

# THE STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT: MASTER PAPERS

# SBM

STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT

MASTER PAPERS

**Anti-Consumerism in the Fashion Industry and its Influence on  
Brand Resonance**

*By:*

*Catharina Nilsson, Dajana Pjatakova, Sk Abtahiune Rashid*

Fourth Edition

Student Papers

2018  
September - October

# Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers

The Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers is essential reading for brand strategists in both private and public sector organisations, and academics in universities and business schools.

The papers are written by master student groups and follow an international journal format. The student groups selected the topics of their papers and provided updated and relevant insights into the strategic management of brands.

The mission of Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers is to “present and develop useful tools and theories for the application in practice of managing brands, and to forward the academic field of strategic brand management.”

The intent of the series is to bridge the gap between academic teaching and research.

The series is a result of co-creation between students and teachers in the course Strategic Brand Management (BUSN21 – 7.5 University Credit Points; 8 weeks 50% study time), part of the master program International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund School of Economics and Management, Sweden. The published papers represent the result of the intellectual work of students under supervision of the heads of course. The content of the papers is to be read as student reports albeit the journal format. The papers are free to download and should be cited following international conventions.

## Editors

Mats Urde

Associate Professor

Frans Melin

Assistant Professor

Heads of master course Strategic Brand Management (BUSN21), part of master program International Marketing and Brand Management.  
Lund School of Economics and Management



# **Anti-Consumerism in the Fashion Industry and its Influence on Brand Resonance**

*Catharina Nilsson, Dajana Pjatakova, Sk Abtahiune Rashid*

## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Anti-consumerism and sustainable fashion are two vital concepts that are prominent in society today, but have not been analyzed in terms of if they are a part of creating this brand resonance. A new framework, the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model, is introduced to determine if a sustainable brand is able to sustain long-term competitive advantages through enhancing brand resonance.

**Methodology:** Mixed method research using primarily qualitative data, through case studies and a questionnaire, with quantitative data to support qualitative results

**Findings:** The research conducted demonstrates that sustainable brands who promote this concept of anti-consumerism can enhance their brand resonance by adhering to the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model.

**Contribution:** This paper is one of the few to show the connection between sustainable fashion/anti-consumerism and brand resonance. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, the creation of our Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model is also the first conceptualization of what constitutes a sustainable brand and how a brand may enhance its brand resonance with no other similar models created before this study.

**Keywords:** sustainable fashion, sustainable brand, anti-consumerism, brand resonance, brand equity, Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model, CBBE pyramid, brand orientation, market orientation, Patagonia, Nudie Jeans, Uniqlo

**Paper type:** Research Paper

## **Introduction**

Throughout the world today, consumers have begun shifting their preferences from high consumption towards a more durable and sustainable approach, due to considerable efforts made by environmental companies and organizations. While the point is not that all consumers do not want to consume anymore, the mindset of owning and buying unnecessary items is starting to change. In a 2008 study conducted by the National Geographic Society and GlobScan on consumer choice and the environment across fourteen countries, consumers in each country “feel empowered when it comes to the

environment and are taking some action in their daily lives to reduce consumption and waste” (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2008). Additionally, “nearly one in four US adults now subscribes to a new set of values that typically includes ‘environmentalism, feminism, global issues and spiritual searching’” (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2008).

Organizations, especially those in the fashion industry, have had to find ways to adapt to this phenomenon. While many firms have realized that by integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their business models, they can sustain long-term competitive advantages, not as many have taken into account an anti-

consumerism approach. CSR is used most effectively when it is strategic, by “choosing a unique position – doing things differently from competitors in a way that lowers costs or better serves a particular set of customer needs” (Porter & Kramer, 2006). While this paper does not focus solely on CSR, it is apparent that sustainable fashion, in this case reducing, reusing, and recycling old garments, is an essential part of it. This has given rise to the circular economy, which is “an economic model based on resources’ conservation and healthy consumption behaviour” (Gheñța & Matei, 2018). One of the ways in which to truly achieve a circular business model is to try to extend the life cycles of products by repairing, upgrading, remanufacturing, or remarketing them (Gheñța & Matei, 2018). For example, three corporate brands who use this concept in their own business models are Patagonia, Uniqlo and Nudie Jeans. These companies have used their brands as strong forces behind this circular business concept, which has driven consumers to change their mindsets toward consumption. However, there seems to lack a connection between this concept of sustainable fashion and anti-consumerism with enhancing brand resonance in order to sustain brand loyalty, commitment, community and attachment.

The main aim of this paper is to explore if it is possible for a sustainable brand to enhance its brand resonance through promoting the sustainable fashion and anti-consumerism concepts. In order to explore this issue, this paper will illustrate how a new model, that focuses on sustainable brand stewardship, can enhance its brand resonance by analyzing three case studies: Patagonia, Uniqlo and Nudie Jeans.

## Literature Review

### *Brand-Market Orientation*

The brand-oriented approach illustrates that the brand acts as the main hub that the organization revolves around (Gromark & Melin, 2011). However, it is true that in taking this approach, brand equity is only produced when there are continued interactions with external and internal stakeholders (Gromark & Melin, 2011). Therefore, the hybrid brand-market approach also takes into consideration the importance that brand image plays on the perception of the brand (Urde, Baumgarth & Merilees, 2011). It is vital that a brand considers both “inside-out” and “outside-in” strategies so as to attract consumers through its core values and unique value proposition, but at the same time, considers consumers’ needs and wants (Urde, Baumgarth & Merilees, 2011).

In addition, a key element of market driving firms is using innovation to change consumer behaviors by creating a new want or a need that is not already present in the market (Tarnovskaya, Elg & Burt, 2008). The market driving approach has been a strategy used by successful global companies, such as Amazon, The Body Shop, and IKEA, which are characterized as strong brands in their respective markets, create a reputable brand image, and are able to sustain their growth across international markets (Tarnovskaya, Elg & Burt, 2008). Market driving has been viewed as either being a part of the existing market orientation theory as an emerging concept, while others see it as a completely new and different model altogether (Tarnovskaya, Elg & Burt, 2008). Therefore, firms that are both brand oriented and market oriented tend to exhibit the same characteristics of a market driving firm, due to the strong

emphasis placed on creating value for consumers by focusing on the firm's core competencies and capabilities.

Furthermore, an important element of a brand oriented organization is emotional branding, or seeking to connect with customers on a deeper level through its identity (Gobé, 2001). Strong brands contain this emotional component because they are able to create a community that believes in what the brand stands for, which emphasizes consumer loyalty and repeat purchase (Kapferer, 2012). Organizations that demonstrate emotional branding use intangible and tangible kernel, or core, values as guiding principles that will lead to emotional loyalty and engagement (Kapferer, 2012). In order to create a strong brand identity, companies need to produce a brand platform that crystalizes these core values, which should be valuable, communicable, unique, and difficult to imitate (Gromark & Melin, 2011).

### *Brand Equity*

Brand equity seeks to evaluate brand awareness, loyalty, market leadership, likeability, trustworthiness, uniqueness, differentiation, and product associations (Keller, 2006). The customer-based brand equity (CBBE) pyramid model will be used in order to show how essential brand resonance is to brand equity. Keller argues that "to create brand equity, it is important that the brand have strong, favorable, and unique brand associations, *in that order*." At the bottom of the CBBE pyramid, there is brand salience, whose main function is to strengthen these brand associations, increase

brand awareness in crucial consumption moments, and maximize the possibility of a particular brand being purchased over a competitor's (Keller, 2001).

One step above salience in the CBBE pyramid, the meaning of the brand can be distinguished through the performance and function of its products in conjunction with the brand imagery that is evoked through the brand's emotional aspects (Keller, 2001). These associations with the brand can be created either directly, through consumer's experiences, or indirectly, through advertising or word-of-mouth (Keller, 2001).

