to informing customers about garment descriptions and the manufacturing and shipping processes.

5.3.2. Summary of the Qualitative Data - Filippa K.

The findings of the interviews have demonstrated a clear appearance of a strong CSR strategy. The company has covered the areas related to the social, environmental, and legal areas. Strong and personal relationships with every employee, a lot focus on the wellbeing of everyone within the company, including the employees of their factories. The company is following up frequently that there is gender equality, and that everyone gets paid as they should. According to the interviews the company is continuing with the same mission as when the company was founded, sustainability is one of the cores of Filippa K, they have a circular fashion framework which is consistent with the 4 R, Reducing, Repairing, Reusing, and Recycling. Simplicity between all the departments and colleagues is important and according to the employees the company has a very pleasant atmosphere, and they have full transparency.

5.2.3.4. Conclusions of the Qualitative Empirical research

We can conclude that CSR is far more challenging to introduce or embed into the corporate philosophy of “resellers” (NA-KD) due to the chain of value of their company, whilst for fashion companies, that control the whole manufacturing process, from design to sales, it is easier to introduce. We can also conclude that for Filippa K, having the values of sustainability embedded into their corporate mission and vision, they “walk the talk” quite comfortably and it is a competitive advantage for the family-run business.

Recruiting or hiring a CSR manager in a “reseller” company does not automatically entitle the enterprise to state its social values since introducing CSR into any organization, independent of its nature, needs to come from the top of the hierarchy, and filter down through leading by example. In the specific case of NA-KD, the new CSR manager had the task to “communicate” transparency to its customers, in terms of describing the origins of the garment, the production and logistics approach. However, this can be considered greenwashing, since for any socially responsible company, the philosophy starts within the organization and not, as seems to be the approach of NA-KD, selling “transparency” to the end customer. This can be claimed

to be a greenwashing approach and employees would be the first to claim the fakeness of the company's "CSR strategy".

The authors can also conclude that there are a number of challenges for the so-called fast fashion if they really wish to embrace CSR before they embed it into their philosophy. However, the authors can also defend that there are a number of tools openly available to reduce the overall impact fast fashion has at social and environmental levels, without the need to greenwash.

5.3 Empirical research end consumers

5.3.1 Introduction

The authors of this paper had a number of goals identified prior to carrying out the empirical research by approaching the end consumers. Albeit the pressure from governments and international institutions to introduce sustainable development values to their institutions, the fashion industry has a heavy reliance on fast turnover, fast volume and a high number of collections per season since, as seen, fast fashion is a response to consumer's demand as well as their own financial interests. Laws, by-laws and pressure to be more accountable are currently clashing with the motivation or decision-making process of fashion consumers.

Secondary research has also highlighted that albeit consumers express their interest to purchase from accountable and transparent fashion companies and brands that respect human rights, reduce waste, mitigate environmental impact, within others, reality shows that fashion consumers in general, and more specifically fast fashion consumers are motivated by the fashion trends (the need to fit into the globalized fashion society through their outerwear) and price, whilst CSR, environmental friendly products, fair trade, do not play a significant role when purchasing. This, is a general overview since there are other independent factors that would need to be analyzed in depth and thus are variables that have not been included in the questionnaire-survey.

The authors of this research paper, as seen in the methodology section, have chosen a qualitative approach and opted for a Google form survey. The overall purpose of this paper was to understand why the final end customers chose brand/company vs from a company that has little or no control over the use of raw materials, manufacturing and logistics. The authors also targeted whether the role of the CSR concept during the decision making and purchasing process of the end customer, identifying, through this process, demographic characteristics that would support

