JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
Jönköping International Business School

Slow Fashion Movement

An Exploratory Study of Slow Fashion: Opportunities and Restraints within the Fast Fashion Industry

BACHELOR THESIS WITHIN: *Business Administration*
THESIS WITHIN: *International Management*
NUMBER OF CREDITS: *15*
PROGRAMME OF STUDY: *International Management*
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JÖNKÖPING May 2019

Bachelor Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Slow Fashion Movement. An Exploratory Study of Slow Fashion: Opportunities and Restraints Within the Fast Fashion Industry.

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Date: 2019-05-20

Key terms: Slow Fashion, Fast Fashion, Sustainable Fashion, Raw Materials, Material Longevity, Product Longevity, Circular Economy

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Abstract

Problem: Working with and implementing sustainability within the fashion industry is as much a necessity as an opportunity in today's society. Fashion retailers should therefore view sustainability as an inspirational force to develop innovative solutions rather than viewing it as a limitation for production. The *slow fashion* movement is a growing phenomenon, yet, it is hard to define its future growth rate which led the authors of this thesis to further explore the slow fashion concept in a fast fashion industry context.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the business opportunities and restraints of slow fashion within the Swedish fast fashion industry, and moreover investigate what potential role slow fashion might have in the context of the fast fashion industry.

Method: A qualitative research approach was selected in order to answer the research questions and fulfill the purpose of the thesis. Empirical data was gathered by three in-depth semi-structured interviews, held with experienced professionals with high leadership positions within sustainability in the Swedish fashion industry.

Findings: The opportunities and restraints that were identified led the authors to the belief that slow fashion as an *entire* concept does not have a role within the fast fashion industry as of current state. However, there are important components of slow fashion where potential can be found that can work well in order to develop an overall more sustainable fashion industry.

Acknowledgements

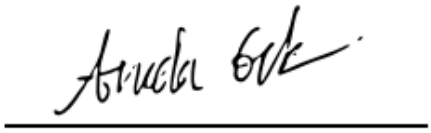
The authors would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the three interviewees and their respective company. Thank you for taking the time to sit down with us and let us explore your personal experiences and sharing your valuable knowledge. Without your wise comments and sharing of expertise, this thesis would not have been possible.

We would also like to show our gratitude to our seminar group for giving us valuable input, challenging us and providing us with constructive feedback throughout the entire writing process. We also want to thank our tutor Ulf Linnman for providing valuable feedback that made this thesis better and gave us support throughout the process. Lastly, we would like to thank Anders Melander for the guidelines regarding this bachelor thesis which have been valuable throughout the writing process.

Thank you.

Sigrid Persson

Felicia Tinmark



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Jönköping 2019-05-20

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1. Introduction

For this section, the background of the topic is presented which will further support the research of this study. The text will lead on to the problem formulation and purpose of this research and lastly present two research questions. In order to make the study comprehensive and easy to follow, perspective, delimitations and definitions are presented at the very end.

Fashion is a form of art and by studying the different takes on fashion throughout the years, one can see the geographical, cultural and personal influence of expressing oneself through fashion. Since memorial, fashion has been a symbol of beauty and illustrates what is considered to be desirable (Thompson & Whittington, 2012). However, fashion has taken on a new era where the environmental aspect is included, forcing on new innovative solutions in order to act more sustainable (Fletcher, 2010).

In Sweden the average consumption is 14 kilos of textiles per person per year which contributes to several environmental and health problems (Naturvårdsverket, 2018). Moreover, in a forecast forged by the Global Fashion Agenda and Boston Consulting Group, it is estimated that the clothing industry consumption will increase by 63 percent by 2030 and as the world population rises parallelly, it is equivalent to 102 million tons of clothing (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017). Also, the textile manufacturing process uses high amounts of water, electricity, fuel and chemicals. Therefore, consumption patterns and high production rates have a strong loading on the environment (Parisi et al., 2015).

“Buy less, choose well” as fashion designer Vivienne Westwood said during London Fashion Week in 2013, where she argued and inspired people to consume less and buy products with high quality. Today, that is referred to the concept of *slow fashion* which focuses on slowing down the production of clothes while taking in consideration what we purchase and why we purchase goods and set those principles in relation to sustainability. Fast fashion is another approach which is characterized by corporations choosing to produce fast and at low costs, where production and manpower many times are related to “wear and tear” fashion (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010). Although “fast” and “slow” are contrarieties, the terms slow fashion and fast fashion do not work in the same sense. Slow fashion is perceived as a reaction towards fast

fashion where the two concepts view purchasing habits using different economic logistics, business models and processes (Fletcher, 2010).