The next step in the CBBE pyramid focuses on brand responses due to judgments and feelings that consumers have towards the brand; either the consumers use their "head" or their "heart" in making important decisions about a brand (Keller, 2001). Therefore, it can be concluded that "the true measure of the strength of a brand depends on how consumers think, feel, and act with respect to that brand" (Keller, 2001).

The final step of the CBBE pyramid is brand resonance, which is the extent to which the consumer feels that they can identify with the brand and have a strong emotional connection or relationship with it (Keller, 2001). Thus, brand resonance is accomplished through creating positive associations with the brand, focusing on product performance as well as emotional connections with consumers, so that they may feel like they are apart of the brand and the community it creates.

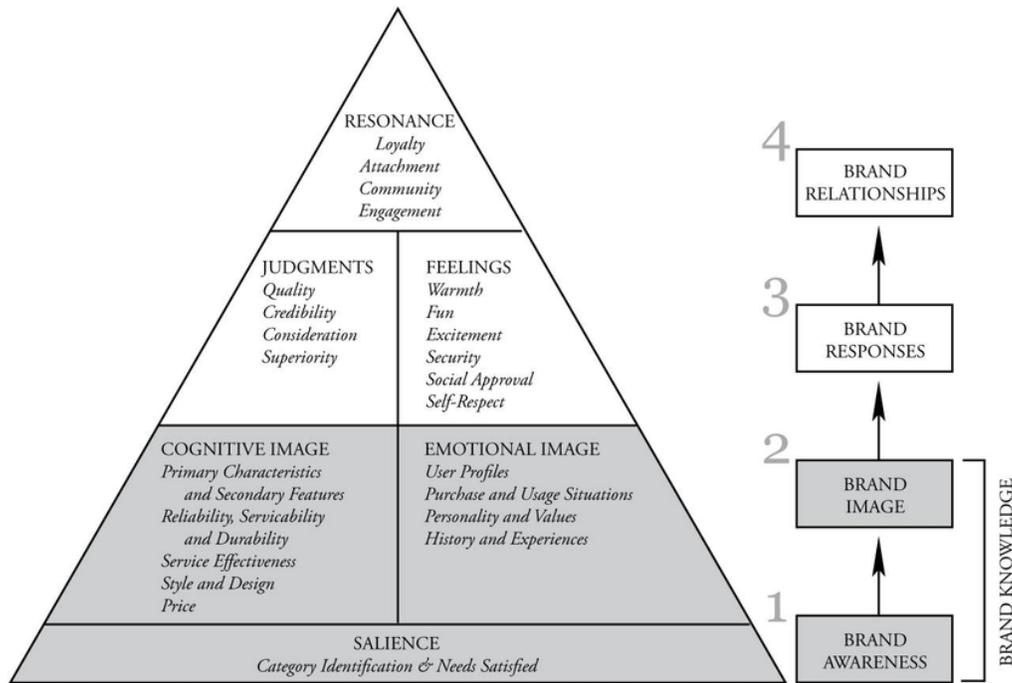


Figure 1. Keller's CBBE Pyramid Model

### *Introducing the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model*

A new model is being proposed that will be placed within the CBBE pyramid model previously discussed. The model will distinguish how a brand that was created upon environmental and sustainable principles can sustain long-term competitive advantages through strong brand resonance. The Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model is inspired by Heritage Brand Quotient. The latter one uses five major elements: track record, longevity, history important to identity, core values, and use of symbols (Urde, Greyser, Balmer, 2007). However, in the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model, the elements are: storytelling, use of symbols, brand personality, history important to identity, serviceability, endurance, core values and track record. Although these elements are similar to the

Heritage Brand Quotient, they rather focus on the sustainable stewardship that a brand strives to nurture, maintain and protect. It is also important to note that the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model represents brand and market orientation and explains inside (brand) and outside (consumer) approaches. As seen in Figure 2, similar to Keller's model, we distinguish between the elements which can trigger rational reasoning in consumers minds: track record, core values, endurance, serviceability (on the left). On the other hand, the elements on the right: storytelling, use of symbols, brand personality and history important to identity represent elements which foster consumer's strong emotions towards the brand. Track record and core values represent judgements, while endurance and serviceability represent the cognitive image of the brand. On the other hand, storytelling and use of symbols represent feelings, while brand personality and history important to

identity reflect the emotional image. We therefore divided our 8 elements into four category groups, with two elements each representing Keller's judgements, cognitive

image, feelings and emotional image, respectively (please see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model

### *Defining the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Quotient*

Brand and market orientation, or the so called “inside-out” and “outside-in” approaches, have become a focal point for this paper (Urde, Baumgarth & Merilees, 2011). In creating this model, it was concluded that in order for an organization to be successful, both approaches are necessary. Therefore, a new brand-market orientation model has been defined, which

reflects the internal branding approach as well as consumers’ perceptions, therefore aligning the two together. As a result, Keller's pyramid core is merged with the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model, based on the Brand Heritage Quotient.

Each of the elements of the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model are paired with Keller's “head” or “heart” elements and their description (Keller, 2001).