5.3.2. Analysis of Responses

5.3.3 Comparative analysis of customers

Number	NA-KD	Filippa K	Shared Keywords /Analysis
Q1. Gender	Female: 95.8% Male: 4.2%	Female: 57.5% Male: 42.5%	It is difficult to determine whether for NA-KD men were less willing to respond to the questionnaire or whether women tend to consume fast fashion more frequently than men. On the other end of the scale, we can appreciate that the gap between consumer of a higher quality, classic or traditional products appeals to both men and women at very close percentage levels
Q2. Age	15-25 - 59.2% 25-35 - 38% 35:45 - 2.8% 45 or older: 0	15-25 - 26 % 25-35 - 38.4 % 35-45 - 27.4% 45 or older: 8.2%	Through this question the authors have identified that albeit younger generations are looking into sustainability, it is in fact the individuals over 35 that are more propense to purchase higher quality garments where sustainability plays an important component in the decision making/purchasing decision.
Q3 Employment status	Student: 73.2% Employed:12.7 % Unemployed:14.1%	Student: 32.9% Employed: 67.1% Unemployed:0	The authors can deduce that individuals with lower income tend to seek fast fashion to cover their fashion needs, while individuals, potentially with a steady income, are comfortable purchasing higher price garments.
Q4. How much do you spend on clothes per month?	0-50€: 71.8% 50-100€: 23.9% 100-150€: 2.8% 150-200€: 1.4% 200-25€0: 0 250 or more€: 0	0-50€: 4.1% 50-100€:9.6% 100-150€:35.6% 150-200€: 28.8 % 200-25€0:17.8 % 250€ or more:4.1 %	The analysis of this question is not surprising as it supports and confirms Q3, in which price is one of the main factors for purchasing for those who opt for fast fashion as they have a lower disposable income and because of the younger age-band of the customer

Q5. Is it your first time buying clothes from NA-KD?	Yes: 88.7% No: 11.3%	Yes: 11% No: 89%	This question should have been further developed to be able to interpret more effectively their response.
Q6. Why do you buy clothes from this store?	Because of the price: 57.7% Because of the quality: 0 The clothes are my style: 42.3%	Because of the price: 0 Because of the quality: 55.6% The clothes are my style: 44.4%	This question was not so surprising, as the customers of NA-KD have a lower income and most likely shop where the price matters. On the other hand, we see how important the quality is for the customers of Filippa K.
Q7. Do you understand the concept of CSR (Corporate Social responsibility?)	I don't know what it is: 25.4% I have basic understanding about this concept: 54.9% I am well aware of the concept: 19.7%	I don't know what it is: 0 I have basic understanding about this concept: 21.9% I am well aware of the concept: 78.1%	Through this question, the authors can identify a contrast between the fast-fashion customers who have a very low Knowledge of CSR (some have not heard about it before). On the other hand, the premium brand has customers who generally have better knowledge and are more familiar with CSR.
Q8. How important is it to you that fashion companies operate on a socially responsible level?	Very Important: 0 % Somewhat important: 73.2% Not important at all: 26.8%	Very Important: 43.8% Somewhat important: 56.2% Not important at all: 0	The analysis of this question is that customers from the fast-fashion brand do not have the same interest or values that customers from Filippa K have regarding companies being socially responsible.
Q9. I would pay more to buy products from a socially responsible fashion	Agree: 67.6% Disagree: 32.4%	Agree: 100% Disagree: 0	The author can determine that most customers from both brands are willing to pay more for a socially responsible fashion company. Still, as mentioned earlier, due to low income, NA-KD's customers might want to

company.			spend more but cannot afford it.
Q10. I consider the ethical reputation of fashion brand when I buy their clothes.	Agree: 4.2% Disagree: 32.4% Sometimes: 63.4%	Agree: 54.8% Disagree: 0 Sometimes: 45.2%	The analysis of this question is clearly that the younger generations from the fast-fashion brand do not have in mind the company's ethical reputation, compared to customers from Filippa K that have it in mind in their daily shops.
Q11. I avoid buying products from fashion companies that have engaged in immoral actions.	Agree: 15.5% Disagree: 36.6% Depends: 23.9% Other: 24%	Agree: 71.2% Disagree: 0 Depends: 20.5% Other: 8.3 %	The results of this question clearly show that the customers from NA-KD do not have in mind that they support these companies that have acted in immoral action by buying from them. In contrast, the customers from Filippa K are pretty clear that they are trying to avoid the purchase but that it also depends on what kind of product it is and what it costs.
Q12. I would pay more to buy products from fashion companies that show that they care of the well-being of our society	Agree: 18.3% Neutral: 60.6% Disagree: 21.1%	Agree: 70.8% Neutral: 29.2% Disagree: 0	This question is similar to Q9. The younger customers that NA-KD is reaching are neutral to pay more for a product that is for the well-being of our society (this can also be because of a low income). However, we can appreciate the gap between consumers of higher quality support companies and their products is good for our well-being.
Q13. How much more could you pay for a product	10%: 95% 20%: 4.2% 50%: 0	10%: 68.5 % 20%: 26% 50%: 5.5%	The result of this question has a similarity where both consumers have an interest in paying 10% more for a product.

