Lund University
Department of Service Management and Service Studies

SMMM20
2017

Applying a lens of practice theory to understand the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

Master's thesis 30 credits

Author: My Lindersson

Tutor: Anette Svingstedt

Abstract

With this thesis, the aim is to understand how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, in terms of perceived meaning and competence for using the information conveyed, and to understand how sustainability-labels may be used to influence product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices. Apart from a literature review on findings from prior research within the field of sustainability marketing, the thesis uses a practice theory approach. The methodological approach is ethnographic-inspired, and involves 15 semi-structured interviews and eight mechanical observations, which are based on a mixture of purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. The analysis of the thesis revealed that consumers struggle with relating to sustainability-labels on fashion products, as they struggle with understanding their own, direct benefits from choosing sustainability-labelled fashion products. Therefore, for sustainability-labels to be more likely to influence sustainable product choices among consumers, the labels might need to emphasise benefits connected to those product attributes that the consumers consider important: appearance, material, quality, fit, function, and price. Lastly, the thesis contributes to an increased theoretical understanding of how sustainability-related aspects of service marketing can be studied from a practice-based approach. The thesis also offers implications concerning the approach retailers can have when designing the messages of the labels, and implications concerning the importance of putting small aspects of sustainability marketing into the greater picture of sustainable development in the society.

Keywords: sustainability-labels, sustainable fashion shopping, sustainable shopping practices, sustainability marketing, service management

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all the people who, in somehow, have been involved in the work with this thesis. First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the consumers who have participated as informants in the interviews for this thesis. I thank you all for sharing your experiences and time with me. Without your participation, this thesis would never have been possible to follow through.

I would also like to thank my thesis tutor, Anette Svingstedt, who has offered me great support throughout the working process with this thesis. I am so grateful for your time and guidance, and all the valuable insights and the constructive feedback you have offered me along the way.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their love and support. If it was not for you being there for me in various ways, the work with the thesis would have been much more of a struggle than what it turned out to be.

I thank you all so much!

My Lindersson

Helsingborg, May 2017

Table of content

1. Introducing how sustainability, fashion, and labels can be integrated 1

1.1. Identifying a research issue 2

1.1.1. Introducing the concept of fashion 3

1.1.2. Introducing the sustainability-label as a notion 3

1.1.3. Introducing a theory of practice 5

1.2. The aim of the thesis 6

1.3. The contributions of the thesis 7

1.4. The structure of the thesis 8

2. Presenting the theoretical background for understanding the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping 10

2.1. From food to fashion: A literature review on the marketing of sustainable products 10

2.1.1. Informing the consumers about sustainability-related issues 10

2.1.2. The sustainability-label in relation to uncertainties connected to sustainability 12

2.2. Using practice theory as the theoretical framework for understanding the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping 13

2.2.1. Using a lens of practice theory for the ability to understand practice 14

2.2.2. Taking action and finding strategies for sustainable shopping practices 16

2.2.3. Integrating material, competence and meaning for understanding sustainable shopping 17

2.2.4. From elements to practice by way of action 19

3. Presenting the methodology for understanding the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping 21

3.1. Interpretation and abduction for studying the role of labels in everyday life 21

3.2. An ethnographic-inspired approach for understanding consumer relations with labels 22

3.2.1. Finding a semi-structure for ethnographic-inspired interviews 23

3.2.2. Complementing the interviews with mechanical observations of in-store materialities 26

3.2.3. Choosing a sampling method suitable for the thesis aim 28

3.2.4. From elements to practices: Putting separate units into categories for analysis 31

3.2.5. Reflecting upon the methods employed for achieving the thesis aim 33

3.3. Using previous knowledge for reaching new understandings 34

4. Achieving an understanding of the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping 36

4.1. The sustainability-label as a materiality 36

4.1.1. Tracking down the sustainability-label in the fashion store 37

4.1.2. Taking a closer look at the sustainability-label and its message 38
4.2. The competence and meaning related to sustainability-labels on fashion products 41
4.2.1. Interpreting sustainability in relation to fashion 41
4.2.2. Reviewing the truth-value and usability of sustainability-labels on fashion products 44
4.2.3. Evaluating fashion products without the use of a label 47
4.3. The sustainability-label as an influencer for sustainable fashion shopping 50
4.3.1. The complexity of becoming influenced to sustainable fashion shopping practices 50
4.3.2. Considering the integration of practice elements to understand the influence from sustainability-labels 52
5. Concluding discussion on the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping 54
5.1. Summarising the conclusions on the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping 54
5.2. Discussing the conclusions to understand the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping 55
5.2.1. From theoretical contributions to implications of how to manage sustainability marketing .. 56
5.2.2. The role of sustainability marketing in a sustainable society 57
5.3. Concluding remarks 58
References 60
Appendix 1: Interview guide 66
Appendix 2: Informational letter to potential informants 69

1. Introducing how sustainability, fashion, and labels can be integrated

It has been reported that consumers increasingly are becoming concerned with sustainability-related issues regarding the environment and social aspects, such as working conditions in manufacturing countries and child labour (Johnstone & Tan 2015). At the same time, an increasing number of retailers has realised the potential of including sustainability-related efforts in their operations, as it might be a way to strengthen the competitiveness of firms these days. Such efforts are often visible through, for instance, the marketing of the products that the firms are offering (Shen *et al.* 2014). However, the green marketing communication of retailers has been reported as a potential reason that consumers often struggle with making consumption choices that are in accordance with their concerns (Johnstone & Tan 2015). The information might be misleading, and the consumers may therefore perceive difficulties in making sustainable choices (Chen & Burns 2006).

With increasing access to information, consumers are becoming more empowered and better equipped to make informed choices (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Rezabakhsh *et al.* 2006). Thereby, to overcome issues concerning sustainable consumption and overconsumption, there is an increasing need to rely on the consumers, as they, through their consumption choices, have the ability to safeguard the environment from further pollution (Chen & Burns 2006; Taufique *et al.* 2014; Testa *et al.* 2015). For that reason, it has been argued that retailers need to offer the consumers what they want, both in terms of products and product-related information, in order to guide the consumers towards making sustainable product choices (Chen & Burns 2006; Yan, Hyllegard & Blaesi 2012; Meise *et al.* 2014; Shen *et al.* 2014; McNeill & Moore 2015). In that sense, information becomes a vital aspect. However, as consumers are becoming more informed they may also become more selective when considering what information to take part of and trust (Lim & Chung 2009). Consequently, it might be necessary to pay attention to how retailers inform the consumers about sustainable product options, and how that information is received and understood by the consumers. Not least if the purpose of the information is to influence the consumers to more sustainable shopping.

One way to inform consumers is through the use of labels, which also function as marketing tools. When marketing products that are claimed as sustainable or green choices, *eco-labels* are often used in connection to the presentation of the product (Castaldo *et al.* 2009; Horne 2009). Originally, *eco-labelling* was identified as a strategy to encourage consumers to engage in more environmentally sustainable

consumption practices, by purchasing more resource- and energy efficient products (Horne 2009). Eco-labelling programmes have further been described as a way for retailers to differentiate their products and to become more competitive in their markets (Horne 2009; Moon, Costello & Koo 2017). The eco-label has been considered a tool for retail firms to overcome consumer brand loyalty, and to subtract market shares from the traditional market leaders (Testa *et al.* 2015). Also, the eco-label can be considered an instrument for providing consumers with information, while extending the assessment of the quality of products and services, as it might indicate the environmental and social attributes of the product or service, which the consumers are not able to ascertain on their own (Bratt *et al.* 2011).

The notion of *eco-labels* has been used emphasise different extents of sustainability-related information. In much research, it has appeared to mainly concern the environmental dimension of sustainability (e.g. Horne 2009; Taufique *et al.* 2014), and only in a few cases, the notion has appeared to cover both the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability (e.g. Bratt *et al.* 2011). To facilitate the understanding of what labels are considered in this thesis, *sustainability-labels* will hereafter be used as the overall notion for labels concerning either the environmental or the social dimension of sustainability, or both dimensions at the same time. Thus, the emphasis will be on sustainability as an overall concept, including various issues concerning, for instance, environmental and social well-being. This idea follows from the definition of sustainable products by Danciu (2013), in which the environmental, social, and economic dimensions simultaneously are taken into consideration:

> "A sustainable product is an item or service that minimizes its impact on resource use and environment and maximizes that on society at each stage of its life cycle." (Danciu 2013: 390)

1.1. Identifying a research issue

Sustainability-labels have been visible within food retail for quite some time, and are increasingly appearing also in connection to fashion products. However, prior research has indicated that consumers still struggle with understanding the relevance of sustainability in connection to such products, mainly due to insufficient information (Ritch 2015). Therefore, it appears as reasonable to pay more attention to sustainability-labels on fashion products, and the information such labels convey.

1.1.1. Introducing the concept of fashion

Slow fashion has been introduced as a notion stressing more sustainable fashion consumption, in terms of higher quality products which will last longer, and thereby involve less need for consumers to constantly buy new products (Jung & Jin 2014). Slow fashion has also been considered as the counterpart to fast fashion, which in turn is a notion that is considered to stress products that are up to date with the present luxury fashion trends, but manufactured and sold at low costs (Joy *et al.* 2012). However, the view on fast fashion as the counterpart to *sustainable* fashion, has more recently been considered as misleading, not least as it is still rather uncertain what sustainable fashion actually is. The reason has been suggested as the fact that sustainable fashion is subjective and therefore, can incorporate various aspects (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates 2016). Fashion as such, has traditionally been considered as a channel of communication, which is embedded with meaning, as having its sources in social structures and culture, and as being used for social differentiation or integration (Davis 1992: 4). However, in this thesis, fashion is used as an overall notion for clothing products, regardless they are up to date with the latest trends or simply basic clothes. Moreover, no emphasis is put on how the actual clothing products are used, what meaning the clothes are inscribed with *per se*, and whether they are used for social differentiation or integration. Rather, the focus here is on the sustainability-related information that revolves around the products. Also, as the entire apparel industry can be considered as facing similar issues related to sustainability (Jung & Jin 2014), taking an overall approach to clothes appears as both essential and suitable.

It has been stated that fashion retailers are facing difficulties in reaching both economic sustainability and environmental and social sustainability (Pookulangara & Shephard 2013), and therefore, one could argue that there is more to explore in connection to such issues regardless the fashion is fast, slow or in-between. The fashion industry has been considered to face various issues related to the ability of being sustainable, not least as it is based on consumerism and satisfying consumers needs of buying new on a regular basis (Jung & Jin 2014; Henninger, Alevizou & Oates 2016). Hence, when aiming to reach more sustainable solutions in the society of today, it might be essential to put some attention to the fashion industry and the ways of dealing with sustainable development within that specific industry.

1.1.2. Introducing the sustainability-label as a notion

It has been indicated that consumers receive the messages of labels differently in different settings, and this may be due to lacking ability of the labels to convey the information that is required (Horne 2009). As eco-labels are widely used within the food industry, and are increasingly used also within other industries,

ISO certifications of such labels have become rather common (Bratt *et al.* 2011). As certification programmes develop, also a need to distinguish the different types of labels used, emerge. Bratt *et al.* (2011) have described a division into three types of labels, resulting from ISO certifications:

> "[…] The type I label that includes multi-criteria third-party programmes intended for end consumers, type II that includes self-declared environmental claims, and type III that provides quantified unweighted environmental data in environmental product declarations." (Bratt *et al.* 2011: 1632)

Hereafter, the emphasis will solely be on labels, involving sustainability claims made by the fashion retailers themselves. Hence, the emphasis will be on labels that can be considered as similar the type II environmental labels that have been suggested by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 2017). Such labels have further been defined as:

> "[…] Not awarded or verified by an independent authority but usually developed internally by companies and tend to take the form of a declaration, a logo, a commercial, etc. For example: 'made from x% recycled material', 'biodegradable', 'recyclable' or 'free from chlorine'." (Taufique *et al.* 2014: 2181)

Labels with self-declared claims have also been referred to as *private eco*-brands, which are used for product differentiation through sustainability attributes in order to increase market shares (Chkanikova & Lehner 2015). The reason such labels will be the main focus of this thesis, is that those have become increasingly visible within the fashion industry. Examples of labels with self-declared claims, are those put on the products within the *Conscious Collection* that the fashion retailer H&M offers. Through that collection, H&M (2016) both claims to do good themselves from a sustainability-perspective, and to inspire the consumers to make sustainable choices. Taufique *et al.* (2014) have described that the claims made by the firms themselves may be vague, misleading and at times also untrue. Hence, the self-declared sustainability claims, made by fashion retailers, can be considered as an interesting topic to address.

The research that has been made, emphasising sustainability-labels, has appeared as more developed in connection to industries such as that of food retail (Lehner 2015; Chkanikova & Lehner 2015). In

connection to the fashion industry, on the other hand, one could argue that there is still more to explore concerning the use of labels for promoting sustainable products. Moreover, prior research (e.g. Horne 2009; Taufique *et al.* 2014) has appeared to put a greater emphasis on labels stressing the environmental dimension of sustainability, than on labels integrating the various dimensions of sustainability. Also, sustainability-related marketing in general has tended to emphasise the green aspects, and thereby, to exclude the overall approach of sustainability which also includes social aspects. That, in turn, has been considered a potential issue for the ability to identify the intersection of social and environmental problems with consumer behaviour (Danciu 2013). Hence, one could argue that there is a need to emphasise all dimensions of sustainability, if sustainable development is supposed to take place.

1.1.3. Introducing a theory of practice

Prior research involving labels with different kinds of sustainability-claims has, apart from mostly focusing on the environmental dimension, appeared to mainly be conducted from behavioural and attitudinal marketing perspectives (e.g. Horne 2009; Taufique, Vocino & Polonsky 2016). Other research, with a similar approach as that of this thesis, has in turn appeared to focus on sustainability-marketing in a broader sense (Fuentes 2014a; Fuentes & Fredriksson 2016). As there at this point in time, is a gap in research on the role of sustainability-labels in connection to fashion shopping, it appears as a suitable focus for this thesis. Labels with appropriate information have been considered a way to increase sustainability-related awareness among consumers and a way to guide them towards products that for instance are environmentally friendly (Taufique *et al*. 2014). For that to be possible, though, it might be essential with an approach that leads to an understanding that covers more than attitudinal and behavioural aspects. When doing research on for instance green consumption, Hargreaves (2011) has argued that the daily practices of individuals are what should be emphasised. Then, when considering green consumption as something that is embedded in sustainable consumption (Danciu 2013), daily practices may also be essential to consider when studying aspects of sustainable consumption.

Practices have been described as carried out by individuals, and as involving routinized ways of doing, describing and understanding (Reckwitz 2002). Also, actions have been considered as derived from practice (Schatzki 1997), and for understanding the practices people engage in, in their everyday lives, it might be necessarily to also study the actions that the practices consist in. The use of sustainability-labels when making purchase-decisions can in turn be considered an action, potentially leading forth to a practice of shopping that is carried out sustainably. Moreover, the ability to focus the empirical analysis around

complexities of practical performances, has been described as enhanced through practice theory (Halkier & Jensen 2011). Therefore, a practice theory approach will be used for bridging the outlined gap, and for analysing sustainability-labels as an illustrating example of the complexities connected to sustainable shopping fashion products. The practice theory approach considered suitable here, is that suggested by Shove and colleagues (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), which has been developed as a simplification of the conceptualisation by Reckwitz (2002). The regarded approach considers practices as constituted by three elements: material, competence and meaning. Below, the aim of this thesis is presented, and so also its assumed connection to those three practice elements.

1.2. The aim of the thesis

The aim of this thesis can be considered as twofold. First, the aim is to attain an understanding of how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, in terms of perceived meaning and competence for using the information conveyed. From such an understanding, the aim is to also reach an understanding of how sustainability-labels may be used for influencing product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices. The aim of the thesis uses the three elements of practice, suggested by Shove and colleagues (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), as point of departure: material, competence and meaning. Thereby, the sustainability-labels are assumed to function as *materialities*, whereas *meaning* and *competence* are made visible through how consumers perceive meaning and usefulness in relation to such labels. Moreover, the practice that those three elements are assumed to underlie, is that of sustainable fashion shopping, which may be carried out when sustainable actions are taken by the consumers, based on the messages that the sustainability-labels convey. The aim also underlies an assumption that material, competence and meaning, which constitute the practice, also constitute the actions underlying the practice. The research questions below are guiding the thesis towards an analysis centred around the three elements of practice, and thereby, towards the achievement of the presented aim.

1. How do consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, in terms of perceived meaning and competence for using the information conveyed?
2. How may sustainability-labels be used for influencing product choices, that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices?