The current state of the economy is considered linear where organizations take resources from the Earth to make manufactured products and when products are no longer usable or wanted, they are thrown away. This is referred to as the take-make-waste system (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Circular economy however, presents a method on how to make use of our resources and thereby minimize the utilization of new resources within the economic model (European Environment Agency, 2016). The main idea is to transform the ways the industry handles resources, how products are manufactured and used, and moreover what happens to the materials afterwards. A circular economy is attained by changing the current production methods in order to exclude waste and pollution, by retaining products and materials in use and by reproducing natural systems (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

A connection between circular economy and slow fashion has been introduced by Skoog and Olsson (2018) in a model called the Circular Slow Fashion Model, which is adapted to a corporate perspective and regards the founding functions in a sustainable production cycle. The model provides tangible approaches that corporations within the fashion industry can work with in order to implement more of the slow fashion concept into their business model (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

1.1. Problem

The fashion industry is currently dominated by fast fashion production, which ultimately has increased the variation and volume of fashion-trends. This encourages corporations to meet the market needs and therefore increase production, while consumers are encouraged to consume high amounts beyond necessities (Pookulangara & Shepard, 2013).

Economy is, according to research, explained as the most predominant factor within businesses as it aims to maximize profit. The symbol of power is growth and corporations continuously relate volumes of sale to success factors (Fletcher, 2010). Throughout the past 20 years, the consumption of shoes and clothes has expanded with over 53% (Roos, 2010). The increase of consumption is complex, and the entire global economy is expected to continuously grow in both poor and rich countries (Spratt et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important for corporations to

understand and actively work with sustainability and take actions to, beyond maximizing profit, incorporate effects that are commercially positive (Ammenberg, 2004).

Working with and implementing sustainability within the fashion industry is as much as a necessity, an opportunity in today's society. Fashion retailers should therefore view the sustainable movement as an inspirational force and develop innovative solutions by creating planet friendly products, rather than experiencing the movement as a limitation to production (Williams et al., 2009). The slow fashion movement is a growing phenomenon, yet it is hard to define its future growth rate. It is also uncertain whether it at some point reaches global dominance over fast fashion (Ozdamar Ertekin & Atik, 2015).

For this thesis the Circular Economy Model has been of significance in relation to placing the slow fashion concept in a fast fashion context. The Circular Economy Model can be considered as an extensive framework in the sense that it is applicable for analysis of both slow- and fast fashion, which was fundamental for the research in order to investigate and place the concept of slow fashion in relation to fast fashion. Research that supported the connection between slow fashion and circular economy was found and thereby the Circular Slow Fashion Model (Skoog & Olsson, 2018), worked as an aid during this study in order to find opportunities and as well as limitations to the breakthrough of the slow fashion concept. This had not been researched previously with support of the Circular Slow Fashion Model or from this particular perspective which is why it was chosen as a way to understand the role as well as the possibilities of slow fashion to have an impact on the greater fashion industry.

The authors argue that both slow fashion and fast fashion retailers work with sustainability, however, the work and view on sustainability differentiates between the production methods. Being that slow fashion is a rather new concept, there are various definitions available which may lead to a certain confusion regarding what it actually implies and the question of whether it can be desirable within the fast fashion industry.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the business opportunities and restraints of slow fashion within the Swedish fast fashion industry, and moreover investigate what potential role slow fashion might have in the context of the fast fashion industry. More specifically this suggests

the function and impact that slow fashion may have in a fast fashion dominated industry. In order to fulfill this purpose, the following research questions will be examined in the thesis:

What business opportunities and restraints do fashion retailers in the Swedish fast fashion industry find regarding slow fashion?

What potential role can slow fashion have in the Swedish fast fashion industry?

1.3. Perspective

The context of the research questions is studied from a corporate perspective. However, since customer preference is related to corporate operations, secondary data will also be gathered from a consumer perspective in order to gain sufficient knowledge for analysis and discussion of the research questions.

1.4. Delimitations

The primary data for this study is delimited to the Swedish fashion industry, as stated in the research questions. This was decided because the authors found interest in exploring the topic of slow fashion in the domestic market in which they are familiar with and have greater access to. Also, Sweden is considered a country that has come far with work towards sustainability and the authors therefore found it interesting to examine the role of slow fashion within this area. As expected, this implies that the empirical findings merely account for the Swedish fast fashion market limited to the number of fast fashion retailers included in the study. Hence, analysis and discussion are conducted primarily from a Swedish industry point of view.