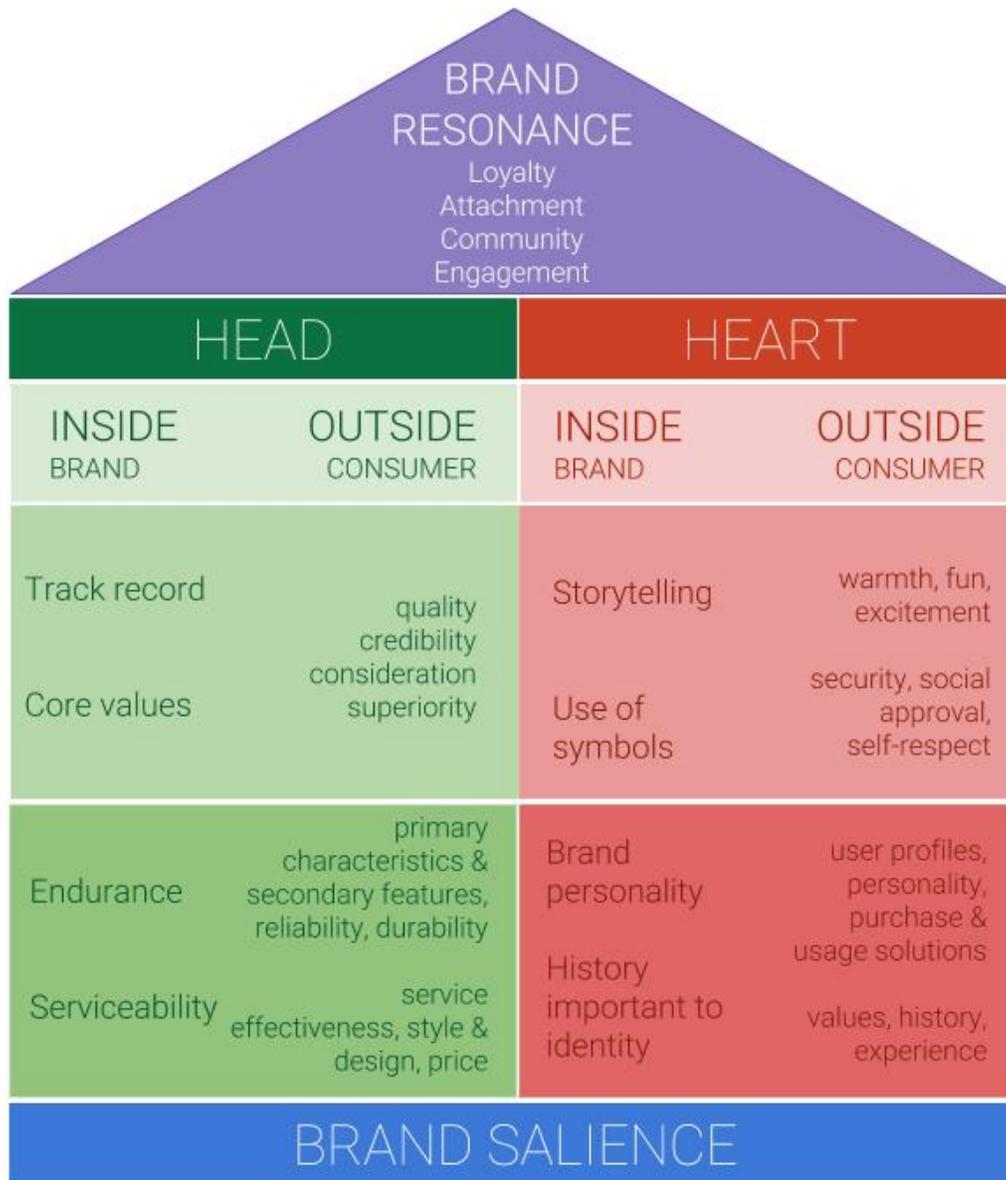


Figure 3. Inside-out and Outside-in Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model

Furthermore, this new model corresponds to all four of the core elements within the CBBE pyramid model previously discussed: brand performance (cognitive), imagery (emotional), judgements and feelings (please refer to Figure 3). For example, use of symbols corresponds to the feelings element because consumers feel like they are a part of something larger than

themselves. They seek social approval by wearing the brand as a badge or symbol of loyalty. On the other hand, core values can be seen as part of the judgements element because consumers need to be explicitly shown and educated on what the brand stands for and how these values are transferable to the brand's products and services. Therefore, values such as quality,

superiority, consideration for the environment, and also sustainability can be vital for the sustainable brand to continually use and promote to its consumers. Lastly, all of these elements are interconnected and necessary to create a strong sustainable brand. For example, the endurance element considers the durability and longevity of the brand's products, but also relates to the brand's history as it ensures that its values endure through time.

## **Methodology**

An important aspect in our research is that there is no model, explicitly for sustainable brands, that can aid in determining brand resonance. As we saw in the literature review, organizations that drive change in consumers behavior using their own distinctive core values exhibit a brand-market orientation, or a market-driving approach (Tarnovskaya, Elg & Burt, 2008). These core values make up the brand's identity, which help to guide its principles and decisions in regards to the market. The organization's identity helps to strike a connection between brand and consumer; if the consumer feels strongly about the company's core values, it will most likely lead to a sustained relationship between the brand and the consumer, and thus, increased brand resonance (Keller, 2001). Brand resonance is the highest level within the CBBE pyramid model and to attain this, brand's must first create salience and build the brand's image and responses, before creating a long-lasting relationship (Keller, 2001). The inclusion of the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model within the CBBE pyramid model is necessary to strategically distinguish what creates these engaged communities of followers.

This paper seeks to analyze one company who has been able to transcend all others by creating a loyal community of consumers who believe wholeheartedly in its mission and vision: Patagonia. The new proposed model will be explained using Patagonia, as well as will be explored using two other companies, Uniqlo and Nudie Jeans, who have implemented sustainability into their business models. To supplement these case studies, 100 responses were collected from consumers in order to garner imperative insights on sustainable fashion and anti-consumption. The sample size is small, therefore a generalization cannot be made, however, since this is a new area of study, it does give imperative insights.

The qualitative research, supported by quantitative responses, was conducted as it allowed for an in-depth look into consumers perceptions of sustainable fashion and Patagonia. The questionnaire helped to gauge interest in this anti-consumerism concept through purchase intentions, awareness of the issue, lifestyle habits, as well as future implications for other businesses trying to promote this ideology. To avoid potential biases, consumer insights were generated using different genders, ages, and geographical locations (America, Europe, and Asia).

## **Case Studies and Observation**

Patagonia, along with Uniqlo and Nudie Jeans, will be analyzed in regards to the new proposed model, the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model within the CBBE pyramid model. It will be determined if this new mode can be applied to all sustainable brands and whether it will be a good predictor of enhancing brand resonance.

### *Case Study - Patagonia*

Patagonia is an American environmental brand whose mission is to “build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire, and implement solutions to the environmental crisis” (Patagonia, 2018, online). As was written in a catalogue on the history behind its brand name, Patagonia: “it brings to mind... romantic visions of glaciers tumbling into fjords, jagged windswept peaks, gauchos and condors” (Patagonia, 2018, online). This depiction of Patagonia evokes its personality traits of being adventurous, daring, rugged, and outdoorsy (please refer to Figure 4). The company’s core values stem from its mission, encompassing the fundamental beliefs of: “1) Quality: Pursuit of ever-greater quality in everything we do; 2) Integrity: Relationships built on integrity and respect; 3) Environmentalism: Serve as a catalyst for personal and corporate action; and 4) Not Bound by Convention: Our success—and much of the fun—lies in developing innovative ways to do things” (O’Rourke & Strand, 2016). Through using materials that support Patagonia’s ideal of durability and longevity, this has led to increased customer satisfaction and has reduced costs by only producing products that are simple in design, and versatile enough for different situations (Rattalino, 2017). Patagonia also has created a “Worn Wear” campaign that seeks to educate and interact with customers on a deeper level by repairing, reusing, or recycling old Patagonia garments (Patagonia, 2018, online). The company believes that using clothing for a longer period of time, thereby lessening consumption, is better for the planet and the environment as a whole.

Patagonia also places a strong emphasis on being transparent in all of the activities that the company performs. Doug Freeman, Patagonia’s COO, has commented

on Patagonia’s commitment to sustainably sourcing its products: “As a management team, we try to empower people to make good, collaborative, and very transparent decisions around the values of the company. It’s unique and unlike any company I have ever worked at in that we treat quality, best product, the environment, and the social issues that affect the people in the supply chain, on an equal level as the business of the company” (O’Rourke & Strand, 2016). Patagonia has always acknowledged that the organization itself is detrimental to the environment. Therefore, Patagonia has honed in on reversing or reducing the amount of impact that it has on the Earth, and has done this by focusing on its supply chain, grassroots activists, repairing clothing for customers, advocating for change and having a strong vision for a better future (Patagonia, 2018, online).

On the other hand, Patagonia strives to make connections with consumers based on its steadfast environmental activism within the community. Patagonia’s brand platform is based off of its history of activism. For example, Patagonia Action Works connects individuals with organizations in the same community that are fighting for the same environmental issues and allows them to donate money, volunteer, sign petitions, and join in on local events (Patagonia, 2018, online). Patagonia also only gives grants to organizations that are dedicated to solving an environmental issue, recognizing the root problem, and are in it for the long-term (Patagonia, 2018, online). Also, through 1% for the planet, Patagonia begun to donate 1% of its total sales to environmental organizations (O’Rourke & Strand, 2016). As stated by the CEO of the company, Yvon Chouinard, “you have to get away from the idea that it’s philanthropy. I look at it as a cost of doing business. Every business should say, ‘We’re polluters, we’re using our nonrenewable

resources', and therefore we should tax ourselves. Being part of [1% For the Planet] is also good for business....Think of it as a

marketing cost ” (O'Rourke & Strand, 2016).