1.3. The contributions of the thesis

This thesis study is conducted by a Master student at the Department of Service Management and Service Studies at Lund University. Therefore, the thesis has an underlying approach to Service Management, through which the sustainability-label is viewed as part of the service provision of the service sector of fashion retail. Service Management is an academic discipline and a concept, which has been considered to involve understandings of the value that is created for the customer when he or she engages in consumption. Service Management has also been considered to involve understandings of how an organisation may develop, for the perceived quality and value to increase (Grönroos 2008: 216). It has been argued that the service-based business logics of today, invite consumers to co-produce value with the firms, and therefore, the role of the firms is to function as facilitators for the value creation (Grönroos 2008: 66). Fashion retail, just like all other retail sectors, can be considered a service sector which might need to include elements of a service-based business logic, to cope with the competition of today. Moreover, marketing has been considered as one of the main rules for how to manage a service sector in a competitive industry. To cope with competition, it has been considered essential to spread the marketing process over the entire organisation, which means that each interaction involves elements of marketing, which – if they succeed to create a good impression of the firm – can influence consumers' willingness to purchase (Grönroos 2008: 437). Sustainability-labels may function as surfaces for interaction, and thereby, it might be essential that the information they convey is managed properly, if the willingness to purchase the labelled products should increase among the consumers.

The sustainability-label can be considered as integrated in the service offering to the consumers, wherefore this thesis study contributes to the field of Service Management, in terms of an increased understanding of how service marketing can be studied from a sustainability perspective. Such an understanding may both have theoretical and practical implications. Moreover, this thesis contributes to a greater understanding of how sustainability-labels on fashion products are used and made sense of by consumers in connection to fashion products. Prior research has revolved around such labels as *eco-labels* from attitudinal and behavioural perspectives (e.g. Horne 2009; Taufique *et al.* 2014; Taufique, Vocino & Polonsky 2016). Here, the focus is shifted to a practice-based perspective, and the view on the label is extended to cover both the environmental and the social dimensions that are included in the notion of sustainability. Moreover, this thesis extends prior research on labels in connection to apparel and fashion, by focusing on *fashion* as an overall notion for clothing products that are used on a daily basis. Thereby,

the thesis builds on a more extensive approach to sustainable fashion shopping, which may contribute with insights to the public debate about sustainable development.

With this thesis, also a contribution to the field of marketing, and specifically to that of marketing-as-practice studies, is offered. Prior research within that field has emphasised the role of stores in promoting sustainable consumption, where both staff and material are considered as enabling the promotion (Lehner 2015; Fuentes & Fredriksson 2016). In such studies, the entire landscape of the store has been considered as the service provision, which in turn becomes a socio-material and performative practice (Fuentes & Fredriksson 2016). Here, the *social* aspect of the in-store landscape is left out, and the focus is solely on *material*, in the shape of sustainability-labels with potential to enable sustainable shopping practices. Thereby, insights are offered concerning what happens when consumers solely encounter and consider the sustainability-labels and other materialities in the fashion store. This may be of practical interest to those retailers that are not able to offer extensive social, face-to-face interaction with their customers, and thereby must rely on materialities for conveying messages to the customers. Thereby, there is a simultaneous contribution to the fields of sustainability marketing and service marketing, which may offer retailers insights into how to manage the services they offer in the shape of sustainability-labels.

Moreover, it has been argued that clothing firms have the possibility to communicate the added value that sustainable products involve, but that their knowledge of how such messages successfully can be conveyed needs to be increased (Clancy, Fröling & Peter 2015). By reaching a deepened understanding of how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, the retailers may become better equipped to offer the information and the service-levels that consumers today require. When knowing what the consumers value, and what they consider meaningful and useful, the retailers may become better in managing their service provision constituted by the sustainability-labels. Thereby, they may also achieve greater abilities in reaching the third aspect of sustainability, which has been suggested by Danciu (2013): economic sustainability.

1.4. The structure of the thesis

This chapter has functioned as the introduction to this thesis, and the next step is to present the theoretical background, which has functioned as the basis for this thesis study. Therefore, the following chapter first contains a literature review on prior research on sustainability marketing and labels. The second section of that chapter, in turn, involves the theoretical framework of the thesis, which is constituted by practice

theory. Thereafter, the focus is shifted towards the methodological approach of the thesis, which is presented in the third chapter. There, the methodology underlying the thesis, and the methods for gathering both primary and secondary data are presented. The chapter also involves constant reflections on the methodological choices, to facilitate the understanding of the choices made.

The fourth chapter of the thesis contains the findings of the study, and an analysis of those findings in connection to prior research and the theoretical framework. The overall conclusions from that analysis are presented in the fifth and final chapter, which involves a concluding discussion. That chapter is initiated with the conclusions being presented in connection to the research questions of the thesis. Thereafter, the conclusions are discussed with an emphasis on their relevance for theory, management, and society. Lastly, some concluding remarks to the thesis are presented.

2. Presenting the theoretical background for understanding the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

This chapter functions as the theoretical basis to the understanding aimed for with this thesis. The chapter is divided into two sections, and the first section involves a literature review on prior research on sustainability marketing in general, and sustainability-labels in particular. With that section, the purpose is to broaden the understanding of what has been revealed up until this point in time. The second section, in turn, revolves around the theoretical framework of this thesis, which is constituted by practice theory and is supposed to guide the analysis of this thesis.

2.1. From food to fashion: A literature review on the marketing of sustainable products

Prior research on sustainable products in general, and the communication around such products in particular, have tended to emphasise food products. It has been reported that notions of sustainability slowly are transferring from the fields such as food retail, into the field of fashion retail. Thereby, concepts of sustainability are increasingly becoming part of the everyday life of consumers (Ritch 2015). Also, as consumers are becoming increasingly health conscious, they are also becoming more active supporters of greener lifestyles (Eryuruk 2012). However, it has been stated that consumers still might be reluctant to integrate sustainable choices in their consumption practices, and this issue could be considered as connected to markets that are based on a rapid turnover of goods, such as fashion (McNeill & Moore 2015). Also, when consumers are concerned of the environment, they are still consuming, but might instead compensate for their consumption by either consuming products that are perceived as green, or by recycling more (Connolly & Prothero 2003). Moreover, ethical issues that directly could influence the consumers themselves, may be of greater concern than other ethical issues. It does not necessarily mean that the consumers are ignorant or self-centred, rather, lack of knowledge, which constrains the ability of making more ethical judgements and to act more ethically and sustainably, has been suggested as a potential explanation (Joergens 2006; Shen *et al.* 2014).

2.1.1. Informing the consumers about sustainability-related issues

Consumers perceive different levels of sustainability-related concern in connection to fashion shopping, and it has been indicated that the most concerned consumers are the ones that are most likely to engage in sustainable fashion consumption (McNeill & Moore 2015). The ability for such consumers to engage in sustainable fashion shopping, however, may be constrained by perceived scepticism of the motives that

the fashion industry has when offering *sustainable* clothes (McNeill & Moore 2015). Consumers may also be constrained by difficulties in understanding, for instance, fashion production and why it endangers sustainability (Ritch 2015), and it has been stated that knowledge of the environmental advantages of specific products is essential for the ability to make the *right* choice (Chen & Burns 2006). Moreover, for consumers to be steered towards more sustainable clothing consumption, it might be essential to offer clothes with a longer life span, that also fulfils the needs for both function and identity creation (Clancy, Fröling & Peter 2015).

Retailers have been considered able to function as gatekeepers of information, and thereby to bridge the gap between production and consumption (Meise *et al.* 2014), and to communicate the added value that sustainable products involve (Clancy, Fröling & Peter 2015). By making information available to consumers, the retailers can guide the consumers in the right direction (Leire & Thidell 2005), and help them choose and use products sustainably (Chen & Burns 2006; Danciu 2013; Meise *et al.* 2014; Taufique *et al.* 2014; Testa *et al.* 2015). However, it might be essential to increase the knowledge of how marketing messages concerning sustainability, successfully can be conveyed (Clancy, Fröling & Peter 2015). When more transparent information about the supply chain is provided, consumers are more likely to choose sustainable options (Salaün & Flores 2001; Auger *et al.* 2008; Meise *et al.* 2014; Shen *et al.* 2014), but for the information to be perceived as useful, it might be necessary to understand which attributes are most valued by the consumers (Meise *et al.* 2014).

For consumers to choose sustainable products, credible messages, which encourage consumers, by putting environmental and social pressures on them, may be essential (Danciu 2013). Lack of credible information on environmental and social performances of products has been concluded as one factor that intervenes between sustainability preferences and purchase decisions (O'Rourke & Ringer 2016). Thus, it might be essential that sustainable communication ensures and conveys credibility to consumers, and especially to those consumers who can be considered as unsettled (Danciu 2013). Consumers are increasingly desiring information concerning aspects such as manufacturing conditions, and thereby an increasing number of questions are raised concerning aspects such as safety, health concerns, and quality. Hence, there is an increasing need for such information to be conveyed, and without such information, consumers may not perceive themselves as enough informed to act (Salaün & Flores 2001).

2.1.2. The sustainability-label in relation to uncertainties connected to sustainability

The use of labels has been considered as one way to make consumers aware and a way to educate them in sustainable issues, and help them choose products based on attributes such as their environmental friendliness. For this to be possible, though, it is necessary that the labels convey appropriate information (Taufique *et al.* 2014). Also, the labels might be recognized and acted upon in some settings, whereas they might have difficulties in conveying the required information in other settings. The consumers might be attracted to simple labels that facilitate the decision-making, but at the same time, simple labels can disrupt the efficiency of the claim (Horne 2009). Labels with self-declared claims have been considered a way for retailers to increase their market shares, by differentiating their products through sustainability attributes (Chkanikova & Lehner 2015). Though, consumers might not always understand which product option is the most sustainable, and they might be confused or misled by advertising claims involving notions such as *environmentally friendly* or *eco-safe* (Chen & Burns 2006). Moreover, as the label might not say much about the consumption itself, and is rather constrained when providing product information, it has been considered most useful as *part* of a strategy for sustainable consumption (Horne 2009).

Green consumption behaviour among consumers has been reported as potentially negatively influenced by aspects such as uncertainty, regarding whether it will make a difference to engage in the claimed green consumption practices (Johnstone & Tan 2015). Also, due to lack of information, consumers purchase-decisions may sometimes be conflicting with their intentions. When they, for instance, intend to purchase clothes that are ethically produced, but do not have all information that they need, they simply have to take a chance and trust the retailers (Shaw *et al.* 2006). Moreover, gaining the trust of consumers that are willing to engage in sustainable clothing consumption has been argued as what should be a primary goal for actors offering sustainable fashion (McNeill & Moore 2015). The consumers might not necessarily want the details, but they might at least want to be ensured that the retailers are doing what is expected from them (Castaldo *et al.* 2009). Reliable and relevant information may be essential for consumers' ability to both trust the information and have their needs met. Also, consumers need to understand the information that they are provided with (Salaün & Flores 2001). Lack of detailed knowledge about environmental effects, misunderstandings of environmental impacts from apparel production, and limited knowledge about where to find environmentally preferable apparel, are potential barriers to pro-environmental behaviour. Also, the availability of sources from which to find the apparel, apparel with attributes that are desired, and economic resources, have been considered potential barriers (Hiller Connell 2010). Altogether, when consumers do not have the knowledge or information they need for making a pro-

environmental purchase decisions, and when they do not perceive the information conveyed through the labels as credible, they might not engage in pro-environmental behaviour (Auger *et al.* 2008; Taufique *et al*. 2014; Taufique, Vocino & Polonsky 2016). As it, for example, has been indicated that consumers with more environmental knowledge are more likely to engage in pro-environmental consumption (Hiller Connell 2010), knowledge and information may be the key also to more *sustainable* consumption.

Findings from prior research have shed a light on the complexity of sustainability-related product information, especially in relation to products within the fashion industry. However, better insights in those regards may be reached when attaining an understanding of how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, and how such labels may be used to influence product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices. For the ability to achieve this aim, a practice theory approach has been applied as the theoretical framework, which now will be presented.

2.2. Using practice theory as the theoretical framework for understanding the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

For increased sustainability, it is necessary to reconsider and transform the existing consumption patterns (Spaargaren 2011). To do so, and to understand how sustainable development can be shaped through sustainable consumption practices, it has been argued as essential to study the practices people are carrying out in their everyday lives. As individualist and structuralist approaches to studying environmental change have been considered to involve bias in terms of either too much responsible put on the individuals, or in terms of exclusion of those individuals, a practice-based approach has been considered more suitable. The practice-based approach has been considered to offer a more balanced approach and deeper understandings, which are necessary for new insights concerning sustainable consumption (Spaargaren 2011). Moreover, a practice-approach through practice theory has been considered to enhance the ability to focus the empirical analysis around the complexities of practical performances (Halkier & Jensen 2011).

It has been suggested that practice theory, in an auspicious manner, can be applied to understand environmental consumption (Røpke 2009; Pererea, Auger & Klein 2016), and that the daily practices of individuals should be the emphasis in research concerning consumption, and especially green consumption (Hargreaves 2011). As the environmental dimension is considered as embedded within the

notion of sustainability (Danciu 2013), a practice theory approach could also be considered as suitable for a study revolving around sustainable consumption in terms of sustainable fashion shopping. Moreover, as this thesis involves an underlying assumption that sustainable shopping constitutes a practice, which in turn consists in and develops from various actions, the practice theory approach presented here, is considered the theoretical framework of this thesis.

2.2.1. Using a lens of practice theory for the ability to understand *practice*

Practice-based studies have previously been conducted within various areas, from various approaches, and therefore it might not be possible to put a specific, defining label on such studies (Corradi, Gherardi & Verzelloni 2010), not least as practice theorists tend to view the nature of practice, and thereby the analysis of social phenomena and actions, differently (Schatzki 1997; Spaargaren 2011). To the *practice lens* (Corradi, Gherardi & Verzelloni 2010) which is considered in this thesis, Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu have been considered two of the major theoreticians (Spaargaren 2011). The approach of this lens of practice theory has developed over the years, but what still solidly remains from the work by Giddens and Bourdieu, though, is the way that social life is understood as a series of recursive practices. Those are in turn considered as reproduced by agents that have the knowledge and capability to draw upon sets of virtual rules and resources, connected to "situated social practices" (Spaargaren 2011: 815). Moreover, it has been proposed that the view on practices, as articulating practical understanding and intelligibility, is what unites practice theorists. Also, meaning is viewed as established in practices, whereas practices are viewed as basic social phenomena (Schatzki 1997). Practice theory as such, has been described as representing a subtype of culture theory, and as differing from other cultural theories as it is situated in a different realm (Reckwitz 2002). The *practice*, referred to in practice theory, has been described as:

> "[…] a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge." (Reckwitz 2002: 249)

An essential aspect of practice theory, is that the elements embedded in the practices cannot be reduced to a single element, rather, they are interconnected and together enabling the practice (Reckwitz 2002; Røpke 2009). A practice has further been described as:

> "[…] a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood" (Reckwitz 2002: 250)

A practice is carried out by an individual, or a *bodily and mental agent*, who acts as the *carrier* of the practice, and thereby is a carrier of "[…] certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (Reckwitz 2002: 250). The individuals, carrying the practice, then use the specific practice for understanding the world and themselves (Reckwitz 2002). Hence, individuals are the *agents* and they are, as implied, involved in the reproduction of practices. However, it is the practice that is the most mattering unit for analysis, not the individual him- or herself (Spaargaren 2011).

Practices have been considered as *coordinated entities*, as sets of doings and sayings, which are assumed as organised by understandings, sets of rules, and by *teleoaffective structures* (Schatzki 2001b: 58). The understandings link the actions, which compose the practice, and are therefore the abilities that belongs to those actions. Understanding might be helpful in determining what makes sense to people to do, and knowing what another person does may facilitate when determining how to respond to that person (Schatzki 2001b: 59). Hence, with such an assumption, when retailers know what makes sense to the consumers, in terms of aspects such as receiving information and being influenced by that information, they might become better equipped to respond to those consumers.

Moreover, the rules can take different shapes, such as those of directives and instructions (Schatzki 2001b: 60). The normative teleoaffective structures that constitutes a third dimension of practice organisation, can in turn take the shape of either acceptable or correct tasks to be carried out, or beliefs to determine which tasks to be carried out (Schatzki 2001b: 61). By following the concept of practice theory and the elements incorporated in practice, as described by Reckwitz (2002), Fuentes (2014a) has illustrated the socio-material practices embedded in green marketing, which result in "[…] the construction of green products through a process of moral inscription" (Fuentes 2014a: 114). Thereby, it was suggested that morality inscribed in commercial products, may be an indication that a consumer culture, tinged by more

ethical reflectiveness is being developed, whilst it may lead to moralities being commercialised (Fuentes 2014a). With such an assumption, the extent to which the actions embedded in sustainable shopping are considered as the acceptable or correct tasks, may influence how and whether sustainable shopping practices are shaped. Thus, a practice theory approach may be fruitful when aiming to understand how consumers relate to sustainability-labels, and how such labels can influence product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices. Moreover, the conceptualisations by Schatzki (2001a; 2011b) and Reckwitz (2002) may be suitable to consider as the foundation for such an understanding, but there are other perspectives on practice theory that later have emerged from those two conceptualisations.