1.5. Definitions

Sustainable fashion – In this thesis, sustainable fashion will be defined as the concept of producing products in sustainable manners with maximization of positive and minimization of negative environmental, social and economic impacts (Moon et al., 2015). Examples of sustainable products: organic, recycled, regenerated and fair trade (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017).

Fast fashion – When consumer's demand and producer’s supply lead to shorter lead times and constant regeneration of fashion items (Clark, 2008).

Slow fashion – This concept includes a new mindset with emphasis on slowing down the fashion process while taking sustainability into account. Such sustainability efforts are higher

quality, fair labor conditions and smaller production and consumption volume. The concept scrutinizes everything from the start of a garment until its end-of-life (Fletcher, 2010).

Raw materials - Factors of production. In the fashion industry, the term regards to natural fibers (examples: cotton, wool and leather), cellulose fibers (plant-based material) and synthetic fibers (examples: polyester and nylon) (Trusted Clothes, 2016).

Material Longevity - Material longevity focuses on possibilities of efficient recycling that enables repeated use of material resources (Chapman, 2008).

Product Longevity - Product longevity insists on extending products life span through physical and emotional measures of durability in the design (Chapman, 2008)

Circular Economy - The circular economy builds on economic activity which creates overall system health. The circular economy model work in all scales of businesses, individually or organizationally, globally or locally (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

2. Frame of Reference

This section will give the reader an understanding of the topics and theories within the different fields of research. It aims at creating a deeper understanding and will provide the authors with a foundation for the exploratory research.

2.1. The Swedish Fashion Industry

The Swedish fashion industry has grown in value over the past years and will continue to do so in the future according to forecasts, where the main general growth is a result of increased domestic consumption (Hauge, 2007). One third of the Swedish fashion industry's market share accounts for the top six clothing companies, which indicates that the big retail chains are dominant in both export and import markets (Lee & Östberg, 2013).

However, as the fashion retail industry grows and number of employees increases, the number of apparel retail stores is reducing (Sundberg, 2006). As a result of this, the Swedish fashion industry presents a situation where few and large retail stores sell higher volumes of clothes (Lee & Östberg, 2013).

2.2. Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is recognized as a method for corporations to respond quickly to fast-changing fashion trends and consumer preferences while offering low prices to the end user. It is the turnaround that differentiates the fast fashion production from haute couture and ready-to-wear systems. Fast fashion companies have a responsive supply chain in which, rather than following the fashion cycle seasons, the companies produce and deliver new designs within few weeks in their retail stores (Fletcher, 2010). Output of this kind is designed to be inexpensive, fast and easy to manufacture based on short lead times, low-cost fabrics and labor and effective mass-productions (Clark, 2008). Polyester, a synthetic fiber, is specifically common in fast fashion products as the costs are low and it makes products more lasting and functional (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017). Products are considered fast if they expeditiously become unfashionable or discarded because of poor quality fabrics or manufacturing (Goldsworthy, 2017). Kate Fletcher states that speed is merely an economic tool to increase output and thereby profit. Fletcher continues to argue that fast fashion is not entirely sculptured by speed but by business approaches with goals of continuously increasing economic growth, which indeed is the most recognized mission worldwide (Fletcher, 2010).

2.3. Slow Fashion

Environmental related problems in the fashion industry have received attention from both consumers and fashion firms at an increasing expansion (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). *Slow fashion* is considered as a reaction to the *fast fashion* industry bodied from the will to improve and change the production and consumption ideologies (Fletcher, 2007). The concept is an alternative to the unsustainable practices within the fashion industry, which emerges from the fast-accelerating fashion cycle within the fast fashion industry (Cataldi et al., 2010).

Slow fashion emphasizes the sustainability efforts such as higher quality, fair labor conditions and smaller production and consumption volume. More specifically, it focuses on the usage of sustainable materials, classic design, exploiting technology with the purpose of minimizing pollution and waste, and additionally considering the motility of the product through the entire supply chain (Fletcher, 2010). Sustainable materials refer to organic, recycled, re-generated or fair-trade materials (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017). The three core elements of slow fashion are the value of local economies and assets, a transparent production system and creation of output with longer durability (Clark, 2008).

From a corporate perspective, slow fashion is primarily characterized by smaller scale production, use of localized resources, production in local facilities along with traditional manufacturing techniques (Clark, 2008). Examples of business models appropriate for slow fashion are; sustainable and ecological fashion, ethical fashion, local production and use of local resources, vintage and lastly second hand (Cataldi et al., 2013). The product itself is often associated with timeless design, slower lead time, and has considerable priority in high quality and longer durability. Moreover, such a product is mostly considered expensive (Fletcher, 2010). The idea is to slow down the pace of consumption by extending the product's life span and create a larger value in every clothing item bought by customers (Clark, 2008).