which follows the CSR factors?			However, this question should have been further developed in order to interpret their answers more effectively.
Q14. If the price and quality of two products were the same, would you buy from a fashion brand which has the right socially responsible reputation?	Agree: 87.3 % Disagree: 12.7%	Agree: 100% Disagree: 0	Here the author can conclude that the customers from both fashion companies have a shared opinion on choosing the right socially responsible fashion brand.

Summary of qualitative Data from end consumers

There are a number of findings that can be highlighted upon the analysis of the data obtained.

NA-KD (Fast fashion Reseller & Manufacturer)

In the first instance, we can appreciate that the younger generation in the 15 year old age bracket is not that familiar with the concept of CSR, and as a consequence, the values of the company and its approach to sustainability do not enter the purchasing decision equation.

We also note that the majority (73.2%) of NA-KD's customers are students, which in turn can be interpreted, in a general perspective, as having a low income and thus they seek affordable, and potentially, from secondary sources, we see that they purchase throughout the season and wear a garment between 3 and 9 months before discarding it.

We can conclude that fast fashion is potentially more attractive to women than men in our survey, however, we have indicated that this could be attributed to a number of external factors (time and hour of the survey, men not wishing to respond, within others).

Only 2.8% of people within the 35-45 age group answered the survey, and albeit the fact that it is difficult to generalize due to the small sample size, we can confirm that the overall fast fashion industry targets teenagers and young adults to the age of 35, leaving out older people. Having said this, there are a number of fast fashion companies, such as Inditex and Mango that are slowly introducing collections for the older generation.

Design is another aspect that has an important role in the decision making process, while quality does not play a significant role.

Synthesizing, we can understand that introducing or embedding CSR into the corporate philosophy of many companies is a challenge since it does not have a direct impact on their sales. However, policies and frameworks set by governments, international institutions (UN) are “guiding” the companies in the right direction. Yet, in order to reduce greenwash approaches and become sustainable, the end consumer needs to demonstrate that CSR has a major impact on where and what they purchase. Until then, the global fashion industry will continue to be one of the most harmful and impacting industries with regard to social and environmental sustainability.

Filippa K (higher-range sustainable fashion wear)

Opposite to what we have been able to perceive in NA-KD, Filippa K’s corporate culture already has embedded the sustainability values in their corporate mission and vision, and it is one of their key competitive advantages since they generate local employment and all aspects of manufacturing, suppliers, have to share those same values. The average age of the consumer is also older, between the ages of 25 and 45 (27.5% age bracket 25-35 and 38.4% 35-45). Over 60% of those interviewed are employed - questions as to whether they were self-employed or employed by a company were not raised in the survey- which can be interpreted as individuals with a higher income, and consequently disposable income. If we look at the average spend, we also see that on average, the expenditure at Filippa K ranges from 100 to 250 euros each purchasing session. Quality and design are the two main factors for purchasing, while pricing, according to the survey data, is not represented. However, it is interesting to observe that the company’s values are not the main reason for purchasing, albeit the fact that over 90% of the respondents said that CSR is very important or somewhat important, quality and design are the main factors for purchasing at Filippa K.

Table 5.1. Comparative between NA-KD and Filippa K as to decision making process and role of CSR

Concept	NA-KD	Filippa K
Price	Yes	No
Garment Design	Yes	Yes
Garment Quality	No	Yes
Role of CSR	No	Yes
Profile	Young people with low disposable income	25-45+ with high disposable income
Average spend per shopping visit	50 - 100€	100-250€
Male /Female ratio	Female	Female
How important is CSR	Very important:0% Somewhat important: 73.2% Not at all: 26.8%	Very important: 43.8% Somewhat: 56.2% Not at all: 0

The overall conclusion is that although corporate social responsibility is important, we see that the end-consumer does “not walk the talk” and this can be appreciated in the response from consumers of Filippa K. who prioritize design and quality as the main reasons for purchasing in this company, and not its values. From a fast fashion end consumer data, although 73.2% stated that CSR is “somewhat important” it is clear that the lack of values does not influence their purchase decisions.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