2.2.2. Taking action and finding strategies for sustainable shopping practices

Reckwitz' (2002) elements of practice, and Schatzki's (2001b) three components of practice, has somewhat differently been referred to as *understandings, procedures and engagements* by Warde (2005). A practice, according to Warde (2005), requires competent practitioners to actively acquire and master the capabilities that are necessary, and to engage in the conduct of the practice. Also, they need to demonstrate common understandings, know-how, and commitment to the practice and the value of the practice. That assumption illustrates why people in different situations perform the same activity differently (Warde 2005). That is:

> "[…] contrasting understandings, levels of practical competence, and degrees of involvement generate behavioural variation." (Warde 2005: 147)

Moreover, practices have been argued as ontologically more fundamental than actions, as the identities of actions are assumed to be derived from practices. Actions, in turn, have been argued to belong to practices when they, for instance, express understandings that organise the practice (Schatzki 1997). In other words, a practice can be considered a set of actions, which can be "[…] either bodily doings and sayings or actions that these doings and sayings constitute" (Schatzki 2001b: 56). Warde (2005) has, based on the conceptualisation by Schatzki (2001b), stated that *performances*, here interpreted as another notion for *actions*, are required for practices to exist. Hence, a performance postulates a practice (Warde 2005), which can be considered as illustrated through a study by Fuentes (2014b), in which it was studied how consumers use strategies, techniques and know-how when greening their shopping practices.

By viewing shopping as a social practice, consisting of various elements such as cognitive techniques, embodied knowledge and understandings of the world, Fuentes (2014b) concluded that the purchasing of green products was one strategy for making greener shopping understandable. The strategies for managing *green complexities* were operationalised through various shopping techniques, which in turn were built on different sets of competences, together with the support of the socio-material landscape of the stores (Fuentes 2014b). When reflecting upon those research results in relation to the conceptualisations by both Schatzki (2001) and Reckwitz (2002), the shopping strategies can be considered as the performances, or actions, postulating the practice of green shopping. From such a point of view, the use of sustainability-labels may also be considered as a technique, which is used for making product choices with the potential of postulating sustainable fashion shopping practices.

2.2.3. Integrating material, competence and meaning for understanding sustainable shopping

It has been considered a potential, operative difficulty to use the conceptualisation by Warde (2005), as an outset for categorisation when studying consumption (Halkier & Jensen 2011). Warde (2005) has stated that most practices, and potentially all of those that are integrative and part of everyday lives, involve and require consumption. Thereby, consumption is part of *forming* practices, rather than being a practice itself (Warde 2005). As this thesis revolves around fashion shopping, which could be considered as embedded in fashion consumption, solely letting the conceptualisation of Warde (2005) guide the analysis could be considered somewhat troublesome. In this thesis, sustainable fashion shopping is considered the practice, whereas sustainability-labels can be considered a technique which potentially influences actions that constitutes sustainable fashion consumption. Therefore, there is more to consider before a basis for the analysis is created.

Following from the conceptualisations by Schatzki (2001b) and Reckwitz (2002), and particularly the claims by Reckwitz (2002) concerning the interdependencies practices consist in, Shove and colleagues (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012) have suggested three elements representing those interdependencies: material, competence, and meaning. Thus, practices are assumed to consist of an active integration of those elements (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 14), at the same time as the elements both are linked and shape each other (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 32). *Material* refers to aspects such as objects, technologies, infrastructure, and tangible physical entities, and the body itself, whereas *competence* involves aspects such as understanding, techniques and practical know-how (Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 14). Lastly, *meaning* is considered to involve and represent

"[…] the social and symbolic significance of participation at any one moment" (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 23). Shove and Pantzar (2005) have further suggested a conceptualisation of consumers as active and creative practitioners, rather than as users. Also, they have stated that the thinking of how practices evolve, makes the relation between material objects, images they are associated with, and competence essential. That has, in turn, been argued as particularly essential when considering the diffusion of practices, and how meanings, competences, and material, which together constitutes practices, circulate (Shove & Pantzar 2005).

Practices have been described to be in processes of formation, re-formation, and de-formation. The elements, on the other hand, tend to be rather stable and may therefore withstand over time, and circulate between different places (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 44). Whereas material can be physically transported, competences and meanings are transported through processes of codification and de-codification. However, the *transportation* of the latter two elements tends to result in modifications of different kinds. For instance, existing competence may sometimes be required for know-how to be transported, which can complicate the ability of the know-how to *travel*. Meaning, on the other hand, can change and emerge fast, and thereby also travel far in a fast pace (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 56-57). As the three elements tend to be closely related, it has been suggested that one element alone may remain inactive until it is brought together with the other elements, and thereby is brought into *living practice* (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 57). Furthermore, for practices to persist, they need to be kept alive by people (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012: 62). Hence, if considering sustainable fashion shopping as a practice, and viewing if from the practice theory perspective of Shove and colleagues (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), sustainable fashion shopping requires people to engage in it.

Fuentes (2014b), who has studied green shopping, found that such shopping may be demanding for consumers, and that a supportive socio-material landscape therefore might be essential. In another study, sustainability service in-store could be interpreted as part of such a landscape, whereas the service was conceptualised as socio-material. The researchers suggested signs and store layout as examples of sustainability service in-store, and they also stated that the promotion of sustainable consumption could be considered a socio-material and performative practice. As staff and their interaction and cooperation with the materialities in the store were considered, the service provision was assumed aa *socio-material* practice (Fuentes & Fredriksson 2016). Following from the findings of these two studies, one can assume

that also sustainability-labels may be part of a supportive socio-material landscape, as they might be able to guide the consumers in their shopping. However, here the focus is solely on *material*, since attention has not been directed towards the role of the staff and the information they might offer about the sustainability-labelled products.

2.2.4. From elements to practice by way of action

In this section, there has been partial emphasis on the development of practice theory as such, and partial emphasis on how practice theory in prior research has been applied to topics similar that of this thesis. For instance, in a rather recent study, green marketing has been studied from a practice theory approach, and it has been suggested that marketing involves elements such as artefacts and knowledge (Fuentes 2015: 193). In addition, the promotion of green products has been conceptualised as a performative project, and it has been suggested to consider green marketing as a "set of practices in which a company and its products have a clear purpose in which they make sense" (Fuentes 2015: 202). The question, though, is whether the marketing material make sense to the consumers and whether it is able to influence their shopping practices? For the ability to understand how more sustainable shopping practices can emerge, it has been stated that the focus should be on how practices are formed, reproduced, maintained, stabilised, challenged and killed-off, rather than on the attitudes, behaviours, and choices of individuals (Hargreaves 2011). Moreover, it has been suggested that the ability to focus the empirical analysis around the complexities of practical performances, is enhanced through practice theory (Halkier & Jensen 2011). In this thesis, sustainability-labels within the fashion industry are subject to the analysis, and such labels could be considered as inducing performances that potentially lead forth to sustainable fashion shopping. Hence, to make a connection to a study by Fuentes (2014b), this thesis could be considered to revolve around the potential of sustainability-labels to be part of consumer strategies for managing *sustainability complexities*.

When considering sustainable fashion shopping a practice, and applying the three practice elements of material, competence, and meaning to the analysis, one could consider the sustainability-labels to function as a materiality. The elements of meaning and competence could, in turn, be assumed to influence the way consumers relate to the materiality of sustainability-labels on fashion products. Thereby, the presence of all the three elements may be essential for consumers to be influenced to make sustainable product choices, which are embedded as actions in sustainable fashion shopping practices (Figure 1). Hence, the elements of practice, suggested by Shove and colleagues (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove,

Pantzar & Watson 2012), can be considered as underlying the aim and the research questions of this thesis. Moreover, to concretise the theoretical approach that this thesis has had up until this point, empirical data is needed. As implied by Spaargaren (2011), there is a connection between practices of consumption, sustainable development, and everyday lives. Therefore, it might be essential to turn to consumers, who potentially encounter sustainability-labels in their everyday lives, in order to achieve the aim of the thesis. For the ability to collect data that enables an analysis with potential to answer the research questions, an adequate methodology was considered vital. Choosing suitable methods for the data collection involved various considerations, which will be presented in the following chapter.

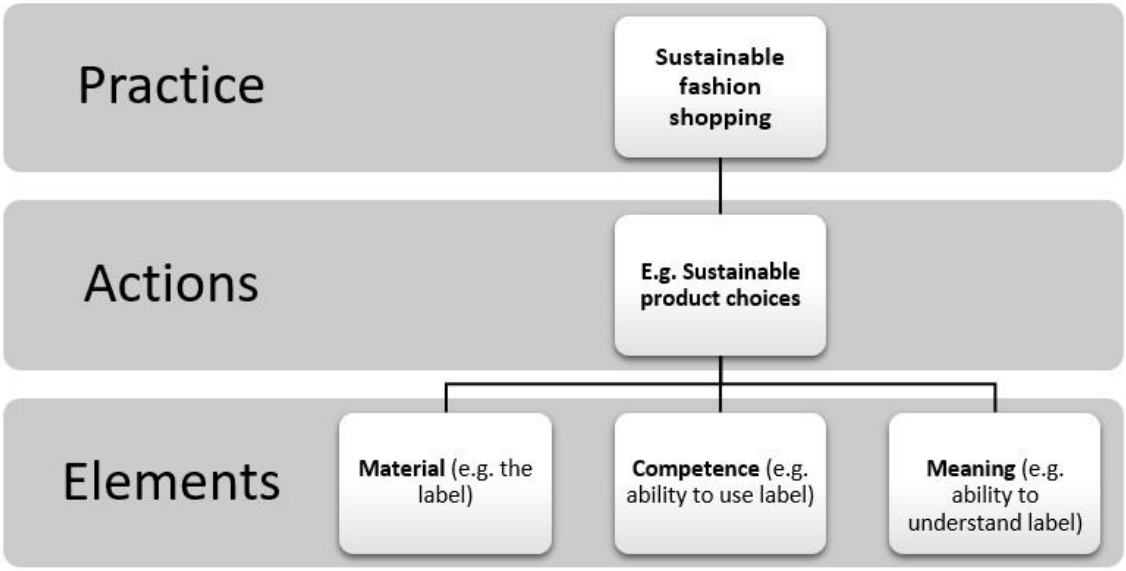

Figure 1. Illustration of the assumption underlying this thesis, based on the elements of practice according to Shove and colleagues (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012)

3. Presenting the methodology for understanding the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

The aim of this thesis involves attaining an *understanding* of a phenomenon connected to everyday life, and as has been implied through prior research, when focusing on everyday life, the methodological counterpart is qualitative methods (Sztompka 2008). As a qualitative approach has been considered suitable for reaching the understanding aimed for with this thesis, the purpose of this chapter is to function as a transparent account for how the chosen, qualitative methods were implemented for data collection and analysis. The chapter is then concluded with some reflections on the use of previous knowledge.

3.1. Interpretation and abduction for studying the role of labels in everyday life

For the ability to achieve the aim of understanding how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, and how such labels may be used to influence product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices, a practice theory approach was adopted as the theoretical framework. Practice theory is assumed to go beyond the individuals as such, but there is still an emphasis on human subjectivity as it is "[…] at the heart of processes of structuration, reproduction, and (also environmental) change" (Spaargaren 2011: 815). Therefore, the subjective accounts of humans may be considered essential for the ability to understand practices, and thereby, the thesis do not involve an objective of achieving generalisations based on objective data. Instead, this thesis uses a qualitative approach and an epistemology allowing for interpretation of subjective accounts.

The notion of sustainability has been argued as increasingly integrated in the everyday lives of people (Ritch 2015), and as this thesis focuses on the relation between consumers and their relation to sustainability-labels, *everyday life* becomes essential also in this thesis. The notion of everyday life has been described as something that consists of a mixture of unusual occasions and routines that are carried out in a down-to-earth manner. It also comprises both private and public domains, and does always include relationships with other people, and it does always occur in a social context (Sztompka 2008). Moreover, as this thesis aims to increase the knowledge-base of the interpretations and intentions consumers have, and the meanings they perceive, in relation to sustainability-labels on fashion products, an abductive approach to generating increased knowledge has been considered suitable. The suitability of such an approach to knowledge generation, is confirmed by Ong (2012), who has suggested an abductive approach for studies that aims to give attention to meanings, interpretation and intentions present in everyday life.

The abductive approach to knowledge generation has been considered to involve an ontological assumption that the social reality is something that is socially constructed (Ong 2012). As *sustainability* is a notion that is referred to differently by different actors (Horne 2009; Bratt *et al.* 2011; Danciu 2013; Taufique *et al.* 2014), one could assume the sustainable fashion shopping, and the performances involved in it, as socially constructed. How consumers understand sustainability-labels on fashion products, and how they potentially are influenced by such labels when making product choices, may be a result of their understandings of both the sustainability-labels and of *sustainability* as such and whether they perceive it as meaningful. The approach of this thesis can be considered abductive as it emanates from an understanding based on the theoretical framework, and then uses a constant comparison between the collected data and prior research in order to answer the research questions (Figure 2). The following sections of this chapter goes into depth with how primary data was gathered and how the emphasised material from prior research was selected.

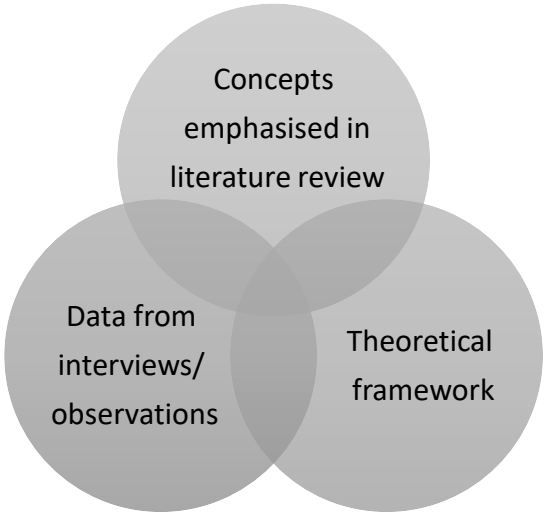

Figure 2. Illustration of the knowledge generation through this thesis.

3.2. An ethnographic-inspired approach for understanding consumer relations with labels

Before offering a detailed description of the method used, it might be essential to also offer a better illustration of the kinds of sustainability-labels that are referred to in this thesis. By way of introduction, it was stated that labels containing self-declared claims are emphasised, but the question is, how do such labels look and what kind of information do they convey? The photo collage below (Figure 3) pictures different examples of how sustainability-labels can appear. They look rather different from each other, and the type and amount of information they convey is also something that differs. Some of the labels

involve brief descriptions such as *Good Choice: Organic* Cotton, while other labels involve longer and more detailed descriptions of how the product is sustainable, organic, and so on. While some of the labels with brief descriptions simply refer to a website for more information, other labels have a QR-code, which can be scanned with the mobile phone if the customer wants more information. Altogether, the labels look differently, and conveys different kinds of messages. What they all have in common, though, is that they mainly convey claims that are *self-declared* by the brands that the retailer offers.

Figure 3. Illustration of different sustainability-labels with self-declared claims.

For the ability to achieve an understanding of how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, and how such labels can influence sustainable fashion shopping practices through product choices, it was considered necessary to use a data collection method enabling such an understanding. Interviews was considered suitable as the main method, as interviews would allow for descriptions of prior experiences with sustainability-labels and descriptions of how such labels are perceived. Through such descriptions, it was assumed that it would be possible to attain the understanding aimed for.

3.2.1. Finding a *semi-structure* for ethnographic-inspired interviews

As the approach underlying this thesis can be considered interpretivist, it was considered necessary to choose a method allowing for interpretation. As it has been described that interpretive techniques for

gathering data tend to be of unstructured kind, and that the research through such techniques tends to be guided by the informants (Anderson Hudson & Ozanne 1988), unstructured interviews were initially of main interest. Also, as it has been stated that interviews can be used when seeking to understand the sense-making and actions by individuals within their social worlds (May 2011: 157), such interviews were initially considered suitable. To achieve a greater amount of data, there was also an initial thought of combining unstructured interviews with focus group interviews. Though, after some consideration, doubts of using focus group interviews started to emerge, as it was assumed that the participants might not be as honest when being interviewed in group, as when being individually interviewed. As Bryman (2008: 464) has stated, a potential disadvantage of focus group interviews is that the participants may be more prone to express opinions that are assumed as expected or accepted, than what they might be in a regular interview. Unstructured interviews may also involve biases, but for this thesis, the potential biases of focus group interviews were considered a greater potential issue.