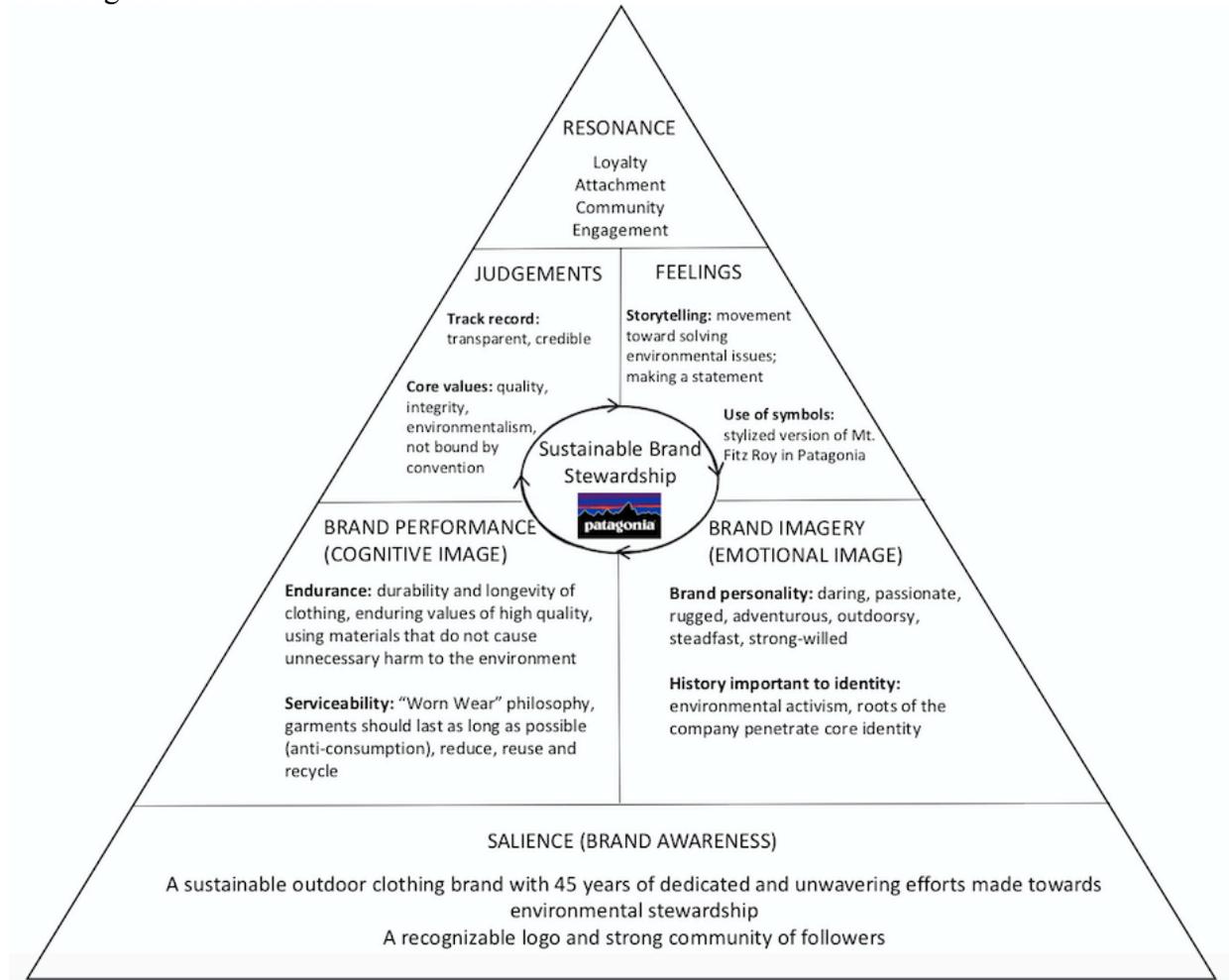


Figure 4. Patagonia within the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model

### Case Study - Uniqlo

Uniqlo is a Japanese fashion brand, with a comprehensive and strong corporate social responsibility statement. Its sustainability mission statement is “Unlocking the Power of Clothing” (Uniqlo, n.d., online), to change the world for the better through its business (please refer to Figure 5). In doing so, Uniqlo is in fact a technology company rather than a fashion company. It is determined to bring

innovation into clothing manufacture and design, creating unique clothing lines to meet customer needs in new ways (Coban, Koch, Yoo, Zaheer, Zapata & Zormpas, 2015). Due to this, Uniqlo focuses on four main areas: products, supply chain, employees, stores and communities.

Uniqlo’s purpose is to produce non-disposable, durable and high-quality “Made for all” clothing, which is known for its functionality (Aaker, 2015). While design plays an important role, the company does

not try to adhere to the trend-driven nature of fast fashion. It has positioned itself as the world's first and unique producer of LifeWear (blend between casual and sports wear), HeatTech (fabric that turns moisture into heat) and AIRism (silk-like fabric that wicks away moisture) garments (Aaker, 2015). Tadashi Yanai, founder and CEO of Uniqlo, often compares Uniqlo as following in the steps of Steve Jobs and Apple because he strives to continuously update the garments to create ever-better innovative clothing (Kansara 2013). Moreover, it produced in a way that is harmonious with nature, without excessive burden on the environment (Uniqlo, n.d., online).

In order to reduce the organization's environmental impact, Uniqlo has a thorough supplier system in place. Uniqlo was the first company in Japan to adopt the SPA (Specialty store retailer of Private label Apparel) model. The business model allows central management to be involved in product planning, design, manufacturing and distribution to save costs and have a flexible production structure in place (Coban et al, 2015). By establishing partnership-like relationships with its suppliers, Uniqlo is able to control and influence its supply chain as well as implement ethical and

environmental practices. Partner facilities are visited by Takumi experts, who have over 30 years of textile industry experience, and contribute to knowledge transfer. This transfer of knowledge provides consistent technical support to improve the factory work and ensure top quality of the products (Uniqlo, n.d., online).

Uniqlo's stores play an incremental role in sustaining its sustainable practices. All of Uniqlo's stores have recycling programs in place. Collected (Uniqlo) garments are either recycled or reused. Unwearable items are recycled into refuse paper and plastic fuel pellets for fuel. Items in good condition are delivered to people around the world such as refugees, disaster victims, homeless people, single mothers and others, while paying attention to local needs, climate, culture and religion. While doing so, Uniqlo works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), NGOs and many other established partners in this field. As of the end of August 2018, Uniqlo collected 77.57 million items from 18 countries and regions out of which 30.29 million items were donated to 65 countries and regions around the world (Uniqlo, n.d., online).