We can state that the fashion industry, as a whole, has, within the last decade and half, exploited natural resources to a level never seen before due to mass production and the low cost structure, which as we have seen throughout this research paper, has projected consumerism to new heights. Embedding CSR into the industry is and shall be an ongoing challenge since within the fashion industry we need to understand the value chain, starting at the origins of raw materials up to the logistics of getting the goods to the stores and outlets. It is also key to identify the type of company that we refer to because, as we have seen, companies that control the whole chain can introduce or embed sustainability to their corporate culture far easier than those whom rely on existing brands to resell, where, due to lower volumes and pressure of the final consumer have little power to influence manufacturers. Having stated what could be considered obvious, it is true that currently there are a number of tools that facilitate a more sustainable approach, such as that of OpenSC, a digital solution to facilitate the implementation of digital supply chains.

On the other hand, the above option is only a step in the right direction. The values of corporate sustainability need to be introduced through a top down approach, and needs and values need to be first put into practice at internal level, otherwise, all that is done can be classified as Greenwashing.

Currently there are a number of CSR frameworks that can be adapted and implemented into organizations, irrespective of their business nature and size. In this section the authors look into one of the most commonly implemented frameworks which will aid senior management in the right direction.

6.1. Implementation of OpenSC

As mentioned above, Filippa K has already a strong CSR, in comparison to NA-KD, we believe that both companies could invest in the new technology platform called OpenSc. OpenSc was founded by WWF, (the worldwide fund for nature) and BCG Digital ventures. They help different companies to create more sustainable, ethical, profitable, and digital supply chains. The new technology has a mission by helping producers, retailers and consumers choose products that are good for the planet and the workers. The company allows consumers access to information about where the products come from, how they are made, and the journey to the customer itself.

“OpenSC for humanity, the planet, quality and your health”

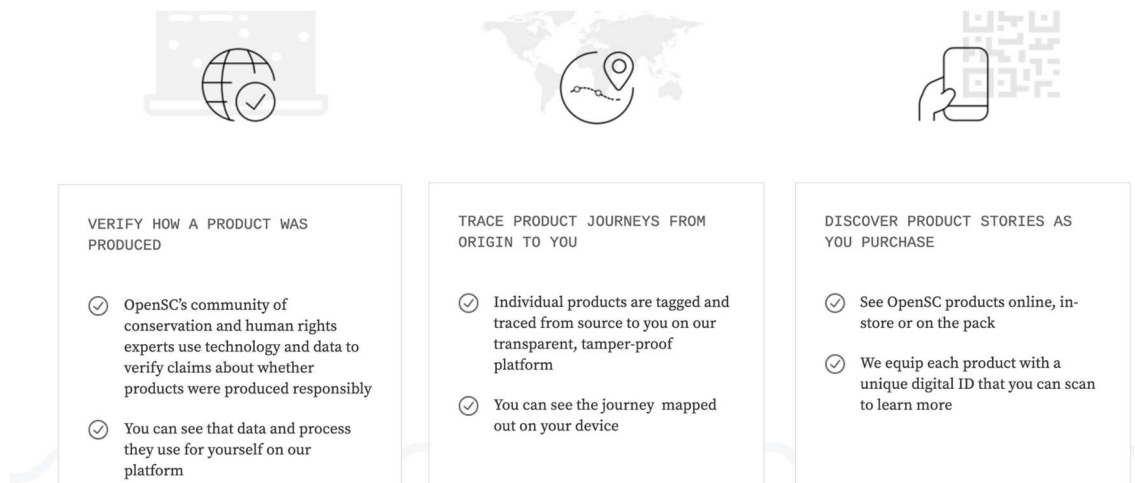


Table: 4 How OpenSC works Source: OpenSC

The picture demonstrates how OpenSc operates. The company empowers businesses to verify claims about responsible production, trace products throughout the supply chain, and share traceability stories with consumers.

This can give the customer a boost in how they can see the material and the whole process of that particular product. By scanning the product, the important information will pop up, and this can engage the customer to buy the product more. However, if the customer already knows Filippa K’s values and mission, they might not know the production process and could see the difference “live” when the customer compares that particular product with another brand.