When evaluating different techniques for conducting the unstructured interview, the ethnographic interview came to be of specific interest. Therefore, the ethnographic interview, as described by Spradley (1979) was used as the point of departure, when designing the interviews. However, the interviews that were conducted for this thesis, should mainly be considered as *inspired* by the ethnographic interview. The interviews for this thesis did not fulfil all the criteria presented by Spradley (1979: 51) in terms of, for instance, the interviews being conducted in a longitudinal fashion with approximately six or seven one-hour interviews per informant. For this thesis, it was only considered feasible to interview each respondent once, as there was an interest in interviewing a greater number of consumers. Neither was it considered necessary to spend six or seven hours with each consumer, to achieve the aim of the thesis. However, as it has been stated that ethnography is concerned with the meaning of the actions people make (Spradley 1979: 5), letting the interviews be inspired by the ethnographic interview appeared as a suitable strategy.

Fifteen ethnographic-inspired interviews were conducted during a period of one month. The first five interviews were more unstructured than the remaining ten, as they were used for setting the direction for the remaining ones. The way the questions were asked, was inspired by how Spradley (1979) has exemplified the questions characterising ethnographic interviews. As a pattern started to emerge from the first five interviews, the simple interview guide used during the first interviews was revised. In the updated interview guide (Appendix 1), the main questions connected to the themes of interest remained, and was complemented with potential follow-up questions concerning topics that had been in focus during

the first five interviews. Hence, the last ten interviews were of more semi-structured character than the first five, which means that the questions were more specified but that there still was room for deviating from the interview-guide (May 2011: 134). Even though the remaining interviews adopted a more semi-structured approach, the questions were still of open-ended character, allowing for the informants to still set the direction of the interviews, and for new patterns and categories to emerge.

The purpose of developing an interview guide was to facilitate the coding process, and to ensure that no aspects of interest were forgotten during the interviews. All interviews were initiated with the same grand tour questions, in order to receive some background information about the informants. First, the informants were asked to tell a little bit about themselves. Thereafter, they were asked to describe a typical shopping trip for them, when shopping other products than groceries, followed by a question concerning their preferences when shopping fashion products. By asking these question, the purpose was to attain an overall image of who the interviewed consumers are, and how they tend to think and act when shopping, and also what they consider as fashion. Knowing about their product preferences was, in turn, assumed to enable a greater understanding of what generally is meaningful to them. After the introductory questions, a mixture of descriptive, structural and contrast questions were asked. Descriptive questions have been described as, for example, grand and mini tour questions and question concerning concrete examples from the informants (Spradley 1979: 86-88). Structural questions, in turn, have been described as leading to answers which reveal how the informants organise their knowledge (Spradley 1979: 60), whereas contrast questions have the purpose of revealing the meaning of something through the statements of how it is different from something else (Spradley 1979: 157). Moreover, it has been stated that when the length of the question is expanded, so may also the answer be (Spradley 1979: 85). The questions were rather short in writing, but as they were adjusted to the descriptions and the displayed understandings by the consumers, their length tended to be longer and involving signposts back to what had already been described by the informants.

The informants were asked to describe their views on the notion of *sustainable consumption*, as there was an interest in understanding how they interpret sustainability in a broader sense, and what aspects they tend to include in their descriptions. Those consumers who stated that they did not know what to say in those regards, where instead asked about their views on the notion of *environmentally friendly consumption*. It turned out that, even though the consumers understood the notions differently, they tended to describe the same aspects in the end. Worth mentioning is that the consumers were asked

about those notions in a general sense, and not specifically in relation to fashion. However, when shifting the focus towards sustainability-labels on fashion products, the consumer descriptions and the remaining interview questions became more specific.

Common for all the informants was that they were more familiar with sustainability-labels on groceries, and therefore contrasting questions were asked in the purpose of reaching an understanding of how they had become more familiar with such labels on groceries. One contrasting question was *How do you view the labels among the fashion retailers in comparison to the labels among other retailers, such as food retailers?*. To attain a greater understanding also of what is important to the consumers, structural questions were asked. For instance, by asking the consumers which of their mentioned product preferences they value most, and what sustainable characteristics of a product they would be most interested in being informed about, it was assumed that cues would appear in terms of how they make sense of the labels.

Altogether, an interview strategy inspired by that of ethnographic interviews was assumed to increase the possibility of gaining insights into the everyday lives of people. However, only documenting the descriptions by consumers may be considered as rather vague, when aiming to understand how a certain practice potentially is enabled. Therefore, observations of some kind were considered a necessary complement.

3.2.2. Complementing the interviews with mechanical observations of in-store materialities

Røpke (2009) and Hargreaves (2011) have stressed the emphasis on *doings* of everyday practices. Hargreaves (2011: 84) have stated that an ethnographic approach, involving observations, is necessary for understanding those doings, as it enables an understanding of what happens when practices are performed. Participant observations, which often are part of ethnographic studies (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994), was not considered here, as doings *per se* was not of main interest. Rather, observations on what enables those doings were considered the main interest, and here, the sustainability-label and the availability of sustainability-labelled products in fashion stores were considered what might enable sustainable product choices in the fashion store.

The observations were conducted as a complement to the interview data, and the stores in which the observations took place were selected based on the consumer descriptions. The stores of those retailers

that most frequently were exemplified in the descriptions by the consumers, were those stores that were considered most suitable as the scene for observation. The observations could be considered *mechanical*, as they were conducted in a fashion similar to what Arnould and Wallendorf (1994) have described as characterising the conduct of mechanical observations. Therefore, photographs were taken of the products and the store layout in each of the visited stores, in order to enable the regarded kind of observation. Crang and Cook (2007: 105) have also described mechanical observations, and have referred to it as a way of mechanically capturing the reality of the images which serves as ethnographic documents. The same researchers have also stressed critique towards the use of photographs, as photographs fail to convey a reality which is not mediated by the photographer (Crang & Cook 2007: 105). The photographs used for the mechanical observations for this thesis, though, were solely taken in the purpose of attaining an increased understanding of how the materialities connected to the labels are structured in those stores that the informants are familiar with. Thus, the mechanic observations mainly revolved around concretising what had been described by the consumers, and thereby enabled triangulation of the consumer descriptions of the materialities connected to the labels. Triangulating the findings was at the same time a strategy for offering a more transparent and credible illustration of the labels and their locations in-store. Involving elements of triangulation as a strategy for increased credibility, was inspired by literature on how to increase the quality of the study results (Golafshani 2003; Ryen 2004: 140).

Moreover, when conducting the mechanical observations, the consumers present in the stores were not of interest. Neither were the consumers that had been interviewed of direct interest in those regards, rather, the observations were simply used as verification of what those consumers had described. However, conducting participant observations with the informants was initially considered, as such observations have been considered the core method when aiming to understand the everyday life experiences of people (Crang & Cook 2007: 37), and when aiming for thick descriptions (Arnould & Wallendorf 1994: 499). However, after some reflection, participant observations were considered less suitable for this thesis, than the chosen observation method. The reason was that the own experiences of conducting such observations were not considered sufficient for conducting successful participant observations, and as May (2011: 188) has stressed, skills are essential for a successful execution. Another reason for not applying participant observations to this thesis study, was to decrease the likelihood that the informants would be influenced by the specific context for observation. Reactive effects and less natural behaviour have been considered a potential result of participant observations (Bryman 2008: 442), and even though interviews also may involve such elements, triangulating certain aspects of the interviews

with mechanical observations was considered a way to increase the quality of the findings also in that sense.

Before continuing with a description of the sampling methods used for this thesis, it needs to be stressed that the specific stores in which the photographs were taken, not necessarily were the exact same stores that the consumers referred to. Though, as all the regarded retailers are chain-store retailers, one may assume that the product range in one store of such a retailer is similar the product range in another store of the same retailer. However, to increase the likelihood of conducting observations in the same stores as the consumers referred to, stores of the emphasised retailers were visited in both Helsingborg and Malmö, since the informants were located either in or nearby those two cities.

3.2.3. Choosing a sampling method suitable for the thesis aim

When doing ethnography, it has been stated that decisions about the interviews, concerning who will be involved and when and where, need to be developed over time (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 4). As the overall approach of thesis is inspired by an ethnographic approach, also the sampling method was to some extent influenced by that approach. The sample should be regarded as initially purposive, as it was considered necessary that the informants were familiar with retailers in Sweden, since the study was conducted in Sweden and eventually would require observations in some of the stores referred to by the consumers. Apart from being familiar with retailers in Sweden, the consumers were purposively asked to participate based on their variations in age, sex, educational background, and occupation, for the purpose of having a diverse sample. Apart from those considerations, no other specific criteria for participation were specified. The reason was simply that there was an interest in taking part of the experiences of consumers in general, regardless of their levels of interest in, for instance, sustainable fashion products. Moreover, as the aim of this thesis is not to generalise the findings to any specific group of consumers, the choice of interviewing *any* consumer was not considered anything else than reasonable. Also, it can be considered necessary to do so if it should be feasible to reach an understanding of how more sustainable shopping practices can be influenced within the fashion industry today. Only targeting one specific consumer group could be troublesome, and considered as insufficient, for such an understanding.

The data collection process was, as described, initiated with a purposive sampling method, which involves choosing informants based on known characteristics (Silverman 2013: 148; May 2011: 100). Then, once the data collection process had proceeded, the interview informants began to lead the way to other

informants, and thereby, the sampling method could partially be considered as *snowball sampling*. Moreover, neither one of the sampling methods used are suitable for generalisations (May 2011: 101), but for this thesis, a sample fitting the purpose and offering variation was considered more valuable. The entire sample of consumers is presented in the table below. It should be noted that the sole purpose of presenting some basic information about the informants, is to offer a transparent account of who has been interviewed, and to indicate the spread of informants. However, the background information will not be used for any analysis of potential differences or similarities between responses based on gender, age, educational level, and occupation. Such an analysis is for future studies to emphasise.

#	Consumer	Sex	Age	Educational level	Occupation	Interview details
1	Susanne	Female	45	High School	Entrepreneur	2 March 2017, 65 minutes
2	Victor	Male	51	Bachelor Degree	Business consultant	3 March 2017, 58 minutes
3	Alexander	Male	19	High School	Student	4 March 2017, 61 minutes
4	Niclas	Male	29	Master's Degree	Student	6 March 2017, 75 minutes
5	Andreas	Male	25	Master's Degree	Student	7 March 2017, 115 minutes
6	Amanda	Female	29	High School	Chef	11 March 2017, 62 minutes
7	Ola	Male	30	High School	Roofer	12 March 2017, 64 minutes
8	Carina	Female	36	High School	Artist/Designer	14 March 2017, 59 minutes
9	Caroline	Female	23	Bachelor Degree	Administrative assistant	20 March 2017, 68 minutes
10	Amelie	Female	27	Master's Degree	Administrator	23 March 2017, 75 minutes
11	Albert	Male	58	Higher education	*Not specified*	24 March 2017, 45 minutes
12	Fredrik	Male	38	Bachelor Degree	CEO	6 April 2017, 54 minutes
13	Rikard	Male	33	Master's Degree	Product Manager	7 April 2017, 48 minutes
14	Ingrid	Female	75	*Not specified*	Retired	8 April 2017, 56 minutes
15	Agneta	Female	68	*Not specified*	Retired	9 April 2017, 59 minutes

Table 1. Information about the informants participating in the interviews.

Of the retailers exemplified by the consumers, four were selected for observations and they were chosen based on the frequency of being mentioned by the consumers, and by their differences. As diversity was aimed for with the interview sample, diversity also in the sample of stores subject to observation was considered reasonable. The most frequently used examples were chain-stores, which facilitated the ability to conduct the observations. As stores of the four retailers were visited in both Helsingborg and Malmö,

in total eight mechanical in-store observations were conducted, resulting in a total of approximately 160 photographs. Below follows a list of the four retailers, based on their characteristics.

Type of retail concept	Assortment	Offered labels
Generalist	Fashion	Own brand
Specialist	Fashion/Outdoor clothes	Other brands
Generalist/Department store	Fashion	Own brand/Other brands
Specialist	Orient-inspired fashion	Own brand

Table 2. Retailers visited when gathering material for mechanic observations

The retailers, subject to observation, were not asked for their permission to be involved in this thesis. Therefore, the names of those retailers will not be mentioned in this thesis, and photographs from the observations are sparsely presented without the visibility of the names of the retailers or the brands put on either the labels or other material. As the purpose of the observations mainly was to complement the interview data, it was not considered an issue to exclude more detailed information about the visited stores. The transparency for increased credibility, and transferability of the results (Ryen 2004: 140), has in this thesis been considered as most essential in connection to the interviews. Not least since the observations have been conducted with the interviews as point of departure.

When the potential interview informants were approached, and asked to participate in the interviews, they were informed either in written (Appendix 2) or orally about what the participation would mean. That information was based on the ethical codes of conduct, stressed in connection to both ethnographic studies in particular (Crang & Cook 2007: 29; Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 209-218) and qualitative research in general (Silverman: 161). For this thesis, the most crucial ethical consideration was that of privacy, as the informants would be asked to share descriptions that could be considered personal. Thereby, all consumers were offered anonymity when participating, and they were also offered to read the transcripts before the analysis of the thesis was initiated, in order to check that their descriptions were correctly transcribed. That could also be considered an act of member checking, which has been stated as potentially increasing the credibility and quality of the results (Ryen 2004: 140). Offering the informants anonymity could also be viewed as increasing the quality of the thesis, in the sense of the consumers potentially perceiving more comfortability with offering honest and detailed descriptions.

3.2.4. From elements to practices: Putting separate units into categories for analysis

All but one of the interviews were transcribed verbatim soon after being conducted, which resulted in approximately 150 A4-pages of interview transcripts. In order to facilitate the transcription process, each interview was recorded with a smartphone, after receiving consent from the informants to have the interviews recorded. Tape recordings are something that Spradley (1979: 70) has referred to as part of ethnographic records, and in this ethnographic-inspired thesis study, the recordings took the shape of voice recordings, enabled through the modern technique of today. Moreover, the recordings were deleted from the smartphone immediately after they were sent and downloaded to a computer for a safer storage. Then, after transcribing the interviews, and listening to the recordings while going through the transcripts one last time to ensure nothing was left out, the recordings were deleted also from the computer.

The interview which was not transcribed, was neither recorded since the informant did not consent to that. Instead, notes were taken meanwhile the interview was conducted, which resulted in an inability to use quotes from that interview in the analysis. Still, the interview was considered useful as it was one of the last interviews to be conducted, and as the note-taking therefore could be focused around aspects that had appeared as essential in the previous interviews. Those aspects were also those aspects that facilitated the qualitative coding process, which was conducted before the written analysis was initiated. Moreover, as the approach of this thesis has been considered abductive, the coding process was initiated with finding overarching, analytical categories based on the theoretical framework and the elements of practice (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012).

Based on the analytical categories, the transcripts were read through, and words and sentences that appeared as connected to those categories were highlighted. Thereby, different codes and units emerged from the transcripts, which later were put into sub-categories of the analytical categories. Thereby, the coding process was carried out in a similar vein as the coding process exemplified by Ryen (2004: 109-113). When coding the data, it appeared rather easy to separate the main categories and they also appeared as mutually exclusive. However, when conducting the analysis, it became clear that separating the analytical categories would not result in an as good analysis as if they were integrated, as they in practice are assumed as closely linked (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012). Therefore, the structure of the analysis is rather different from the coding scheme presented in the following table (Table 3). Altogether, the analytical main categories were inspired by the theoretical framework, whereas units and sub-categories emerged from the collected data with guidance from the main categories.

Main category	Sub-category
Material	The in-store placement of the sustainability-label
	The availability of sustainability-labelled products
	The appearance of sustainability-labels
	The message of sustainability-labels
Competence	The definition of sustainability
	The prior experiences of encountering sustainability-labels
	The prior experiences of using sustainability-labels
	The definition of sustainable products
Meaning	The interest in sustainability
	The perceived importance of sustainability-issues
	The perceived importance of certain product attributes
	The perceived truth-value of the labels

Table 3. Coding scheme for the conducted interviews.

The data from the conducted mechanical observations also needed to be coded before being brought into the written analysis. The coding process of what had been observed appeared as simpler than the that of the interviews, as it could be based on codes, units and categories that emerged when the interview transcripts were coded. As the observations only involved the practice element of material, only one of the main categories found when coding the interviews, was used. Below follows a table (Table 4) presenting how the coding process was carried out based on that category.