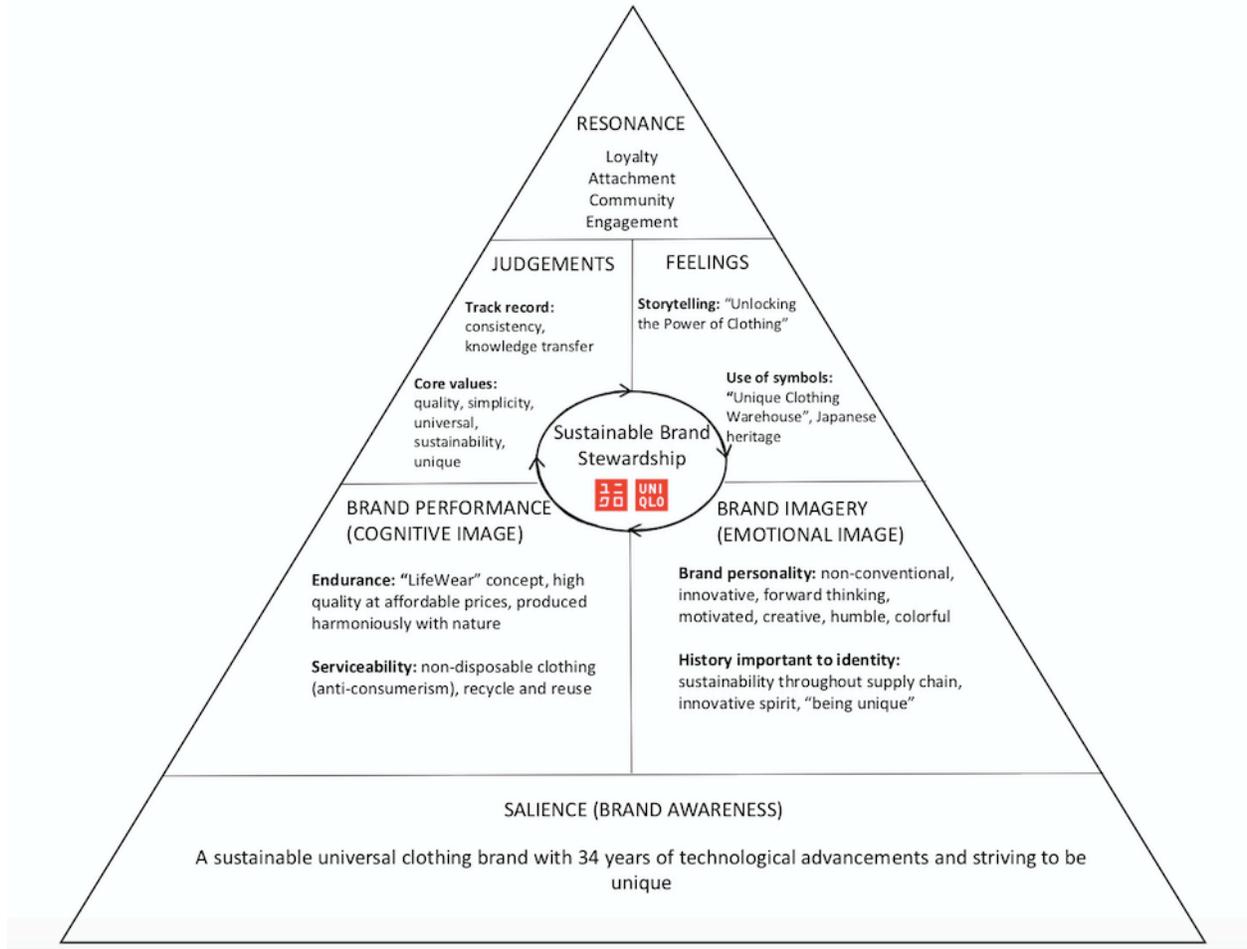


Figure 5. Uniqlo within the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model

### Case Study - Nudie Jeans

Nudie Jeans is a Swedish denim brand which focuses on sustainability and transparency in every step of its production process. In the interview by Engels-Zadén & Hansson, 2015, one of the owners stated: “It has always been central for us [i.e., the owners] to be able to go to sleep at night knowing that those who work and produce for us are doing well”. Nudie Jeans' tagline, “The Naked Truth About Denim”, is connected to its transparency, storytelling, and rebellious nature to search for better ideals and functional features of the garment. Similarly

to Levi's or Wrangler's image, Nudie Jeans' brand personality is also based on life-long attachment to the “second skin” pair of jeans (Nudie Jeans, n.d., online).

Since it was founded in 2001, the company has been focusing on transparency at all levels of production and set high sustainability standards. The company implements sustainable solutions from the materials throughout the production to the final product “This is Nudie Jeans” (Hedman, 2018). Nudie positioned itself as the only producer of 100% organic cotton denim with an aim to becoming the most

transparent company in the world (Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2015). As a result of its transparency project launched in 2013, customers can trace the origin, sustainable practices and production facilities of their jeans on the company's website.

Nudie Jeans has always been determined to prolong the life of its products, to produce slow fashion and to contribute to the circular economy (Hedman, 2018). In doing so, one of the most distinctive features of Nudie Jeans is its so-called “eco-cycle”: “we do not believe in ‘throwaway’ and ‘jeans’ are words that belong together and our eco-cycle is a good example of how we practice the idea. The eco-cycle is always with us, from decision-making in the design process to the choice of material,[...]. It is everything we do.” (Nudie Jeans Sustainability Report, 2016). Nudie's eco-cycle can be defined in the following steps: break-in, repair, reuse and recycle. Break-in is a form of craftsmanship, a sport, a challenge, which takes 6 months.

It can also be perceived as a means to reduce environmental impact by lowering the water and washing detergent use (Nudie Jeans Sustainability Report, 2016).

The second step in the eco-cycle is repair. All of the company's stores serve as Repair Shops and offer free repairs on Nudie products for life (please refer to Figure 6). Given the fact that customers might not be able to visit one of these stores, the company also provides the “Nudie Jeans Repair Kit”, which contains patches and a few additional items to help consumers repair garments themselves (Nudie Jeans, n.d., online). The circular lifecycle of Nudie's jeans is envisioned in this reuse program. When used and/or repaired jeans have been given the eco label “Good Environmental Choice”, they can be returned to its stores as second-hand articles. For example, as of 2017, around 44,021 jeans were repaired and out of 5,099 reused jeans, 804 were sold as second hand items (Nudie Jeans Sustainability Report, 2017).