2.3.1. Slow Fashion from a Corporate Perspective

The concept of slow fashion can be approached from a combination of production and consumption aspects (Jung & Jin, 2014). However, viewing slow fashion from a corporate perspective, *slow production* is of significant importance. By slowing down the cycle of production, consumers are enabled to co-exist in an aseptic manner and the environment is allowed to regenerate (Cataldi et al., 2013). Refraining from the exploitation of natural resources, the slower production pace allows raw materials to grow naturally (Fletcher, 2007). From a corporate perspective, slow fashion is not just about slowing down the supply chain, it is the means of embodying actual social responsibility and transparency but at the same time being profitable in the long run (Fletcher, 2010). For firms that pursue slow fashion the intention is not to hinder consumers from buying new clothing, but rather to manufacture outputs that are sustainable and recyclable (Mistra Future Fashion, 2018).

Furthermore, life-quality of workers is improved as time pressure of production is reduced. Rather than workers experiencing excessive workload to counter erratic demands, the slower production may contribute to fair employment and regular working hours. Not only is time pressure removed but the slower time span also improves the quality of the product as each worker can spend more time on each individual product (Cataldi et al., 2010).

It is not surprising that retailers and firms may have an intricate interpretation of what slow fashion means. The concept is often locked into the current business model and procedures of already established firms while it really requires a new, fresh approach. The most commonly accepted mission or goal for a firm is to increase profits and instead of realizing how slow

fashion can transform procedures by the root, profits and growth come in first hand once again. There needs to be a deeper and thorough change within firms (Fletcher, 2010).

2.3.2. Slow Fashion from a Consumer Perspective

Approaching slow fashion from a consumer perspective, *slow consumption* is the primary focal point. Consumers need to be educated within this matter and willingly embrace the slow fashion lifestyle meaning quality instead of quantity, minimizing consumption and implementing a longer life-span to the clothing (Pookulangara & Shepard, 2012). One method to improve the impact of clothing on the environment is to use and wear the clothes for a longer period of time, additionally, to recycle, donate or sell when the clothes are no longer in use. This is crucial in the process of acting sustainable within the fashion industry as even the most sustainable production can become unsustainable when the consumption itself is abrupt (LeBlanc, 2012).

For a product to function in a slow fashion system, the design and durability of the product must be long-lasting in *both* quality and design where the consumer has an ability to appreciate the products and their versatility (LeBlanc, 2012) (Johansson, 2010). By combining the factors above, that is, buying high quality clothing, wearing the clothes repeatedly, using their timeless design in multiple different styles and assure that the textiles are given new life when they are no longer in use would be the definition of slow fashion from a consumer perspective (Clark, 2008).

2.4. Restraints of Slow Fashion

2.4.1. Economic Restraints

An issue is that sustainable materials often are more expensive than other materials (Gam & Banning, 2011). Raw materials are frequently bought in lower quantities, preventing companies from achieving economies of scale on the same level as fast fashion companies, therefore production and certification costs are higher (Franco, 2017). Accordingly, larger companies that experience heavy competition choose the cheaper alternatives in order to push prices (Gam & Banning, 2011). Such cheaper alternatives imply to synthetic fibers, like polyester, which constitute to 64 percent of the total fibers used in production worldwide (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

Another challenge is the ceaseless fashion trends that fast fashion retailers encourage consumers to follow (Gam & Banning, 2011). To be able to obtain the never-ending trends, consumers expect companies to keep prices low in order to purchase more (Pookulangara & Shepard, 2013). Since corporations are highly dependent on consumers' perceptions, it seems difficult for companies to find sufficient support to disclaim the cheap production factors (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

2.4.2. The Recycling Process of Textiles

Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) has proven that apparel in amounts of one garbage truck is being landfilled or incinerated every second. To avoid this there are several recycling methods on the market, however, none of them have been developed for large-scale production yet. Due to this, 13 percent of the total material input in the industry is being reused in some way, mostly as low-value applications like isolation or padding (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). What hinders the different recycling approaches from being developed into large-scale is mainly the fact that in order to improve the functionality of products, meaning the ability to keep quality and color even as the clothes are worn and washed repeatedly, it is common to mix materials in the same type of apparel (Naturvårdsverket, 2015). In order to carry out successful recycling processes, the garment needs to consist of one type of material only, also called nanomaterial. Alternatively, it requires that garments go through a pre-process that separates the different materials from each other before the actual recycling can begin. However, there is no fast-automated separation technique with enough conscientiousness to detect all fiber-characteristics such as fiber type or color, which makes it difficult to separate these (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Recycled materials do not obtain as much quality as new fibers, because of this merely one percent of the total materials used in the fashion industry are recycled and produce to new apparel to be resold (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). In Sweden approximately 0.1 percent of the collected garments are recycled into new fibers (Naturskyddsföreningen, 2019).