Main category	Sub-category
Material	The in-store placement of the sustainability-label
	Availability of sustainability-labelled products
	The appearances of sustainability-labels
	The messages of sustainability-labels

Table 4. Coding scheme for the conducted mechanical observations.

The findings from the interviews and the observations, will be presented and analysed in relation to prior research and the theoretical framework in the following chapter. When reading through the interview

transcripts and coding the data, quotes that were considered to represent main points were chosen, and those are presented in the analysis chapter. What needs to be noted is that the interviews for this thesis mainly were conducted in Swedish, as that was the language all but two consumers were most comfortable with speaking. The other two interviews were conducted in English, as those consumers were not yet fluent in Swedish. As the language of this thesis is English, the quotes from all interviews conducted in Swedish needed to be translated, and as English is not the mother tongue of the thesis author, the quality of the translations could be questioned. However, as the entire thesis is written in English by a non-native English writer, and as the research approach does not fully exclude subjective interpretations, the quality of the translations has not been considered a major issue. Rather, the quotes have been viewed as facilitating for the reader, as they illustrate views that were essential parts of the findings of the thesis.

3.2.5. Reflecting upon the methods employed for achieving the thesis aim

With an emphasis on one aspect of everyday life, namely fashion shopping, the purpose of the methods used has been to capture consumer experiences connected to fashion shopping, and specifically shopping of sustainability-labelled fashion products. To achieve the aim of this thesis, one main method was employed, and that was the method of interviews. The decision of initiating the interview process with unstructured interviews, was based on a willingness of letting the informants guide the research process rather than the own preconceptions. The semi-structured, ethnographic-inspired interviews, which were conducted based on what was discovered during the first unstructured interviews, made it possible to limit the scope of data and thereby, the analysis was facilitated.

The purpose of combining parts of the interview data with mechanical observations, was primarily to concretise and triangulate the consumer descriptions. The reason only parts of the interview data were triangulated through observations, was the fact that not all aspects were observable. It was possible to observe the tangible materialities that were described by the consumers, and such observations were also considered feasible to conduct within the time frame for the thesis study. However, observing how consumers express meaning and competence would require extensive participant observations, which were not feasible to conduct. There would neither be enough time, nor enough skills, for conducting successful participant observations.

The execution of the chosen methods was facilitated by prior experiences of using such methods, and thereby, more focus could be put on increasing the quality of the findings by, for instance, letting the

informants guide the interview process, by asking adequate interview questions, and by triangulating the findings. Thereby, the own preconceptions were given less scope, and the subjective elements of the thesis were to a greater extent based on those of the informants. Also, the constant presence of previous knowledge helped to avoid letting the own preconceptions and other elements of subjectivity to take over in the execution and the analysis of this thesis study. Therefore, before proceeding to the analysis, a reflection on the involvement of previous knowledge is presented as the concluding section to this chapter.

3.3. Using previous knowledge for reaching new understandings

Before beginning to practically work on this thesis, extensive searches for theories and prior research were conducted. The search for previous knowledge was initially rather unstructured, but once the thesis topic was considered definite, a more concentrated search for research articles was initiated. Mainly LUBsearch/EBSCO*host* and Google Scholar were used for the initial searches, by using search words such as *sustainability + labels*, *eco-labels*, *sustainable fashion*, *sustainable apparel*, *sustainable garments*, *sustainable clothes*, *sustainable retailing*, *sustainable shopping*, and *sustainable consumption*. Thereafter, a snowballing sampling method was employed to find further articles within the areas of interest, and that method was used until the same articles started to appear more frequently and saturation was considered as reached.

The prior research referred to in this thesis, has to a great extent been conducted in the Western world, which means that the cultural scene for prior research is likely to be similar that of this thesis. What has appeared as the main difference between this thesis study and prior research, is that of the approach. In prior research, sustainability-labels and labelled products have, as described, mainly been studied from behavioural or attitudinal approaches (e.g. Taufique *et al.* 2014; McNeill & Moore 2015; Taufique, Vocino & Polonsky 2016), emphasising the attitudes consumers have towards such products, and what it does for their behaviour. Also, prior research on labels has appeared to put greater emphasis on the environmental dimension of sustainability, and has referred to the labels as *eco-labels* (e.g. Horne 2009). By considering the labels in a broader sense, as sustainability-labels, and by breaking down the relations consumers have with those into competence and meanings, rather than as attitudes and behaviours *per se*, a somewhat different approach has been taken here. Moreover, that approach has required support from theories and prior research within the practice theory approach.

The secondary data, which served as the theoretical framework for this thesis, initially consisted of prior research within similar fields using practice theory approaches. Such research involved studies on, for instance, strategies for dealing with the complexities connected to green shopping (Fuentes 2014b), and the service provision connected to the promotion of sustainable consumption as a socio-material and performative practice (Fuentes & Fredriksson 2016). From the articles presenting those studies, a greater understanding of practice theory and what it may involve, was achieved. From there, the knowledge-base of practice theory was increased, by going further back in time to those theoreticians that have appeared as specifically important for the development of the practice theory approach of interest.

Moreover, also for the ability to choose a suitable research approach and method for this thesis, previous knowledge was essential. First, the research approach was influenced by those of prior practice-based research on sustainability-related issues within retail. For a greater understanding of suitable methods for this specific thesis, also textbooks on methods were integrated. Also, prior experiences of conducting interviews and observations, were considered when evaluating suitable methods, as the own ability of conducting the chosen methods was considered crucial for findings of good quality. The findings, in turn, are presented in the following chapter, where they also are connected connection to previous knowledge in terms of the theoretical framework and the prior research presented in the literature review.

4. Achieving an understanding of the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

In this chapter, the main findings from interviews and observations are presented, and connected to findings from prior research and to the three elements of practice (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012). The first section serves as an introduction to the label and what it is, involving the materialities of its placement in-store and the materialities of the label as such, in terms of its appearance and message. The second section serves to answer the first research question of this thesis: *How do consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, in terms of perceived meaning and competence for using the information conveyed?*. The answer to the first research question is constituting the basis for answering the second research question, *How may sustainability-labels be used to influence product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices?*, which is emphasised in the third and final section of this chapter. The overall conclusion, with a simultaneous emphasis on the findings related to both of the research questions, is then presented and discussed in the following chapter.

4.1. The sustainability-label as a materiality

Before going into depth with how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, it might be essential to first pay attention to where such labels are encountered. As the interviews turned out to mainly concern the in-store environment, the online environment has been excluded from this thesis. Therefore, this section first briefly emphasises where in the stores sustainability-labels can be encountered, both as experienced by the consumers and as observed in the stores exemplified by the consumers. Thereafter, once an understanding is reached of where to find the label in the store, the focus is shifted towards the label as such and what it may convey, based on consumer experiences and observations based on those experiences in turn. By considering the sustainability-label a *materiality*, which is surrounded by other materialities, and by studying how consumers relate to such labels on fashion products, in terms of perceived meaning and competence to understand and use them, it might be easier to understand the role of the label in influencing sustainable product choices and thereby sustainable fashion shopping practices.

4.1.1. Tracking down the sustainability-label in the fashion store

Something that was revealed during most of the interviews, was that the consumers have limited experiences of encountering sustainability-labels in the stores of fashion retailers. The common perception among the consumers was that sustainability-labels on fashion products is a rather rare sight in the regular fashion store. A few consumers, who stated that they have learned to recognise the labels, stated that it is rather easy to find sustainability-labelled products, as long one knows what to search for. Some of the consumers, in turn, stated that they consider the range of such products as greater in the stores of more specialised retailers, such as the outdoor retailer subject to observation for this thesis. The observations, on the other hand, did not reveal any major differences between the range of sustainable product options.

There were two consumers who perceived the sustainability-labelled products as rather separated from the other products in the stores. However, the common perception, and what also was revealed during the observations in the stores of four of those retailers referred to by the consumers, was that the products tend to be mixed with the fashion products that are not labelled. Therefore, the product displays may not necessarily lead the way to products with sustainability-labels. Moreover, none of the consumers could recall seeing specific signs indicating where to find sustainable products. Only in the stores of one of the retailers, the department store retailer, signs were used. In those stores signs were used extensively, in all departments, regardless of product type. Below, three photographs illustrate how the signs were used in those stores. The left photography displays the use of signs hanging from the roof, whereas the photography in the middle displays a sign, almost looking like a label, hanging from the clothing stands. The right photography, in turn, displays a big sign put on one of the walls in the store.

Figure 4. Illustration of how one fashion retailer uses signs to make sustainable options visible.

Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016) have studied aspects such as signs and the store layout, as part of what constitutes sustainability service provided in-store, which they in turn conceptualised as a socio-material and performative practice. The material aspect of the sustainability service in-store can here be regarded as the signs and the product placement in-store, and also the labels as such. Considering the descriptions of the use of signs and the product placement, the retail landscape may not always be supportive, which partially also was revealed by Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016). Here, one of the four retailers was an exception that stood out in terms of offering other visible marketing material than labels as sustainability service in-store. The use of labels was a common, but rather hidden, feature in all the stores, but only having the labels present may not qualify as a service. Also, what the labels convey may be essential for consumers to be able to consider the labels as a service that is both useful and means something. Therefore, it is necessary to look closer at the labels as such, to find out what they convey.

4.1.2. Taking a closer look at the sustainability-label and its message

When describing their prior experiences with sustainability-labels on fashion products, the consumers offered different descriptions of the information conveyed. First of all, two of the consumers could not recall encountering sustainability-labels on fashion products, and could therefore not offer any descriptions in that regard. The other thirteen consumers had experiences of either encountering labels conveying brief information, or encountering labels with more extensive information. Also, some of the consumers had experience of encountering both kinds of labels.

Especially when describing the labels with brief information, the descriptions were consistent with each other. The consumers described such labels as mainly involving the aspects of material and production, and thereby as emphasising the environmental dimension. That appeared as the case also when encountering labels with brief information during the observations, which is illustrated by the following figure (Figure 5). Moreover, the consumers describing the labels with brief information, also appeared to recall encountering green-coloured labels with links to websites to visit, or with barcodes to scan for further information. The website links appeared as a common theme on the labels in the stores subject to observation, and green coloured labels were seen in the stores of all but one of the retailers. That one retailer instead used white labels for conveying similar information as the green labels. The difference, though, was that the white label involved social claims as well. So did also the green label, claiming that the product involves a *sustainable choice*, as it turned out to offer more information on its backside.

Figure 5. Illustration of labels with brief information, found in the observed stores.

The consumers who described sustainability-labels with more extensive information, stated that such labels tend to either offer more detailed descriptions of different aspects of sustainability, or involve story-telling that does not necessarily involve more detailed descriptions of the product as such. The labels used in the stores of three of the four retailers, mainly appeared to be of the brief kind. However, in the stores of the retailer which offered fashion and outdoor products from various brands, the variation of the label types appeared as greater. In the stores of that retailer, labels with brief information could be found, but especially on more advanced products, such as jackets, also labels with more extensive information were found. The following figure (Figure 6), which displays the backside of one of the labels presented above, illustrates a label with more extensive information concerning the product as such.

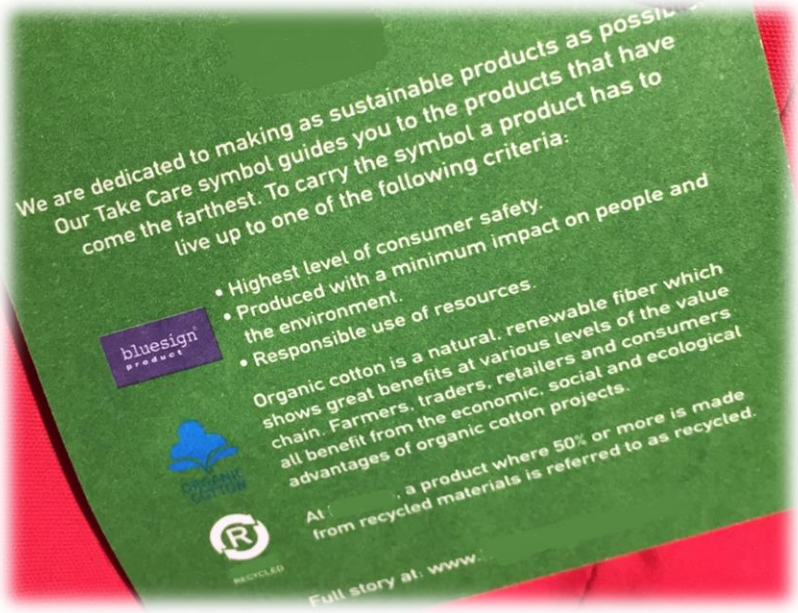

Figure 6. Illustration of label with more extensive information, found on one of the observed stores.

"The labels are what the labels are. They are not going into depth with things." (Andreas)

The quote above illustrates a perception common among the interviewed consumers, that labels may have issues in conveying detailed information, which in turn may require more from the consumers if such products are to be chosen. As one consumer stated, the labels do not convey a clear signal for purchase, when operating on their own. Moreover, prior research has stressed the design and the messages of labels, as essential for the choice of whether to act based on the labels (Horne 2009). Also, the materialities surrounding sustainability-labels, in terms of both the label itself and other materialities used for marketing the labelled products in-store, may be considered essential for practices to practiced, and should not be taken for granted. As suggested by Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016), signs and store layout can be considered as sustainability-service in-store, facilitating for the consumers to be guided towards sustainable consumption. When such service is not present and leading the way, the abilities to locate sustainability-labels and sustainable product choices in the fashion store, is likely a matter of the competence consumers have in connection to sustainability-issues related to the fashion industry. Moreover, as consumers do what makes sense to them to do (Schatzki 2001b), they might not actively search for, or even discover, such labels when the labels are not making sense to them. Therefore, when

using the approach to practice suggested by Shove and colleagues (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), and considering the label as a materiality embedded in sustainable fashion shopping practices, attention also needs to be directed towards the elements of competence and meaning.

4.2. The competence and meaning related to sustainability-labels on fashion products

It has been assumed that practitioners perform activities differently as they, for instance, have different understandings and commitment (Warde 2005). It has also been suggested that consumers perceive different levels of sustainability-related concern, and that the most concerned consumers are those that are most likely to engage in sustainable clothing consumption (McNeill & Moore 2015). Thus, when aiming to understand how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, in terms of perceived meaning and competence for using the information conveyed, it might be essential to understand whether the use of sustainability-labels within the fashion industry make sense to people, and whether they understand the information those labels convey. By focusing on the elements of competence and meaning, related to that of materialities – here in the shape of sustainability-labels – the understanding sought for might be achieved, both in terms of the relation to the labels, and the potential of the labels to influence product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices.

4.2.1. Interpreting sustainability in relation to fashion

The consumers, interviewed for this thesis, displayed different competences concerning to sustainability-issues related to the fashion industry. Thereby, they also revealed different levels of perceived meaning, as those two elements appeared closely linked together in those regards. The consumers who perceived most concern for sustainability-issues related to the fashion industry, were also those who expressed most competence in those regards. Those consumers also had a more simultaneous emphasis on the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability, which have been described as equally important by Danciu (2013). However, most of the consumers appeared to struggle with including the social aspect in the notion of *sustainability*. Instead, the environmental dimension appeared as most commonly referred to when considering sustainability-related issues, but when social aspects were considered, mostly concerns related to fair salaries, child labour, and the working conditions in general were emphasised. Moreover, among the consumers that considered both the environmental and social aspects of sustainability, the common perception appeared to be that the former precedes the latter. The following

quote illustrates this, as it involves a view on good deeds for the environment as positively influencing the people that are involved.

> "That is a thing that I think connects them, like the environmental stuff and how they [the workers] are treated. Like, the toxic stuff that you maybe use when you normally produce clothes and other products are often not allowed to be used when you produce things in an organic way. So, I think then you also know that the workers are not exposed to all of this." (Amelie)

Common for the interviewed consumers, regardless of level of competence of what sustainability is and involves, was a view on sustainable fashion product choices as something that offers a good feeling. As illustrated by the quotes below, regardless the choice would be good for the environment or for other people, it gave the consumers a good feeling. The first quote involves an emphasis on a good feeling connected to making a good choice for oneself and the environment, whereas the second involves a simultaneous focus on oneself, the environment, *and* social aspects.