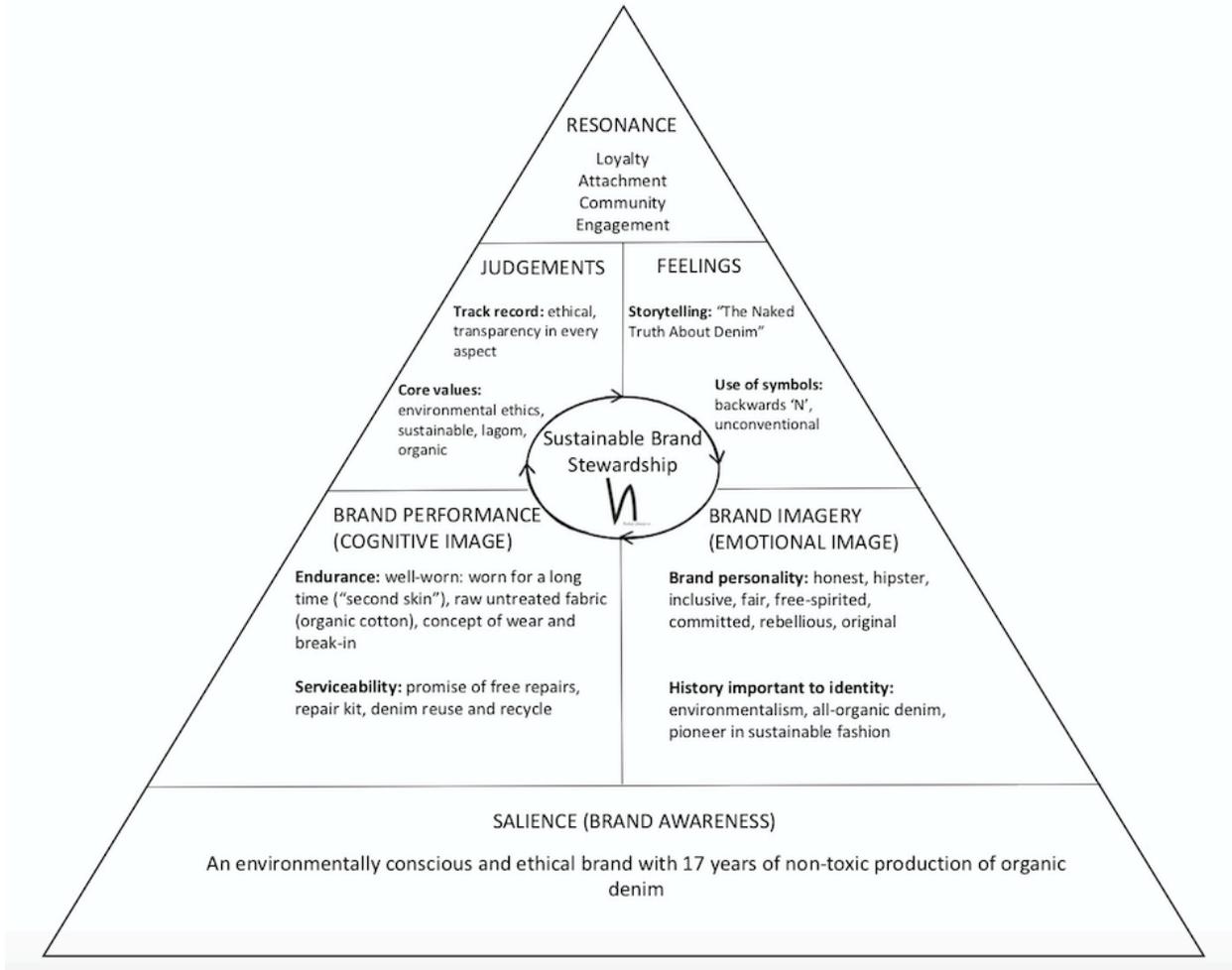


Figure 6. Nudie Jeans within the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model

## Analysis

### *Analysis of Case Studies*

Patagonia has been able to create high brand resonance among its customers through its evocative storytelling ability and strong promotion of its environmental activism. Through the niche market that Patagonia targets, the outdoorsy and athletic segment, it has manifested a community that believes in the environmental issues that it actively works towards solving. The company began with a very inspiring and sentimental story that has resonated among this group of people because they too feel the same way about the environment, as it is a huge part of who they are. In this way, Patagonia truly is a brand-market oriented brand, as it has built up its brand platform on environmental and sustainable core values, all while communicating with and involving its customers in every change or innovation that the company strives to make. It also uses emotional branding in order to convey its identity through sustainable means to preserve, protect, and nurture the environment.

While Patagonia has tried to be as transparent as possible since it was first founded, in 2015, it was exposed by PETA that it was sourcing wool from farms that were found guilty of mistreating the lambs (O'Rourke & Strand, 2016). Doug Freeman, Patagonia's COO, stated in response to the crisis that "we have a toolbox and we opened it up to the industry, but it's naïve to think we have everything figured out" (O'Rourke & Strand, 2016). However, the company has a track record of being extremely honest and open about its supply chain and never has sought to hide or deny any of its transgressions. Therefore, Patagonia consistently seeks to improve and

alter its practices when they become unsustainable.

Lastly, Patagonia has always been an environmental brand at its core, but only recently started to follow the sustainable fashion trend. While its products have always been durable and functional, it wasn't until 2017 that the brand followed in other companies' footsteps to institute its "Worn Wear" campaign. Due to its long-standing history of being an upstanding organization in regards to CSR and its strong vision for its future, it has been able to successfully promote this trend and enhance its resonance with its customers. Although it didn't have the first mover advantage in promoting the reduce, reuse, recycle phenomenon with its products, its strong community of followers have remained loyal. Because of this, Patagonia has sustained long-term competitive advantages by staying true to its core identity by promoting sustainable brand stewardship.

While Uniqlo has strived to be a purely technology driven organization and is currently the fourth largest fashion retailer in the world, it has fallen short in producing enhanced brand resonance among its customers. It is true that the organization is sustainable in its supply chain processes and seeks to create a better world based on its core values of quality, universality, and simplicity in its products, but this is not enough in order to create a loyal community. Uniqlo does not possess a distinct identity, as its core values are not unique and can be imitated by competitors (Gromark & Melin, 2011). This can be explained by a lack of symbols in their strategy.

To illustrate, Uniqlo has struggled in being successful in creating brand resonance internationally, especially in America, due to its laser focus on producing the most

affordable but high quality clothing for the price conscious consumer. While Uniqlo has “a distinct Japanese flavor that other companies [are] not in a position to copy”, giving it an advantage, these ideals may not have translated well across cultures (Coban et al, 2015). After failing to open a few stores on the east coast the first time around, US CEO Shin Odake stated that in an effort to re-introduce the brand to the US market that “flagship stores on high-profile streets are extremely important to the brand outside of Japan... They make a statement” (Coban et al, 2015). Thus, Uniqlo had to rethink its strategy and re-define the brand for the American market, since its identity wasn’t understood by Westerners.

Lastly, Uniqlo also uses its “LifeWear” philosophy to recycle and donate clothing that is still wearable, but this seems to merely follow the sustainable fashion trend. Norms, rules and humility are important in Japanese culture and sustainability, as part of a CSR initiative, seems to be an item that needs to be checked off on a list, rather than an added emotional element to Uniqlo’s identity. Additionally, Uniqlo only focuses on its innovation, technological advancements, and sustainable product creation through its “Unlocking the Power of Clothing” story. As stated by Kapferer, “unlike a network of cognitions, brands are emotional bonds. If they do not drive emotions, they are just the name of a product and not a brand as shown by neurosciences” (Kapferer, 2012). The sustainable aspect of the organization hasn’t been readily communicated or promoted to its consumers as much as Patagonia has done, for instance, but it still is a strong core value of the brand. Besides the challenges that Uniqlo may have, the company does have the capacity to produce brand resonance with its customers if it strives to build up its brand internally and become a market-brand oriented organization.

Nudie Jeans is a force to be reckoned with in the sustainable fashion world, as it can enhance its brand resonance due to its strong sense of brand identity, core values, and personality. From the very beginning, the company has had a strong environmental philosophy, which led it to use only 100% organic cotton in its products. Nudie Jeans took this as an opportunity to incorporate raw, untreated material as part of its identity, even though this concept “wasn't sought after by the public” (Nudie Jeans, 2018). Because of its need to be unconventional, Nudie Jeans has been a frontrunner of the sustainable fashion concept since it started to turn all of its stores into “repair shops” in 2013, offering repair services to preserve and care for all Nudie clothing. Due to this, it is very differentiated from competitors as it has believed in its sustainable fashion mission from the start.

Furthermore, Nudie set a lofty goal in 2012 to become the most transparent company in the world by showing how and where its products were being created (Nudie Jeans Sustainability Report, 2017). Even after it set out to accomplish this, “as of 2013, Nudie had not fully realized its vision, but was still arguably more transparent about its supply chain than, for example, transparency frontrunner Patagonia” (Zanden & Hansson, 2015). Transparency has become a norm for organizations that wish to sustain competitive advantages. While Nudie’s emphasis on transparency may be too strong, it should strive to create an emotional connection with its customers, otherwise it may take away from the company’s ability to enhance resonance. When Nudie's transparency project, known as its Production Guide was launched, company representatives noticed a lack of customer response, explaining that consumers are mainly interested in the look, fit and quality of the product (Engels-

Zandén & Hansson, 2015). It has also been argued that this research had been done shortly after the launch of the Production Guide in mid-2013 (Engels-Zandén & Hansson, 2015).

Lastly, Nudie Jeans has created its business from the inside-out, or rather from a brand-oriented perspective, and has left out the vital aspect of appeasing the wants and needs of its consumers. The creative director of Nudie Jeans, Maria Levin, has commented that “since starting up back in 2001, we have remained focused on issues around sustainability and the environment regardless of the demands of the market or our customers, in a time when price has been a key factor” (Nudie Jeans, n.d., online). However, Nudie has capitalized on the shifting mindset of the consumer and was one of the first companies to foresee a new trend that is here to stay. If Nudie is able to continue moving in a direction towards brand-market orientation, and remember to keep the consumer in mind, it can sustain long-term competitive advantages.