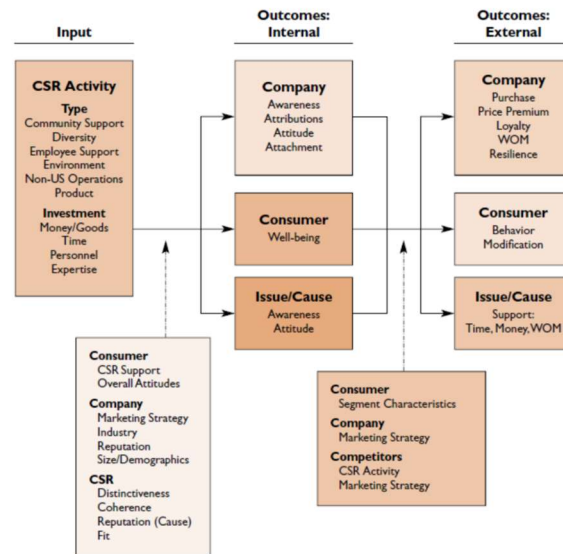


Table: 5 Why OpenSC for business? Source: OpenSC

The picture above shows what capacity and benefits OpenSc offers.

6.2. CSR Framework

The table below shows a clearer structure for a CSR model that the companies, in this case mostly NA-KD but also Filippa K could follow. As mentioned earlier in this study, fashion companies should take more into account its economic, social and environmental impact by maximizing the benefits and minimizing the disadvantages.



Internal Aspects:

Here the company has to build solid support for the strategy before they can define what to archive with the strategy. It's important to get support and participation from as many high profile executives in the organisation and to identify and engage these people that are passionate about CSR within the business. Once the support is there it will be easier to define the CSR strategy in the business.

External Aspects:

The CSR strategy will act as the positioning document for the responsible business practice of the company. The stakeholders and the public will expect a visionary document that shows ambition and goals.

CSR Management.

After defining the strategy the next step is to set up a CSR management system. The management system of CSR within the organisation will outline what the company actually needs to make the strategy happen and produce results.

Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

In this section, it is important that companies continuously engage their stakeholders to have a really long-term value in building a CSR strategy, a report or communicating what you do and have done as an organization. When considering CSR and the stakeholders, keep in mind that the CSR solution or strategy does not suit all

stakeholders. Here it is important to be open-minded and find the best way to make it work.

8. CONCLUSION

The results show that the majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards CSR, but were not a deciding factor when shopping at either of the two physical/online stores. From this study, we can draw the conclusion that other factors were of greater importance, such as quality, price and design. This validates the need of fast fashion customers' demand for a low price and fast changing trends.

Among many others, the first challenge is for governments, businesses, and consumers to become more aware of the importance of sustainability to break the current pattern in which "fast fashion" dominates "slow fashion" and to speed up developments. The same applies for "middle companies, or resellers", such as NA-KD.

Based on the interview results, recommendations are made for the fashion industry in Sweden to introduce social responsibility within the value chain and its end product (articles):

1. At internal/corporate level the CSR implementation process should:
2. Respect all human rights within the establishment and effectively respond to the demands of employees.
3. Legal compliance (human rights and ecology) and ensure their application throughout the production line.
4. Greater reliance on renewable energy sources such as solar panels.
5. Ensure quality standards are respected throughout the whole value chain.

From an external perspective, the company should not only have embedded CSR into their strategy but also:

1. Maintain a high level of transparency with all stakeholders, (annual reports, communication of milestones using different platforms for the communication)
2. Actively engage with the stakeholders' community, through the sponsorship of different activities to promote community welfare, such as: schools, sport institutions, hospitals and nursery homes.
3. Packaging and logistics. Reduce packaging and ensure it is either recycled or recyclable material. Use green logistics. Offset potential carbon emissions through different approaches (sponsorship of forestry, etc)
4. Introduction of digital supply chains, such as that proposed in this paper - OPEN SC.

