



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

The social game of cohesion and differentiation in sustainable fashion consumption

An in-depth study on certification labels' collective after-purchase value

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May 2019

Master's Programme in International Marketing and Brand Management

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Examiner:

Abstract

Title: The social game of cohesion and differentiation in sustainable fashion consumption – An in-depth study on certification labels’ collective after-purchase value

Date of the Seminar: Wednesday, 5th of June, 2019

Course: BUSN39. Degree project in global marketing

Authors: Sally Lundqvist and Réka Ines Tölg

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Word count: 26 927

Keywords: sustainable fashion consumption, certification labels, identity creation, identity expression, cohesion and differentiation

Thesis purpose: To investigate how certification labels’ after-purchase value can enable consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity, and thus, assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context.

Theoretical perspective: The present study is grounded upon the traditional concepts of cohesion and differentiation in fashion by Simmel (1904) and Bourdieu (1984). The study reviewed these concepts in the social context of sustainable consumption, with consideration of identity construction and expression. Furthermore, the study looked at the literature on certification labels and their value for consumers.

Methodology: Due to the exploratory purpose, the paper is designed as an in-depth qualitative study, guided by abduction and Spiggle’s (1994) analytical approach.

Empirical data: Six semi-structured interviews guided the construction of three focus group sessions, with each session lasting for about an hour. All the 23 participants involved were selected from the consumer pool of Swedish, male and female, Gen Y, university degree consumers through purposive and then snowballing sampling techniques.

Originality: The present paper provides a unique insight on the after-purchase value of certification labels in terms of its potential to assist the consumer need of sustainable identity construction and expression, in the social process of cohesion and differentiation. This serves as a valuable insight as certification labels currently do not bear high consumer awareness within fashion. Thus, this paper offers a potential mechanism to enable labels to address consumers through their underlying social needs and motives.

Conclusion: The findings imply that consumers would like to cohere with sustainable norms, and differentiate from non-sustainable habits. Expressing these values are important due to the fear of being judged non-sustainable, yet consumers have to overcome the second fear of judgement, bragging. The ‘*silent display*’, collective after-purchase value of certification labels, enables consumers to avoid the judgements, and construct and express their sustainable fashion identity in a humble, discreet manner. Thus, contributing to the need for cohesion with the sustainable norms, and differentiation from non-sustainable norms.

Acknowledgements

The present thesis was written during the spring semester 2019 at Lund University in partial fulfilment of the Master of Science, International Marketing and Brand Management degree programme. Within the past 10 weeks, we received much support from various people, and we would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone, who helped us in this process.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to our dissertation advisor, Jens Hultman, for providing guidance through this research project. Furthermore, we would also like to thank MUD Jeans for Skyping us regarding their certification label strategy. We would like to say thanks to our friends and family who contributed with valuable and supporting opinions. Likewise, we would like to thank all of the interview and focus group participants, who sacrificed an entire hour of their busy schedule and contributed with rich thoughts and insightful opinions to our research.

Lund, 29th May 2019

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1 Introduction

The present chapter aims to introduce the background of sustainability, the fashion industry, and certification labels. Upon this, the chapter presents the need for future research by identifying the theoretical gaps. Based on the problematisation, the research purpose, and supporting questions are presented. Furthermore, the intended theoretical contribution and the normative promise are explained. Lastly, the final section sets an outline for the present paper.

1.1 Background

The consumer society has pushed for demand and desire for new fashion styles, instigating a culture of impulsive shopping behaviour and ‘throw away’ mindset (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). Fast fashion responsiveness to societal trend fluctuations, has resulted into fragmented supply chains and complex manufacturing processes, causing threatening ecological and social effects to the planet (Niinimäki, 2010; Castellani, Sala & Mirabella, 2015; Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018). Thus, consumers have become more conscious, knowledgeable, and aware regarding their consumption patterns (Henninger, Alevizou & Oates, 2016; Todeschini, Cortimiglia, Callegaro-de-Menezesa & Ghezzi, 2017). Consequently, within the contemporary consumer culture, increased attention to sustainable fashion has risen and sustainability as part of clothing is gradually forming into a common phenomenon (Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang & Chan, 2012; Watson & Yan, 2013).

The societal pressure of sustainability is forcing companies to adopt novel production cycles and provide adequate transparency in their operations (Henninger, 2015). Sustainable fashion often considers factors such as the environment, working circumstances, and animal justice, yet, consumers find it difficult to define and understand the phenomenon and thus act upon it (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Consequently, brands have started to acquire certification labels to better address and communicate aspects of sustainability to their stakeholders (Pedersen & Neergaard, 2006; Blackburn, 2009). However, certification labels have not yet gained wide recognition by consumers in the fashion context, perhaps due to their inability to speak to consumers on a deeper level (Henninger, 2015).

To understand how consumers manoeuvre in the era of sustainable fashion consumption, and how certification labels become part of this process, the denim brand MUD Jeans and the Nordic Ecolabel certification example contributed to the initial interest behind the present paper. In 2018, after a one-and-a-half-year process, the Amsterdam-based denim brand, acquired the Nordic Swan Ecolabel for all of their products (MUD Jeans, 2018). The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is a third-party certification label, which takes into account total environmental impact by evaluating product’s entire life cycles; from procurement of raw material to waste management (Nordic Ecolabelling, 2018). This makes the label an effective tool to use throughout companies’ marketing campaigns, to show evidence of their sustainable efforts. Yet, certification labels are missing a consumer-driven approach, which could further encourage

sustainable fashion consumption, through addressing consumers' underlying motives and values. Thus, the present paper takes a departure from the consumer perspective.

1.2 Problematisation

To Simmel (1904), fashion is a social and cultural phenomenon, which allows self-recognition within a group, as well as, distinction from others. Thus, fashion consumption often serves as a common language in the process of identity creation, through the social process of cohesion and differentiation (Simmel, 1904; Bourdieu, 1984). However, in the era of liquid society, this common language is rather fluid, creating a challenge for consumers to manoeuvre between new trends, and the constantly changing societal norms (Bauman, 2000). Recently, the rising importance of sustainability also affected the 'common language'. Therefore, the complexity of sustainable fashion consumption cannot be understood on the individual consumer level. Jacobsen and Hansen (2019) argue, that to understand sustainable consumption, one must take a holistic approach, and consider the social dynamics that occur when people interact. Furthermore, construction of a sustainable fashion identity is considered to be not only driven by altruistic motives, but also by the need for social belonging (Bly, Gwozdz & Reisch, 2015; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; McNeill & Venter, 2019). Thus, further investigation is necessary to understand how consumers manoeuvre between sustainable fashion values and motivations, while simultaneously cohering and differentiating to others, as the consumer identity construction is also a social process (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Previous literature presents ambiguous insights regarding the notion of cohesion and differentiation in terms of expressing sustainable consumer identity (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011; Agerup & Nilsson, 2016). Since expression of the sustainable identity is linked both to the notion of cohesion (Agerup & Nilsson, 2016) and differentiation (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011), further insights are necessary to understand how these aspects manifest in the sustainable fashion context. Reimers, Magnuson, and Chao (2017) argue that status-enhancement is an important aspect in sustainable fashion consumption as well. Furthermore, Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018) argue that there is a link between conspicuous consumption and sustainable fashion behaviour. However, there is a need for better understanding of the link between sustainable identity expression, such as status-enhancement and conspicuous sustainable fashion consumption, and the role of cohesion and differentiation in a social context. Furthermore, as Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018) argue, the public display of sustainable fashion is necessary, to leverage on the status-related benefits. Therefore, a better mechanism is required to further promote the adoption of sustainable fashion consumption and leverage on the potential benefit of identity creation and expression.

There are 108 certification labels present in the fashion world, yet they have not gained wide recognition by consumers (Henninger, 2015). Label holders are unable to reach consumers in a meaningful manner, therefore currently certification labels are not able to serve their purpose in encouraging sustainable fashion consumption. According to the current paradigm, certification labels help consumers to locate the sustainable choice prior to the purchase (Shaw, Hogg, Wilson, Shiu & Hassa, 2006; Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). Thus, previous literature only explored certification labels' potential to signal availability, spread information, and promote purchase (Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). However, their after-purchase role and value

in the fashion context remain unexplored (Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). Lastly, as certification labels have not managed to gain wide consumer recognition, a novel way of marketing these labels through a consumer-driven approach is necessary.

Linking the need for public display and the issue of addressing consumers' underlying motivations together can create rich insights for an enhanced implication of certification labels in the fashion context. One can see that investigating the after-purchase values of labels, in relation to identity creation and expression, can further assist cohesion and differentiation. On a broader scale, this knowledge is necessary to assist the consumer adoption of sustainable fashion products.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

The above-identified topics of interest imply that there is a need to further understand why and how consumers construct, as well as, express their sustainable fashion identities to achieve cohesion and differentiation. Exploring the after-purchase values of certification labels in the sustainable fashion context can provide new insights on how it may contribute to identity construction and identity expression. Thus, the present study sets to understand *how certification labels' after-purchase value can enable consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity, and thus, assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context.*

The above-presented research purpose is answered by looking into the following research questions:

- *RQ1: Why and how do consumers construct a sustainable fashion identity?*
- *RQ2: Why and how do consumers express their sustainable fashion identity?*
- *RQ3: What after-purchase values do certification labels carry for consumers?*

1.4 Theoretical contribution

Previous research mainly focused on the personal values and attitudes behind sustainable fashion consumption. The present study contributes by looking at the interplay of personal values and motivations with social factors, as the social dynamics require further exploration in sustainable fashion consumption (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Exploring the underlying motives of sustainable fashion identity creation grounded on the theory of cohesion and differentiation (Simmel, 1904; Bourdieu, 1984) contributes to the field of sustainable consumption, with a unique societal understanding on the reasons behind constructing a sustainable fashion identity (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; McNeill & Venter, 2019). Furthermore, as previous studies regarding the role of cohesion and differentiation in sustainable consumption, provide somehow contradictory insights, the present paper sets to contribute with a deeper look on how this role interacts with consumer identity expression in the fashion context (Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016). Furthermore, the present paper takes the notion of status-

enhancement under the microscope, to see how it interacts with the motivation to engage and express sustainable fashion consumption (Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017; Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). Moreover, the value of certification labels have only been studied in relation to signalling the utilitarian aspects of sustainable products before the purchase in fashion (Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018), therefore certification labels' potential after-purchase value remain unexplored. By investigating the value of certification labels during the after-purchase phase through a Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) angle, the present paper creates further understanding of the social context of sustainable fashion consumption. Leveraging on the understanding around identity construction and expression offers a unique insight for the collective after-purchase value of certification labels. Through this consequent exploration, and understanding the societal momentum of the matter, the contribution of this paper lies in investigating how certification labels can better address consumers' need for cohesion and differentiation.

1.5 Normative promise

The gathered knowledge has the potential to assist MUD Jeans, as well as, other similar sustainable fashion brands, to broaden their understanding of the motives and values behind sustainable fashion consumption, in the social context. Furthermore, the insights regarding the construction and expression of a sustainable fashion identity can provide an understanding of consumers' need for cohesion and differentiation through their consumption practices. Currently, certification labels are lacking awareness in the fashion industry, thus there is a need to effectively communicate them to consumers. Using certification labels as a marketing tool to address consumer in a more meaningful manner, relevant to the social context, is neglected. Taking a consumer-driven approach, by looking at the after-purchase value of certification labels in terms of constructing and expressing one's identity, therefore makes this knowledge highly applicable for brands. Thus, the present paper's understanding sets to guide MUD Jeans and other brands with certification labels, to evaluate whether they can leverage on the social value of labels. Considering the underlying drivers for identity construction and expression in sustainable fashion consumption can enable marketing teams to use certification labels to develop high performing communication campaigns. Therefore, this knowledge could serve as a competitive position within the ever-changing retail scene, and thus, provide an increased market share for sustainable fashion brands like MUD Jeans.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

The present study starts with an analytical overview of the research area, within the 'Literature review' chapter leading to a preliminary theoretical framework. In the 'Methodology' chapter, the approach to the empirical material and the research design are discussed. Building on the collected empirical material the paper presents the findings in Chapter 4, and then provides a discussion in Chapter 5, reflecting upon the research questions, research purpose, and the preliminary framework. The final concluding chapter summarises the outcomes of the research in the sense of its theoretical and managerial contributions as well as its limitation and future research avenues.

2 Literature Review

The present chapter presents an exploration and understanding of the paper's academic field. Existing theories will be discussed to comprehend the background and reasoning to the research purpose. The first section gives an in-depth understanding of the evolution of the sustainable fashion consumer identity. The second section highlights the expression of this identity in the social context. Finally, the third section observes the current knowledge regarding the values of certification labels in sustainable fashion consumption. The chapter is concluded with a theoretical framework shaped by the main literature streams.

2.1 The evolution of the sustainable fashion consumer identity

2.1.1 Fashion and identity in the consumer society

Recent economic and cultural historiography theories believe that one must take a multifaceted approach to better understand, what has shaped contemporary consumer behaviour (Sassatelli, 2007). Thus, the emergence of the consumer society is being observed more commonly as a long-term phenomenon with multiple geographies at various historical events (Glennie, 1995; Trentmann, 2004). Subsequent to the post-war period, the great economic expansion of cultural goods on the market took place. This triggered the mass-production of goods, mass-consumption among all social classes, and mass-communication through cultural intermediaries (Sassatelli, 2007). Consumption, therefore, became not only an expression of economic value but also related to symbolic meaning, influenced by cultural and social factors (Mukerji, 1983). The process of buying and selling goods developed into a significant collective and economic activity, leading to the formation of social practices i.e. cultural classification, social structures, professions, power relations, and identity constructions (Sassatelli, 2007). Veblen (1899) further argues that the possession of objects signalled prestige to the owner, showing superiority to others. Thus, consumption was no longer only driven by the function and utility of objects.

The development of fashion was supported by the circle of aspiration and desire for a rapid change (Sassatelli, 2007). Fashion itself acts as a social mechanism, which signals diverse forces to society, enabling people to belong to certain groups but also distance themselves from others; the need for cohesion and differentiation (Simmel, 1904), or in other words inclusion and exclusion (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, consumers construct an identity by aligning and at the same time distancing themselves from others in a common language. Bourdieu (1984) further argues that fashion provides a promise and opportunity, enabling consumers to transform into someone they aspire to be. Likewise, sociologist Bauman (2010) explains fashion as a driver for differentiation. Furthermore, he argues that it is a socio-economic competition, categorising people into different groups; winners and losers. Thus, fashion can be perceived as a social

game steered by continuous anxiety and defined by the avoidance of exclusion and the fear of feeling left out (Bauman, 2010). McNeill (2018) also highlights the emotional element of fashion consumption, as she found that instead of confidence and creativity, fear of being judged, and not fitting in has major implications for fashion consumption.

The current postmodern era involves the freedom of consumer choice, changing lifestyles and new social movements. Therefore, society is going through constant changes, which is transferred into the cultural meanings of artefacts (Bauman, 2000). Bauman (2000) describes this phase as a liquid society, where consumers are affected by fluidity and uncertainty, which evokes constant self-critique (Niinimäki, 2010). Therefore, due to this constant change, consumers need to constantly renew their appearance based on what is perceived to be culturally accepted and valid, and how they want to convey themselves within this world (Bauman, 2000; Niinimäki, 2010). Thus the role of cultural norms cannot be ignored, when considering fashion consumption and identity in the social context (Davis, 1994). Furthermore, as social interactions validate one's self-identity, the importance of the social environment in identity creation is further reinforced (Stets & Burke, 2000). Therefore, the owned clothing items have a significant role in the construction of identity (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; McNeill & Venter, 2019). Consequently, both individual values, cultural norms, and the social interaction elements of clothing choice are crucial for a holistic understanding of fashion consumption.

2.1.2 The emergence of sustainable fashion

In 1987, the Brundtland report first defined sustainability as 'being able to satisfy current needs without compromising the possibility for future generations to satisfy their own needs' (WCED, 1987, p.43). The fashion system received criticism, due to its harmful environmental impact, and social ethical aspects, which evoked the concept of sustainable fashion (Niinimäki, 2010; Castellani, Sala & Mirabella, 2015; Becker-Leifhold & Iran, 2018). Sustainable fashion has been explained and discussed as 'slow fashion', 'green fashion', 'eco-fashion', and 'ethical fashion' by various scholars and practitioners (Fletcher, 2014; D'Souza, 2015; Peirson-Smith & Evans, 2017). The focus within sustainability mostly lies with the production and garment itself, where researchers highlight aspects such as 'fair-trade', 'sweatshop-free labour conditions' and using 'biodegradable and organic cotton' to avoid harming the environment and workers (Joergens, 2006). These ethical and green claims require companies to adopt distinctive practices such as fair labour conditions, empower workers, source products ethically and locally, obtain certifications, and display traceability (Fletcher, 2007; Pookulangara & Shephard 2013; Henninger, 2015). Thus, sustainable fashion aims to re-invent the fashion industry that has so far been characterised for its negative externalities, such as animal cruelty, environmental damage and labour exploitation (Bianchi & Birtwistle, 2010; Blanchard, 2013).

Despite the ever-changing fashion landscape, sustainable fashion is gradually forming into a phenomenon adopted by a large cohort of consumers (Watson & Yan, 2013), evolving into a 'megatrend' over the past decades (Mittelstaedt, Schultz, Kilourne & Peterson, 2014). Megatrends are shaped by social, economic, political, and technological movements, which are larger, longer and deeper than ordinary trends (Naisbitt, 1982). As a result, independent creatives, multinationals, and high-end designers; from niched to street-style and luxury fashion – all show that stakeholders have begun to embrace and adopt sustainability concepts and practices (Ertekin & Atik, 2015). However, Clark (2008) highlights the oxymoron within the meaning of sustainable fashion, as the underlying nature of fashion is to follow short-term trends, while sustainable fashion is built on encouraging timeless pieces and their long-term

worth. Research also emphasises the importance of consumption patterns, requiring people to consume fashion in a reduced and more ethical manner, yet it might involve challenges due to the above-mentioned oxymoron, which may impede consumers' sense-making of the phenomenon (Fletcher, 2010; Eretkin & Atik, 2015).

2.1.3 The struggle of being a sustainable fashion consumer

In their recent study, Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates (2016) indicate that the awareness and knowledge regarding sustainable fashion among consumers have grown, yet individuals feel that they cannot always act upon their values. Even though sustainable fashion consumption is an emerging concept, previous literature demonstrated various barriers to consuming more consciously, such as knowledge, availability, and price (Connell, 2010; Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2011; Joy et al., 2012). Furthermore, the intertwined factors of egoistic motivations, social influences, and hedonistic values form a strong personal motivation to consume according to fast fashion habits (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Johnstone & Lindh, 2017). These barriers may further discourage consumers to act on their sustainability concerns, resulting in an attitude-behaviour gap (Connell, 2010; Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2011; Joy et al., 2012, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980, Ajzen, 1988). Consequently, the dissonance between personal fashion needs and intrinsic concerns regarding the planet and humanity may lead to the emergence of guilt, as consumers do not feel able to act upon their sustainability values (Peloza, White & Shang, 2013). Traditional, high-street fashion often contradicts with sustainability values of consumers, which can lead to frustration, and a sense of shame (Lundblad & Davies, 2016).

The traditional view argues that in sustainable fashion consumption, consumers are asked to go beyond their individual needs of expression, cohesion and differentiation, and consider environmental and ethical elements at purchase (Niinimäki, 2010). Early understanding of the topic of sustainable fashion consumption argued that strong altruistic motivations lead to sustainable consumer behaviour (Bly, Gwozdz & Reisch, 2015). However, recent research on the matter argue that sustainable fashion consumption is also motivated by egoistic values and motives (comfort, individuality, differentiation, looking good, avoidance of guilt), beyond care for the environment and sustainability issues (Antonetti & Maklan 2014; Bly, Gwozdz & Reisch, 2015; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Furthermore, according to the dominant paradigm in fashion consumption research, people consume not only to enable identity building and enhance self-esteem but to fulfil their need of social belonging, thus facilitate cohesion and differentiation (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Likewise, in a recent study by McNeill & Venter (2019), it was brought to attention that identity-related benefits in a social setting among young female consumers are the most sought after outcomes of participating in sustainable, collaborative fashion consumption. McNeill and Venter (2019) argue that sustainable collaborative fashion consumption in their study was adopted mainly due to its power of facilitating identity creation, and assisting cohesion to a new environment, and fit in with the local style. Expression of individual sustainability values, as making a statement, and thus differentiation from the local norm was also discussed in the study, but to a lesser extent (McNeill & Venter, 2019). Those who wanted to act upon their sustainability values adopted the consumption pattern to differentiate from fast fashion consumers. Furthermore, seeking social acceptance through constructing a sustainable fashion identity, can also be interpreted as a way to avoid judgements, and thus reduce the emotional worries associated with fashion consumption (Bauman, 2010; McNeill, 2018).