As seen in these case studies, each brand has struggled with at least one element of the new model. This does not mean that they are not strong brands that are unable to produce brand resonance, but there are different emphases placed on each element. Each brand either places importance on certain elements in their strategy and not others. Overall, if the company utilizes all eight elements effectively as a part of their branding strategy, it can be characterized as a successful sustainable brand. The stronger the emphasis on each element, the stronger the brand resonance.

### *Analysis of Questionnaire Results*

From the questionnaire, 100 quantitative consumer insights were

received, with a few qualitative open-ended responses, from participants that were located in Europe (51%), America (27%), Asia (11%), and other countries (11%) in order to better understand their perceptions about sustainable fashion. When asked what companies come to mind when consumers think of sustainable fashion, the responses were overwhelming and the most common company named was ‘Patagonia’ (23%). Additionally, 52% of respondents stated that they have heard of Patagonia before. The second most commonly named company was H&M (12%) and then Nudie Jeans (8%). However, interestingly enough, 23% of respondents also said that they either could not think of a company that promoted sustainable fashion or just could not think of any off the top of their head. Uniqlo was only mentioned once.

Furthermore, consumers were asked if they prefer durable and timeless fashion to trendy, of the moment fashion and 51.5% of consumers said that they choose durable clothing most of the time, with 23.2% saying that they always prefer it. When consumers were asked about Patagonia offering repair services and whether it was an added value or not, a common comment was, for example:

*“I think it's an important added value to its brand, because they are disrupting the disposable fashion phenomenon and doing things differently” and “it fits the brands values and further strengthens its positioning as sustainable and eco-friendly outdoor fashion”.*

Other consumers commented on the fact that other companies are also using repair services as an added value, such as by saying:

*“Yes, this is a nice idea that quite a few brands are trying to implement”, whereas others have never heard about it before: “I’ve never heard about that in other clothing companies. It’s really [an] important value... because of less waste”.*

Overall, a vast majority of consumers said they think it is important, and even when price is at a premium, this respondent finds it worth it to still purchase:

*“It is kind of a preventative means to make you buy less. However, what you buy really lasts and you try to preserve it, cause it was expensive. Also, as you build the attachment to the clothes, it is hard to throw it away and that’s when the repair service comes [in] handy”.*

Overall, 83.3% of consumers would like to see more companies that promote this sustainable fashion/anti-consumption trend. When asked if they believe that we should consume less as a society, a great response received was:

*“[I] completely agree but I also think that the whole idea of being eco friendly/zero waste does not start with buying all the eco friendly stuff but with minimizing your own consumption and thinking twice whether you really need what you are buying”.*

Also, another consumer gave their own definition of what sustainable fashion should become:

*“Sustainable fashion has to go mainstream/into big-box stores if we are, as a society on the whole, focused on consuming less... as long*

*as people have purchasing power however, they will go and buy the newest best thing. The focus must be on the timelessness of the product, and the product cannot fall into the trendy trap, only being worn for a few months then disposed of for something newer”.*

This is a mindset that we are seeing as being created by these sustainable fashion companies, and that needs to be addressed by other brands, in order to stay ahead of the competition.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to explore if it is possible for a sustainable brand to enhance its brand resonance through promoting the sustainable fashion and anti-consumerism concepts. Our findings show that brands who can successfully deploy and implement the sustainable elements outlined in the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model can be used to enhance brand resonance. As seen in the case study, these companies, Patagonia, Uniqlo and Nudie Jeans, implemented new practices in the era of mass production and consumption. Patagonia and Nudie Jeans were found to incorporate each element of the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model into their branding strategy. This is exemplified through introducing the need for repair, reuse and recycle programs as part of the circular economy, which help to increase customer engagement and eventually lead to enhanced brand resonance. Consumers are growing more concerned with the wellbeing of our planet and want to contribute by purchasing products that are produced safely and sustainably, with no additional harm to society and the environment. As a result, these programs make customers feel involved, engaged and are contributing to

preserving and nurturing the environment, creating a brand-consumer community.

However, although these brands were the first movers in creating durable products that last, realizing the importance for the environment, not all of the companies fully implement and promote sustainable practices. A key finding is that Patagonia and Nudie Jeans are utilizing each element, particularly emotional storytelling and their identities as part of their history, to alter consumer behavior towards anti-consumption. Patagonia and Nudie Jeans are more brand-oriented in this way, whereas Uniqlo is more market-driven. While Uniqlo has been analyzed as a sustainable brand, a better distinction is that it is merely a brand that uses sustainable solutions. The brand therefore, does not promote this anti-consumerism approach, but produces fashion in a sustainable way. From analyzing the brand through the model, it does not have an emotional storytelling element or unique core values related to sustainability that would create a clear brand identity that is needed to enhance brand resonance. Uniqlo does not use symbols (logo as a badge for consumers to wear), therefore it is hard to identify its products. The brand may be using sustainability as a prerequisite CSR practice, in order to build up a clean track record and appease consumers who are concerned with the environment. An important aspect that Uniqlo seems to lack is the repair service, which does not help in engaging customers as it does with Patagonia and Nudie Jeans. In this way, Patagonia and Nudie Jeans can sustain competitive advantages with enhanced brand resonance due to the combination of both the “heart” and “head” elements found in the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model (Keller, 2001).

Lastly, an authentic sustainable brand incorporates all of these elements, but also uses brand-market orientation, which

states that customers needs and wants should be satisfied within the limits of the company's brand identity. Because our resources are limited, but there is a need to produce, it is essential to have limits. This paper specifically exemplifies brands who imposed limits on themselves to satisfy consumer needs and wants within their brand identities - in this case, sustainability. They do this by promoting the concept of anti-consumption, but produce products of higher quality and endurance. In this way, higher prices do not only serve as a preventative means to purchase multiple products, but also supplement this idea to buy less and increase products' longevity, so as not to consume unnecessarily.

### *Theoretical Implications*

The new proposed Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model describes the internal (brand strategic action) and external (possible consumer reactions) that a brand can create to enhance brand resonance. According to Keller, “the strongest brands excel in all six of [the CBBE] areas... With the CBBE Model, the most valuable brand-building block, brand resonance, occurs when all the other brand-building blocks are completely synchronized with customers' needs, wants, and desires. In other words, brand resonance reflects a completely harmonious relationship between customers and brand” (Keller, 2001). The Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model contributes to the field of brand equity in that it focuses solely on a sustainable and/or environmental brand and how it may enhance its resonance through specific elements, in order to satisfy customers within the confines of the brand's identity. While Keller's CBBE pyramid model is more static, the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model proposes that each of the elements are interrelated, which makes it

more dynamic. It also can be used outside of the CBBE model as a way to define and align the sustainable brand. A sustainable brand can define its internal strategy using the eight elements, which can then be placed within the CBBE model. Therefore, in combination with consumers perceptions and the internal brand's strategy, the brand can enhance its brand resonance.

Furthermore, Keller describes that a brand derives its power and value directly from customers themselves (Keller, 2001). In this way, the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model can be applied to any sustainable brand, but can only truly create brand resonance when it is combined with consumer perceptions. Since this new model takes into consideration brand and market orientation, or "head" and "heart" components, it helps in determining brand resonance. To further this point, Keller says that "strong brands blend product performance and imagery to create a rich, varied, but complementary set of consumer responses to the brand" (Keller, 2001).

Finally, it takes time for brands to create awareness amongst consumers so that they can understand and formulate their own beliefs and attitudes towards the brand (Keller, 2001). The history is important to identity element is therefore imperative to include in the new model as a basis for what the sustainable brand is built on. The time spent to build the brand correlates with the strength of the resonance that can be created.