We cannot conclude this paper without mentioning the final consumer. As stated in the introductory paragraph of this sector, the final consumer plays a potential key role to lobby the fashion industry towards a more sustainable and ethical approach to their businesses. As we have seen through the primary research, the main challenge remains that of "walking the talk". Fast fashion /pricing/aggressive marketing and the "need to

belong” to a societal community through their outer wear (fashion) pushes the younger generation, with lower disposable income to consume in excess garments which are generally produced by manufacturers who are the main impediment since the near absence of ethical approaches is the tool used to sell garments and low-prices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. Tell me about your position at Nakd/Filippa K?
2. What are your daily responsibilities/tasks within the company?
3. Can you share how you experience the company culture in the company?

4. What is the average age of an employee at your company?
5. What is your target customer?
6. Would you describe the company as sustainable?
7. How has CSR evolved at the company?
8. How would you describe your time as an employee in the company?

Appendix 2. - Google Form Questions. - End Consumer

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age:

- 15-25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-older

3. Current Employment

- Student
- Employed
- Unemployed

4. About how much do you spend on clothes per month?

1. 0-50 Euro
2. 51-100 Euro
3. 101-150 Euro
4. 151-200 Euro
5. 201-250 Euro
6. 250 Euro or more

5. Is it your first time buying clothes from Nakd?

- Yes first time
- No, No, I have bought from this brand before

6. Why do you buy clothes from this store?

- Because it's cheap
- Because of the quality
- The clothes are my style

7. What is your level of knowledge regarding the term Corporate Social responsibility (CSR)?

- I don't know what it is
- I have basic understanding about this concept
- I am well aware of the concept

8. How important is it to you that fashion companies operate on a socially responsible level?

- Extremely important
- Somewhat important
- Not important at all

9. I would pay more to buy products from a socially responsible fashion company.

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

10. I consider the ethical reputation of fashion brand when I buy their clothes

- Agree
- Neutral
- Sometimes

11. I avoid buying products from fashion companies that have engaged in immoral actions

- Agree
- Neutral
- Depends
- Other

12. I would pay more to buy products from fashion companies that show that they care of the well-being of our society.

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

13. How much more could you pay for a product which follows the CSR factors?

- 10%
- 20%
- 50%

13. If the price and quality of two products were the same, would you buy from a fashion brand which has the right socially responsible reputation?

- Agree
- Disagree

Appendix 3, Data collection Google form

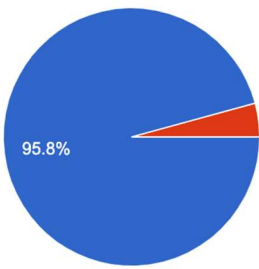
NA-KD's answers

FILIPPA K's answers.

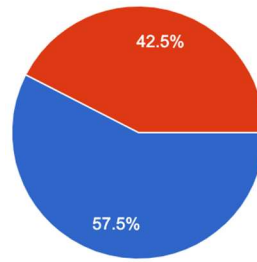
NA-KD

FILIPPA K

1. Gender

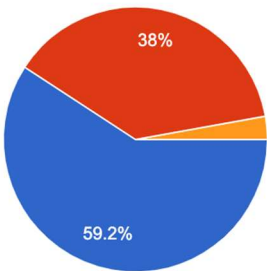


● Female
● Male

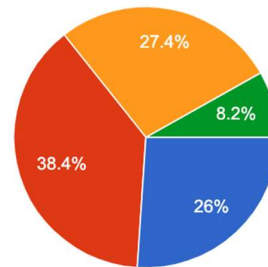


● Female
● Male

2. Age:

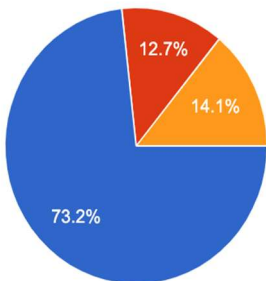


● 15-25
● 25-35
● 35-45
● 45 or older

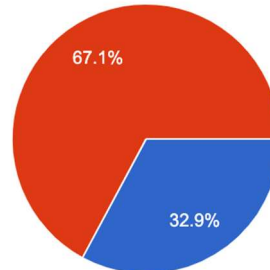


● 15-25
● 25-35
● 35-45
● 45 or older

3. Current Employment:

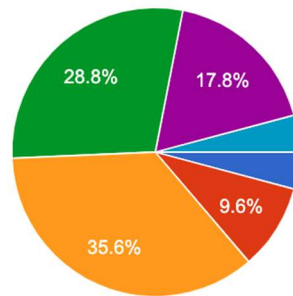
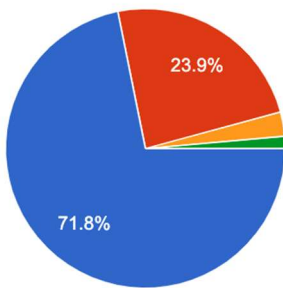