Therefore, constructing a sustainable fashion identity is not solemnly led by altruistic motives, but also by the need to cohere and differentiate oneself to others. The underlying reasons for engaging in sustainable fashion consumption, as part of constructing one's identity, remain a complex matter and thus require investigation. Furthermore, identity creation cannot only be understood on the individual level, as the expression of the constructed identity in the social context is also highly relevant. Thus, the following section reviews the expression of one's sustainable fashion identity in the social context.

2.2 The sustainable fashion identity in the social context

2.2.1 The social interaction element

Sustainable fashion consumption is often seen as an alternative way of consumption (Sassatelli, 2007). Initiatives, such as protesting for a safer and ethical work environment, activate consumers to express their values through both online and offline channels (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2016; Davies, 2017; Fashion Revolution, 2018). According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), publicity-oriented attitudes became an emerging trend in the consumer society. Micheletti (2003) argues that taking part in alternative consumption is a mean of questioning the existing consumer culture by opening up to new perspectives and practices. Additionally, consumers are able to make their identity visible to others, and hence, express themselves (Micheletti, 2003).

Previous research pointed out that sustainable consumption may serve as a social currency (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011). There is an emerging understanding from the consumer goods sector that identity expression in the social context, beyond identity construction, also have an influence on the consumption of sustainable products (Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016). The knowledge from different industries (consumer goods, car industry) can benefit the comprehension within the sustainable fashion consumption context. According to Aagerup and Nilsson (2016), consumers are shaped by their social interactions, and products with positive sustainability meanings are often perceived as tools for identity expression. Thus, beyond the utilitarian value of sustainable products, consumers can also gain social acceptance by purchasing and consuming them. Therefore, Aagerup and Nilsson (2016), poses the question of whether 'seeming good' is just as important as 'being good' in the context of sustainable consumption (p.275).

2.2.2 The prius effect and status-enhancement

A survey published in New York Times, reported that environmental motivation behind Prius purchases was last on the priority list, while 'makes a statement about me' the first (Maynard, 2007, in Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010, p.392). Motivated by these insights, Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh (2010) and Sexton and Sexton (2011) conducted studies in relation to the Prius effect, looking into the status-related motivations of sustainable consumption. These papers found that sustainable purchases involve status-related motivation elements as part of consumer identity expression (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011). Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh (2010) further argue that if

status motives are activated, respondents in their study chose environmental benefits over luxurious, but regular products. Furthermore, if the purchase is made public and the price is increased for sustainable products, the tendency was even stronger in their study.

Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh (2010) and Sexton and Sexton (2011) argue that status-related sustainable consumption can also facilitate identity expression in relation to others. According to them, consumers aim to stand out and differentiate themselves as more sustainable consumers, and thus, gain status through sustainable choices (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010). This can be perceived as a way to present themselves as ‘better people than others’, thus as a form of differentiation (Agerup & Nilsson, 2016, p.276). On the other hand, Agerup and Nilsson (2016) studied the aspects of self-enhancement behind the choice of coffee consumption in their experiential study. In contrast with previous research, they found that consumers use symbolic and expressive sustainable consumption as a form of social cohesion, rather than differentiation.

As Stets and Burke (2000) argue, since self-identity is validated through social interactions, identity creation, and expression are simultaneous constructs. This implies that social interactions can further shape the consumer identity. Therefore, the process of cohesion and differentiation cannot be ignored in the social context of identity expression either. The identified opposing, but related motives of cohesion and differentiation, imply that status-enhancing sustainable consumption can be motivated by both differentiation and cohesion (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011; Agerup & Nilsson, 2016). Therefore, further refinement is required to understand whether differentiation or cohesion motivates the status-enhancement in the field of sustainable fashion consumption.

2.2.3 Conspicuous sustainable fashion consumption

The ‘Prius effect’ in relation to sustainable fashion consumption is discussed by Reimers, Magnuson, and Chao (2017). They argue that status-enhancement, gaining the admiration of others, is a strong motivation behind choosing sustainable fashion items, alongside happiness and altruism. Therefore, status-enhancement might serve as a motive to balance the traditional concerns regarding the lack of personal benefits behind sustainable fashion consumption.

Veblen’s status-seeking conspicuous consumption theory carries relevance in the sustainable consumption setting as well (Veblen, 1899; Agerup & Nilsson, 2016, Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). Conspicuous consumption is usually understood in the context of luxurious consumption when the purpose is signalling wealth (Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). An arising term, conspicuous compassion refers to the public display of pro-social behaviour, and it can also be observed in the increasing purchase of products, which carry pro-social value, such as TOM shoes (one for one campaign, Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). Pro-social value of products is closely related to sustainability as it represents the ethical aspects of the phenomenon. Consumers with pro-social self-concept are likely to be motivated to engage in these forms of consumption, to display, and signal their beliefs (Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh (2010) argue that consumption of sustainable items can signal status, partly by demonstrating one’s ability to invest in these causes. Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018) believe that consumers use pro-social conspicuous consumption as an assertion of belonging, just as in the case of conspicuous display of luxury items to demonstrate belonging to a financial elite. Interestingly, the authors argue that cohesion in pro-social conspicuous consumption is

an important motive, as consumers can demonstrate their personal alignment with the cause and be more accepted in conscious social circles.

An important aspect of traditional conspicuous consumption is the public display of the purchase (Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). In the case of pro-social conspicuous consumption, if the purchase itself is not visible to the public, it can hinder the status formation element (Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017; Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). According to Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018), nurturing the public display and expression of pro-social conspicuous consumption can help fashion brands to promote sustainable consumption, by supporting the status-enhancement consumer motives. However, this being an emerging area within research, further investigation is necessary to understand how status-driven and conspicuous sustainable fashion consumption takes place in identity expression, with the aim of cohesion or differentiation in the social context.

2.3 Certification labels in sustainable fashion

2.3.1 Values of certification labels

Previous literature found the need for a mechanism to assist sustainable consumption patterns (Shaw et al., 2006; Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). Certification labels have originally been used to communicate the sustainability aspects of brands and products to help consumers with purchase decisions (Pedersen & Neergaard, 2006). Certification labels can signal the sustainable choice at purchase when the consumers obtained high issue-relevant knowledge and motivation (Pedersen & Neergaard, 2006; Shaw et al., 2006; Thøgersen, Haugaard & Olesen, 2010). However, they have not gained as much importance in the fashion context, as in other sectors, like the food industry (Ritch, 2015). This may be due to the lack of label recognition in the fashion context, and due to the inability to address consumers' motivations for consuming sustainable items (Ritch, 2015; Shaw et al., 2006).

Sustainable fashion is asking the consumer to consider environmental and societal issues and often compromise on self-expression and identity building for the greater good (Niinimäki, 2010). Individual benefits are often neglected in the marketing of sustainable fashion items (Belz & Schmidt-Riediger, 2010). Thus, label certificates within the fashion context might need to find new ways to address consumers by going beyond purely sustainable motives. Traditionally, self-interested consumption is thought of as a cause for non-sustainable patterns of consumption (Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017). The status element and social interaction aspects of sustainable consumption have only been briefly touched upon in previous research (Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016). Aagerup and Nilsson (2016) argue that rendering sustainable consumption as conspicuous, would aid the promotion of sustainable choices. Besides bridging the utilitarian aspects of attitude-behaviour gap, such as price and availability, certification labels may have the potential to signal conscious purchase decisions in the social context, as they are a certified sign of the sustainable choice (Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016; Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017).

2.3.2 Values of certification labels in the social context

Prior to the present study, a pilot research was conducted in the field of third-party labels to interpret the function of an external certificate on the clothing choices. The empirical insights imply that the status element of certification labels could motivate the adoption of sustainable fashion consumption. Furthermore, the pilot study conducted by the researchers also implies that consumers value certification labels not only due to their sustainability benefits but also for their power in social interactions. With the emerging insights on identity aspects of sustainable consumption, there might be an opportunity to encourage sustainable product choices through presenting it in a conspicuous and status-enhancing manner (Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016).

Previous research highlighted the importance of the public act of purchase and recognisability of sustainable fashion products to leverage on the status-enhancing, and conspicuous aspects of sustainable consumption (Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017; Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). However, as sustainable clothing should not compromise on the style element, as that may potentially hinder consumer adoption, the recognisability of sustainable clothing needs to depend on other elements than just the look (Connell, 2010).

Appadurai (1986) argues that if there is a flow of communication among consumers, knowledge serves as a commodity. As a result, the adoption of sustainable items, can encourage consumers to participate in expert dialogues and by that manifest their identity as a sustainable consumer. Goffman (1974) argues that consumers 'key' goods, based on the meanings and values they convey. This can enable consumers to construct new identities and express them to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance in certain social contexts. Owning fashion items with certification labels may, therefore, represent a person of fine taste, a connoisseur, as they indicate high awareness and education regarding sustainable fashion (Sassatelli, 2007). Fashion certification labels have the potential to signal sustainability prior to the purchase. However, the after-purchase value of certification labels in the social context requires further exploration, as previous studies only looked into their potential for purchase decision making.

Additionally, certification labels have not been studied in relation to identity creation and expression in the context of sustainable fashion consumption. Thus, the present study sets to investigate the link between the after-purchase value of certification labels, and sustainable consumer identity creation and expression in the fashion context, to facilitate cohesion and differentiation.

2.4 Theoretical framework

In the present chapter, the current literature was reviewed in an analytical manner to build a theoretical framework for the present study (see Figure 2.1). The figure starts with highlighting the importance of cohesion and differentiation in identity creation (Simmel, 1904; Bourdieu, 1984). Grounded on this baseline theory, as it was discussed in the previous section, the notion of sustainable fashion identity construction is connected to the social process of cohesion and differentiation (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; McNeill & Venter, 2019). The first stream of literature, 'Evolution of the sustainable fashion consumer identity', observed the values and motivations for sustainable fashion identity construction (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; McNeill & Venter, 2019). These insights brought awareness on the lack of understanding regarding the

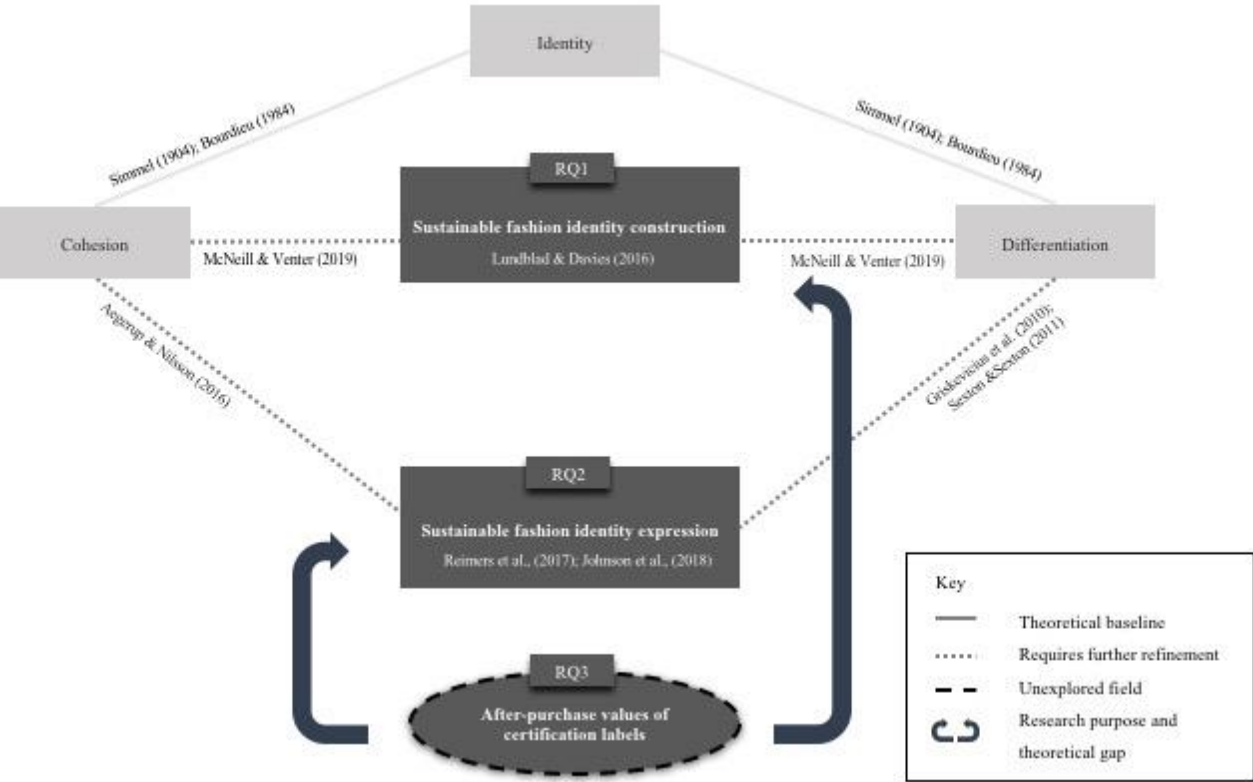
social process of sustainable fashion identity construction, which led to the need of further exploration on the following research question: Why and how do consumers construct their sustainable fashion identity? (RQ1)

The next level in Figure 2.1, focuses on identity expression, which is also connected to cohesion and differentiation, but more specifically through the expression of one's sustainable fashion identity, with tools such as status-enhancement, and conspicuous sustainable consumption (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011; Agerup & Nilsson, 2016; Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017; Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). These aspects were explored through the second stream of literature, 'Expression of sustainable fashion identity in the social context'. Based upon the contradictory insights regarding the contexts of cohesion and differentiation, as well as the need for expression, status-enhancement, and conspicuous sustainable fashion consumption, the following research question was identified: Why and how do consumers express their sustainable fashion identity? (RQ2)

As the current literature mainly looked at the before-purchase value of labels (Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018), further understanding is necessary on how they bring value to consumers after the purchase, while owning the labelled items. This was identified within the third literature stream, 'Certification labels as part of sustainable fashion consumption'. Thus the final level on the figure, after-purchase values, require an exploratory approach; therefore, it is marked as an 'unexplored field'. Investigation on this final research question is necessary to be able to then tie together the streams and address the purpose of the study. Therefore, the following research question needs to be investigated: What after-purchase values do certification labels carry for consumers? (RQ3)

The preliminary theoretical framework presents and links the above discussed three knowledge streams together. The key on Figure 2.1 indicates whether the research questions require further refinement or exploration. As it is indicated on the theoretical framework the purpose of the study sets to be fulfilled by answering and connecting the literature streams together (see bold blue arrow on Figure 2.1). The lack of knowledge regarding the after-purchase value of certification labels in the social context is problematic. Currently, the social value and its worth to consumers is overlooked in certification labels as part of companies' marketing strategies. Thus, the paper sets to provide valuable insights, which can be used to encourage sustainable fashion consumption, by exploring how certification labels' after-purchase value can enable consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity, and thus, assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context.

Figure 2.1 Preliminary theoretical framework



The following ‘Methodology’ chapter provides a detailed explanation of how the researchers collected and analysed the empirical material to answer the research questions and fulfil the purpose of the study.

3 Methodology

The present chapter provides an explanation of the research steps taken as part of the study starting with the research philosophy and approach. Building on these standpoints, the chapter discusses the research design, empirical material collection, and analysis method. Finally, the chapter reflects on the quality of the study, pointing out potential weaknesses, and ends with the ethical considerations.

3.1 Research approach

To synchronise the two researchers' conception of reality, it was deemed important to reflect upon the philosophical stance of the research. Therefore, the nature of reality and knowledge creation were discussed, which influenced the role of the researchers, the formulation of the research questions, and the research design (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Since the purpose of the research is to explore consumers' experience with sustainable fashion consumption, the ontological approach of the study appreciates the individuals' own conception of reality and thus can be considered relativist (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, the present research sets to explore different perceptions, influenced by the participants' and the researchers' interpretation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The epistemological view of the study, considering the theory of knowledge creation, is shaped by a social constructionist approach. This implies that interpretations are unique to the world of the sense-maker, in which social interactions are highly influential for reality construction (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, the present paper considers that meaning is created by each individual consumer in social interactions, giving it a subjective nature (Berger & Luckman, 1966). The understanding of knowledge creation and the idea of reality enables the researchers to explore, and further, enrich the understanding behind sustainable fashion consumption. A more positivist approach would bound the researchers to the search of single reality and casualties, which would not facilitate the understanding of individuals' own experience with sustainable fashion consumption in the social context (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

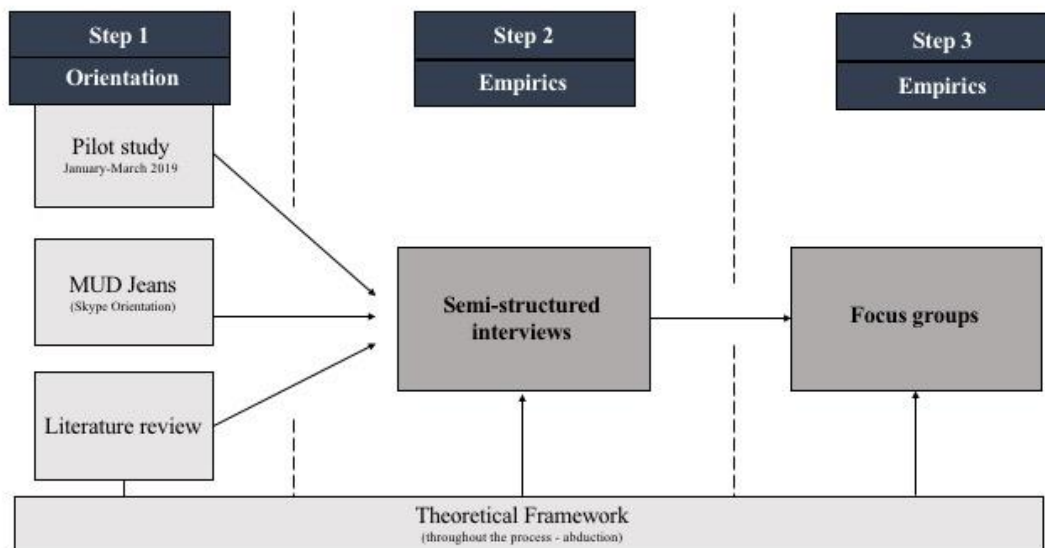
The present study took an abductive approach, due to the nature of the existing theory and research purpose (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). The literature streams were formed into a preliminary theoretical framework, discussed in section 2.4. The framework was used as a guide for data collection and formulation of research questions, and pre-determined themes, while also leaving room for more exploratory, serendipitous findings. The first and second part of the preliminary framework required consultation with previous literature, by looking for more in-depth understanding, and refinement on cohesion, differentiation, when constructing and expressing one's sustainable fashion identity (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). The oscillation between existing theory and empirics, was in line with the abductive approach to theory and research, as it aimed to refine current understanding and consider newly emerging insights (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). It is important to note that the third research question required a more inductive

approach to generate understanding, due to the lack of research within the field of the after-purchase values of certification labels (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). However, the overall approach of the paper still considered to be abductive, since all the research questions were motivated by previous literature, and refinement was more heavily the motivation for the research than pure exploration (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Deductive or inductive reasoning alone would have not aided the research, as a conversation with previous theory and new insights are both required due to the current lack of research within the area (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3.2 Research design

Qualitative research approach supports the exploratory investigation of a phenomenon and refers to research that creates understanding without the aid of statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, to facilitate the exploration of sustainable fashion identity construction and expression, and the after-purchase values of certification labels, the qualitative methodological approach was deemed relevant for the present research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The present research sets to explore a consumption practice through the consumer's own detailed experience and reality, thus, the toolset of quantitative studies would not support this exploration (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, quantitative studies aim to test theories and measure concepts, which is not in the interest of the present study (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). To provide a rigorous interpretation about the lived consumer experience of identity creation, expression, and values of certification labels, consumers' own accounts can be best presented by words rather than numbers (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Previous studies on status-enhancement in sustainable consumption, sustainable fashion consumption, and in the role of certification labels mainly applied quantitative methodologies (Bray, Johns & Kilburn, 2011; Agerup & Nilsson, 2016; Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). These studies described phenomena, yet the quantitative measures struggled to interpret and explore underlying consumer motives (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that qualitative research helps to further study initial concepts, understand human relationships' and societies' unique qualities, and bring 'serendipitous' insights (p.1). Thus, the qualitative approach was applied to study the underlying concepts regarding sustainable fashion consumption, involving the role of certification labels (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The above discussed abductive research approach is influential for the qualitative research design of the study. To study the research purpose, and research questions, a three steps study was designed, where the research was in a constant flux between the theoretical framework and empirics (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Figure 3.1 below shows the three different steps of the research design and empirical material collection. The figure only shows a linear process for presentation purposes, and the 'Theoretical framework' rectangle signals, that the research process was a constant oscillation between theory and empirics.