> "It feels good that I have the opportunity to purchase it and that I can choose to wear something that I at least can trust does not bring extra toxins to the own body. [...] And to the environment, that it does not have to be more sprayed with pesticides." (Susanne)

> "The sustainable lifestyle makes you feel better, because you have a better conscience, because you know that other people maybe also has a future. So, it is empathy for the people who produce it, and it is also that I think that too much waste is produced. Toxins. Everything." (Amelie)

Making good, sustainable choices when purchasing fashion products was something that all consumers considered as the optimum in theory, but when considering it in practice, two consumers differed from the others. They both talked about becoming too obsessed and stressed about making the right choice all the time. One of those consumers emphasised the importance of finding a balance that works for oneself,

whereas the other stated that not knowing about everything probably is best for the own health. The following two quotes illustrate the reasoning by those two consumers.

> "At the same time, it cannot be exaggerated. So, I do not think that it makes the human-being feel good either. [...] I think it is important that you get to find your own balance in it." (Carina)

> "You might not want to know about everything, because then you probably would become sick from that." (Amanda)

Altogether, the knowledge about and the commitment to sustainability-related issues within the fashion industry varied between the consumers. As stated, the more knowledge the consumers appeared to have, the more commitment they also expressed. However, what came first – the competence or the perceived meaning – is not something that will be further speculated in here, but it can be assumed that those aspects would be closely linked regardless the order of appearing. Not least as it has been stated that competence and meaning, together with material, are linked together when considering how practices are constituted (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012). Also, when considering competence and meaning connected to sustainability-related issues, all the consumers interviewed for this thesis appeared as more competent and concerned of such issues connected to the food industry. When perceiving difficulties to relate to sustainability-labelled fashion products, the consumers tended to use examples connected to the groceries. In prior research on how consumers interpret sustainability in relation to fashion, the similar was reported to happen when the interviewed consumers needed to fill gaps in their descriptions, which could not be filled with examples from the fashion industry (Ritch 2015). Moreover, the consumers interviewed for this thesis referred to the clarity of the health benefits from choosing more sustainable product options, and thereby the *personal aspect*, as their reasons for being more concerned in connection to groceries. Many of the consumers also stated that, in general, the closer something gets to oneself, the more important it is considered. Thereby, as explicitly stated by many of the consumers, as food is ingested, it becomes a greater concern that such products do not involve toxins or other stuff that can endanger the personal health.

The expressed concern for the personal health in connection to sustainability-related issues, resembles the findings from prior research, in which ethical issues, directly related to the consumers themselves, has

been found as more influencing than other ethical issues (Joergens 2006; Shen *et al.* 2014). Thereby, for consumers to be increasingly interested in purchasing sustainable products, they might need to be targeted on a more personal level as that can result in more commitment and greater perceptions of meaning. Also, in terms of competence, it might be easier for consumers to understand the seriousness of aspects that are directly related to themselves. Hence, sustainability-labels on products that are ingested might be perceived as more meaningful and better understood, than labels on other kinds of products such as fashion products. Moreover, as implied by both Hiller Connell (2010) and Ritch (2015), if the consumers do not have the knowledge they need, they might be constrained in behaving pro-environmentally or sustainably. Also, perceiving concern for sustainability-issues may be essential for consumers to engage in sustainable fashion shopping (McNeill & Moore 2015). The knowledge the consumers have, and the concern they perceive, may therefore have implications for how they relate to the sustainability-labels that are offered by fashion retailers, and thus, it may be essential to look closer at how consumers interpret the labels as such. Especially when considering the label as a materiality that potentially could influence sustainable actions leading forth to a sustainable fashion shopping practice, it becomes vital to consider how and whether meanings and competences are present in relation to the regarded material.

4.2.2. Reviewing the truth-value and usability of sustainability-labels on fashion products

Not only when considering sustainability-related issues connected to the fashion industry, the consumers appeared to express different levels of commitment and have different levels of competence. Also, when focusing on sustainability-labels, conveying information on aspects connected to those issues, the perceptions and understandings appeared as differing. For some consumers, the presence of sustainability-labels was considered as solely positive. For other consumers, the first response to the labels would include distrust, but later turn into a consideration of the labelled products as being *better than the alternatives* or as being a positive effort in the sense of potentially opening up for other sustainable efforts among both consumers and retailers. The following quotes illustrate the diversity of the views on sustainability-labels within the fashion industry.

> "[…] they [the labels] tell me that I get a product that will not harm me with toxins, plus that no toxic crop-spraying has been done when producing the fabric. That I can trust that there are no unnecessary toxins in it." (Susanne)

> "I guess I assume that the information in somehow is somewhat true, since they [the retailers] at least have made an effort to flag up the product. […] It is so easy to get busted, and it is so stupid to get busted." (Victor)

> "When the companies are marketing sustainability, I feel like they are trying to gain money out of me. I get angry sometimes as that [sustainability] is not the standard of producing things and that they are trying to market it as superior and as a competitive advantage." (Andreas)

Most consumers tended to be slightly distrustful towards the labels and the information they convey, but as implied, they tended to consider the labels a *good start*. Also, as revealed through one of the quotes above, since there is a risk of getting caught if the messages involve lies, the labels were by most consumers thought to involve some elements of truth. Moreover, as the last quote above illustrates, some consumers appeared to consider the labels and their messages as a tool for increased competitiveness, and especially the use of non-standardised, self-declared labels were considered an issue for the ability to trust the labels. Such labels have previously been considered a tool for marketing and increased competitiveness (e.g. Chkanikova & Lehner 2015), which resembles with the view of most of the interviewed consumers. The quote presented below, is an illustration of how some consumers reasoned in this matter.

> "This with companies making their own sustainability-stamps, I cannot believe that they are used, because their purpose is only to lead the consumers on. Because there are established guidelines and labels that can be followed, but to not need to fulfil all the criteria and have follow-ups they establish their own brands, but people do not get it. So, if it is knowledge among consumers that one is after, it should be independent certificates that are used. These should not be confused with other fabrications, because then one just lacks trust and in the end, there is nothing that the consumers can trust. And information about what these labels mean is important." (Niclas)

Moreover, when using labels in green marketing, it has been stated that the labels sometimes convey messages that are misleading (Chen & Burns 2006; Johnstone & Tan 2015), not least when they involve claims made by the retailers themselves as such claims can be considered vague (Taufique *et al.* 2014).

That is what is illustrated through the quote above. When the retailers are not using standardised messages, the consumers sometimes perceive it difficult to understand the messages, and sometimes they might even consider it insidious. Interestingly though, was that the consumers distrusting the messages would not immediately have a negative attitude towards the product being marketed through the label, even if they did not trust the label. Many of the consumers stated that the sustainability-labels would not solely influence their perceptions of trust in the sustainable characteristics of the product. Also, other materialities such as the in-store environment, the other products in the store, and the size of the retailer, could influence the perceived truth and thereby usefulness of the label. Many of the consumers stated that, if the overall operations of the retailers were characterised by a concern for sustainable development, the label would be considered more meaningful and useful. That is illustrated through the quotes below.

> “The label can be trustworthy, but then I do not think that the label itself affects the trustworthiness. I mean, I rather think it is the retailers and their reputation of how they do things that creates the feelings of trustworthiness.” (Andreas)

> “If you enter an H&M store it feels like `Buy all that you see´. It is almost like the store is throwing up their stuff on you, whereas if you enter Naturkompaniet or similar it is much more moderate, it is much more selected, and it is not the same variety.” (Rikard)

When considering the size of the retailer as an influencer of perceived trustworthiness, there were split opinions of which size would be most likely as united with trustworthy labels. As the following quotes illustrate, the consumers either trusted the big chain-store retailers, or the small, independent retailers most. The argument for the former was that big retailers “have more eyes on them”, whereas the main argument for the latter was that the smaller retailers easier can control the entire supply chain.

> "I think that the bigger retailers cheat less. They cannot take the risk, with shareholders and everything. They probably have to keep it very strict. [...] I believe that the smaller brands probably can cheat a bit more." (Fredrik)

> "They [the big chain-store retailers] cannot even decide how the clothes are produced, because they are just telling another company in the third world, like `Can you produce this and this for us?´, and then they have no say in whatsoever how people are treated there." (Amelie)

Altogether, most of the interviewed consumers described the use of sustainability-labels as a potential way for the fashion retailers to increase their competitiveness and thereby their profits. Thereby, the findings by Fuentes (2014a), concerning moralities as being commercialised, appear as rather applicable also when considering sustainability-labelled fashion products. The study by Fuentes (2014a) had a somewhat different approach than this thesis, as he studied green products and focused on various marketing practices in connection to such products from a socio-material practice approach. However, considering the ways that the consumers interviewed for this thesis relate to the sustainability-labels within fashion retail, the notion of commercialised moralities appears to have a role to play. The consumers described the label as a marketing tool for the retailers, through which they seek to increase their sales. At the same time, the presence of the labels was described as making most of the consumers feel good, as the label works as an indication of good choices. Some consumers also considered the labels as a way to less bad conscience, which illustrates how the moral compasses of the consumers can be targeted through the labels. Morally targeted or not, though, the consumers all appeared to think positive of the labels in theory, but when they described how they evaluate products prior to purchase, the label as such did not appear as the main influencer. Also, even though not all consumers had described themselves as particularly well-informed and knowledgeable of sustainability-related issues within the fashion industry, most of them still stated that they have their own strategies for acting as sustainably as possible. Therefore, the sustainability of a product was not considered as solely understood based on the label and its presence. The consumers appeared to use other strategies, similar those suggested by Fuentes (2014b), for shopping sustainably.

4.2.3. Evaluating fashion products without the use of a label

Findings from prior research has illustrated that uncertainty of whether a difference will be made from engaging in, for instance, green shopping practices, may decrease the likelihood for such engagement (Johnstone & Tan 2015). Also, perceived scepticism has in prior research emerged as a potential barrier to sustainable shopping (McNeill & Moore 2015). However, the consumers interviewed for this thesis appeared to use strategies for making sustainable choices, which are not directly based on the information

that the retailers provide. Thereby, even though they to some extent were doubting the information conveyed through the labels, that did not appear as crucial for their shopping choices. Many of the consumers, regardless of level of commitment and competence in the matter, appeared to use evaluations based on different product attributes when determining whether to purchase a product.

Instead of being guided by sustainability-labels and their claims, and using them as a main strategy for making good and sustainable choices, the consumers appeared to be guided by other attributes. The *appearance* of the product appeared as the first attribute that the consumers pay attention to when shopping for fashion, but when going deeper into the evaluating of whether the product is worth purchasing, other attributes appeared as more influencing. Fabric, or *material*, was by some of the consumers described as such an attribute, connected to aspects of comfort and durability. *Fit* was another attribute that was stressed by a greater number of the consumers. For those consumers, fit appeared to concern either the fit of the product on their own body, or the fit of the product with the other products in their wardrobes. Another attribute that appeared as closely connected to that of fit, was *function*. The consumers that considered function important, described the ability to use the product for, first and foremost, the intended purpose, but also in other contexts. For instance, some consumers stated that they prefer to purchase fashion products that last, and that also will be able to fill various functions throughout its lifetime. It was exemplified that a shirt that initially was used at the office, later can be used in the garden once it has fulfilled its function as business wear. By being able to use the product many times, and sometimes also in different contexts, the consumers prioritising function meant that they would not need to consume that much. As illustrated below, one of the consumer referred to that as *sustainability*.

> "Everything I buy, I prefer to use many times. That of course means that I buy less, and contribute less to the consumption. But first and foremost, that is sustainability for me." (Victor)

Two attributes that were stressed by all the interviewed consumers were those of *quality* and *price*. Some of the consumers appeared to be more concerned about quality, while most of the consumers appeared to consider their priorities of either quality or price as a matter of context and product type. Only one consumer considered price as a constant the top-priority, together with appearance, when shopping fashion products. That consumer preferred to purchase greater amounts of fashion, and therefore, price is an essential attribute. The attribute of quality could be considered as rather overarching, as the

consumers appeared to relate it to both durability and sustainability, and also to the other attributes of appearance, material, fit, and function. Price also appeared to have an overarching function connected to the other attributes, as those other attributes appeared to influence the willingness to pay a premium price. For instance, the better the fit and the higher the quality, and also the longer the expected use of the product, the more sense paying a bit extra appeared to make to the consumers.

Among the attributes that were most valued by the consumers, sustainability did not explicitly appear more than in few cases. Those consumers who stressed the importance of sustainable fashion products appeared to evaluate the degree of sustainability based on the attributes of material, quality, and function. Through the presence of those attributes, the consumers stated, it would be possible to evaluate and calculate the length of use. In that sense, the aspect of durability became translated into a matter of sustainability. Also, as illustrated through the quote below, the *feeling* of the product was stressed by some of the consumers, who meant that a product with a material that felt *authentic* would indicate sustainability.

"It feels real, it feels good, and it feels authentic." (Ingrid)

Attributes that are valued by consumers have been argued as essential to emphasise, when aiming to offer consumers information that is perceived as useful (Meise *et al.* 2014). It has also been suggested that consumers apply heuristics connected to specific attributes, when information needs to be substituted (Ritch 2015). In a similar vein, the consumers interviewed for this thesis revealed that they use valued attributes for applying strategies of product evaluation when information is either missing, not trusted, or not considered useful. Not all consumers appeared to apply such a strategy for a specific evaluation of the *sustainable* characteristics of the products, but those consumers who considered sustainable product choices essential, tended to use the same attributes that were used by the other consumers for evaluation: quality, material, and function. The overall purpose of using those attributes to evaluate sustainability appeared to be connected to the durability of the product. By purchasing a durable product, the consumers would be able to use the product for a longer time, and could thereby lower the number of consumed fashion products. Moreover, when considering these findings, they appear as consistent with the findings by Fuentes (2014b) concerning the use of strategies, techniques, and knowledge for managing the complexities related to green shopping of outdoor products. Each of the three attributes, here revealed as connected to the perceptions that consumers have of sustainability, can be considered a

technique for product evaluation, which in turn functions as the overarching strategy that also could be referred to as *heuristics* (Ritch 2015). Thereby, regardless of whether a sustainability-label is present or not, the consumers may find a way to evaluate whether a specific product qualify as a sustainable choice, or whether it simply makes sense to purchase that specific product – sustainable or not. Thus, when the consumers evaluate the products, they use competences that they already have, and connect those to the meanings they perceive in connection to specific product attributes. If the sustainability-label does not convey messages that reflect the competences and perceived meanings among the consumers, it might not succeed in being integrated in the shopping practices of the consumers. Thereby, the consumers might struggle with relating to sustainability-labels on fashion products.

4.3. The sustainability-label as an influencer for sustainable fashion shopping

The consumers, interviewed for this thesis, revealed different perceptions and understandings of sustainability. Through their descriptions, it was also evident that what they consider meaningful and easy to understand and relate to in one setting, can be perceived differently in another. Horne (2009) revealed the similar when emphasising eco-labels, and here, it was particularly visible when the consumers referred to sustainability-labels within the grocery store and compared those to the labels within the fashion store. Not only were the labels on groceries perceived as easier to understand, they also appeared as more meaningful to the consumers. Many of the consumers stated that it is easier to understand the labels on groceries as they tend to involve clearer information, and be a result of standardisations and regulations. Moreover, it was also revealed that such labels are easier to understand as they target the consumers themselves on a different level than the labels on fashion products do, which resembles with what has been stated by Ritch (2015) in prior research. All consumers stated that they are more aware about the health benefits of purchasing sustainable, and especially organic, food. Thereby, it makes more sense to them, and is perceived as more meaningful, to make sustainable choices in relation to groceries. Ritch (2015) has suggested that consumers might perceive difficulties in understanding why fashion production endangers sustainability. Here, in relation to fashion in a broader sense, that did not appear as the case. Rather, the consumers appeared to struggle with perceiving meaning, and understanding their personal benefits from choosing sustainable fashion products.

4.3.1. The complexity of becoming influenced to sustainable fashion shopping practices

When considering sustainable fashion, the consumers appeared to rather relate the benefits of such products to other aspects of sustainability, than to aspects directly concerning the consumers themselves.

Thus, the meaning of making such product choices, compared to choosing sustainable groceries, appeared as perceived rather differently. Instead of focusing on meaning connected to oneself and the own wellbeing, meaning in relation to sustainability-labelled fashion products mainly appeared as emotional or moral. Some consumers referred to *good feelings* when making sustainable choices, while others referred to their *obligations* of taking responsibility. There were also a few consumers who viewed making sustainable product choices, as a way for *clearing their consciences*. In contrast to that, two consumers stated that the labels rather give them *negative feelings* and increase their *bad conscience*, at least when they do not choose the labelled products. Altogether, most consumers stated that they have not come as far with making sustainable choices in the fashion store, as in the grocery store, even though they consider sustainable fashion somewhat appealing. Thereby, they appeared to perceive difficulties in ascribing meaning, strong enough for actions to be taken, to the labels put on fashion products.