● Student
● Employed
● Unemployed

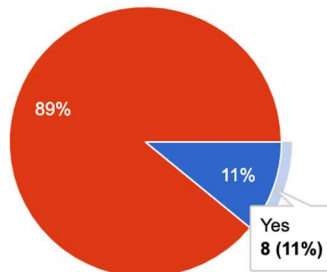
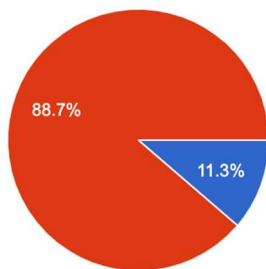


● Student
● Employed
● Unemployed

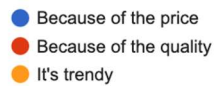
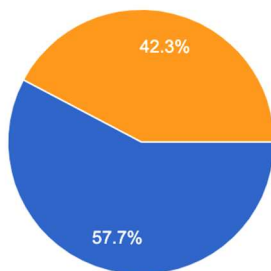
4. About how much do you spend on clothes per month?



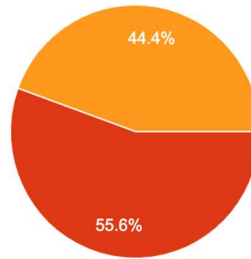
5. Is it your first time buying clothes from Nakd/Filippa K?



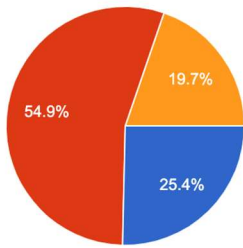
6. Why do you buy clothes from this store?



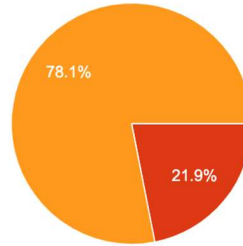
7. What is your level of knowledge regarding the term Corporate Social responsibility (CSR)?



- Because of the price
- Because of the quality
- The clothes are my style

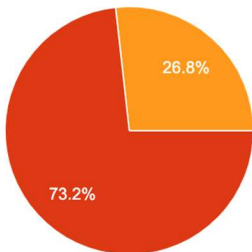


- I don't know what it is
- I have basic understanding about this concept
- I am well aware of the concept

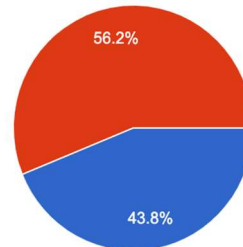


- I don't know what it is
- I have basic understanding about this concept
- I am well aware of the concept