Figure 3.1 Research design and empirical material collection



The first step of the study involved an ‘orientation phase’, starting from a pilot study on consumers’ perception of third-party labels and research question development with the involvement of the literature. Furthermore, as the research was originally motivated by learning about certification labels in the fashion industry, through Nordic Ecolabelling news, more specifically about MUD Jeans, the Dutch denim brand gaining the Nordic Swan label for all their products. Therefore, complementary to the literature research, it was also deemed important to reach out to MUD Jeans, and understand the company’s motivation for acquiring a certification label, their target groups, and their need for better consumer understanding in the Swedish context. Thus, a Skype-session with MUD Jeans’ Corporate Responsibility Head was conducted. As discussed earlier, the current study developed three research question to meet the purpose of the study, with the first two research questions motivated by the refinement of current theory, while the last one is more towards the search of new insight.

Step two and three of the study involved the ‘empirical material collection phase’. According to Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989), interviews are one of the most significant data collection methods to gather rich understanding regarding consumers’ latent motives and values. This collection method was chosen as the initial empirical step, to avoid the social pressure, and enable the exploration of personal, sensitive aspects of sustainable consumption, without the intimidations in a group context (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Meanwhile, the focus group stage facilitated the further exploration of the themes identified through the interviews, based on group discussions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As the research is driven by social constructions viewpoint, understanding the phenomena in the social context through a group discussion was highly appreciated by the researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since collective sense-making is an apparent aspect of consumers’ life, the choice of additional focus groups was highly justified in the present study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Morgan (1988) argue that focus groups and interviews can complement each other, as interviews can provide rich and in-depth insights, and focus groups allow the collection of more opinion and new insights triggered by group dynamics and discussions.

3.3 Consumer in focus

Previous research served as the primary guidance to define the unit of analysis, the consumers, which were studied in the present paper (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As a result, the unit of analysis was shaped by nationality, age, education, and gender. However, as MUD Jeans is used for illustration purposes, it was essential to consider the company's consumer segments. Thus, MUD Jeans' target audience served as the secondary guiding principle to define the final unit of analysis. Previous research and literature, together with the influence of MUD Jeans, therefore, shaped the group of consumers who participated in the study's semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

3.3.1 Primary guidance

Firstly, in terms of nationality, Swedish consumers were chosen to be studied. This cohort of consumers was preferred, due to their strong pro-environmental norms and health concerns (Strand, Freeman & Hockerts, 2015; Nordic Ecolabelling, 2018). Additionally, Swedes together with other Nordics consumers, are considered the most sustainability conscious in the world, and more specifically, three out of four care about how their behaviour impacts the environment (Nordic Ecolabelling, 2018). Therefore, Swedish consumers' high awareness in sustainability, made them an attractive and relevant unit of analysis to study in the present paper.

Secondly, in terms of age, consumers belonging to Generation Y, also referred to as Millennials, were chosen to be studied, as they demonstrate the highest sustainability awareness compared to other generations (Lu, Bock & Joseph, 2013; Ekström & Salomonson, 2014). Furthermore, generation Y consumers provide a strong, in-between context, with high sustainability awareness but also increasing buying power as they are becoming the largest working generation (Tilford, 2018). Finally, as there are different claims regarding the exact age range of generation Y, the present study considered, and thus, focused on consumers born between 1978 and 2000, which covers most of the opinions regarding the start and end date of this generational cohort (Arsenault, 2004; Lescohier, 2006; Aktan & Kaplan, 2015; Brown, 2017). Narrowing the unit of analysis to a specific age group, provided the researchers with unique insights on how consumers manoeuvre in the field of sustainable fashion consumption, specific to the Swedish, generation Y context.

Thirdly, in terms of education, previous scholars have identified a positive relationship between the level of education and environmental apprehension (Arcury & Christianson, 1993; Klineberg, McKeever & Rothenbach, 1998; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014). Therefore, the present study considered consumers who carry or are in the process of obtaining a bachelor's or master's degree. The education element enabled the researchers to further specify the unit of analysis, and thus, further ensure a baseline interest and awareness in sustainability among Swedish consumers belonging to generation Y.

Finally, in terms of gender, the researchers aimed to consult a mixture of both females and males to gain more diverse perspectives. According to previous literature within sustainable

consumption, both male and female consumers are interested in the status-driven aspects of sustainability, thus both genders are considered to be of high relevance for the present study (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010). As a result, the nationality, age, education, and gender, served as important characteristics to define the unit of analysis, and thus, gather the most relevant consumer segment for the present study.

3.3.2 Secondary guidance

As there was a lack of the fashion aspect in the primary guidance section, the researchers recognised that MUD Jeans' target audience was applicable to consider when finalising the study's unit of analysis. The preliminary conversation with the company's Corporate Responsibility Head enabled the researchers to identify three main target groups. The first group was considered as 'the hip and healthy'. This segment is sensitive to trends, they are aware of current issues in society, and they try to buy less but better quality. The second group is considered as 'the sustainable fighters'. This segment seeks more meaningful experiences, they show high concern and care for the environment, and thus they also show sustainable fashion behaviour. The third group is considered as 'the intellectuals'. This segment demonstrates high awareness of the world problems, they feel an overall scepticism towards brands, and they are well educated. By comprehending the target groups of MUD Jeans, important values, lifestyle, and needs of consumers were identified. These specific target groups and their characteristics, aided the researchers to narrow down the criteria to individuals who show interest and awareness in sustainable fashion consumption, and thus, finalise the unit of analysis of the present study.

3.4 Empirical material collection

The empirical material was collected in two consequent steps, as indicated in the research design, involving semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The sampling method and conduct of the material collection are discussed separately for each data collection method in the next two sections.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interview sample

The above-identified unit of analysis allowed the researchers to select the participant sample accordingly. Purposive sampling was the most suitable technique to use to identify and select participants from the identified unit of analysis, and who could provide the richest and most valuable information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Additionally, to create an insightful interview, it was essential to involve individuals who would show a willingness to participate and communicate their opinions in an expressive and reflective manner (Spradley, 1979; Bernard, 2002). The researchers recruited participants for the interviews through online forums. The individuals who showed interest went through a preliminary conversation with the researchers, where they were briefed regarding the context of the study, as well as, evaluated to

ensure they matched the determined criteria. The process allowed the researchers to create a final sample for the semi-structured interviews. Each of the specific MUD Jeans' target groups was represented by two participants, thus with an equal emphasis on each category. The following Table 3.1 gives an overview of the participants who took part in the interviews. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

Table 3.1 Overview of interview participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Target group</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Time</i>
(p1) Freja	Female	23	The hip and healthy	Swedish Generation Y University degree	00:53 minutes
(p2) Olivia	Female	23	The hip and healthy	Swedish Generation Y University degree	01:09 hours
(p3) Kristina	Female	26	The intellectual	Swedish Generation Y University degree	00:58 minutes
(p4) Liam	Male	29	The sustainability fighter	Swedish Generation Y University degree	01:06 hours
(p5) William	Male	27	The sustainability fighter	Swedish Generation Y University degree	00:35 minutes
(p6) Noah	Male	27	The intellectual	Swedish Generation Y University degree	01:03 hours

Interview process

The interviews were built in a semi-structured manner, with the aim to give participants space to elaborate on their answers but also give the researchers space to ask follow-up questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were the most applicable collection technique to use, as it allowed the interview questions to be constructed around existing theories but also leaving space for unexplored areas not covered by literature, thus, further ensuring the abductive approach (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015). The theoretical framework guided the researchers to identify topics of discussions and steer the communication in the interviews. The interviews were thereby guided by a semi-standardised script based on pre-determined themes, allowing the emergence of new topics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The five pre-determined themes included: fashion and identity, cohesion and differentiation through fashion, cohesion and differentiation through sustainable fashion, expressing sustainable fashion consumption, and values of certification

labels. Within these areas, there were sets of main questions, as well as sub-questions, to fuel the conversation if necessary. However, to gain the most adequate collection of material and to tailor the interviews in a more personal and subjective manner, it was important to provide a level of flexibility (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The larger cohort of questions was, thus, constructed in an open-ended manner, to empower participants elaborate and develop their own opinion (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, not limiting the interviewee to a set of defined questions, created the freedom to adjust the order of the questions and alter the way they were phrased (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This created a smoother conversation flow. The entire interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with one participant at a time. This allowed for a private, intimate, and non-intruding environment. To minimise the potential concerns of the participants, it was vital to commence the session in a sensitive manner (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Thus, the researchers began by briefing the interviewees of the purpose of the study and signing the 'Consent Form' after reading the 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix B and C). To create comfort and trust, it was important to emphasise that there were no right or wrong answers. Even though all participants were Swedish consumers, the interviews were held in English, as there was a limited understanding of Swedish by one of the researchers. The primary intention was to conduct four interviews, however, as the researchers did not reach the point of saturation, two additional interviews were held. This gathered a more fruitful interpretation, which offered a contribution to the research purpose (Quinlan, Babin, Carr, Griffin & Zikmund, 2015). During the first four interviews, both researchers were equally involved to ensure a similar setting and unbiased approach. However, in the two additional interviews, the participation of the researchers had to be split up, due to the convenience of the participants. Yet, this did not affect the flow of the interview, as by then the researchers developed a similar routine and synchronised approach. During the interview, the questions were asked as neutrally as possible to not evoke any biased reaction. It was vital to gain a precise understanding of the answers and to avoid potential misunderstandings (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Probing techniques such as mirror and silent probe were adopted when participants gave a vague or ambiguous answer. Laddering up and laddering down techniques further helped the researchers to explore more interesting content. These techniques were used to carefully peel off the layers of the participants' experiences to fully understand how they perceived the world (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Depending on the participants' engagement and motivation to communicate, the interviews lasted between thirty-five minutes to one hour and nine minutes. The interviews were recorded by an audio device and shortly after transcribed to ensure an in-depth and accurate analysis.

3.4.2 Focus groups

Focus group sample

The larger cohort of the focus group participants was recruited by a snowball method, suggested by the previous interview participants. This technique enabled the researchers to leverage on the interview participants' social network, and thus, find like-minded and similar individuals in regards to the target groups of MUD Jeans, and sustainability awareness. Nonetheless, they all still had to match the criteria of the primary guidance e.g. nationality, age, education, and gender, to further ensure sustainability awareness. Consequently, three focus groups, ranging between five and six participants, each accommodating a mix of females and males, were

created. The following Tables 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 give an overview of the 17 participants who took part in each of the focus groups. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

Table 3.2 Overview of focus group (1) participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Time</i>
(p7) Astrid	Female	30	Snowballed by William	Swedish Generation Y University degree	01:06 hours
(p8) Ebba	Female	26	Snowballed by Kristina	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p9) Saga	Female	26	Snowballed by Freja	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p10) Hugo	Male	30	Snowballed by William	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p11) Lilly	Female	24	Snowballed by Olivia	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p12) Lucas	Male	31	Snowballed by William	Swedish Generation Y University degree	

Table 3.3 Overview of focus group (2) participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Time</i>
(p13) Wilma	Female	27	Snowballed by Olivia	Swedish Generation Y University degree	01:08 hours
(p14) Sanna	Female	24	Snowballed by Freja	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p15) Erik	Female	24	Snowballed by Liam	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p16) Per	Male	27	Snowballed by Noah	Swedish Generation Y	

				University degree
(p17) Nils	Female	25	Snowballed by Noah	Swedish Generation Y University degree
(p18) Johan	Male	35	Snowballed by Liam	Swedish Generation Y University degree

Table 3.4 Overview of focus group (3) participants

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Recruitment</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Time</i>
(p19) Maria	Female	27	Snowballed by Kristina	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p20) Linnéa	Female	24	Snowballed by Olivia	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p21) Oscar	Female	24	Snowballed by Liam	Swedish Generation Y University degree	
(p22) Anna	Male	27	Snowballed by Freja	Swedish Generation Y University degree	00:51 minutes
(p23) Elias	Female	25	Snowballed by Noah	Swedish Generation Y University degree	

Focus group process

The interviews helped the researchers to identify topics of discussions that required deeper understanding and exploration. Thus, the following themes were identified to be further explored in the focus groups; the Swedish sustainable consumer, expressing sustainable fashion consumption in the social context, and values of certification labels in the social context. Within these themes, the researchers designed questions necessary to lead the discussion. It was important to create the focus groups in a manner that evoked reactions, interactions, and discussions to different topics (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Therefore, the quality was dependent on how well the group dynamics would work; hence, the ability of participants to feel free to express their thoughts in a social and open setting. To achieve this, the role of the researchers were vital as they needed to stimulate this type of atmosphere (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Thus, the focus groups were built semi-structured,

allowing the participants to move freely but within the structured themes, aligning with the abductive approach. This also enabled the moderators to not be tied to their defined questions, but move freely by asking follow-up questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To collect more opinions and data within the time limit (Morgan, 1988), the researchers also prepared a set of pictures for the participants to gather a discussion around. These pictures represented various Instagram posts, posted by personal accounts, made anonymous, which were collected from MUD Jeans' Instagram account's tagged photos. Four posts were presented, which aimed to present how different people communicated sustainable fashion in a social context. The participants were asked to express their feelings towards the posts and user, explain what they thought the motives were behind it, and compare them to the other posts. The posts aimed to equip participants with an applied and engaging scenario and to gain an understanding of identity construction and expression in sustainable fashion consumption. However, it is important to notice that the visual material did not guide the analysis, but was used to trigger further the empirical material. The entire focus group guide and visual material used can be found in Appendix D and E.

The focus groups were held in a casual, non-intruding environment to make the participants feel comfortable and at ease. This was enhanced by offering 'fika' (Swedish coffee tradition) and providing the option for participants to small-talk before the session initiated. They also received a briefing of the context of the study and were asked to sign the Consent Forms. Both researchers acted as moderators and the conversations were held in English. All for the same reasons as mentioned in the in-depth interview section. The moderators acted in a neutral manner and used different probing and laddering techniques to receive the most fruitful expressions and thoughts. The focus groups lasted between one hour to one hour and ten minutes. They were recorded by audio devices and later transcribed and analysed.

3.5 Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data bears a creative and intuitive character, which evokes challenges for describing the analysis steps (Patton, 1980). The present approach to analysis was influenced by Spiggle's (1994) article regarding qualitative data analysis in consumer studies. Spiggle (1994) proposes that inferences drawn from the empirical material can be based on analysis and interpretation. Analysis breaks down the complex whole into its constituent parts and it allows a more systematic approach compared to interpretations, which is more unique to the sense-maker (Spiggle, 1994). As part of the analysis the following seven steps were followed in the present study: 'categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration, and refutation' (Spiggle, 1994, p.493). The first five steps guided the researchers to organise the empirics, extract meanings, draw conclusions, and consult theories throughout the process (Spiggle, 1994). Whereas, iteration (subsequent operations shaping each other throughout data collection and analysis back and forth) and refutation (adopting a sense of scepticism, and project ideas under scrutiny) were considered throughout the process (Spiggle, 1994). Interpretations involve abstract conceptualisations, in a less systematic manner than analysis, due to the intuitive, playful, representative, and imaginative nature of the task (Spiggle, 1994). Spiggle (1994) argue that no guidelines are proposed for this phase, as they depend on mental activities. However, inferential processes require a combination of both analysis and interpretation to draw conclusions (Spiggle, 1994). Therefore, even though the present paper took a mainly analytical approach, the application of interpretation tools allowed

intuitive and playful interpretive processes of identifying and understanding newly emerging themes.

To conduct analysis, all interview and focus group audio files were transcribed by the researchers. Once the interview materials were transcribed, both researchers set up NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis package on their computer. NVivo was chosen, as it is an ideal tool for researchers working in a team since it helps to manage a vast amount of data and ideas in a systematic manner (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Therefore, throughout the process the researchers used the NVivo 12 software to manage, organise, and recall the empirical material, through the text search and node tools available in the package.

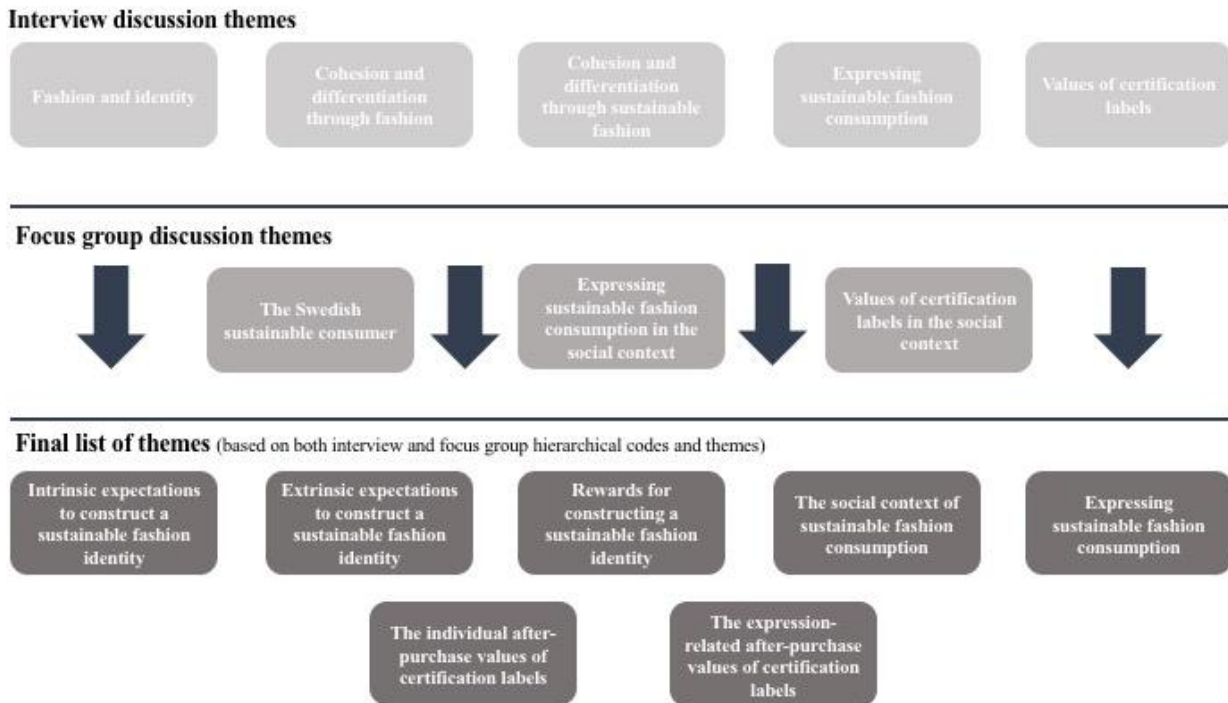
Once the researchers learnt the basic aspects of NVivo, the interview transcripts were uploaded to the programme to commence the analysis. The analysis process was conducted simultaneously with the data collection, as the interview themes and codes guided the organisation of the focus group sessions (iteration, as the steps were shaping each other). NVivo allowed both researchers to have two separate projects open, one for the interview files and one for the focus group material. As part of the categorisation, both researchers coded the interview materials separately, based both on the pre-determined themes from the theoretical framework and through the exploration of further emerging themes within the material. The 'node' feature of NVivo 12, allowed the researchers to code the material systematically and add new quotes to already existing 'nodes' or create new ones. This process is supported by Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to analysis, who suggest using of a set of pre-determined themes, but also to remain open to new insights and code newly emerging insights. This process is also in line with the oscillation mentioned in the research approach section, as the researchers looked for codes based on the pre-determined themes but also included new material, if relevant to the field and research questions (refutation by being sceptical towards emerging insights). The new insights were highly relevant within the analysis and interpretation of the after-purchase values of certification labels, as this part of the research represented a more inductive nature.