### *Managerial Implications*

Brand managers in sustainable companies can determine brand resonance based on the eight elements of the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model. A brand manager should keep in mind that it is not completely possible to determine brand resonance without consumer perceptions, as well as each element must be implemented

and aligned within the model successfully and as part of a cohesive branding strategy. Additionally, this is only one model that can be used in determining whether a sustainable brand has the elements necessary to achieve brand resonance, and how these elements can work together to enhance brand resonance, thus leading to sustained competitive advantages for the company.

### **Future Research**

The results from this research indicate that further development and wider-scale studies are needed in order to make a generalization. Furthermore, future research would benefit by testing the Sustainable Brand Stewardship Model. Moreover, it would be interesting to see this research reach other industries.

### **References**

- Aaker, D. (2015). American Marketing Association, Why Uniqlo is Winning, Available through: LUSEM Library website, <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 12 October 2018]
- Åslund Hedman, E. (2018). Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Jeans: A case study performed at Nudie Jeans, Skolan för industriell teknik och management, KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Available through: <http://kth.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1221104/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [Accessed 12 October 2018]
- Coban, T., Koch, A., Yoo, H.J., Zaheer, S., Zapata, M., Zormpas, I. (2015). UNIQLO: Innovating to be Number One: A case study, The Fletcher School, Tufts University, Available through: <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/~media/Fletcher/MI/B/pdfs/B236%20Student%20Case%20Study>

[es/Uniqlo%20Case%20Study.pdf](#) [Accessed 10 October 2018]

Fast Retailing Report. (2017). Available Online:  
[https://www.fastretailing.com/eng/sustainability/report/pdf/sustainability2017\\_en.pdf](https://www.fastretailing.com/eng/sustainability/report/pdf/sustainability2017_en.pdf)  
[Accessed 9 October 2018]

Ghența, M. & Matei, A. (2018). SMEs and the Circular Economy: From Policy to Difficulties Encountered During Implementation, *Amfiteatru Economic*, 20(48), pp. 294-309.

Gobé, M. (2001). Emotional Branding; the new paradigm for connecting brands to people, New York: Allworth Press

Gromark, J. & Melin, F. (2011). The underlying dimensions of brand orientation and its impact on financial performance, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. no.6, pp. 394–410, Available through: LUSEM Library website,  
<http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 12 October 2018]

Gromark, J. & Melina, F. (2011). The underlying dimensions of brand orientation and its impact on financial performance, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. no.6, pp. 394–410, Available through: LUSEM Library website,  
<http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 12 October 2018].

Ind, N. (2007). Living the Brand: How to transform every member of your organisation into a brand champion, London & Philadelphia: Kogan Page Limited

Kansara, V.A. (2013). With a revolutionary approach, Uniqlo aims to create new category, *The Business of Fashion*, April 19, Available online:  
<https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/intelligence/with-an-evolutionary-approach-uniqlo-aims-to-create-new-category>  
[Accessed 10 October 2018]

Kapferer, Jean Noël. (2012). The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking. Fifth Edition

Keller, L. K. (2001). Building Customer-Based Brand Equity: A Blueprint for Creating Strong Brands, *Marketing Management*, pp.15-19.

Keller, L.K. (2006). Measuring Brand Equity, in *Handbook of Marketing Research - Do's and Don'ts*, eds. Rajiv Grover and Marco Vriens, pp. 546-568.

Nudie Jeans Marketing AB. (2018). Available Online:  
<https://www.nudiejeans.com/> [Accessed 12 October 2018]

Nudie Jeans Sustainability Report. (2016). Available Online:  
<https://cdn.nudiejeans.com/dist/files/Nudie-Jeans-Sustainability-Report-2016.pdf>  
[Accessed 8 October 2018]

Nudie Jeans Sustainability Report. (2017). Available Online:  
<https://cdn.nudiejeans.com/media/files/Sustainability-Report-2017-Nudie-Jeans.pdf>  
[Accessed 8 October 2018]

O'Rourke, D. & Strand, R. (2017). Patagonia: DRIVING SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION BY EMBRACING TENSIONS available online [http://cases.haas.berkeley.edu/promo/patagonia\\_preview.pdf](http://cases.haas.berkeley.edu/promo/patagonia_preview.pdf) [Accessed 13 Oct. 2018].

Patagonia Inc.(2018). Available Online: <https://www.patagonia.com/home/> [Accessed 12 October 2018]

Porter, M. E. & Kramer, M. R.(2006). *Strategy and Society: The Link Between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility*, reprint: R0612D, Available online: <https://hbr.org/2006/12/strategy-and-society-the-link-between-competitive-advantage-and-corporate-social-responsibility> [Accessed 12 Oct. 2018].

Rattalino, F. (2017). Circular advantage anyone? Sustainability-driven innovation and circularity at Patagonia, Inc., *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 60(5), pp. 747-755, available online <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/doi/epdf/10.1002/tie.21917> [Accessed 16 Oct. 2018].

Tarnovskaya, V., Elg, U. & Burt, S. (2008). The role of corporate branding in a market driving strategy, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, (11), p. 941.

UNIQLO Co. Ltd. (2018). Available Online: <https://www.uniqlo.com/eu/en/home> [Accessed 10 October 2018]

Urde, M., Baumgarth, C. and Merrilees, B. (2011). Brand orientation and market orientation — From alternatives to synergy, *Journal of Business Research*, 66, pp. 13–20, Available through: LUSEM Library website, <http://www.lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 12 October 2018]

Urde, M., Greyser, S. A. & Balmer, J. M. T. (2007). Corporate brands with a heritage, *Journal of Brand Management*, 15(1), pp. 4–19.

World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2008. Sustainable Consumption Facts and Trends from a business perspective

## Appendix – Online Questionnaire

# Sustainable Fashion Questionnaire

\* Required

**Email address \***

Your email

**What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary

**How old are you?**

- 18-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50+

**Where are you from?**

- America
- Europe
- Asia
- Other

**What companies come to your mind when you think of sustainable fashion? (Please try not to Google!!)**

Your answer

**Do companies that are more environmentally responsible affect your purchasing decisions?**

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Other:

**Do you prefer durable and timeless fashion (lasts a long time and trend never fades) versus trendy, of the moment fashion?**

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Other:

**Do you know of the company Patagonia?**

- Yes, I really like it
- Yes, I know about it, but not much
- Yes, but I am not into the brand
- Yes, I know about it, but I am neutral towards the brand
- Never heard of it
- Other:

**If yes to the previous question, when you think of Patagonia what words come to mind? Write N/A if not.**

Your answer

**Patagonia offers repair service to all clothing, including other brands. Would you consider this to be an important added value to its brand? Why and why not?**

Your answer

**Have you purchased products from Patagonia before?**

- Yes
- I would like to, but I cannot afford it (price premium)
- I would like to and I can afford it, but I have not yet
- No
- Other:

**What factors contribute to why you would buy products from Patagonia? Please check all that apply:**

- Products themselves
- Activism/Community involvement
- Environmental and sustainability practices
- Repair services (all brands)
- Durable/Sustainable fashion
- The "cool" factor - I feel cool wearing the brand
- Other:

**What features of Patagonia's business model do you like most? Please check all that apply:**

- Buy it new
- Trade it in i.e. swap out old Patagonia garment and receive credit towards another one (new/used)
- Buy it used and can trade it back in when you are done
- Repair service

Patagonia's website states "The single best thing we can do for the planet is keep our gear in use longer and cut down on consumption". Do you agree with this statement? Do you think we should consume less as a society? Please explain your thoughts.

Your answer

Do you want to see more companies that promote this anti-consumerism (less is more)/sustainable fashion mindset?

- Yes of course!
- Sure, but I do not really care (does not affect me)
- No, I like to consume as much stuff as possible
- Other:

Are there any other ideas/opinions that you have about Patagonia or sustainable fashion that would be of interest to us? Please feel free to discuss.

Your answer

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

SUBMIT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.