8. How important is it to you that fashion companies operate on a socially responsible level?

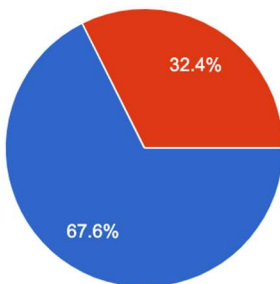


- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important at all



- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important at all

9. I would pay more to buy products from a socially responsible fashion company.

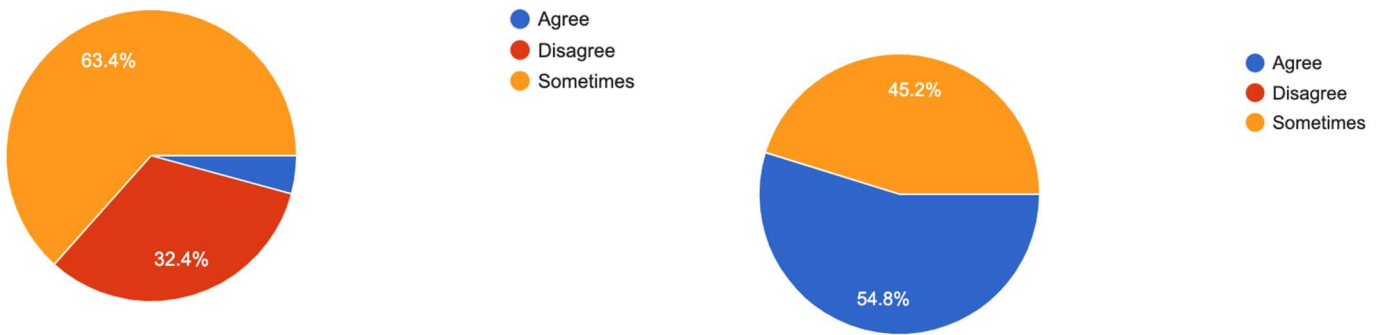


- Agree
- Disagree

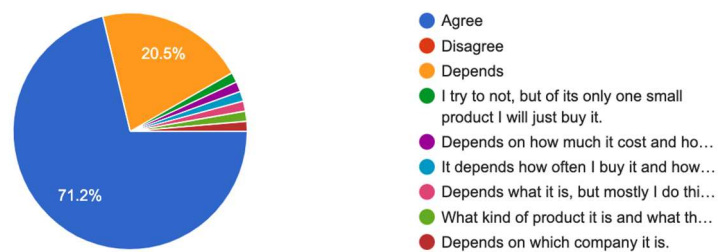


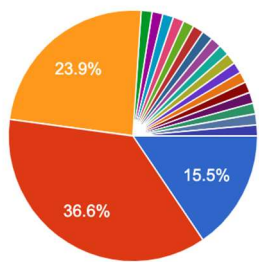
- Agree
- Disagree

10. I consider the ethical reputation of fashion brand when I buy their clothes



11. I avoid buying products from fashion companies that have engaged in immoral actions

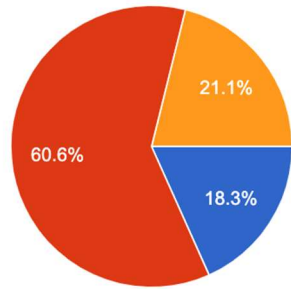




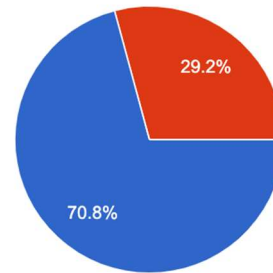
- Agree
- Disagree
- Depends
- Depends on what it is, and how much...
- Depends on what it is and how much...
- I try, but it depends on how much mon...
- Depends how much the product cost
- Depends on what it is, this store I am...

12. I would pay more to buy products from fashion companies that show that they care of the well-being of our society.

▲ 1/3 ▼

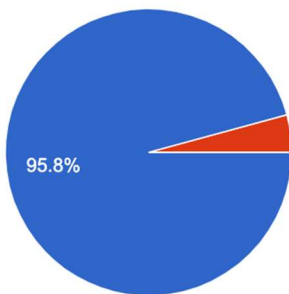


- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

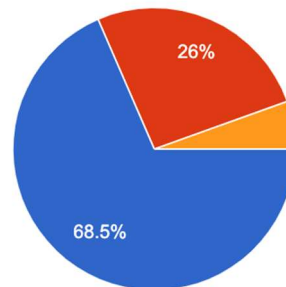


- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

13. How much more could you pay for a product which follows the CSR factors?

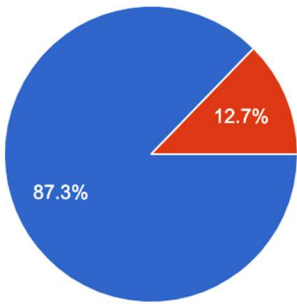


- 10%
- 20%
- 50%

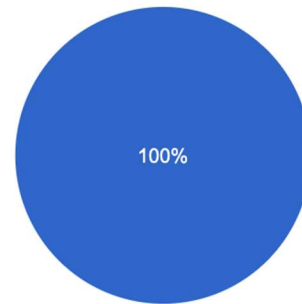


- 10%
- 20%
- 50%

14. If the price and quality of two products were the same, would you buy from a fashion brand which has the right socially responsible reputation?



● Agree
● Disagree



● Agree
● Disagree