The above-described process of coding and categorisation was repeated for the focus group material as well, by both researchers on separate project files. Subsequent to identifying the codes, the researchers merged their interview files, and also their focus group NVivo project files, to have one shared interview file, and one shared focus group file. NVivo helped the process by combining the identical codes (nodes) from the material, thus, the merged file did not contain repetition and provided a clear overview of the commonly identified codes and the separately identified codes. Upon this, the researchers used abstraction, to surpass the categorisation and create higher order conceptual constructs, thus grouped codes into fewer and more general themes and categories (Spiggle, 1994). The abstraction, both for the interviews and focus groups, was based on initial individual coding by both researchers, merging of those through NVivo, and group discussion on the hierarchical order and reduction of the final set of themes, with respective codes (see Appendix F and Appendix G for NVivo hierarchical codebooks imported from the respective NVivo project files).

The themes from the interviews and focus groups were compared once again by the two researchers, who then generated the final themes to answer the research questions. As part of this comparison stage, the researchers noticed that the empirical material from the interviews and focus groups provided overlapping themes and codes, thus, the final set of themes and quotes merged the insights from the two empirical materials. Therefore, all previously identified research questions were supported by themes from both data collection methods. See Figure 3.2, for the theme development process, from the pre-determined interview and focus

group discussion themes, based on the theoretical framework, to the final set of themes based on the theoretical framework, and newly emerged insights, codes from empirical material.

Figure 3.2 Theme development process



The relationship between the final themes were also discussed as part of the analysis and comparison process and, thus were considered at the final arrangement of themes and codes, which process is referred to as *dimensionalisation* by Spiggle (1994). As part of *integration* stage, the researchers considered the final set of themes in relation to theory as it led to the discussion of the findings, and consideration of the preliminary theoretical framework. Experimenting with the report and visual representation tools of the NVivo package, the researchers were allowed to discuss ideas and interpretations, thus this process helped the researchers to manage and synthesis the ideas in relation to theory (Spiggle, 1994; Richards, 1999).

3.6 Quality of research and limitations

There are different concepts and assessments used to determine the quality of a study. However, they should aim to be consistent with the epistemology and ontology that guides the research. In quantitative studies, the concepts of reliability, validity, and generalisability are often used (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015), whereas in qualitative studies, the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are suggested to apply (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, to Lincoln and Guba (1985), when

conducting qualitative research, it is of high essence to consider the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study, which the present study used as a guidance to ensure quality.

Even though the reality of individuals is explained through different perspectives in qualitative research, the findings should be accepted by others to determine a high degree of credibility (Bryman, 2012). Only then can it convey trustworthiness. To increase the credibility, the use of triangulation is recommended (Bryman, 2012; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Adopting multiple perspectives based on triangulation, including the semi-structured interviews and the focus groups, enabled the researchers to gain a better understanding of the participants' conception of phenomena. The individual interviews gathered insights in more personal and sensitive means, whereas the focus groups provided a better understanding of how participants engaged in a social setting. Thus, the researchers considered and applied different methods to better understand the complexity of the human behaviour, which improved the credibility of the findings (Bryman, 2012; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Moreover, the probing techniques mentioned in the data collection section enabled the researchers to convey an understanding of the participant. This was of high importance, as the initial empirical lack of awareness on certification labels in the fashion context, had to be overcome. Eventually, participants felt more comfortable of forming their opinion and supported their thoughts with examples drawn from under consumption contexts, such as car and food. Thus, there was a mutual comprehension of the answers between the interviewer and interviewee, which added another level of credibility to the present study. Furthermore, to keep the unit of analysis consistent, the researchers recruited participants in the focus groups through a snowballing technique. This improved the credibility of the study as it scoped the sample to like-minded participants. However, some may argue that anonymous sampling, through online sign-up provides more credibility, yet in the present study, the initial conversations with the participants ensured that all participants match the rigorous sampling principles, and thus fit with the identified context.

The transferability is vital to consider when determining the quality of a study as it identifies whether or not it can be applied to other scenarios. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), it can also be referred to as the generalisation of findings. However, in qualitative studies, the focus lies within researching a specific phenomenon in a smaller sample (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, the assurance of transferability in the present study is difficult to determine, as the researchers limited themselves, due to time constraints of the study, to six interviews and three focus groups. Nonetheless, the researchers recruited similar samples for the data collection, where the participants had to fulfill certain criteria. Additionally, there was an equal emphasis on gender. Thus, there was a homogeneous sample presented in the study, which improved the transferability. Yet, it is essential to highlight that the purpose of the present paper was to gain a thick understanding and description of the phenomenon studied, meaning, comprehending the cultural context of highly sustainability aware Swedish consumers and how they construct and make sense of their reality (Geertz, 1973). The researchers, therefore, focused on key individuals with particular knowledge to gain greater in-depth findings. However, it is essential to highlight that the researchers are aware that the insights may lack generalisation to other scenarios, individuals, and contexts.

The notion of dependability of the study is assessed through the stability, as well, as consistency and accuracy of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Anney, 2014). According to Bryman (2012), it is essential for research to provide understandable insights to others. Thus, the researchers kept track of the different steps of the study to make better sense of the empirical material, as well as, determine the goal for each step. The research process was further carefully

explained to facilitate a potential replication of the study (Shenton, 2004). However, it is vital to acknowledge that the outcome of a replicated study may not convey the same findings as to the present one. The researchers further improved the dependability by equally and simultaneously transcribe and code the empirical material. Thus, there was a joint analysis for both the interviews and focus groups, which provided a more reliable and open-minded interpretation of the findings. The research avoided false reporting, by looking into each other's coding, as well as focused on avoiding misleading reporting, by discussing the individual understandings, to create knowledge in an accountable manner. To ensure a common understanding of the interpretations of the researchers, all parts were reflected and discussed. This further supports Lincoln and Guba's (1985) opinion on the importance of reaching a reciprocal agreement. However, due to the nature of the study, and the ontological standpoints these interpretations might be unique to the participants and the two researchers.

To assure that the researchers' personal values and preferences did not influence the study, confirmability had to be considered throughout the process. The researchers, therefore, acknowledged that when engaging in social studies, a high degree of objectivity was hard to reach. The data collection methods were chosen to better understand how individuals made sense of reality. Thus, it was important that the knowledge generated, had minimum influence from the researchers, as their role was to moderate the interviews and focus groups. Decreasing any personal impact, as well as, remaining cautious and aware of the possible influence on the interaction between the researchers and participants, improved the confirmability of the study. Thus, the researchers aimed to encourage a free communication, remain neutral, and not show any misleading emotions in the discussions. Furthermore, all transcripts of the participants have been stored to provide readers the opportunity to interpret the material themselves. According to Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013), this improves the confirmability of qualitative studies.

As a conclusion, criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are linked to the trustworthiness, as well as, the authenticity within the present paper (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as it indicates a high degree of representation of distinctive perspectives in a social setting. Additionally, all participants' viewpoints were considered, which made the research approach fair, relevant, and comprehensive.

3.7 Ethical consideration

In research, ethical considerations are referring to securing participants' interest, as well as the precise, unbiased conduct of the research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Bryman and Bell (2007, cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015, p.330) argue that the following ten aspects must be considered for an ethical research conduct: avoidance of harm, dignity, informed consent, privacy, data confidentiality, anonymity, avoiding deception about aims of research, declaration of funding sources and conflicts of interest, honesty and transparency about research, and lastly, avoidance of false or misleading reporting of research findings. These aspects were considered as they thoroughly cover the well-being of participants, as well as the manner in which research should be conducted to live up to ethical standards.

In the present study, the well-being of all participants was considered, as avoidance of harm and securing dignity were a great priority, especially when participants were asked to reflect

upon cohesion, differentiation, identity, and status through consumption. In order to ensure that all participants were at ease, and comfortable with their involvement, fully informed consent by all participants was asked. Furthermore, a safe environment was provided, in quiet and undisturbed places, accommodating the participants' availability and comfort. As part of the initial conversations, each interview and focus group participant received a 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix C), explaining the aspects of participation, the field of the research, and contact details of the researchers. In this form, participants were ensured that their participation is anonym and that they will be referred to by pseudonyms (see Table 3.1 for interview and Table 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 for focus group participants). Furthermore, they were also ensured about the confidential and private handling of their data. The participants were also aware that the research was conducted in partial fulfilment of the International Marketing and Brand Management degree. The deception was avoided, and participants were briefed about the general topic of discussion, sustainable fashion consumption, yet they were not fully aware of all aspects of the study to ensure unbiased accounts. Finally, before the interviews and focus groups started, all participants were explained that the participation is voluntarily, and they are free to withdraw at any point, as well as their right to seek for a copy of the final paper, and only then they were asked to sign the 'Consent Form'. Lastly, reflecting upon the Instagram content used in the focus groups, they were collected without breaching privacy aspects by removing the names and tags and only gaining content from public profiles.

Based on Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2015) four political dimensions within research: the experience of the researchers, subject of study, corporate, and academic stakeholders were also reflected upon. The researchers were aware that their personal experiences and backgrounds, could act as a filter for the research. However, both close and distant perspective to the empirics were represented by the researchers, by one being part of the context (Swedish consumer) while the other one had a more external perspective, as not identified as a Swedish consumer. These backgrounds and perspectives were reflected upon and discussed throughout the study, which led to diverse and rich interpretations. The researchers are aware that the subject of the research likely was influenced by popular topics (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Sustainability and consumption as such are macro trends within both academia and practice in several industries, and not specific to the present paper, thus are inevitable (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The study was partly motivated by providing valuable consumer insights in the Swedish segment for MUD Jeans, as it was discussed in the '1.5 Normative Promise' section, yet the main motivation of the study was to contribute to academia, refine and enrich the understanding on the topic. Besides the orientation conversation with MUD Jeans, the company did not invest resources into the presents research and did not aim to influence the direction or the findings. Lastly, the academic stakeholder within the present research is Lund University, and the Thesis Supervisor, who has provided valuable feedbacks but did not influence the research direction in any manner.

4 Empirical findings

The following chapter introduces the empirical material of the present study. The rich insights gathered from six semi-structured interviews and three focus groups enabled the researchers to identify seven main themes, in accordance with the analysis method discussed in the previous chapter. The collected empirical findings are organised on the basis of the themes and sub-themes, supported by quotes from the participants. The present chapter provides a grounding basis, driven by the empirics for 'Chapter 5 - Analysis and Discussion', where the hereby presented themes and findings will be connected to the research questions.

4.1 Intrinsic expectations to construct a sustainable fashion identity

The researchers identified that engaging in sustainable fashion was partly because of the participants' own expectations. These expectations were explained by intrinsic motivations such as personal values, responsibility, and guilt. As a result, the hereby presented theme, helped the researchers to gain a grounding interpretation of the intrinsic expectations behind constructing a sustainable fashion identity.

4.1.1 Personal values

The participants' personal values were thoroughly discussed throughout both the interviews and focus groups. This provided the researchers with an understanding of how they felt towards sustainable and non-sustainable practices in fashion, and if these values truly came from the self or from other sources. The insights revealed that the participants demonstrated an informed view of the current threats to society and the planet. There was a strong awareness of aspects such as climate change and unethical practices within the working place. This influenced them to shape strong opinions of sustainability; hence, what is right or wrong to do.

*'Because of the changes in climate. Because we had the forest fires last summer. The winters have become strange. Hot summers. And so on. I think people are starting to see it with their own eyes and realise **how valuable nature is**. They see how animals are becoming extinct.'* [William, interview 5]

Furthermore, the participants understood that their buying choices and usage habits did not always have a positive impact on the environment. Nonetheless, they carried an expert knowledge, as well as, honest reflection on their own engagement in sustainability and clothing.

*'Yes I think it is definitely **uncomfortable**, for example buying a 150 SEK t-shirt from H&M that **I know has taken a lot of water and energy to produce**, and then it will be thrown out after a while.'* [Freja, interview 1]

Freja discussed how she found it uncomfortable to navigate between her personal values and actions once she has been exposed to unpleasant information.

4.1.2 Responsibility

As the participants embodied a great awareness in sustainable fashion consumption they also recognised the need for change. Thus, they labelled themselves indirectly as important assets 'to save the planet before it's too late'. They also felt empathy for the environment and humanity and saw themselves responsible for causing the current threats to the planet.

*Like the society is kind of fucked up. **You need to do what you can** to save the planet before it is too late. I am also totally aware, also most of my friends, they behave a certain way. [...] It doesn't hurt for me to **try to live more sustainable** so why not.'*
[Liam, interview 4]

Liam claimed that making sustainable choices is something that should be obvious to any individual as we are living in very critical times. Noah further reflected upon the importance of doing something good for society.

*'I want to live in line with these **values** and **do good** for the community.'* [Noah, interview 6]

4.1.3 Guilt

Furthermore, many participants felt ashamed and anxious if their actions did not comply with their internal values. This posed a strong guilt factor on the participants. Thus, an internal judgement was created based on the interaction between the participants' own actions and values. Consequently, the guilt was closely related to the responsibility the consumers felt when they did not pursue practices in favour of their values regarding sustainable fashion consumption.

*'I have a strong **shame impulse**. I easily feel ashamed if I don't live according to **my values**.'* [Noah, interview 6]

*'Yeah I think I too to greater heights and **I started questioning more** and also because **personally I try to really like not have such a big attitude behavior gap**.'* [Linnéa, focus group 3]

Reducing the guilt by staying true to the self, therefore, became an important point of conversation among participants.

4.2 Extrinsic expectations to construct a sustainable fashion identity

The need to construct a sustainable fashion identity was not explicitly triggered by internal motivations, but also by external factors. The participants explained that these expectations were mainly created by feeling a judgement from others, by following current social trends, and by complying with social norms. Thus, the hereby presented theme aimed to gain comprehension of the extrinsic expectations behind constructing a sustainable fashion identity.

4.2.1 Judgement

Throughout the discussions, the researchers identified a sense of judgement of others, as well as, themselves. According to Erik and Noah, people's degree of sustainable behaviour, as well as, mind-set, classified them into groups; intelligent versus non-intelligent. Additionally, Erik emphasised on the person's responsibility to educate the self about sustainability, while Noah claimed that people who are not exposed to the knowledge, should not be judged the same way as those who are. Consequently, people who conveyed limited knowledge in sustainability were seen as less educated, and in many cases, looked down upon.

*'I do the same, if that is judging, but **I don't feel that the person is so educated.** I wouldn't say that person is a bad person but I would say the probably don't know any facts. And that's that **person's responsibility** so.'* [Erik, focus group 2]

*'**Mindless robots** in the consumerism wheel. **Unintelligent**, but some oblivious. Or some have not been exposed to the same experience that is different.'* [Noah, interview 6]

Another judgement arose focused on the social setting and relationships of the participants. Here, the level of judgement was related to social circles. To Lucas and Wilma, being judged by someone important, such as a girlfriend or friend, was much more critical than by a further acquaintance. Linnéa further mentioned that the status of the judging person mattered. Thus the following quotes show that the participants, therefore, had a very distinct opinion to when a judgement mattered and when it did not.

*'If someone walked up to me and said that's a nasty unsustainable shirt, then I would be like **whatever, f*ck off.** But if **someone important** told me, then it is a different thing. If my **girlfriend** [...] because she would have reasons, that makes me listen.'* [Lucas, focus group 1]

*'I think it depends on if it's like a **really good friend** [...] so I feel that if people are aware of me not being sustainable then I would try to change that. So like **circle of groups.**'*
[Wilma, focus group 2]

*'That's how I feel with our **teacher in the sustainability course**. I mean if he would criticise me I would be like yeah yeah yeah I'm guilty because he was the most sustainable most **knowledgeable person I ever met.**' [Linnéa, focus group 3]*

4.2.2 The sustainability buzz

The participants highlighted that there is a social movement of sustainability, motivating people to become more aware of the topic. According to Astrid and Freja, being sustainable is the new 'cool'. Thus, the perception of what is cool and not cool has changed among individuals. Consequently, following trends appeared to be important as it influenced how others perceived you. Additionally, 'embarrassment' and 'shame' were feelings which arose if someone would witness their non-sustainable behaviour. Thus the sustainable trend created by extrinsic expectations, pressured individuals to engage and express sustainable identity and values in certain ways.

*'Do you not think tough that few years ago **it was kind of cool** to have one million shopping bags, because you went on a shopping trip, and pictures. I would feel a bit **embarrassed**, I would never upload a picture of myself with lots of shopping. Then at least small part of my network would feel like **that's not very modern.**' [Astrid, focus group 1]*

*'Yes I think so as more people are aware **it is becoming cooler to care about the environment the earth**. Like we are not living in the '50s when it didn't matter, that you consume and throw away. I think there is definitely **a shame of being wasteful**. Especially amongst younger people.'* [Freja, interview 1]

4.2.3 Social norms

The participants had similar opinions of what norms one should comply to Sweden. There was a shared agreement that Swedish people care for the environment, as well as, how they present themselves. These aspects had a strong influence on the participants' choices and lifestyle too. It was noticeable that participants associated their Swedish identity with imposed responsibility to act in a certain manner. Olivia further highlighted that it is expected from you to be able to 'keep up' with the conversations.

*'**People are constantly talking about it** so you should be able to **keep up with the conversation** but in another country not as much, because that's not as sustainable as Sweden.'* [Olivia, interview 2]

Additionally, comparisons between countries were identified during the discussions. The participants mentioned that when travelling abroad, there was an evident difference between how people in Sweden talk about sustainability. Erik further claimed that Swedes have a bigger responsibility to act sustainably.

*'It can seem very egocentric but it feels that Sweden as country, not only because of Greta Tunberg, is a **symbol as a pioneer of sustainable living** or overall. Even though we're not that big of a country with that much impact, except the bigger companies. In that sense I think that **we have a bigger responsibility** in that sense.'* [Erik, focus group 2]

It was also brought to attention that there were typical standards of life, which individuals were expected to adopt in today's society. Olivia in the final quote stated that there was a desire to be seen as a 'good human', which can be connected to the 'millennial mind-set'.

*'I think for me it's a **stereotypical millennial mindset** where you're looking for jobs **you want to have a purpose**. You want to feel what you're doing is actually helping the world. If you start wearing sustainable brands it's a way to say 'look I have a purpose, **look I want to change the world**.'* [Olivia, interview 2]

4.3 Rewards for constructing a sustainable fashion identity

The insights revealed that beyond acting according to internal and external expectations, sustainable consumption carried rewarding outcomes. Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards emerged for the construction of a sustainable fashion identity. Therefore, the hereby presented theme helped towards comprehending the rewards behind constructing a sustainable fashion identity.

4.3.1 Intrinsic rewards

It was relevant from the initial interviews, that the participants experienced personal satisfaction from purchasing sustainable items. These feelings were internal and were mainly described through the following topics: a sense of pride, excitement, feeling good, contribution, self-awareness, and development. Sincerity and honest care for the planet and humanity were relevant topics. Participants often reflected upon their values, and how buying sustainable fashion items supported these values, therefore allowed them to feel comfortable, true to themselves, and generally good. Furthermore, the purchase itself was regarded as an act of good, and contribution to society. Participants further mentioned that sustainable fashion consumption, in terms of second-hand items, brought excitement, and feeling of pride for finding a very good piece.

*'Of course, I **feel good**, but it is also a way for me to confirm that I do something good and **contribute**.'* [Liam, interview 4]

*'I guess I am **proud**. And when you go to a second hand store and you find a very good piece then you are just **super excited**, like I am so lucky that I found this.'* [Freja, interview 1]

Interestingly, another participant associated sustainable fashion consumption with self-awareness and development. To William, consuming in a more sustainable manner was associated with knowledge and awareness, which contributed to personal development.