When considering fashion products in a general sense, the consumers appeared to specifically ascribe meaning to six specific product attributes: appearance, material, quality, fit, function, and price. Prior research has suggested that appearance and function might be essential for consumers to be willing to choose sustainability-labelled products, and to be steered towards more sustainable fashion shopping (Clancy, Fröling & Peters 2015). That appeared as the case also for the consumers interviewed for this thesis. Many of the consumers struggled with viewing sustainability-labelled products as involving desirable aspects of the attributes of appearance, fit, and function. That is illustrated by the following quote. However, the conducted observations revealed that sustainability-labelled products are available in various shapes, colours, and materials. Though, as described in the first section of this chapter, the labelled products tended to be mixed with the other products in the stores subject to observation. Therefore, only when randomly encountering those products, if not actively searching for them, consumer would reach an understanding of what kinds of sustainable product options are available. To increase the potential for consumers to come across such products, other materialities in the store can be helpful. As suggested by Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016), signs and store layout can be considered as sustainability service in-store, promoting sustainable consumption. Moreover, availability of sustainable alternatives has in prior research been stressed as crucial for sustainable shopping (Hiller Connell 2010). Altogether, the perceptions of availability, both in a more general sense as availability in the store, and in more specific sense as of products with desired attributes, has been revealed as crucial.

> "I have pretty neutral clothes and then there is not much to choose among. I do not know, it feels like they want to do it with such an environmental emphasis so that that it really is visible, and then it is beige. There might also be those brands that are making the kinds of clothes that I buy, but I have not seen them. Because most often when I see an environmental label there is so much `environment´ so I do not think it looks good." (Fredrik)

Knowledge has in turn been considered essential for taking action and practicing a practice (Warde 2005). Simply providing consumers with information, though, may not be enough for the consumers to develop knowledge. As revealed through this thesis, and as stated in prior research, it is essential that consumers understand the information that they are provided with (Salaün & Flores 2001). However, when the purpose of information – here in the shape of sustainability-labels – is to influence practice, more than understanding and competence might be essential. As, for example, McNeill and More (2015) has stated, the most concerned consumers are those that are most likely to engage in sustainable consumption. Thus, perceiving concern for sustainability-related issues, and thereby meaning of making sustainable choices, may be essential for such choices to be made and for sustainable fashion shopping to be practiced.

4.3.2. Considering the integration of practice elements to understand the influence from sustainability-labels

The element of material has been described as able to be physically transported (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), and sustainability-labels are an example of this, as they can be found in different stores, in different shapes, and to different extents. The labels may also travel between industries, which was revealed through the comparisons between the food and the fashion industry, which was made by the consumers interviewed for this thesis. Considering the expressed differences from a practice theory perspective, in which the material and the other practice elements are assumed to remain rather stable (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), the practice of shopping is what may change. Moreover, as the materiality of the label remain rather similar from context to context, differences in competence and meaning related to the labels and their contexts may be what makes grocery and fashion shopping being practiced differently in terms of sustainable choices.

Meaning has been described as able to both change and travel fast, whereas it might be more difficult for know-how to travel, unless certain competence for transporting this know-how already exist (Shove,

Pantzar & Watson 2012). The difficulties in transferring competence were revealed through many of the descriptions by the interviewed consumers, and those difficulties appeared as connected to difficulties in perceiving meaning. The consumers did, as mentioned, describe that they struggle with understanding their direct benefits from choosing sustainable fashion products, and thereby, the perceived meaning of making such choices appeared as rather absent. The consumers also described the presence of different labels with different claims as confusing. Labels with self-declared claims have in prior research been considered a way for retailers to increase their market shares through sustainability attributes that differentiate their products (Chkanikova & Lehner 2015). That was not revealed as the case in this thesis, as many of the consumers appeared to consider the information of standardised labels, based on regulations, as more motivating to take part of. Also, when comparing the fashion labels to those within the grocery store, many of the consumers considered the latter easier to understand due to more standardised labels, which also tends to be rather similar regardless of grocery store visited. Thereby, the consumers appeared to consider sustainability-labels on groceries as more useful, trustworthy, and meaningful than those on fashion products. The confusion that the labels on fashion products appeared to involve, may create difficulties in properly applying the know-how and meaning that the consumers perceive in more established settings, such as that of the grocery store. Therefore, the consumers wanting to make sustainable choices of fashion products, may perceive a need to apply other strategies instead.

As stated by Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012), each of the three elements of practice may remain inactive until they are brought into living practice, together with the other two elements. Based on the analysis of this thesis, that might be the case for sustainability-labels on fashion products. The element of material is present in the shape of sustainability-labels, and in the shape of other materialities that are used for marketing the labelled products. Still, there might be an absence of competence and perceived meaning connected to those labels, and thus, they might not succeed to influence more sustainable product choices, and neither to lead to more sustainable shopping practices. Moreover, as the conclusions of this thesis has revealed, and as has been implied by Schatzki (2001b): consumers do what makes sense to them to do. Hence, for materialities in the shape of sustainability-labels on fashion products, to influence fashion product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices, the consumers might need to both have the competence of using such labels and perceiving them as meaningful. Otherwise, the consumers might use other strategies for evaluating products, and such strategies might not necessarily pay attention to aspects of sustainability.

5. Concluding discussion on the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

This chapter serves as the concluding discussion of this thesis. The chapter is initiated with a summary of the conclusions from the previous analysis, which serves to answer the two research questions. Thereafter, the discussion is initiated, involving the theoretical, managerial, and societal contributions and implications of the thesis. As those appear as a rather linked, they are presented in connection to each other. Lastly, some concluding remarks on this thesis study are presented.

5.1. Summarising the conclusions on the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

The aim of this thesis has been to attain an understanding of how consumers relate to sustainability-labels on fashion products, in terms of perceived meaning and competence for using the information conveyed. From such an understanding, the aim has also been to reach an understanding of how sustainability-labels may be used for influencing product choices that are part of sustainable fashion shopping practices. To conclude the findings from the previous chapter, and to answer the research questions that are based on the aim of this thesis, consumers may perceive difficulties in relating to sustainability-labels on fashion products, as they do not fully understand their own direct benefits from choosing sustainability-labelled fashion products. All the interviewed consumers expressed concern for sustainability-related issues, but for most of them, their concern in connection to the issues related to the fashion industry did not appear as strong enough for a specific relation with sustainability-labels to be established. Thereby, when applying a lens of practice theory (Shove & Pantzar 2005; Shove *et al.* 2007; Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012), the findings indicate that consumers do not always have enough competence, and do not always perceive enough meaning, to act based on the materiality of sustainability-labels. For consumers to be influenced to more sustainable product choices, and thereby to engage in more sustainable fashion shopping practices, the labels might need to emphasise benefits connected to those attributes that are specifically important to the consumers: appearance, material, quality, fit, function, and price.

What the findings of this thesis has revealed is that more than sustainability-labels and sustainability attributes might be required for consumers to be attracted by the products that are claimed to be sustainable. Clancy, Fröling and Peter (2015) have stated that clothes with a longer life span, that both fulfil needs for function and identity creation, might be what is essential for consumers to be steered

towards more sustainable clothing consumption. The findings of this thesis points in a similar direction, as the attributes that were revealed as important, can be connected to both the life span of the product, and aspects of function and identity creation. Moreover, materialities such as signs and store layout have in prior research been considered as part of a supportive socio-material landscape, which provides the consumers with a service that enables sustainable choices (Fuentes & Fredriksson 2016). Also in those regards, the findings of this thesis points in a similar direction. Signs and product placement in-store appeared as materialities that might help consumers realise the availability of sustainable product options, and thereby steer them towards more sustainable fashion shopping practices. The presence of such materialities might be particularly important when the consumers doubt the availability of sustainable options with desired attributes, such as appearance and fit.

Prior research has indicated that labels may function best as part of a strategy (Horne 2009), and that can be considered as illustrated also through the findings of thesis. For a label to succeed in conveying meaningful and useful messages, the label might require support from other materialities. Support from other materialities in the in-store environment, and support from other attributes that are considered desirable may be essential, and so also support from an argument that targets the consumer on a personal level. Only when the labels are discovered, and when they convey messages that relates to the consumers themselves and what they desire, the consumers might perceive the understanding and meaning that is essential for them to be influenced to engage in sustainable fashion shopping practices.

5.2. Discussing the conclusions to understand the role of sustainability-labels in sustainable fashion shopping

Prior research, with a practice approach to studying the promotion of sustainable consumption, have emphasised both staff and material as enabling the promotion (Lehner 2015; Fuentes & Fredriksson 2016). Here, the emphasis has solely been on the aspect of material, and thereby, the thesis has not contributed with a socio-material approach to studying sustainability-labels. The reason was an underlying view of the label as constituting a service, and an interest in studying how the labels succeed in providing service and marketing products without the persuasive power of a salesperson. As the findings might would have appeared differently if there would have been a simultaneous focus on the staff, the thesis topic can be considered as a far from fully studied. Still, there are several contributions that has been made through this thesis study, with implications for Service Management in both theory and practice, and for the society as such.

5.2.1. From theoretical contributions to implications of how to manage sustainability marketing

The academic discipline of Service Management has been described as involving a view on service firms as co-creating value with consumers (Grönroos 2008). When viewing the sustainability-labels, or other communication tools in-store that might contribute to the value creation, as part of the service provision of the retailers, implications for the discipline of Service Management emerge. As the analysis of this thesis has revealed, simply offering labels might not be a full solution for informing consumers and influencing them to make sustainable choices. The messages of the labels are crucial, if the consumers should be able to relate to the labels. Also, for the consumers to even discover the labels, a supportive retail landscape, similar that described by Fuentes and Fredriksson (2016) may be crucial. Moreover, the findings of this thesis illustrate what Grönroos (2008) has stressed: to be willing to purchase, a good impression of the firm through each interaction, is essential. As the sustainability-label can be considered a way to interact with the consumers, creating a good impression also through the label might be essential. As revealed, targeting attributes that are considered desirable could be one way to improve that impression. Also, targeting the consumers on a more personal level could be necessary. Hence, the studying of sustainability-labels on fashion products has contributed with increased knowledge about service marketing in connection to sustainability, within an industry that is considered to involve severe issues related to sustainability (e.g. Jung & Jin 2014).

Moreover, this thesis has offered a contribution to the field of marketing, and specifically to that of marketing-as-practice. What needs to be noted, though, is that this thesis has paid attention to a practice, and specifically to an action embedded in that practice, that can be a potential result of the marketing practices of retailers. Thereby, attention has not been directed to the marketing practice *per se*, but the findings of this thesis have contributed with practical implications concerning how fashion retailers, and other retailers, can develop the labels that they are offering. For instance, attributes of sustainability may not succeed when operating alone, and therefore, other attributes that are valued by the consumers might be necessary to take into consideration when the messages of the labels are shaped. The consumers, interviewed for this thesis, revealed that six attributes were of specific importance in relation to fashion products, but in connection to other products, other attributes might be more valued. Hence, retailers could benefit from getting to know their target groups in terms of what those groups value. That might in turn, apart from influencing sustainable choices, also facilitate the co-production of value as suggested by

Grönroos (2008), and thereby, both the consumers and the retailers could benefit from the presence of labels and other such material.

By using a practice theory approach, studies on the use of sustainability-related marketing material can lead to more profound insights being reached. That has appeared as the case with this thesis, as greater insights into how consumers understand and potentially use sustainability-labels have been reached. Thereby, prior research conducted from attitudinal and behavioural perspectives (e.g. Horne 2009; Taufique *et al.* 2014; Taufique, Vocino & Polonsky 2016) has been extended with insights into how consumers make sense of the emphasised marketing material, and how that sense-making can influence actions, and thereby practice. Put differently, the practice theory approach has proven to offer a combination of insights that other research approaches, such as those emphasising attitude or behaviour, might not succeed in offering on their own. Here, one way of marketing sustainable fashion products has been emphasised, but the applied research approach would much likely be suitable also when studying other products and other aspects of marketing. The findings concerning the difficulties in relating to sustainability-labelled products and being influenced by the labels, due to an inability to understand the own, direct benefits from choosing such products, could likely be transferred to other contexts. It is most likely that similar findings would appear in connection to other products, for which lack of sustainable characteristics would not be considered as directly endangering the personal health. Such products could potentially be other discretionary products, such as electronics.

5.2.2. The role of sustainability marketing in a sustainable society

This thesis has been conducted with a view on fashion as an overall notion for clothing products, including both fast and slow fashion, and everything in-between. However, when listening to the consumers describing their experiences of sustainability-labels within the fashion retail industry, most of them appeared to stress aspects of slow fashion. With an emphasis on attributes such as those of quality and function, the findings of this thesis could be considered as more applicable to the notion of slow fashion (Jung & Jin 2014), than to that of fast fashion (Joy *et al.* 2012). With this thesis, there is no suggested explanation why, but the fact that prior research has stressed the difficulties for fashion retailers to combine the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability with economic sustainability (Pookulangara & Shephard 2013), makes it understandable. Producing at low costs in a pace that is compatible with that of fast fashion (Joy *et al.* 2012; Henninger, Alevizou & Oates 2016), might not be compatible with a finished product that is labelled as sustainable. However, there are still products in the

stores of fast fashion retailers that are labelled as sustainable, wherefore it has been considered essential to study the use of sustainability-labels in all kinds of fashion stores. Also, as consumers in general have been considered as able to, for instance, safeguard the environment from further pollution through their consumption choices (e.g. Testa *et al.* 2015), their consumption choices can be considered as important – regardless where and what they shop.

By studying labels as emphasising various dimensions of sustainability, instead of simply the environmental dimension, new insights have emerged. Something that were not extensively emphasised in the analysis, but still can be considered as essential to stress, was that some consumers appeared to equate the overarching notion of sustainability, as suggested by Danciu (2013), with that of *environmentally friendliness*. When describing environmentally friendliness, many of the consumers tended to include aspects of the social dimension, and some consumers appeared to struggle with the meaning of the notion of *sustainability*. Hence, even though the consumers might recall seeing *green* labels in the stores of the retailers, they could still refer to its content in a manner that is congruent with the notion of sustainability. However, that might be an issue when the label simply involves either environmental claims or social claims, and not a combination of them. Therefore, the findings of this thesis indicate that there still is more to explore in terms of how consumers interpret the notions of sustainability and environmentally friendliness, and what those interpretations do for how marketing and services related to sustainability succeed in being properly understood by the consumers. Also, the way that sustainability is interpreted, might have implications for the societal development at large. For sustainable development to take place in the society, it might be essential that the citizens of the society know what *sustainable development* means and what actions to be taken for such development. Sustainability-labels on fashion products are only one way to inform consumers about sustainable efforts, but if the retailers succeed in creating awareness at least in those regards, one step can be taken towards a development that is beneficial for the society at large. That is, if the information conveyed through the label succeeds in being understood and perceived as meaningful, and thereby manage to influence sustainable shopping practices.

5.3. Concluding remarks

Sustainability-labels are simply one aspect that can be connected to sustainable shopping practices. If the aim is to understand the practice of sustainable shopping *per se*, it is necessary to study the practice in connection to both sustainability-labels, and all other aspects that are present. Due to limitations in both time, and in the pre-understanding which would be necessary for such an extensive study, this thesis has

simply revolved around the sustainability-label as a materiality that *might* lead forth to actions embedded in sustainable fashion shopping practices. Moreover, future studies within this field may benefit from using participant observations, which has not been employed in this thesis study. By investing the time required for successful participant observations, greater insights might be reached in terms of how the labels actually are used in practice.

As this thesis has involved subjective and interpretive streaks, the findings should not be considered as definite in any sense. Rather, the findings should be viewed as an indication of what might need to be studied more extensively, in order to get closer to the answer to the conundrum of sustainable development within retail. With this thesis, a step towards a greater understanding of how sustainability-labels are used and made sense of in connection to fashion products, has been taken. Still, there is more to explore in those regards, but for now, consumer descriptions and mechanical observations in connection to practice theory serve as the basis for the understanding of how sustainability-labels on clothing products are used, made sense of, and potentially influencing sustainable fashion shopping practices.

References

Anderson Hudson, L. and Ozanne, J. L. (1988). Alternative Ways of Seeking Knowledge in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (4), pp. 508-521.

Arnould, E. J. and Wallendorf, M. (1994). Market-Oriented Ethnography: Interpretation Building and Marketing Strategy Formulation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31 (4), pp. 484-504.

Auger, P., Devinney, T. M., Louviere, J. J. and Burke, P. F. (2008). Do social product features have value to consumers? *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 25 (3), pp. 183-191.

Bratt, C., Hallstedt, S., Robért, K-H., Broman, G. and Oldmark, J. (2011). Assessment of eco-labelling criteria development from a strategic sustainability perspective. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 19 (14), pp. 1631-1638.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder* [Social Research Methods], 2nd edition. Stockholm: Liber.