'For self-awareness and development.' [William, interview 5]

4.3.2 Extrinsic rewards

On the other hand, external rewards were also associated with sustainable fashion identity construction, which served as a positive reinforcement for buying those clothing items. Throughout the empirical material, social recognition was associated with both inner circles and the general public. Participants were mainly interested in being recognised by their closer connections, yet their answers often included their image in the 'public eye'. There was a perceived need for 'cool behaviour' to be recognised through social forms of acknowledgement, such as a 'high five'.

'Well, I hope they think it's cool and give me a high five.'
[William, interview 5]

Furthermore, projecting a caring image was also discussed by the participant. Being perceived as a caring person, carried relevance for participants' social standing. Thus, rewards were gained by being acknowledged and seen as a caring consumer. Olivia used the word 'showing', to imply that actively projecting an image can be motivated by gained recognition in the eye of the public.

'Sustainable fashion is more about showing that you care, so I guess it's status in the sense, as you want to show that you care. And that's an added value to be seen as such a caring person for the environment.' [Olivia, interview 2]

On the other hand, Noah implied through the word 'demonstrate' that consumers had a less active role in communicating sustainable identity as the clothes spoke for themselves.

'Sustainable clothing clearly demonstrates that you are sustainable. Some people might do it for public recognition or attention.' [Noah, interview 6]

When sustainability was such a central part of the discussion, the confirmation and validation were often associated with shared values around caring for the planet and society. Thus, the confirmation and validation gained through a sustainable consumer image served as a strong extrinsic reward. Noah highlighted that fashion was a good channel for creating a sustainable identity of oneself as that was the first aspect that others perceive. Overall, the following quote highlights his experience of social perception in today's society, while searching for confirmation and validation.

*'We are in a very **self-absorbed** period. We have a constant **confirmation and validation** need.[...] I think sustainable fashion is a good channel for this, as that's how you present yourself, that's what people see first of all.'* [Noah, interview 6]

4.4 The social context of sustainable fashion consumption

It became evident that the participants experienced a need to address sustainable fashion consumption both for themselves and to others. There were opinions on how the social environment triggered people to express it, as well as, discussions on the rewards for expressing sustainable and concealing non-sustainable habits. Therefore, the hereby presented theme provided the researchers with a better understanding of the social context in sustainable fashion consumption.

4.4.1 The social currency of sustainable fashion consumption

The type of social environment played an active role throughout the conversations. The foremost finding was that one would essentially talk about sustainable fashion habits when there were an appreciation and awareness among others. Additionally, this also determined who you surround yourself with and what their opinion on the matter was. According to Lilly, some might think sustainability is 'god', while others may not care at all.

*'Like in some areas people are very aware, and **sustainability is like god**, and in other areas people **don't care at all**. I think it **depends on the people you surround yourself with**.'*

[Lilly, focus group 1]

However, there was also a clear distinction between different demographics. The participants believed that the 'younger generation', meaning generation Y and below, were more aware of and interested in sustainable fashion. It was important for this cohort to be perceived as 'caring for the environment' and 'being a good person'.

*'I think there is a **public pressure among certain groups**, like **young people** in general. They are more aware, and care more about the environment, I think older generation maybe not understand it in the same way. I think if you are among this age group **it is more important to me that they understand that I am sustainable**, I care about the environment and that I am a good person. Whereas if I am with grandparents, I don't think they would even start thinking about it.'* [Freja, interview 1]

*'**The younger generation** is aware of the pressure to communicate sustainability, because **they need to behave a certain way and confirm that**. Then I think social media is a very*

important tool how to express your opinion about something.’ [Liam, interview 4]

These claims further displayed that there are different tools used today to communicate sustainability, such as social media. According to Liam, these tools enable individuals to express an opinion and through that support one’s identity.

4.4.2 Cohering through expressing one’s sustainable fashion identity

The communication of consumer identity in the social setting and adhering to accepted norms were reflected upon by participants. Some of the participants made a connection between fashion as a tool for social identity construction, and sustainable consumption as a new way of expressing these values to belong and distance oneself to others. Olivia explained how designer items served as a tool for becoming part of certain groups and then drew a comparison to sustainable consumption, as a more meaningful way of creating a social belonging. This experience implied a sense of tiredness with current societal structures and status symbols. For Olivia sustainable consumption within fashion carried a higher meaning, than traditional forms of luxury consumption. In this case, Olivia wanted to move beyond cohesion through luxury, to less shallow conversation-based social interactions on sustainability, related to the items people wear. Here, sustainable fashion consumption would serve as a new form of shared interest between consumers.

*‘Fashion is a way to express who you are, what your values are, how much money you have, what background you’re from, what type of community you want to be a part of. In Sweden, a lot of young girls [...] buy **designer bags** to connect with someone or something, you have these superficial conversations over these items. What if you could have more **meaningful conversations about how sustainable something is.**’* [Olivia, interview 2]

Expressing one’s sustainable fashion identity was perceived as an important aspect in ‘categorising people’. In this sense, participants created their own idea of others based on their visible sustainable habits. This categorisation urged people to express their sustainable identity in the fear of being perceived as non-sustainable.

*‘Yes, definitely. I think there’s this tendency to **categorise people** who are sustainable, such as veganism. Who care for the environment? You categorise people into a box based on if they’re only wearing sustainable items, or only living a life like that.’* [Olivia, interview 2]

4.4.3 Not signalling non-sustainable fashion habits

Although there was a force to communicate sustainable fashion consumption, it appeared in the discussions that the participants were more careful about not signalling, and hiding non-sustainable behaviour. According to some participants, it was more apparent to distance oneself from non-sustainable practices, rather than expressing sustainable fashion consumption.

*'They are ignorant. I mean I think socially its really trendy to be sustainable and care about. **You don't want to be someone who doesn't.**'* [Lucas, focus group 1]

*'Yeah exactly because someone wouldn't say it to you directly but you talk about it and learn their values. So then **you will be concerned about them finding out that you're not sustainable.**'* [Erik, focus group 2]

According to Erik, this was because values interplay in social relations, which created an expectation of how you should act and not act in certain friend groups. This was related to that worse behaviour received more visibility than good behaviour. Thus, the participants sometimes felt concerned if people would find out that they are not sustainable. Furthermore, as Astrid mentioned, the participants were more inclined to hide their non-sustainable purchase, than signal their sustainable purchases in some cases.

*'Like I bought something shit from Primark which is something that I would not tell people like 'look what I bought here, 100 SEK only'. **So I don't think I signal something when I do something sustainable but I really do try to not signal it if I do something unsustainable.**'* [Astrid, focus group 1]

4.5 Expressing sustainable fashion consumption

Throughout the previous theme, it became evident that expressing a sustainable fashion identity was important in the social context. Furthermore, it also came across that expressing one's sustainable fashion identity was motivated by factors such as informing others and enhancing one's status. Therefore, the hereby presented theme gave the researchers further comprehension of the reasons and circumstances behind expressing one's sustainable fashion identity.

4.5.1 To inform and educate

The participants felt that people often communicate sustainable fashion consumption to inform and educate others. In many cases, they assumed that the purpose was to spread awareness due to their honest care, knowledge, and passion for the phenomenon.

*'Someone who wants to like **educate on thinking twice before you buy.**'* [Johan, focus group 2]

*'You want to **raise awareness about organic cotton used at H&M.**'* [Elias, focus group 3]

Johan and Elias observed that expressing sustainable fashion habits was sometimes an act to address serious facts and inform others. Thus, the participants felt that there can also be a genuine reason behind it. Additionally, Olivia stated that her reason to address sustainable

fashion consumption was to help others make better choices and by that become an inspiring role model.

*‘Yes **I like to inspire.** [...], **to be able to help people make better choices.**’ [Olivia, interview 2]*

However, there was also an identified fine line between doing it to inspire people in a non-judgemental way and looking down on others in a morally demanding way. Furthermore, Linnéa believed that there was often a self-incentive in mind when expressing one’s sustainable fashion identity, alongside educating others.

*‘**In one way it is probably to inspire people to consume less. But also about their self-branding and how they want to be perceived by their peers.** So I think it has both. I have a friend and she does this all the time on insta stories, and she’s a vegan [...] so it’s more about **bashing people who are not.**’ [Linnéa, focus group 3]*

4.5.2 To enhance one’s sustainable fashion identity

Although participants felt that individuals can address their sustainable fashion identity due to non-egocentric motives, they were still more convinced that it was driven by enhancing their own sustainability status. Erik specially stated that there are often ‘some hidden incentives’ to why consumers express sustainable fas. Thus, the need to express and enhance the personal image was a topic which re-emerged throughout the discussions. Additionally, the desire to stay relevant and updated on societal trends were also highlighted.

*‘I think again it’s connected to **the trend.** I think that there’s a lot of people **talking about sustainability as a front** and maybe not doing so much if you actually ask them what they do that is sustainable.’ [Johan, focus group 2]*

*‘Yeah **it’s so trendy to be sustainable right now.** Then that has a potential threat of becoming a **façade** which then goes against the ideal of sustainable fashion.’ [Olivia, interview 2]*

Johan and Olivia believed that the current sustainability trend influenced more individuals to communicate their sustainable fashion consumption to others. Hence, it was executed with the aim to receive increased social recognition of one’s identity. However, the participants often referred to these people as ‘hypocrites’, as they did not ‘walk the talk’. They also discussed that it often became a ‘façade’ or ‘front’ to make them perceived as caring for the planet and society.

*‘He looks like a **super annoying guy,** I would be annoyed if I saw this on my Instagram feed. [...] I don’t think that is his ambition, I think his ambition is just mainly to **build his personal brand.**’ [Astrid, focus group 1]*

- ‘*They communicate it on Instagram.*’ [Hugo, focus group 1]
- ‘*And how do they do it there?*’ [Interviewer, focus group 1]
- ‘***They brag.***’ [Hugo, focus group 1]
- ‘*Anything else they do?*’ Interviewer]
- ‘***They perfect an image of themselves in any way possible.***’ [Ebba, focus group 1]

According to Elias, a person can act as an inspirational source without having to enhance the self to the public. Therefore, communicating sustainable fashion habits was seen as more meaningful if there was a genuine purpose behind it.

*‘But there’s something about him **trying to include himself in this picture**, which is **not really the purpose**. It’s something annoying like he’s talking about plastic and then he’s happy. If he would like to inspire then he could maybe put a picture of the ocean full with plastic. So there is **something which doesn’t feel authentic.**’*

Astrid implied that using social media, in general, to present the self was seen as foolish; hence, this habit received a lot of judgement.

*‘It’s easy to **enhance one side of your life as a really sustainable side** and when you do that on **social media it is also perceived as extremely self-centred and very not sympathetic**. Like you are a **fool of yourself.**’* [Astrid, focus group 1]

*‘Isn’t that in line with the **Swedish mentality**, like bragging about anything is **not a good thing.**’* [Saga, focus group 1]

Moreover, the participants implied that there was a desire for others to notice one’s sustainable fashion consumption. However, it needed to be pursued in a discreet manner to avoid the judgment of others. Thus, the term ‘humble bragging’ appeared among the conversations, which enabled individuals to address matters in a more subtle way, yet with the indirect aim to ‘show off’. The participants further discussed how they would not bring up the topic of sustainable fashion consumption themselves, but be patient for someone else to do it. Only then would it become socially acceptable to talk about it and, thus, trigger a conversation about their habits.

*‘For sure the media but I also think **social media**. Lot of **humble bragging** ‘look at me and look at this awesome sustainable sweater’.’* [Per, focus group 2]

*‘Isn’t sustainability the biggest **humble brag** today, taking the train to Umea instead of the plane, so you can get a tonnes of work done... good for you, I don’t know...’* [Hugo, focus group 1]

4.6 The individual after-purchase values of certification labels

It was identified that labels can facilitate the recognition of sustainable items in the after-purchase phase, as well as their ability to benefit consumers' intrinsic values. Thus, the hereby presented theme helped towards the understanding of the individual after-purchase values of certification labels.

4.6.1 Difficulty of defining sustainable fashion items

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, there was one constantly emerging theme regarding the difficulty of identifying sustainable fashion items. Hugo compared clothing items to hybrid cars, where opposed to clothing, sustainability was apparent at first sight.

*'I mean it is different if you buy a hybrid car, that **everybody can see that it is a hybrid car.** Whereas it is **a pair of jeans, made sustainable, it is hard to see.**'* [Hugo, focus group 1]

Furthermore, internally defining sustainable fashion, in terms of the perception of its attributes, also caused confusion for participants. Participants found it difficult to identify sustainably made items in the fashion industry, which caused difficulties for them to act according to their values and fulfil the expectations, imposed by themselves and society.

*'I feel like **it's difficult to draw the line exactly what is sustainable fashion.**'* [Linnéa, focus group 3]

This confusion often led to ignorance, as participants were less able to act upon their sustainability motivations in fashion. They believed that social expectations are not as strong for sustainable fashion consumption, as for other sustainable behaviours, such as avoidance of plastic, or food consumption. This was due to the clothing items' hidden sustainability value. However, according to the participants, the sustainable trend is emerging and it is becoming more part of their social interaction, as it was discussed in the previous sections.

*'I try to compare it to the food industry, whether **I feel pressure in food shopping to look for labels, compared to fashion. But there it is normalised in a whole other way, maybe if it would be more normalised with certifications in fashion, then I think more people would adapt.**'* [Linnéa, focus group 3]

Linnéa believed that social normalisation of certification labels in clothing was necessary for making more people consume sustainable clothing. One can understand that visibility of sustainability in fashion is the first key step for the process and that labels can help the consumers to signal sustainability.

4.6.2 Intrinsic values

Participants often associated the labels with intrinsic values, such as reassurance of a good act, pride, and also evidence for quality and longevity. In this sense, the label served a credible source and support for the consumers, regarding their good act.

*'I would know that **I did something good** and I would have an item which has a good quality and last for longer time.'*
[Saga, focus group 1]

*'It would make me **feel good** about myself, maybe **proud**.'*
[Liam, interview 4]

Participants re-called instances when they experienced a sense of guilt while purchasing fashion items, due to their high awareness around sustainability issues. However, if the item was certified and sustainable, this guilt was consolidated. Furthermore, the purchase itself was also considered to be more justified if the item was sustainable. 'Buying your guilt away' was a strong intrinsic value that labels presented for consumers.

*'I also think that if I buy something expensive, but sustainable, **you are buying your guilt away**.'* [Lucas, focus group 1]

Appreciation of an item, and gaining long-term use out of it, was often associated with labels. However, participants highlighted that they still had to find the item appealing, as the label only served as an added value. This may imply that fashion items need to represent aesthetics, as sustainability would only strengthen the appeal of the item and not serve as a single selling point.

*'Probably if I buy something it's not only because it is a label but because I like it. So, if it has both these qualities then probably, **I would appreciate it even more**.'* [Astrid, focus group 1]

Lilly compared the experience of shopping certified clothes to the purchase of certified food. In this case, the label would carry a long-lasting value for the participant after purchase, as she would own the item for a longer time compared to certified food products.

*'I think **I would prefer to have labels more for fashion than food** as you keep clothing for some time.'* [Lilly, focus group 1]

The longevity aspect implies that the labelled clothing items may have a potential to deliver intrinsic values (good conscience, reduction of guilt) for the consumers and serve as a reminder of the sustainable aspects while the clothing is used. Therefore, labelled clothing items carry relevance for consumers in the long-run and remind them of their good actions, make them feel proud while owning the piece of clothing.

4.7 The expression-related after-purchase values of certification labels

As the after-purchase value of expressing certification labels emerged, it was revealed that the conversation setting and display of sustainable habits through labels were valuable for consumers. Therefore, the hereby presented theme aided the understanding of the expression-related after-purchase values of certification labels.

4.7.1 Conversation setting

To participants, sustainability aspects had to be addressed in the social setting to become an even stronger phenomenon. However, most participants said that they would not talk about sustainability in relation to fashion unless the topic emerged naturally. In that case, the label would be an incentive to mention the sustainability aspects of the owned item, but otherwise mentioning it would be perceived as bragging. However, even in this scenario, Noah felt the urge to express that sustainable fashion conversations usually involved a humoristic tone.

*'No, we don't really talk about clothing. **Unless it came up, sustainability in fashion, then I would definitely say check out this jumper it is sustainably certified haha...**'*
[Noah, interview 6]

On the other hand, some participants thought that labels would be an additional motivation to address sustainability in a conversation. In that case, the label was perceived as an extra source of credibility, which could support one's sustainable actions in the eyes of others. Therefore, this suggests that labels can serve as an additional motivation to talk about sustainability in clothing. However, as discussed in the 'Expressing sustainable fashion identity section, this must be conducted in a humble manner.

*'I think we are all conscious about sustainability in fashion, and you would be **more inclined**, because you want to bring it up as **you have the label in the back of your mind**. And **if someone mentioned it**, you can be like alright I do have a sustainable shirt.'* [Oscar, focus group 3]

4.7.2 Displaying sustainability

The display of the certification labels emerged throughout the empirical material, as a way of subtle expression of sustainable fashion identity, through the easier recognition of the items. Therefore, through the display of certification labels, consumers can communicate their values in social situations, yet avoid addressing them in an active and bragging manner. Noah and Olivia reflected upon the potential of labels in the following quotes.

'Labels can motivate people who want to look more sustainable to buy it.' [Noah, interview 6]

'Yes, if it's recognisable. I think that's my main difficulty here, how will I know that that shirt is sustainable? But if it was visible then it can absolutely have a status thing.' [Olivia, interview 2]

The participants discussed various innovative and creative ideas on how certification labels could be displayed. External displays involved some small, and discreet marks, not necessarily the label logo, but other forms of identifications, such as a small green tag. In this case, the external visibility of sustainability would serve as 'trendy' stamp, which could communicate the owner's sustainability commitment and identity. Here, the visual display was also associated with the Michelin star from the hospitality industry, which is granted for excellence (Michelin Guide, 2019). Interestingly this may imply, that a certification label can have a strong recognition value for the owner, as an 'excellent sustainable consumer' in fashion.

'I think Levi's made this campaign supporting AIDS, where they made red details on their stuff, and that was a hit. Maybe there could be something similar just with green things, maybe not green colour but those things.' [Nils, focus group 2]

'Like the Michelin star!' [Nils, focus group 2]

Further speculations regarding the display of the certification involved that labels need to be more heavily advertised at the beginning to create better recognition. This thought is related to the idea of normalisation, brought up earlier by Linnéa. In this case, certification labels would need to require more recognition externally, at the early stages, to leverage on the social pressure around sustainable behaviour.

'Maybe there is a point of making them very visible at the beginning, like those obnoxious logos, with I am a sustainable t-shirt to get it more visible. Then overall move forward.' [Per, focus group 2]

After the initial ideas on external visibility, some of the participants raised their concerns around bragging. In their view, the display should be discreet, as otherwise it can be perceived as a form of bragging. Johan compared the pride he felt when buying sustainably produced food at the supermarket, to wearing 'stamped' clothing. He was quick to express his doubt about the external stamp. In this case, the point of reference (sustainably marked food) was further from the fashion industry opposed to the previous example of the AIDS campaign and Levi's, which received a stronger approval between the focus group participants as well.

'It could be like in the store, where you feel proud to have a cart full of nicely produced KRAV food like putting it out on the cashier. But is it the same for clothes, stamped, I don't know?' [Johan, focus group 2]

However, throughout the discussion, the discreet display was reiterated by the participants. For Per and Johan, it was important to know that the fashion item was labelled at the store and on the laundry tag, and would not use it for showing off. Furthermore, Johan compared the

situation to owning branded clothing items, in which he did not desire to project the brand logo outside either.

*'I'd like to see it **on the laundry tag**, like organic cotton, sustainably made or when you buy it and **on the price tag** it could also be displayed. **When I buy it** 'cool and sustainably made', but **no need to show it off**.'* [Per, focus group 2]

*'For me it could be **discreet** too. [...] Not all over the chest, but still visible. [...] **Same with branded clothes**. I have them, but doesn't have to be all over, **I know** that I have quality nice clothes, **that's enough** for me.'* [Johan, focus group 2]

The following conversation from the third focus group involved a humoristic tone regarding the obnoxious display of sustainability-related consumption statements. These insights suggest that if the certification labels would be displayed too visibly, they could have a reverse effect, as customers would not buy these items.

- *'Yes, I agree more the labelling and everything of the clothing but **not like a mark saying I am a sustainable person**.'*
[Linnéa, focus group 3]
- *'Yes that would be another reason for **not buying it**.'*
[Anna, focus group 3]
- *'Yeah that's **the next I'm a vegan**.'* [Elias, focus group 3]

In general, this conversation hints, that consumers do not wish to notice immense messages regarding sustainability on their clothing items. The following statement provides an insight regarding the overarching feelings involved with the display of certification labels.

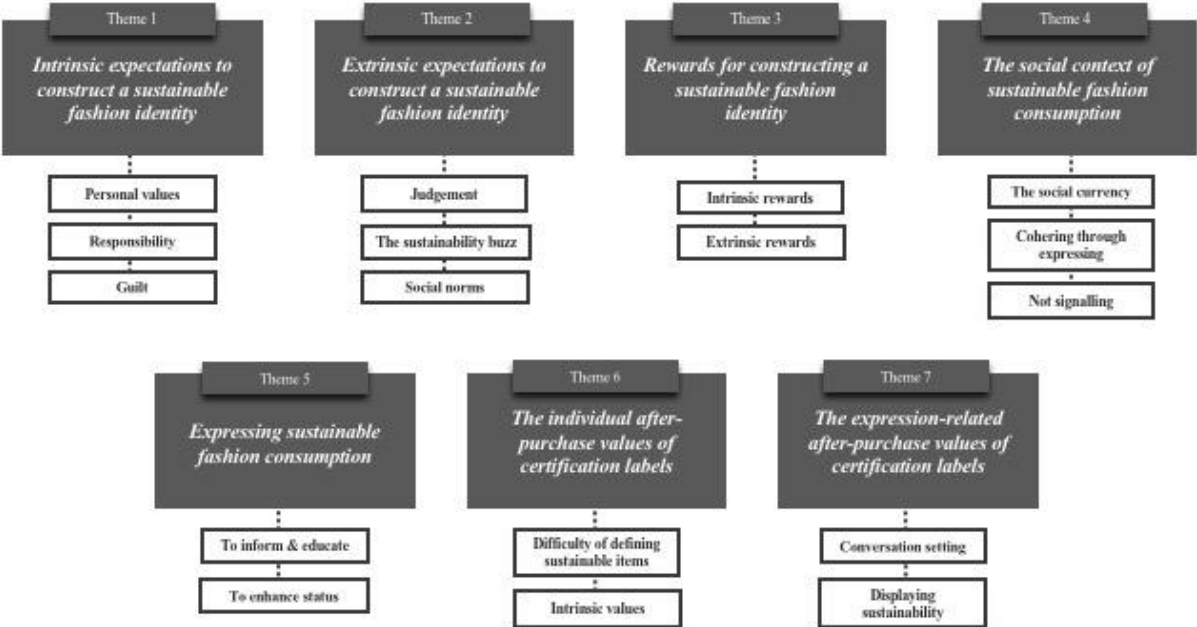
*'**You cannot be judged if it is discreet**.'* [Nils, focus group 2]

Here, the key message was the avoidance of judgement, and a discreet demonstration of one's values. These themes constantly emerged throughout the discussions, as participants were conscious of their perceived image in a social setting.

4.8 Summary of the empirical material

The empirical findings enabled the researchers to identify seven main themes. These themes are built around distinctive sub-themes, with the goal to provide rich insights, to answer the research questions, and thus, address the purpose of the research. Figure 4.1 presents the themes in a numerical order, which provides a grounding base and understanding for the next chapter, ‘Discussion and Analysis’.

Figure 4.1 Identified themes and sub-themes



5 Analysis and discussion

The present chapter analyses and discusses the findings in relation to previous literature streams guided by the research questions. Each research question will be answered through the set of themes which were identified in 'Chapter 4 - Empirical Findings'. Additionally, tying all the research questions together, the purpose of the research is addressed, supported by a discussion on the final theoretical framework of the study.

5.1 Mapping the findings and analysis

In the previous chapter, seven main themes and their sub-themes were presented, supported by participant quotes. These themes will be analysed and discussed in regards to the research questions they aim to serve. Subsequently, they will address the research purpose, which is to investigate *how certification labels' after-purchase value can enable consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity, and thus, assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context.*

- Theme one, two, and three, answers research question one: *Why and how do consumers construct their sustainable fashion identity?*
- Theme four and five, corresponds to research question two: *Why and how do consumers express their sustainable fashion identity?*
- Theme six and seven, are connected to research question three: *What after-purchase values do certification labels carry for consumers?*

5.2 Why and how do consumers construct a sustainable fashion identity?

Table 5.1 Theme one, two, and three, with sub-themes answering RQ1

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Intrinsic expectations to construct a sustainable fashion identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Personal values ➤ Responsibility ➤ Guilt
2. Extrinsic expectations to construct a sustainable fashion identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Judgement ➤ The sustainability buzz ➤ Social norms
3. Rewards for constructing a sustainable fashion identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Intrinsic rewards ➤ Extrinsic rewards

The first research question of the study: ‘Why and how do consumers construct a sustainable fashion identity?’, is discussed and answered by looking into theme one, two, and three. These themes imply that consumers are both influenced and motivated by certain expectations, as well as, certain rewards to construct a sustainable fashion identity. Previous literature suggests that consumers construct a sustainable fashion identity, not just due to altruistic and sustainable values, but also to experience a sense of social belonging (Bly, Gwozdz & Reisch, 2015; Lundblad & Davies, 2016; McNeill and Venter, 2019). Thus, the notions of cohesion and differentiation, explored by Simmel (1904) and Bourdieu (1984), are highly relevant to apply to the present study. However, whether consumers construct a sustainable fashion identity due to these aspects, remained somehow vaguely explored in previous literature. The present study suggests that besides internal motivations and values regarding sustainability, social aspects are also highly relevant, which were previously ignored (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Research question one, therefore, served to gain a deeper understanding of how the social process of cohesion and differentiation, influence the construction of one’s sustainable fashion identity.

The present study argues, that both intrinsic and extrinsic expectations drive consumers to construct a sustainable fashion identity (theme one and two). The participants’ personal values and morals, shaped by their care and empathy for the planet and humanity, put certain expectations on them to engage in sustainable fashion consumption, and thus construct a sustainable fashion identity. Therefore, there was a perceived individual responsibility, connected to non-egocentric values, which created a pressure to engage in sustainable fashion consumption. Consequently, the expectation to engage in sustainable fashion consumption and construct a sustainable fashion identity, was often driven by the participants’ inner anxiety to do good, and to avoid guilt and shame. The misalignment of values and action created an ‘uncomfortable’ feeling, ‘anxiousness’ and ‘shame’, which pressured participants to reduce their attitude-behaviour gap. Thus, they were motivated to further engage and construct a sustainable fashion identity. These findings were in line with Lundblad & Davies (2016), who also explored how personal and internal values influence individuals to shape a sustainable fashion identity, beyond pure altruism.

However, social and extrinsic aspects were somehow more apparent throughout the material. The judgement of others became an evident reason to construct a sustainable fashion identity. The participants claimed to be more affected by the judgement received from closer friends than strangers, as they valued their opinion more. Additionally, if someone was superior and carried more knowledge in sustainability, the judgement was perceived worse, as well as, perhaps, more justified. All participants further recognised the tense climate of being judged by others in Sweden, which created a pressure and expectation to engage and, thus, also construct a more sustainable fashion identity. McNeill and Venter (2019), argued that fitting in with the local style, and, thus, cohering to the environment, was a motivation to construct a sustainable fashion identity. Thus, the present paper supports McNeill and Venter (2019) findings, which explored the importance of both the social pressure and social environment in the construction of one's sustainable fashion identity.

Moreover, it seemed important to stay relevant to trends and not stick out from the crowd. This can be interpreted as a form of social belonging, thus, cohesion, conducted through sustainable fashion consumption practices. Participants perceived that to be accepted more, they had to conform to the societal norms of higher commitment to sustainability, through different aspects of consumption, including fashion items. Feeling obliged, by external factors, to learn more about sustainability, was identified throughout the findings. Additionally, coming from a society where sustainability was a 'hot topic', created a need to comply more with social norms, and thus, construct a sustainable fashion identity. A professional and personal societal pressure, to be someone with a purpose and goal in life, can be perceived throughout the empirical material. In other words, participants also felt a pressure to live up to the 'stereotypical millennial image'. Here, cohering to a certain image seemed to carry an important role, and constructing a sustainable fashion identity, was perceived as a tool for this. One can draw parallels to Bauman (2010) and McNeill (2018), who claim that fashion consumption is steered by the constant avoidance of judgement and fear of feeling left out.

Intrinsic and extrinsic expectations were not the only reasons for constructing a sustainable fashion identity. The reward aspects also played an essential role. Self-enhancement and improvement as a conscious human by staying true to own values, served as an intrinsic reward to construct a sustainable fashion identity. However, social recognition as an extrinsic reward, was also identified. Receiving acknowledgement through sustainable clothing, referred to the desire to create a sustainable fashion identity, and be recognised for their 'caring' behaviour. Thus, the need to identify, and coher with the 'caring' group of people seemed to be an important reward for constructing a sustainable fashion identity. However, as cohesion, identifying with one group, often involves differentiation from non-appealing values, this can also be interpreted as a way to differentiate oneself from 'non-caring' people. Thus, the findings contributed to the study by McNeill and Venter (2019), who briefly touched upon expressing individual sustainable values as differentiating oneself from fast fashion consumers.

Cohesion and differentiation interplay simultaneously in some cases. The findings further explored a constant search for identity and one's own role in a social group. Therefore, cohesion and differentiation were important aspects associated with the process of sustainable identity construction as well, as participants referred to it time to time, either explicitly or implicitly.

5.3 Why and how do consumers express a sustainable fashion identity?

Table 5.2 Theme four and five, with sub-themes answering RQ2

Themes	Sub-themes
4. The social context of sustainable fashion consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The social currency ➤ Cohering through expressing ➤ Not signalling
5. Expressing sustainable fashion consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To inform and educate ➤ To enhance status

Theme four and five, including the respective sub-themes, were identified to discuss and answer research question two: ‘Why and how do consumers express their sustainable fashion identity?’. Guided by previous literature, the researchers gained insights into the expression elements of status-enhancement and conspicuous consumption, in sustainable fashion consumption (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011; Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016; Reimers, Magnuson, and Chao 2017; Johnson, Tariq, and Baker, 2018). However, the understanding of how cohesion and differentiation manifest in the expression of sustainable fashion required further exploration (Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016). Research question two, therefore, served to gain a deeper understanding of how the social process, cohesion and differentiation, influences the expression of one’s sustainable fashion identity.

The social context appeared to be an important factor as it influenced participants’ motivation to express their sustainable fashion identity. This was also highlighted by Stets and Burke (2000), who argued that one’s identity is shaped through social interactions, thus, expression and interaction through consumer identity are highly relevant notions. However, it emerged from the findings that participants were more inclined to express their sustainable fashion identity when sustainability was an appreciated and recognised value within the social environment. Participants noted that the younger generation (Generation Y and below) was considered to be more keen to address the notion of sustainable fashion consumption, as they believed that there was a greater expectation among them to be seen sustainable. The notion of cohesion within this group of people, therefore, became evident throughout the study. Therefore, in the present study, shared norms and generational values influenced why consumers may feel the need to express their sustainable fashion identity. Aagerup and Nilsson (2016) argue that consumers are shaped by their social interactions, and expression of sustainable consumption is often motivated by the need for cohesion with other sustainable consumers. The present study supports and contributes to the findings of Aagerup and Nilsson (2016) from the fashion context, as cohesion was considered to be an important motivation to express one’s sustainable fashion identity. Communicating a sustainable fashion identity in today’s society can, therefore, support consumers to feel social acceptance and belonging to others. The social environment which individuals are exposed to triggers how they would like to be perceived by others, and thus how they express their identity.

In the present study, the social environment in Sweden was perceived to be immensely judgemental with respect to non-sustainable behaviour. Caring about sustainability was

perceived heavily 'trendy' by the participants, which created a motivation to distance themselves from 'ignorant' people, through expressing their own sustainable habits. The fear of being perceived as someone, who is not sustainable can also create a strong motivation to differentiate from 'ignorant' people. The findings further indicate that non-sustainable behaviour is a negatively loaded phenomenon and it carries stigmatisation, which the participants did not wish to be associated with. Therefore, showing that one is not non-sustainable, can be interpreted as a reversed, and twisted way of expressing one's sustainable fashion identity, in a subtler manner. Differentiating from non-sustainable people can be interpreted as simultaneously identifying with sustainable consumers, through the expression of not non-sustainable fashion consumer identity. These findings further complement the study of Aagerup and Nilsson (2016), with a more in-depth understanding of different levels of cohesion through the expression of sustainable fashion identity.

Besides the motivation of belonging and cohesion, the perceived intentions to express sustainable fashion identity varied from informing others by showing genuine care, to enhancing a personal status. Thus, the participants claimed that some individuals do it with the purpose of spreading awareness and educating others to make better choices. This form of expression was perceived to involve a more genuine, non-selfish, and meaningful manner to become a source of inspiration.

The present study, also investigated the notion of status-enhancement, involved with the expression of sustainable consumption, as it was an influential theme throughout the theoretical framework. Even though participants mostly noted that adhering to social norms openly and visibly, was one of the most important motivations for them personally to express sustainability, there was a strong opinion, and judgement involved on why other people might do it. Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh (2010), and Sexton and Sexton (2011) based on their study on hybrid car ownership argue that expression of sustainable consumer identity is more motivated by the need for differentiation, and seeming better than other consumers. These findings, only emerged in the present study, when participants formed an opinion about others' motivation to express sustainability. When talking about other consumers' motivation to express sustainable fashion values and identity, participants noted that it might be motivated by the intention to be perceived better than others, and by that, placing themselves on a 'higher horse'. Therefore, the status-enhancing element of differentiation, identified by Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh (2010), and Sexton and Sexton (2011) in hybrid car ownership, was less relevant in the present study, as participants did not feel the need to differentiate themselves openly, through expressing their sustainable fashion identity. Being accepted and cohering with sustainable consumers was a more impactful reason behind making one's sustainable fashion habits visible. Thus the present study supports the findings of Aagerup and Nilsson (2016), which argue that sustainable identity expression is more associated with adhering to the norms and fitting in within the social circles.

Status-enhancement in the fashion context, through expressing one's sustainable fashion habits, was identified by Reimers, Magnuson, and Chao (2017). In the present study, egocentric and self-centred aspects were often seen as motives to communicate one's sustainable fashion identity. The element of self-branding and consuming sustainable fashion for the wrong reasons was perceived to be a way of hiding non-sustainable behaviour behind a façade. Additionally, social media, Instagram specifically, was also perceived as a place to 'show off' and 'brag' about the self to others. Thus, recognising and identifying status-driven sustainable fashion communication as authentic or sympathetic was perceived difficult by the participants. In the present study, there was a fine line between 'being good' by performing and expressing

sustainable fashion identity in a genuine way, and ‘seeming good’ by performing it in a superficial way (Aagerup & Nilsson, 2016). Furthermore, cultural aspects were re-emerging topics throughout the discussions. It was brought to attention that the Swedish mentality was influenced by the culture of ‘Jantelagen’, that ‘you should not believe that you are better than others’ or ‘enhance yourself in any way’. Thus, bragging was generally looked down upon in the present context. This may imply why participants wanted to avoid the expression of sustainable consumption, with the goal of seeming better than average consumers, thus through the status-driven differentiation identified by Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh (2010), and Sexton and Sexton (2011). These interpretations imply that societal norms steer the way people express their sustainable fashion identity.

Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018) connected the notion of expression of sustainable fashion consumption to Veblen’s (1899) theory of conspicuous consumption. However, the present study, perhaps as it was conducted in the ‘Jantelagen’ environment, found contradicting insights regarding conspicuousness of sustainable consumption. The findings imply, that consumers, would not like to openly address their involvement with sustainable fashion, in a verbal manner, as the expression of sustainable fashion identity, was not motivated by status and emulation of the social role of a better person. As sustainability was perceived as a widely accepted and expected value in the studied context, the findings imply a more inconspicuous element to the expression of sustainable fashion identity. The inconspicuous hints were often connected to the need for cohesion, and adhering to the norms in terms of sustainability through fashion consumption as well. Even though the conspicuous element was not highly relevant in the present study, the findings support Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018), regarding the need for public display to leverage on its social value. However, this social value is more associated with the expression of the sustainable fashion identity with the goal of cohesion to the societal norms in the present study. Furthermore, the participants claimed that they live in a society where they feel pressured to carry an opinion and purpose in life, which should be expressed. This was also supported by Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), who identified an emerging trend of publicity-oriented attitudes among consumers.

5.4 What after-purchase values do certification labels carry for consumers?

Table 5.3 Theme six and seven, with sub-themes answering RQ3

Themes	Sub-themes
6. The individual after-purchase values of certification labels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Difficulty of defining sustainable items ➤ Intrinsic values
7. The expression-related after-purchase values of certification labels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conversation setting ➤ Displaying sustainability

This section answers the final, third research question of the present study: ‘What after-purchase values do certification labels carry for consumers?’. The present part of the study focused on

the after-purchase values of certification labels, as opposed to previous studies, which looked into the before-purchase role of labels (Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). Thus, answering the third question required a highly inductive approach, due to the lack of previous knowledge within the field. In the search of the values of certification labels, theme six and seven, with their sub-themes, helped the researchers to explore the potential benefits that certified fashion items carried for consumers.

As labels in the clothing industry are not widely recognised, participants often drew examples from different consumption practices, such as automotive and food consumption. Throughout the findings, it emerged that consumers cannot establish whether a clothing item is sustainable or not, due to the lack of external visibility of sustainability signs, as opposed to the cars, where it is easier to determine if the car is electric or hybrid. Some brands can be associated with sustainability aspects, yet these attributes are still not very distinctive visually in fashion. Thus, participants were interested in the more wider application of certification labels in the clothing industry, where labels could make sustainable items more recognisable. In the present study, participants highlighted that it may be necessary to create a greater recognition around labels, through displaying the labels in an externally noticeable, almost 'obnoxious' manner at the beginning. These findings are in line with Pedersen and Neergaard (2006) and Thøgersen, Haugaard, and Olesen (2010), who argued that labels need to have high issue-relevant knowledge in the first place to create awareness around consumers.

When participants discussed the external visibility aspect of labels, it became apparent that through a small, subtle tag, on the outside of the clothing, it would be more straightforward to decide, whether the clothes around a person are sustainable or not. Therefore, certification labels have the potential to function as the 'hybrid' tag on the back of the car, in the fashion industry as well, and thus assist consumers in recognising sustainable fashion items. Furthermore, as Brach, Walsh, and Shaw (2018) highlighted, labels can signal sustainability, yet the present study argues that this value is not only appreciated in stores, but also in the consumption phase of the item. Thus, this paper argues that certification labels have the potential to help identifying sustainable items after the purchase as well, create a better overall understanding, and avoid ignorance around the topic, which previously arose, due to the lack of awareness. However, labels need to become more associated with fashion items, and more externally recognisable to create stronger pressure for consumers to adhere. In other forms of consumption such as food and transportation, participants experienced larger pressure to consume labelled items, due to the public recognisability of both sustainable and non-sustainable behaviour.

The empirical material also suggests that labels have an intrinsic value for consumers by reminding them of the 'good act' of purchasing a sustainable item in the long run as well. Furthermore, other intrinsic values associated with certified clothing involve good conscience, pride, and reduced guilt. According to Lundblad & Davies (2016), these individual values are important motivators to engage in sustainable fashion consumption and based on the empirical material, labels have the potential to reinforce these aspects. Interestingly, the participants reflected upon labels' potential to reduce guilt, associated with fashion consumption, thus making the owned item, itself more valuable (Peloza, White & Shang, 2013). During the findings, it became apparent that the main difference between sustainable food consumption and fashion consumption, is the longer-term value gained from the latter, since opposed to the food industry, items in the fashion sector are owned for a longer time period. The empirical material implies that in this sense labels have the potential to deliver value for consumers in the long run as well, therefore owning a certified clothing item, can serve as a reminder for the

consumer of their 'good act' in a longer perspective. Leveraging on the above discussed intrinsic values can speak to consumers on a deeper level. As Ritch (2015) highlights labels have not gained as much recognition in the fashion industry, potentially due to their inability to address consumers. Leveraging on the identified intrinsic values, and going beyond the operational, before-purchase values of labels, can benefit the adoption of sustainability in clothing consumption.