Castaldo, S., Perrini, F., Misani, N. and Tencati, A. (2009). The Missing Link Between Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Trust: The Case of Fair Trade Products. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84 (1), pp. 1-15.

Chen, H. and Burns, L. D. (2006). Environmental Analysis of Textile Products. *Clothing & Textiles Research Journal*, 24 (3), pp. 248-261.

Chkanikova, O. and Lehner, M. (2015). Private eco-brands and green market development: towards new forms of sustainability governance in the food retailing. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 107, November, pp. 74-84.

Clancy, G., Fröling, M. and Peter, G. (2015). Ecolabels as drivers of clothing design. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 99, pp. 345-353.

Connolly, J. and Prothero, A. (2003). Sustainable consumption: consumption, consumers and the commodity discourse. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 6 (4), pp. 275-291.

Corradi, G., Gherardi, S. and Verzelloni, L. (2010), Through the practice lens: where is the bandwagon of practice-based studies heading?. Management Learning, 41 (3), pp. 265-283.

Crang, M. and Cook, I. (2007). *Doing Ethnographies*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Danciu, V. (2013). The contribution of sustainable marketing to sustainable development. *Management & Marketing*, 8 (2), pp. 385-400.

Davis, F. (1992). *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Eryuruk, S. H. (2012). Greening the Textile and Clothing Industry. *Fibres & Textiles in Eastern Europe*, 20 (6), pp. 22-27.

Fuentes, C. (2014a). Green materialities: marketing and the socio-material construction of green products. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 23 (2), pp. 105-116.

Fuentes, C. (2014b). Managing green complexities: consumers' strategies and techniques for greener shopping. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38 (5), pp. 485-492.

Fuentes, C. (2015). How green marketing works: Practices, materialities, and images. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 31 (2), pp. 192-205.

Fuentes, C. and Fredriksson, C. (2016). Sustainability service in-store: Service work and the promotion of sustainable consumption. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 44 (5), pp. 492-507.

Grönroos, C. (2008). *Service management och marknadsföring: kundorienterat ledarskap i tjänstekonkurrensen* [Service Management and Marketing: Customer Management in Service Competition], 2nd edition. Malmö: Liber.

Halkier, B. and Jensen, I. (2011). Methodological challenges in using practice theory in consumption research. Examples from a study on handling nutritional contestations of food consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11 (1), pp. 101-123.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: principles in practice*, 3rd edition. New York: Routledge.

Hargreaves, T. (2011). Practice-ing behaviour change: Applying social practice theory to pro-environmental behaviour change. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11 (1), pp. 79-99.

Henninger, C. E., Alevizou, P. J. and Oates, C. J. (2016). What is sustainable fashion? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 20 (4), pp. 400-416.

Hiller Connell, K. Y. (2010). Internal and external barriers to eco-conscious apparel acquisition. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34 (3), pp. 279-286.

H&M. (2016). *H&M conscious actions: Sustainability report 2015*. Available at: http://sustainability.hm.com/content/dam/hm/about/documents/masterlanguage/CSR/2015%20Sustainability%20report/HM_SustainabilityReport_2015_final_FullReport.pdf. (Accessed: 25 February 2017).

Horne, R. E. (2009). Limits to labels: The role of eco-labels in the assessment of product sustainability and routes to sustainable consumption. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 33 (2), pp. 175-182.

ISO. (2017). *ISO/TC 207/SC 3 Environmental labelling*. Available at: http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards_development/list_of_iso_technical_committees/iso_technical_committee.htm?commid=54836. (Accessed: 26 February 2017).

Joergens, C. (2006). Ethical fashion: myth or future trend? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 10 (3), pp. 360-371.

Johnstone, M. and Tan, L. P. (2015). Exploring the Gap Between Consumers' Green Rhetoric and Purchasing Behaviour. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 132 (2), pp. 311-328.

Joy, A., Sherry Jr, J. F., Venkatesh, A., Wang, J. and Chan, R. (2012). Fast Fashion, Sustainability, and the Ethical Appeal of Luxury Brands. *Fashion Theory*, 16 (3), pp. 273-296.

Jung, S. and Jin, B. (2014). A theoretical investigation of slow fashion: sustainable future of the apparel industry. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38 (5), pp. 510-519.

Lehner, M. (2015). Translating sustainability: the role of the retail store. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 43 (4/5), pp. 386-402.

Leire, C. and Thidell, Å. (2005). Product-related environmental information to guide consumer purchases – a review and analysis of research on perceptions, understanding and use among Nordic consumers. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 13 (10), pp. 1061-1070.

Lim, B. C. and Chung, C. M. Y. (2009). The impact of word-of-mouth communication on attribute evaluation. *Journal of Business Research*, 64 (1), pp. 18-23.

May, T. (2011). *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*, 4th edition. Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill Education.

McNeill, L. and Moore, R. (2015). Sustainable fashion consumption and the fast fashion conundrum: fashionable consumers and attitudes to sustainability in clothing choice. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39 (3), pp. 212-222.

Meise, J. N., Rudolph, T., Kenning, P. and Phillips, D.M. (2014). Feed them facts: Value perceptions and consumer use of sustainability-related product information. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21 (4), pp. 510-519.

Moon, S-J., Costello, J. P. and Koo, D-M. (2017). The impact of consumer confusion from eco-labels on negative WOM, distrust, and dissatisfaction. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36 (2), pp. 246-271.

Ong, B. K. (2012). Grounded Theory Method (GTM) and the Abductive Research Strategy (ARS): a critical analysis of their differences. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 15 (5), pp. 417-432.

O'Rourke, D. and Ringer, A. (2016). The Impact of Sustainability Information on Consumer Decision Making. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 20 (4), pp. 882-892.

Perera, C., Auger, P. and Klein, J. (2016). Green Consumption Practices Among Young Environmentalists: A Practice Theory Perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, DOI: 10.1007/s10551-016-3376-3. (Accessed: 15 February 2017).

Pookulangara, S. and Shephard, A. (2013). Slow fashion movement: understanding consumer perceptions – an exploratory study. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 20 (2), pp. 200-206.

Prahalad, C. K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creating unique value with customers. *Strategy & Leadership*, 32 (3), pp. 4-9.

Reckwitz, A. (2002). Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5 (2), pp. 243-263.

Rezabakhsh, B., Bornemann, D., Hansen, U. and Schrader, U. (2006). Consumer Power: A Comparison of the Old Economy and the Internet Economy. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 29 (1), pp. 3-36.

Ritch, E. L. (2015). Consumers interpreting sustainability: moving beyond food to fashion. International *Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 43 (12), pp. 1162-1181.

Ryen, A. (2004). *Kvalitativ intervju – från vetenskapsteori till fältstudier* [Qualitative interview – from theory of science to field studies]. Malmö: Liber.

Røpke, I. (2009). Theories of practice - New Inspiration for ecological economic studies on consumption. *Ecological Economics*, 68 (10), pp. 2490-2497.

Salaün, Y. and Flores, K. (2001). Information quality: meeting the needs of the consumer. *International Journal of Information Management*, 21 (1), pp. 21-37.

Schatzki, T. R. (1997). Practices and Actions: A Wittgensteinian Critique of Bourdieu and Giddens. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 27 (3), pp. 283-308.

Schatzki, T. R. (2001a). Introduction: Practice theory. In Schatzki, T. R., Knorr-Cetina, K. and von Savigny, E. (Eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London: Routledge, pp. 10-23. E-book.

Schatzki, T. R. (2001b). Practice mind-ed orders. In Schatzki, T. R., Knorr-Cetina, K. and von Savigny, E. (Eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London: Routledge, pp. 50-63. E-book.

Shaw, D., Hogg, G., Wilson, E., Shui, E. and Hassan, L. (2006). Fashion victim: the impact of fair trade concerns on clothing choice. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 14 (4), pp. 427-440.

Shen, B., Zheng, J., Chow, P. and Chow, K. (2014). Perception of fashion sustainability in online community. *The Journal of The Textile Institute*, 105 (9), pp. 971-979.

Shove, E. and Pantzar, M. (2005). Consumers, Producers and Practices: Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5 (1), pp. 43-64.

Shove, E., Watson, M., Hand, M., and Ingram, J. (2007). *The design of everyday life*. Oxford, New York: Berg.

Shove, E., Pantzar, M. and Watson, M. (2012). *The dynamics of social practice: everyday life and how it changes*. London: SAGE.

Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research*, 4th edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Spaargaren, G. (2011). Theories of practices: Agency, technology, and culture. Exploring the relevance of practice theories for the governance of sustainable consumption practices in the new world-order. *Global Environmental Change*, 21 (3), pp. 813-822.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Belmont: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning.

Sztompka, P. (2008). The Focus on Everyday Life: a New Turn in Sociology. *European Review*, 16 (1), pp. 1-15.

Taufique, K. M. R., Siwar, C., Talib, B., Sarah, F. H. and Chamhuri, N. (2014). Synthesis of Constructs for Modeling Consumers' Understanding and Perception of Eco-Labels. *Sustainability*, 6 (4) pp. 2176-2200.

Taufique, K. M. R., Vocino, A. and Polonsky, M. J. (2016). The influence of eco-label knowledge and trust on pro-environmental consumer behaviour in an emerging market. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, DOI: 10.1080/0965254X.2016.1240219. (Accessed: 15 February 2017).

Testa, F., Iraldo, F., Vaccari, A. and Ferrari, E. (2015). Why Eco-labels can be Effective Marketing Tools: Evidence from a Study on Italian Consumers. *Business Strategy & the Environment*, 24 (4), pp. 252-265.

Warde, A. (2005). Consumption and Theories of Practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5 (2), pp. 131-153.

Yan, R., Hyllegard, K. H. and Blaesi, L. F. (2012). Marketing eco-fashion: The influence of brand name and message explicitness. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 18 (2), pp. 151-168.

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Warm up & background questions:

1. Har du lust att börja med att berätta lite om dig själv?

- Finns det någonting som skulle säga att du brinner för?

[Would you mind starting by telling me a little bit about yourself?

- Is there anything that you would say that you are passionate about?]

2. Hur skulle du beskriva en typisk shoppingtur för dig när du handlar sällanköpsvaror? Hur gör du normalt sett?

- Hur skulle du beskriva dig själv som konsument?
- Hur brukar du fatta beslut när du ska köpa någonting?
- Skiljer det sig beroende på vad det är du ska köpa?
- Hur ser du på ”shopping”?

[How would you describe a typical shopping trip for you, when you are shopping discretionary products? How do you usually do?

- How would you describe yourself as a consumer?
- How do you tend to make decisions when you are about to purchase something?
- Does it differ between different kinds of products?
- How do you view “shopping”?]

3. Hur skulle du beskriva dina preferenser när det gäller klädprodukter och andra klädrelaterade produkter, t.ex. skor och väskor?

- Vilken av [nämnda preferenser] skulle du säga är viktigast för dig?
  - Nu när du har tänkt efter lite, kommer du på något mer som är viktigt för dig när du shoppar klädprodukter och ska fatta eventuella köpbeslut?

[How would you describe your preferences concerning clothes and other fashion-related products, such as shoes and bags?

- Which of [mentioned preferences] would you say is most important to you?
- Now, after some consideration, do you come up with anything else that is important to you when you shop fashion products and potentially are to make purchase-decisions?]

4. Har du hört talas om begrepp såsom *hållbar konsumtion* och *miljövänlig konsumtion*? Om ja: Vad får de begreppen dig att tänka på?

[Have you heard about concepts such as *sustainable consumption* and *environmentally friendly consumption*? If yes: What do those concepts make you think of?]

5. Hur tänker du kring den information som klädhandlare ibland erbjuder kring deras ansträngningar för en hållbar utveckling?

[How do you think of the information that fashion retailers sometimes offer, in relation to their efforts for sustainable development?]

The consumer's current relation to sustainability-related issues and labels

6. Har du någonsin sett hållbarhetsetiketter på klädprodukter? Om ja: Kan du berätta om den senaste gången då du såg en produkt med en sådan etikett? Om nej: Kan du minnas om du sett en sådan etikett i ett annat sammanhang? Om ja: Kan du berätta om den senaste gången du såg en sådan etikett?

- Fick du syn på produkten eller etiketten först?
- Hur uppfattade du etikettens budskap?
- Vilken roll hade etiketten när du utvärderade produktens egenskaper?
- Kan du beskriva fler situationer då du har sett hållbarhetsetiketter på klädprodukter?

[Have you ever seen sustainability-labels in connection to fashion products? If yes: Could you tell me about the last time you saw a product which such a label? If no: Can you remember if you have seen such a label in another context? If so: Could you tell me about the last time you saw such a label?

- Did you see the product or the label first?
- How did you perceive the message of the label?
- What role did the label have when you were evaluating the characteristics of the product?
- Could you describe more situations when you have seen sustainability-labels on fashion products?]

7. Om du vore osäker på den information som förmedlades via en hållbarhetsrelaterad etikett i samband med att du ska fatta ett köpbeslut, hur skulle du hantera det hela?

[If you were unsure about the information conveyed through a sustainability-label, when you were about to make a purchase-decision, how would you deal with the situation?]

The consumer's general reflection on sustainability-labels and sustainable information:

8. Nu efter att ha reflekterat lite, hur skulle du beskriva dina övergripande tankar kring användningen av hållbarhetsrelaterade etiketter bland detaljhandlare som säljer klädprodukter?

- Hur upplever du att du kan använda dem?
- Vilken roll har de i förhållande till andra sätt att informera dig som konsument?
- Hur ser du på etiketterna hos klädhandlare jämfört med etiketterna hos handlare inom till exempel livsmedelsbranschen?

[Now, after some reflection, how would you describe your overall thoughts on the use of sustainability-labels among fashion retailers?

- How do you perceive your ability to use them?
- What role do they have in relation to other ways of informing you as a consumer?
- How do you view the labels among the fashion retailers in comparison to the labels among other retailers, such as food retailers?]

9. Hur skulle du föredra att bli informerad om klädprodukters hållbara karaktärsdrag?

- Skiljer det sig från hur du skulle fördra att bli informerad om andra produkttyper?
- Om du blev informerad på det sätt som du hade önskat, hur tror du att dina val av klädprodukter hade sett ut?

[How would you prefer to be informed about the sustainable characteristics of a fashion product?

- Does it differ from how you would prefer to be informed about other kinds of products?
- If you would be informed in the way that you prefer, how do you think your product choices would look?

10. Slutligen, är det någonting du skulle vilja tillägga eller utveckla?

[Finally, is there anything you would like to add or develop?]

Appendix 2: Informational letter to potential informants

Hej,

Jag skriver just nu min masteruppsats med fokus på hållbarhet i relation till klädprodukter och vänder mig till dig som konsument, då jag skulle vilja intervjua dig. Syftet med uppsatsen är att få ökad förståelse kring hur hållbarhetsetiketter på klädprodukter används och uppfattas av konsumenter, samt hur etiketterna kan influera konsumenter till att engagera sig i hållbar klädshopping. Jag är därför intresserad av dina tankar och erfarenheter av sådana etiketter, oavsett du kommit i kontakt med dem eller ej. Deltagandet i intervjun är frivilligt, vilket även innebär att intervjun kan avbrytas när som helst och likaså att intervjun kan dras tillbaka i efterhand om så önskas. Ditt deltagande är anonymt och resultaten behandlas konfidentiellt. Det du delar med dig av under intervjun kommer enbart att användas i den masteruppsats som avses, och du har dessutom möjlighet att ta del av intervjutranskriptet och den färdiga uppsatsen. På så vis kan du påverka uppsatsens innehåll även efter att intervjun är genomförd.

Vänligen kontakta mig enligt uppgifter nedan om du har möjlighet att delta, eller om du har några frågor.

[Hi,

I am currently writing my master thesis with an emphasis on sustainability in relation to fashion products, and I turn to you as a consumer as I wish to interview you. The aim of the thesis is to attain a greater understanding of how sustainability-labels on fashion products are understood and used by consumers, and how the labels may influence consumers to engage in sustainable fashion shopping. I am therefore interested in your thoughts and experiences concerning such labels, regardless of whether you have been in contact with such labels or not. The participation in the interview is voluntary and you can cancel the interview at any time, and withdraw the interview after it is completed if you wish. Your participation is anonymous and the results are treated confidentially. What you share during the interview, will only be used for the regarded master thesis, and you are also able to take part of the interview transcript and the finished thesis. In that way, you can influence the content of the thesis also after the interview is completed.

Please, use the contact details below to contact me if you are able to participate, or if you have any questions.]

Vänliga hälsningar/Kind regards,

My Lindersson

e-mail: mylindersson@hotmail.com

Skype: mylindersson