As it was discussed earlier, there was some level of reluctance to talk about sustainable fashion among the participants. Therefore, participants were only willing to discuss sustainability, if the topic emerged naturally. However, they noted that having a certification label on the clothing item, might make them more inclined to talk about sustainability, yet still with using a humorous tone. Humour is often implied, to ease a situation, therefore there was a sense of uncomfortable feeling associated with talking about this matter. Even though there was a perceived high awareness between the participants around sustainability, participants were less willing to participate in 'expert dialogues', even if knowledge served as a commodity (Appadurai, 1986). Certified fashion items, are yet to become 'keyed' goods, associated with sustainable values (Goffman, 1974). If certification labels become more common, there might be more space to discuss the phenomenon of sustainability in fashion in social interactions, without being perceived as bragging. In this case, the knowledge on the matter may serve as a commodity (Appadurai, 1986), but yet the topic carries negative connotations if addressed openly. Therefore, owning certified fashion items, may serve as a sign of fine taste, yet talking about owning that certified fashion item, does not directly reflect a person of fine taste, connoisseur, as of now (Sassatelli, 2007). Therefore, to leverage on the knowledge-related value of certification labels, it needs to be communicated in a more humble, perhaps visual manner.

The displaying value of certification was also relevant throughout the discussions. However, participants noted that certification labels are mainly displayed on the inside of the garments, and thus, it is not visible from an outside perspective. However, if there was an innovative way of displaying these labels, in a subtle manner, the participant would feel that the label carry the message of 'excellence'. This idea is in line, with the above-mentioned connoisseur notion, identified by Sassatelli (2007). On the other hand, some participants connected the idea of displaying the certification labels on the outside of the garment, to large, more conspicuous brand logos, which was homogeneously perceived to be negative. In this case, participants argued, that they own branded clothing items, but it is satisfying enough to know it themselves, thus they liked to avoid brand logos, as well as heavy certification logos on the outside of their clothes. Based on these insights, for some of the participants, the intrinsic reward of certification labels was stronger than the extrinsic recognition. Therefore, a too obvious and heavy display of a certification label, would not be perceived valuable by the participants in the long run and may have a reverse effect. However, the participants' confusion regarding the judgement whether a garment is sustainable, and the explored importance of conveying one's standpoint on the manner, implies that a subtle and discreet display would aid consumers to communicate their statements regarding environmental and ethical factors within fashion.

5.5 Addressing the research purpose

The above-discussed research questions provided a grounding base for addressing the research purpose. The present section ties together the findings from the research questions and includes the description of the identified process of how certification labels' after-purchase value can enable consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity, and thus, assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context.

Constructing a sustainable fashion identity was perceived to be driven by both internal and external motives. However, an interesting finding which emerged throughout the study was the fear of being judged as a non-sustainable consumer. Aspects such as being knowledgeable about sustainability, complying to sustainable norms, and jumping on the trend of sustainable fashion, were brought to attention. Cohering to the 'sustainable' and 'caring' group of people, would serve as a way to avoid being judged, but also as a tool for gaining social acceptance. Thus, the main insight from research questions one was that constructing a sustainable fashion identity was heavily influenced by the need to define oneself in relation to others, and to create a social role as a sustainable fashion consumer.

Alongside the emerging need for construction of a sustainable fashion identity, there was also an identified need to express this identity in the social setting. Hence, if consumers do not communicate their sustainable identity, then they may be perceived as a non-sustainable consumer, and consequently, receive a social judgement. The need for cohesion through a sustainable image, therefore, motivates individuals to make this identity visible to others. However, the fine line between expressing one's sustainable fashion identity in a genuine and contrarily in a bragging way was identified in the study. Open, verbal expression of sustainable fashion habits in a non-discreet, pretentious, and superficial manner was seen as less authentic, as it was associated with the purpose of perfecting and enhancing one's image to others. Besides physical conversations, social media was also perceived as a superficial tool to address sustainable habits. This implies that the goal of cohesion and social belonging may be difficult, through the expression of sustainable fashion habits, since if it is addressed too loudly it may lead to the negative, 'bragging' judgement of the person. Thus, in the present study, the importance of unwritten, societal rules emerged on how one should act to avoid judgement and to become accepted. Therefore, even though the expression of a sustainable fashion identity was perceived to be important to consumers, it may only be accepted if it was driven by the extent of belonging, and not to seem better than others. The main finding from research question two is the rising societal importance of making one's identity visible to others to gain social acceptance, in a culturally acceptable manner.

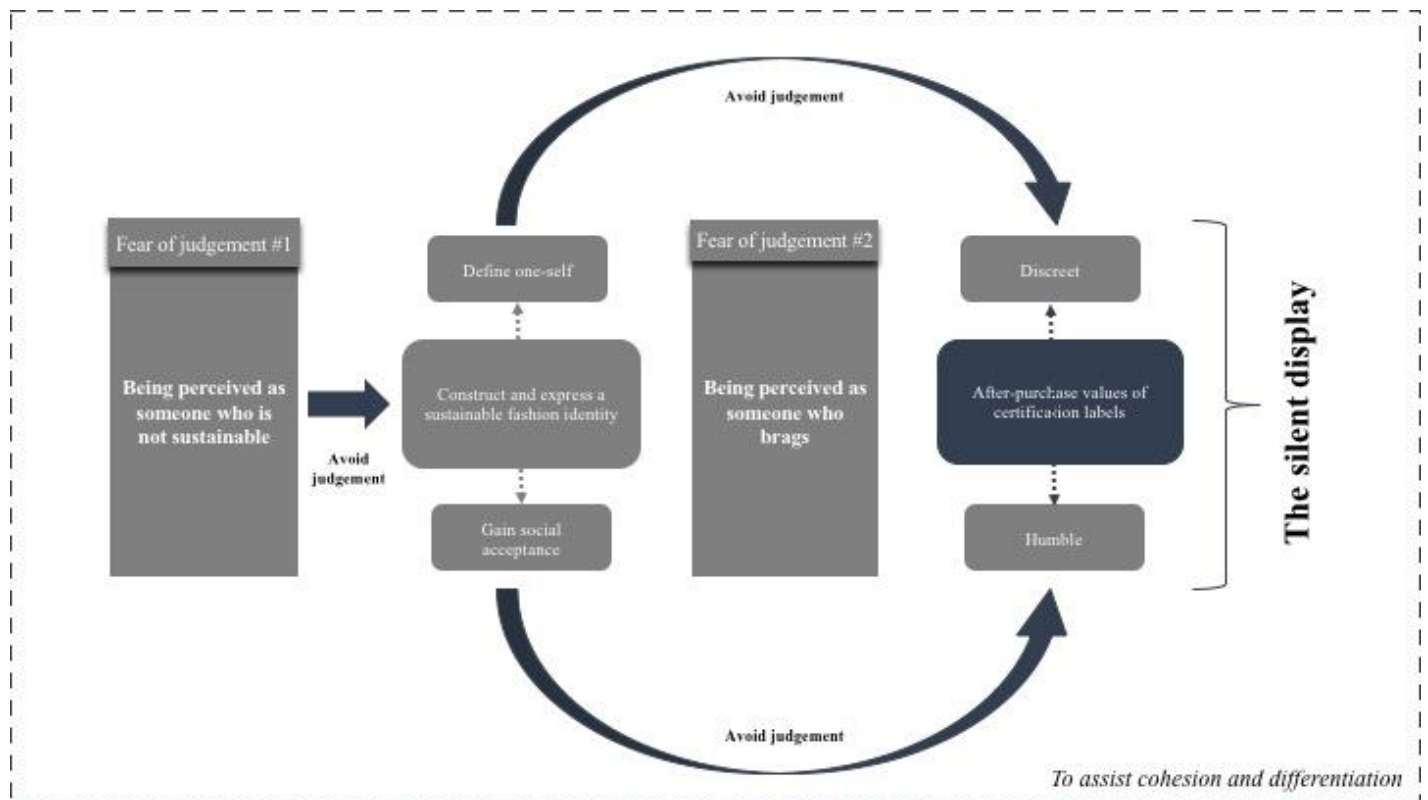
As the present study explored the after-purchase values of certification labels, it became evident that consumers both have individual and social level associations with the values of certification labels. The ownership of a labelled garment can further help consumers to identify and cohere more with 'sustainable norms' and a group of consumers. There was a perceived need to identify sustainable items in a more convenient manner, which would facilitate the wider adaption to sustainable purchases, through the process of social normalisation. Through its displaying value, in the after-purchase phase, they could serve as a tool to define and categorise 'sustainable people'. Certification labels carry displaying values, but there is a fine line between, being recognised as a 'good, caring human' and as 'someone who is bragging'. Therefore, the main finding regarding the after-purchase values of certification labels, is its

displaying value, which can only be leveraged on in a discreet and humble manner, to avoid the social judgements.

Based on the above-discussed aspects, consumers are facing a challenge on how to express their sustainable fashion identity in a socially accepted manner. In this sense, two main fears of judgement emerged, which consumers felt the need to manoeuvre between; the fear of being perceived as someone who is not sustainable, and the fear of being perceived as someone who brags. Interestingly, these two aspects seem to interplay, and therefore, need to be balanced to receive maximum acceptance in the social context. Looking into the different, identified after-purchase values of certification labels, one can sense that its displaying value is highly relevant to the social process of identity construction and expression, which the present paper set to explore. The potential to implement this displaying value in a subtle manner serves the previously identified need for a humble and discreet construction and expression of the sustainable fashion identity in the social context. Therefore, leveraging on the humble and discreet after-purchase value of certification labels, may help consumers to balance within the limbo of avoiding judgement of being not sustainable, and the judgement of bragging. The struggle of being a sustainable fashion consumer, therefore, may be facilitated with certification labels' *'silent display'* after-purchase value.

Figure 5.1 below shows the social process of this consumer limbo. The figure starts with the identified consumer experience of the fear of being judged as non-sustainable. This evokes the need for construction and expression of sustainable fashion identity, to define the self, gain social acceptance, thus reach cohesion with sustainable norms and differentiation from 'non-caring people' (Simmel, 1904; Bourdieu, 1984). However, this must be conducted by avoiding the second fear of judgement, associated with bragging and showing off. This second fear of judgement may be avoided by not actively talking, and bragging about one's sustainable fashion consumption, but through demonstrating it in a 'passive' manner. Here, the discreet and humble elements of certification labels provide a *'silent display'* after-purchase value, by demonstrating that the owner of the item, acts according to sustainability values. Thus, the present paper argues that constructing and expressing one's sustainable fashion identity can be nurtured through the *'silent display'* after-purchase value of certification labels. This process assists the consumers to overcome the societal judgement elements related to identity construction and expression. The *'silent display'* value of certification labels, enables consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity in a humble and discreet manner. Thus, contributing to the need for cohesion with the sustainable norms, and differentiation from the people who do not care.

Figure 5.1 The 'silent display' after-purchase value of certification labels



The present paper argues that the purpose of the study to investigate *how certification labels' after-purchase value can enable consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity, and thus, assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context*, can be supported by the process of 'silent display' element presented above. These aspects are evaluated in relation to the theoretical framework in the following section, as well as further discussed in '6.2 Theoretical contribution'.

5.6 Evaluating the theoretical framework

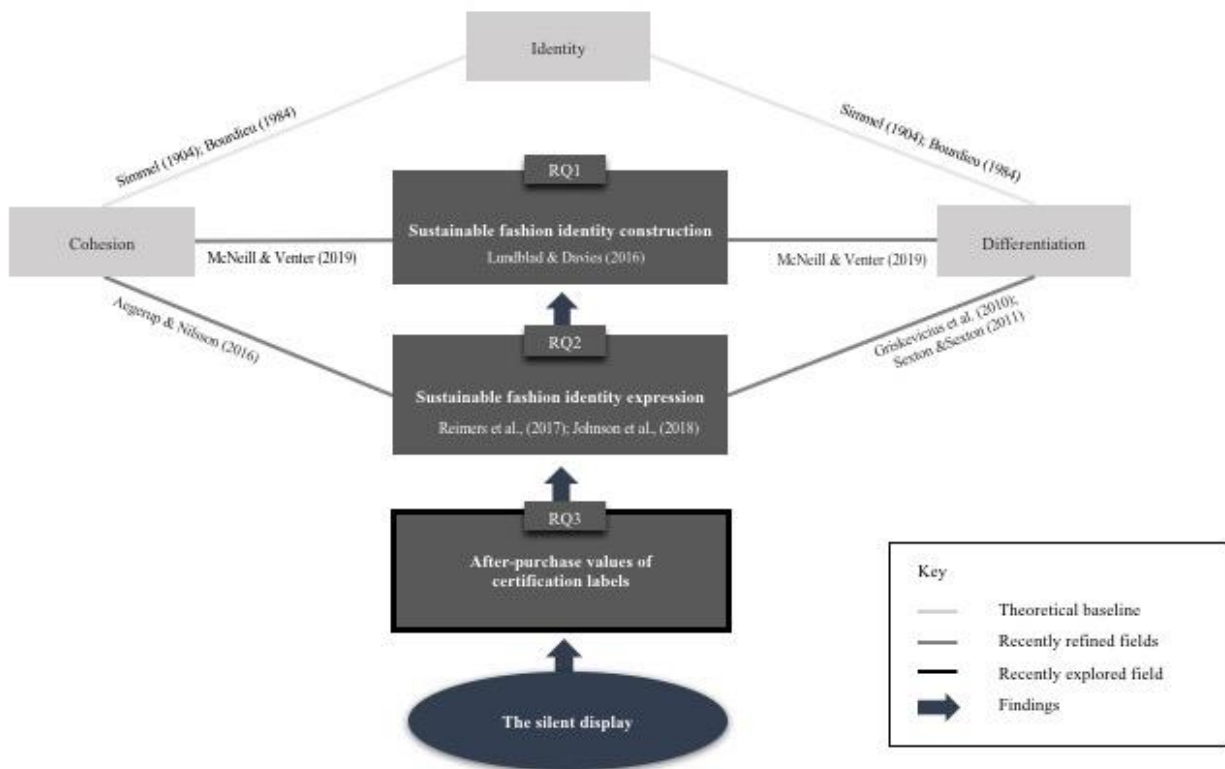
Upon consideration of the above-discussed findings, related to the research questions and the purpose, the preliminary theoretical framework was evaluated. The three aspects of identity construction, identity expression, and after-purchase values of labels are suggested to be connected, as the contribution of the present study, and addressment of the research purpose. The present paper further refined the process and reasons of sustainable fashion identity construction, both on the individual and social level as one's self-identity and social-identity are constructed simultaneously, since the latter validates the former (Stets & Burke, 2000). As Lundblad and Davies (2016) argue, the present study also found that the construction of a sustainable fashion identity is motivated by individual benefits and is influenced by social expectations and rewards, such as avoidance of being judged not-sustainable. Furthermore, the present paper also argues that cohesion and differentiation are important aspects in the process of sustainable fashion identity creation, as McNeill and Venter (2019) argued.

Furthermore, in relation to the expression of sustainable fashion identity, the present study looked into the ‘Prius effect’, and its connection to cohesion and differentiation, previously discussed by Griskevicius, Tybur and Van den Bergh, (2010), and Sexton and Sexton (2011). Agerup and Nilsson (2016) argue that these concepts require further exploration, as the previous insights on cohesion and differentiation provided contradictory findings. The present study contributed to this theoretical debate, with in-depth exploratory insights from the sustainable fashion context. In the studied context participants, were more involved with cohesion and fitting in through expressing one’s sustainable fashion status, thus the present findings are more towards Agerup and Nilsson’s study (2016). Furthermore, in connection with Reimers, Magnuson, and Chao (2017), and Johnson, Tariq and Baker (2018) the present paper also looked into the status-enhancement and conspicuous elements involved with the expression of sustainable fashion identity. However, the present paper argues that consumers need to communicate their identity, in a more humble, discreet manner to also gain social acceptance. Thus, expression of sustainable fashion identity involved more inconspicuous elements in the present study.

Previous studies only looked at the role of labels in the before-purchase phase in relation to signalling the utilitarian aspects of sustainable products (Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). Additionally, previous literature identified the need for more public and visible display of sustainability values to assist status-enhancement (Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017; Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). Therefore, bridging these streams of literature, and exploring the after-purchase values of certification labels were an important contribution of the study. Based on these insights, in relation to the research purpose, it emerged that the display-related after-purchase value of certification labels serves as a collective value for consumers in constructing and expressing their identity. Tying all the findings together, it was found that this display, must be conducted in a humble and discreet manner to enable individuals to avoid being judged non-sustainable, avoid being judged as bragging when constructing and expressing their sustainable fashion identity. Thus, the present research argues that the ‘*silent display*’ after-purchase value of certification labels, assist consumers to define themselves as sustainable fashion consumers, gain social acceptance (cohesion with sustainable societal norms) and thus avoid the judgement of non-sustainable, and bragging.

As Figure 5.2 shows, the collectively identified after-purchase value of labels, the ‘*silent display*’, presented in section 5.5, is added to the framework. This after-purchase value provides a collective contribution, to sustainable fashion identity construction and expression, associated with the end-goal of cohesion and differentiation. Therefore, the ‘*silent display*’ element supports the purpose of the study.

Figure 5.2 Evaluated theoretical framework



6 Conclusion

The final chapter concludes the findings of the present paper. An outline of the theoretical contributions, as well as, practical contributions are revealed and discussed to provide insights and implications for scholars and managers in the field of sustainable consumption, marketing, and branding. Moreover, limitations of the study, followed by recommended future research avenues, are pointed out at the end of the chapter.

6.1 Summary of the research process

The present paper set to explore *how certification labels' after-purchase value can enable consumers to construct and express their sustainable fashion identity, and thus, assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context.* The researchers considered both previous research, as well as, primary empirical material, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The empirical material collection involved male and female Swedish consumers, belonging to generation Y and carrying a University degree. The phenomenon of sustainable fashion in terms of identity construction and expression, through cohesion and differentiation, was investigated to understand how certification labels can facilitate the social value. This focus led to the creation of three research questions, investigating the fields of identity construction, identity expression, and after-purchase values of certification labels in sustainable fashion, which were discussed and answered in 'Chapter 5 - Analysis and Discussion'. Upon the discussion of the findings, the purpose of the study was discussed, leading to the presentation of '*silent display*', *the collective after-purchase value of labels for identity creation and expression, to assist cohesion and differentiation in a social context.* The '*silent display*' was then added and discussed in the evaluated theoretical framework.

6.2 Theoretical contribution

The theoretical contribution of the present paper is discussed through firstly, addressing the contributions through 'refinements' in relations to the theoretical framework. This is then followed by the contribution involved with the exploration of the '*silent display*'.

6.2.1 Sustainable fashion identity construction and expression

The present paper holds a theoretical contribution to the field of sustainable consumption, in the fashion context, with special attention to the often neglected social dynamics involved (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Furthermore, its holistic and interdisciplinary approach enabled the researchers to not only consider individual values, but also social interaction elements. The

empirical findings imply that consumers are inclined to construct a sustainable fashion identity, to gain social acceptance through the perceived norms around sustainability. The shameful, uncomfortable feeling, and judgement associated with not following sustainable values, imposed by the consumers and the society, were constantly emerging themes within the present research. The role of social interactions, therefore, was perceived to be highly influential in constructing a sustainable fashion identity. Furthermore, the present study also analysed how these social interactions interplay with individual values in the process of sustainable fashion identity creation. These aspects were hinted in previous studies, yet their connection to the social interaction aspects has only been vaguely explored (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; McNeill & Venter, 2019). Therefore, the present study contributes to the understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and rewards, that play key roles in sustainable consumer identity creation, to reinforce one's social standing through cohesion and differentiation.

Regarding the expression of the sustainable fashion identity, the present study found that expressing was more driven by cohesion motives, than differentiation in the sense of being a better person than others. This insight might be highly relevant to the studied cultural context, as bragging and 'standing out too much' was not appreciated throughout the empirical material. Thus, it affected the opinions regarding identity expression in the sustainable fashion context as well. Consequently, one can sense that consumers in the studied context face difficulties regarding the expression of their identity, being perceived as a sustainable fashion consumer, and reaching cohesion. Since expression of sustainable fashion identity with the goal of status-enhancement in relation to cohesion and differentiation are newly emerging themes within the literature, the present study contributes with unique insights on the field (Griskevicius, Tybur & Van den Bergh, 2010; Sexton & Sexton, 2011; Agerup & Nilsson, 2016; Reimers, Magnuson & Chao, 2017; Johnson, Tariq & Baker, 2018). This paper argues that the way consumers express their sustainable fashion motives is associated with culture, as consumers tend to act according to the perceived norms and values within the society. Here, consumers felt a pressure to communicate their sustainable fashion identity, and be perceived as a 'caring human'. Yet, they were careful with their manner of expression, to avoid bragging, which was a negatively judged act.

The present paper contributed to the literature stream around certification labels, and their role in consumption, with a highly unique look on the after-purchase values of certification labels (Brach, Walsh & Shaw, 2018). This paper implies that labels carry an individual value for the consumers in the after-purchase phase, in terms of identity creation and expression. After-purchase values of the certification labels were found to be valuable in the process of sustainable fashion identity construction through serving as a long-time reminder, of the good act, and informed purchase choice, thus also contributing towards the reduction of the consumption-related guilt. The individual benefits of sustainable fashion consumption identified by Lundblad and Davies (2016) may be reinforced through the additional individual values of certification labels. Furthermore, this study argues that consumers seek to avoid bragging about their sustainable behaviour, but it is still important to be perceived as caring by others. Certification labels can, therefore, mark fashion items to assist sustainable fashion identity construction and expression. However, the findings also suggest that this display should avoid conspicuous tools, as sustainable fashion identity is more associated with cohesion, and thus inconspicuous values. This insight is opposing the view of Reimers, Magnuson, and Chao (2017), and Johnson, Tariq, and Baker (2018), who argued that conspicuous sustainable consumption should be reinforced, in the sense of making the consumers of the sustainable product 'seem better than others'.

6.2.2 The 'silent display'

Tying together the above-described streams of knowledge, the present paper not only offers an in-depth understanding but also a proactive approach, in identifying a mechanism, that can facilitate the need for social belonging. The understanding regarding the after-purchase value of certification labels and its connection to identity creation and expression provide valuable findings for the consumer culture research tradition and the field of sustainable consumption. These findings are supported by empirical evidence from the fashion context, which is highly relevant to one's identity. With the identified collective '*silent display*' after-purchase value of certification labels, the present paper contributes to the literature on certification labels, as well as, the social context of sustainable fashion consumption. The present paper argues that labels have the potential to enable consumers to project their sustainable fashion identity to themselves, but also to others, in a quiet and humble manner, which form of behaviour is highly aspired in the studied context. Therefore, the present study identified the '*silent display*' after-purchase value of certification labels, which can nurture and facilitate the construction and expression of one's sustainable fashion identity, with the goal to cohere with sustainable norms and differentiate oneself from people, who do not care about the phenomenon.

The '*silent display*' helps consumers to navigate in the era of sustainable consumption and leverage on the after-purchase value of the label, through its signalling power. However, as it was discussed earlier, the word 'silent' is key in this process. The present study argues, that if the display becomes overpowering, similar to conspicuous display of brand logos, then it may have reversed effects. As sustainable consumption motivations were perceived more inconspicuous in the present study, there is an elevated importance of maintaining the balance and using the display value in a humble and discreet manner. Here, the goal should never be status-enhancement in the sense of seeming better than others, just the facilitation of cohesion with the societal norms.

6.3 Practical contribution

The present paper was partly inspired by the managerial question, faced by MUD Jeans on how to leverage on their recently attained Nordic Swan Ecolabel. The paper took a consumer-driven approach to understand the social context of sustainable fashion consumption. Besides the theoretical contribution of the paper, the practical implications provide a novel understanding of the after-purchase value of certification labels for sustainable fashion brands like MUD Jeans.

It became evident that consumers feel the need to construct a sustainable fashion identity and express it in a humble and discreet manner due to societal norms. As a result, the researchers discovered how certification labels' after purchase value can facilitate identity construction and expression within sustainable fashion consumption. Thus, the '*silent display*' value of certification labels, is a new insight brands can use to understand and address their consumers better. Interpreting this value on a managerial level can aid companies to create more relevant and meaningful marketing campaigns, and therefore, serve the need for cohesion and differentiation among consumers. If companies with certification labels learn to appreciate this value, it can help companies like MUD Jeans, who is in a niche and early business stage, to increase their market share by using a marketing technique which is overlooked in today's

business environment. The '*silent display*' value of certification labels, therefore, aims to serve as a major competitive advantage for brands in understanding consumer behaviour and needs in sustainable fashion consumption. On an industry level, it could assist sustainable fashion consumption to gain larger importance.

However, brands should discover an innovative way of displaying certification labels on the outside of the garment. During the study, participants drew a parallel between a potential small green tag and the red colour associated with AIDS charity collaboration of Levi's. These insights imply that brands are recommended to find novel ways of making the labels visible, beyond the laundry tag, if they want to leverage on the expression related value of the labels. Yet, this must remain a discreet practice, as the aesthetic of the items should not suffer. Furthermore, the insights on how participants wanted to avoid large brand logos were not mainly driven by conspicuous sustainability motives. This provided further support for the discreet and subtle display of the certification label. Furthermore, the target audience of the brand should also be considered in the marketing of the certification labels. As perhaps for more extrinsically oriented, trend-conscious participants ('Hip and healthy' from the interviews), sustainability carried a stronger social acceptance value, than for other perhaps more intrinsically oriented participants, who are stronger on the 'Sustainability Fighter' aspects.

6.4 Limitations

The limitations of the study must be considered to understand the overall contribution, as well as future research avenues connected to it. The foremost limitation of the present study, which also involves its strength, is due to its purpose to discover an empirically less well-known phenomenon, as consumers are not highly aware of certification labels in the fashion context. However, this limitation was tackled, through drawing examples from other industries, and interpretations connecting the opinions on the after-purchase values of certification labels, and construction and expression of sustainable fashion identity.

Furthermore, as the study was focusing on sensitive social and individual constructs, such as identity, cohesion, differentiation, the researchers faced difficulties in terms of classifying attitudes and motivations, as they depend on the individuals and are influenced by social factors (Britt, 1950). However, due to the philosophical standpoint of the research, these unique interpretations were appreciated by the researchers. Furthermore, due to its qualitative nature, the present study might carry prestige bias, which was aimed to be avoided by creating trust but also approaching the same concepts from different angles, to see whether participants are coherent in their answers and opinions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

The purposive and snowball sampling techniques resulted in a targeted sample, with participants sharing similar attributes. Here, an assumption was made, that the snowballed participants will share similar attributes regarding the initial participants in terms of the second guiding principle. Furthermore, the sample size of 23 participants involved in the study through the interviews and focus groups, cannot allow generalisation. However, it offered an in-depth insight specific to the context of the study, which involved highly educated participants, with an awareness of sustainability. The length and depth of the empirical material enabled the researchers to gain and form valuable comprehension on the phenomenon under study, within the chosen context.

6.5 Future research avenues

The present study interpreted the after-purchase value of certification labels, in a context, where sustainability awareness is high and socially accepted. Thus, it is recommended to further study the '*silent display*' value of certification labels in a different context, both in terms of consumers and industry, but also how to apply it to brand's marketing strategies. Investigating how individuals, who carry little sustainability interest, reflect over the status specific elements of certification labels, require further exploration. Insights regarding these aspects emerged, but it was outside of the scope of the present study. Furthermore, studying the status-driven consumption aspects might also bring interesting insights from a context, where certification labels are more common, yet the products are less associated with identity construction, such as the food industry in the grocery context.

The present paper provided insights on the after-purchase value of labels, and its connection to sustainable fashion identity construction and expression. Yet, further insights are necessary on the marketing tools in terms of displaying and communicating these certification labels, and thus, leveraging on the identified '*silent display*' element. Additionally, how certification labels are presented and how their visibility may serve as a reason to consume more sustainable fashion items, in terms of aesthetic aspects, is recommended to be further explored. Lastly, the certification labels' connection to the brand image of the fashion company can also bring further value. This could bring understanding of the brand alignment between the '*silent display*' value of certification labels and fashion companies. These aspects might be worth considering to be studied through a larger sample size, as the present study only identified and considered the underlying value of certification labels for identity construction, expression, with the goal of cohesion and differentiation, and not the specific marketing tools applicable.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

Interview Guide

Introducing researchers

Administration (Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form)

Ask for name, gender, age

(first part) - Fashion and identity

- Fashion consumption patterns (identity and fashion)
 - What brands do you shop from?
 - Do you have any alternative ways of getting new items? (second-hand, swaps, online bidding shpock, tradera, tise, blocket)
 - How often do you shop clothes?
 - What do you look for in clothes? (characteristics, durability, etc)
 - What style do you believe you have? What's your taste in clothes?
 - Is it important for you to change styles or do you usually have the same one?

(second part) - Cohesion, differentiation through fashion

- What trends would you consider are taking place today?
- How important are fashion trends for you? Do you follow them?
 - Do you feel a pressure to follow the trends?
 - Do you feel free to express your own style?
- Do you want to be different with your style? Stick out from the crowd?
- Do you feel that it is important to make a statement of who you are with your choice of clothing?
- Do you dress to be associated with a specific group of people? Why?
- What values can you express through your clothing?

(third part) - Cohesion and differentiation through sustainable fashion

- How important is sustainability to you in your everyday life? (in general)
- Do you feel ashamed if you don't care about it? Is there a public pressure?
- In which industry is it the most important for you? Why?
- When people can see what you consume in general (food, cars, transportation, fashion) are you more willing to shop sustainable items? (online and offline)
 - Who do you do it for? Do you do it for yourself or others?
- How do you signal sustainability to the public in everyday life?
- Why do you engage in these activities?
- When others see you, are you more careful about these habits?

-----fashion-----

- Do you shop sustainable clothing items? How often and why?
- How important is sustainability in fashion to you?

- Do you feel that more people are committing to the sustainable fashion trend today? Why?
 - Is sustainable clothing becoming fashionable?
 - Do you think it looks good?
- Do you feel ashamed if you don't care about it? Is there a public pressure?
- Do you identify yourself as a conscious fashion consumer? On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being not at all, and 10 is completely)
 - How do you act upon this?
 - How important is it for you to express these values?
 - Do you aspire to be a sustainable shopper in fashion?

Fourth part - Expressing sustainable fashion consumption

- How do you feel when you shop sustainable clothing? Happiness, proud, good citizen, educated etc.
- Do you try to make your sustainable fashion actions more visible to others?
- Do you express these values to strengthen your image as a conscious consumer? Is there a public pressure to do so?
- Do you seek for confirmation regarding your sustainable clothing choice from your network?
- Do you feel the urge to talk about this action with others?
- Do you feel the urge to express this on social media?
- How do you think people will feel about you for making a conscious choice?
- Do you feel a pressure to learn more on the topic of sustainability and contribute to discussions?
- Do you categorise people based on how much they care about sustainability?
- How do you feel about people who don't consider the impact of their fashion choices and shop recklessly?
- Do you look up to other people who shop sustainably?

---Transition from personal to society---

- Is it important in today's society to be seen sustainable and caring for planet and humanity? Is it a hot topic in Sweden today?
- Why do you think people shop sustainable fashion items?
- Do many people show off in the fashion world? Is it authentic or a facade to be a good human?
- How do you know if a fashion item is sustainable?

Fifth part - Values of certification labels

- Do you find it is hard to define sustainability in clothing?
- When you buy sustainable clothing, is it hard to show that it is sustainable to people?
- Is there a need for a more universal tool?
- How aware are you of certification labels in the fashion industry?

(Before purchase)

- What do you think the role of these labels are?
- Is this a better item to buy because of the certification? Validation?
- How should they be displayed to people?
- Would it encourage you to purchase products with labels if there is a well-known awareness around them? More appreciation/value
- Does labelling have to be a trend/common practise for you to shop clothing?
- Would you do it to show that you are sustainable?

(After purchase)

- Would certification labels allow you more to signal or show your sustainability motives better while using the items?
- What does it say about someone if they are aware of these type of labels?
- Is it a problem for you that it is not visible after you buy it?
- How would you try to share the information?
- Do they only work if people are aware?
- How can this label and thus sustainability consciousness be part of the conversation after purchase?
 - Would you like to tell your friends about this item and that it is certified?
 - Would it make you proud that you own it more than regular clothing?
 - Would it be a certified proof that you are sustainable?
- Does the brand image matter when you talk about labels?
 - Such as a smaller sustainable brand or a multinational
 - Are you more likely to talk about and express the importance of labels when they are presented by small sustainable brand or a multinational (fast fashion)?
 - How can small brand support your status as a conscious consumer?
 - How can multinational support your status as a conscious consumer?

Appendix B: Consent form



Consent Form

Study area: *Sustainable fashion consumption*

Degree Programme: International Marketing and Brand Management

Researchers: Reka Ines Tolg (re0007to-s@student.lu.se) and Sally Lundqvist (sa2308lu-s@student.lu.se)

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant Signature

Date

Name of Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix C: Participant information sheet



Participant Information Sheet -Interviews

Study area: *Sustainable fashion consumption*

Degree Programme: International Marketing and Brand Management

Researchers: Reka Ines Tolg (re0007to-s@student.lu.se) and Sally Lundqvist (sa2308lu-s@student.lu.se)

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Here are some frequently asked questions about taking part in a research conducted at Lund University.

What is the purpose of the study?

This is an exploratory study about sustainable consumption within the fashion industry. The study is aiming to gather understanding regarding consumers motivation for sustainable consumption within the social context. The study takes place between April - May 2019.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because of your interest in fashion consumption and because you are a Swedish resident or citizen in the millennial cohort.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The research is taking place over the 2018-2019 academic year. Potential participants are contacted by the researcher with an interview participation request. The interviews will be about 60 minutes long. The sessions will be audio-recorded, and the conversation, questions are based on the research topic.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will be removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The audio files, research data, and results will be stored by the researchers. Participants will not be identified in any reports or publications. If you wish to obtain a copy of the published results please contact the researchers, Reka Ines Tolg or Sally Lundqvist.

Contact for Further Information

Reka Ines Tolg (re0007to-s@student.lu.se) & Sally Lundqvist (sa2308lu-s@student.lu.se)

Thank you for reading this!

Appendix D: Focus group guide

Focus group guide		
Time	Topic	Question
5	Setting the scene	Introducing the researchers Explaining the participation Signing 'Consent Form'
10	The Swedish sustainable consumer	Do you consider Sweden a sustainable country? - Why?
		What are your responsibilities as a consumer in Sweden?
		Does society create a pressure to act sustainable? - Are there expectations put on you? - Why is that?
		What do you think about people who don't care about sustainability?
		How important is it to be seen sustainable in Sweden?
		How do people talk about sustainability in Sweden? - Is consumption a hot topic? Why?
	Expressing sustainable fashion consumption in the social context	What is sustainable fashion to you? - How do people engage with it? - Is it an internal motivation or triggered by pressure?
		Is participating in sustainable fashion consumption expected of the society today?
		What do you think of someone who engage in sustainable fashion consumption?
		How do you feel about people who don't care about sustainability in fashion?
		Would you feel offended if you were seen unsustainable in terms of fashion choices?
		Where do you think people communicate sustainable fashion habits? - How do people talk about it both online and offline? - What tone? (educating, bragging, sincere care, guilt, climate anxiety)
		Show 3 instagram posts - Explain the motives for posting it! Can you compare them/are they different? - How do you feel about the person who posted? - Can it be seen superficial or showing off? - Can sustainable fashion show caring for planet and humanity?

Appendix E: Focus group visual material





[Redacted]

[Redacted] This week is fashion revolution week. 18 months ago I decided not to buy any new clothes and if I did (which has been a handful of times) I buy from ethical and ecological brands. It is a really easy shift to make and actually does have an impact on the wasteful fashion industry and your own shopping habits outside of clothing choices. Unfollow toxic Instagram trend setters (they return most of their clothes anyway, which results in massive amounts of waste) and start following brands like @fash_rev for a more balanced view of how fashion affects everyone around the world. #fashion #fashionrevolution

41 likes
1 DAY AGO

Add a comment... Post



[Redacted] There is more than enough clothes already in this world so please think your purchases through 🙏. How long are you intending on wearing this item? Can you find what you are looking for second hand or through clothes swapping? Do you REALLY need this item? What is it made of? Who made your clothes?

[Redacted] Consider these questions and if you can answer them honestly before swiping your card again.

3w

[Redacted] #shoppingfast #ethicalmyway

94 likes
APRIL 3

Add a comment... Post

Appendix F: Interview hierarchal codebook

Master's thesis (Interview codes)

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Identity		2	4
Conscious of identity		3	9
Education		3	11
Awareness		3	11
knowledge		4	17
identity through clothes		2	6
Swedish consumer		2	4
Label		3	11
displaying labels		2	3
visibility of labels		3	7
identifying sustainable clothing		4	21
label as information		1	6
instructions		1	1
Labels branding		1	4
Labels distrust		1	4
Labels role		3	8
Labels status		1	8

May 9, 2019

1

Name	Description	Files	References
limitations		3	6
recommending through labels		2	2
sustainability as an added benefit		1	1
trust		2	4
value of labels		1	11
who should have a label		2	3
Pre-perception of brands		3	10
Social interaction		2	5
Balance		1	2
Cohesion.		4	13
Conversation		2	4
casually in the conversation		2	7
depends on the group		4	16
differentiation		4	10
unique		1	5
expressing sustainability		4	13
Free to express		1	1
physical interaction		2	6
Signal sustainability		2	6
Showing off		2	4
Sustainable fashion consumption		0	0
Barriers to sustainable consumption		2	6

May 9, 2019

2

Name	Description	Files	References
Skeptical		1	5
motivation for sustainable clothing		4	12
Care.		5	15
Egoistic values		2	4
guilt		1	7
Incentives		3	15
inner or external		3	13
Intrinsic		1	6
judgement		5	26
People categorization		3	34
makes me feel good		3	9
norms		3	8
uncomfortable		2	2
pressure		3	9
proud		2	2
recognition		3	8
right reasons or facade		2	11
Shame.		2	6
Social pressure		3	18
Sustainable status		1	5
trends		6	22

Appendix G: Focus group hierarchal codebook

Master's thesis - focus group codes

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Expressing sustainable fashion as a consumer		1	1
Bragging		3	13
humble brag		5	37
Want to stay humble		3	7
Conversation		2	3
Credits and opinions about SFC		1	4
Educational		2	5
expressing sustainability		3	31
Hypocrisy.		3	18
image		2	20
individualistic		2	4
Influencer image		2	4
norms		2	2
Personal branding		3	5
promoting sustainability		2	13
Self-centred not sympathetic		3	4

May 9, 2019

1

Name	Description	Files	References
Signal sustainability		1	3
Status		1	1
talk or not talk about it		1	1
Tone of communication		1	1
Walk the talk		2	2
sender		2	7
Labels		0	0
after purchase		4	11
An extra value		1	3
awareness around labels		2	4
brand's own label		3	6
confusion around labels		2	4
discreet		1	5
Discrete labels		2	4
ease		1	3
easy to follow label		2	6
Easily fooled		1	1
external voice		2	11
Hard to tell.		5	28
How can labels work		2	9
How to communicate it		2	3
label and brand interplay		3	20

May 9, 2019

2

Name	Description	Files	References
Labels as taking away responsibility from consumer		1	1
Labels lack of knowledge		1	1
thoughts on labels		3	6
Trustworthy source.		5	22
value of labels		3	28
Motivations for sustainable fashion consumption		1	1
Depends on groups		2	6
Expectations		2	2
identity		3	10
Internal.		4	7
judgement		5	35
non-sustainable= non-educated		1	4
Self-critical		1	2
who says it		3	7
not individualistic		1	2
Responsibility.		4	16
Social groups		1	5
social pressure		3	12
Trends.		5	33
Cool has changed		1	2
Not a trend yet		1	1

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Name	Description	Files	References
Sustainable fashion meaning		3	14
consumption instead of reduction		2	5
Contradiction		2	2
totality of sustainability		2	4
What is sustainability		2	4
Sweden sustainable		2	7
compared to food industry		1	5
Comparing countries		2	3
High awareness		1	2
role as a consumer		2	9
Sweden not sustainable		1	1
Sweden partly sustainable		2	2
Sweden situation		1	4

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