Innovation and technology are consecutively being examined within the area of textile material recycling. However, the recycling procedure of mixed material is problematic because of the lack of technology. New material separation techniques must be developed in order to achieve economic benefits within recycling and to increase the supply of recycled materials (Naturvårdsverket, 2014). Developing efficient recycling processes is important for sustainability since it enables fibers to be processed into new clothing to be resold and later on,

recycled several times before the final stage of incineration. Thus, the life cycle can be extended (Naturvårdsverket, 2014).

2.4.3. The Consumer's Mindset

Producing products using high quality materials is identified as the most common design approach (Goldsworthy, 2017). WRAP's (2015) report states that if the life of apparel could be lengthened by nine months it would lead to a reduction in waste, water and carbon release by approximately 20 to 30 percent in each. The obstacle by prioritizing longevity of the product takes form when durable fabrics are being used and worn as short-life products where the product is not being recollected or recycled again. If consumers decide to purchase recycled products, it is positive in terms of the reductions mentioned above. However, if the reuse results only in a few additional weeks of utilization, the material and resources used in the recycling process will expeditiously become discarded. Thus, good intentions to buy recycled products are fruitless due to the poor use-period of apparel (Goldsworthy, 2017).

2.5. Opportunities with Slow Fashion

2.5.1. Long-term Relationships

As slow fashion entails a shift from quantity to quality, the timely pressure is removed, and suppliers are able to plan orders as well as estimate the essential number of workers needed as opposed to the uncertainty derived from a continual emphasis on reducing labor and production costs. This creates an opportunity to invest in longer term objectives and companies are encouraged to build valuable relationships. Subsequently, suppliers will not have to hire subcontracted workers, nor force workers into unreasonable overtime in order to meet unpredictable orders and unattainable due dates. Alternatively, employees will feel secure with humane working hours and promotion opportunities. As quality is costly, fewer, but more high-value products will be purchased instead. The result of the slower design will allow abundant interaction within the supply chain and strong relationships can be assembled (Fletcher, 2007).

2.5.2. CSR as a Strategy Within Slow Fashion

Current research defines Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as commitment to better the well-being of society through discretionary business practices (Kotler et al., 2005) and the perspective of CSR is certainly an important part of the slow fashion concept (Fletcher, 2010). The issues attended to by the significance of CSR are extensive and divergent in the sense that

both environmental and social aspects of the fashion industry are embodied. Ihlen et al. (2011) continue to discuss that one of the main issues regarding the implementation of CSR is the lack of definition and standards, which means that the perception of CSR can be considered subjective and exclusive to each organization.

As a result of the complexity in relation to the definition and interpretation of CSR, several retailers have begun to brand their ethical and sustainable values to clearly convey the morals and standards of the company. Despite the fact that the favored position of the branding aspect of CSR commitments has not yet been demonstrated, the number of companies embracing the approach is growing (James et al., 2017). It is said that a company is no more sustainable than its supply chain, which has driven fashion brands to question traditional thinking and business practices (Krause et al., 2009).

In CSR the level of corporate transparency is essential. There are various definitions of transparency available within business practices, however, Mol (2015) describes it as "disclosure of information with specific attention paid towards ethics and sustainability". The will to possess and obtain a solid corporate transparency functions as the key component to the slow fashion concept. The real actions of approaching issues that exist in the fast fashion industry's textile value chain have come to be more visible amongst professionals in the sense that there is a realization of the issues' importance. Due to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its immediate connection to accountability for fashion firms, the will to impose transparency in the supply chain has increased (Perry & Towers, 2009). The further developed transparency in production systems creates more opportunities for collaborations amongst producer, designer and end-user (James et al., 2017).

As fashion brands embrace transparency within business practices, the disclosure of essential details of supply chain processes grows more central (James et al., 2017). Moreover, MacLean and Rebernak (2007) state that transparent business practices will work in favor of corporations since an increase in trust will appear amongst consumers who will choose to purchase products from transparent companies rather than non-transparent companies. A change towards more transparent supply chains can help build trust between corporations and their consumers with a focus of making CSR engagement more substantial (Kang et al., 2014).

2.5.4. Economic Opportunities

The fashion industry has extremely complex supply chains where many thousands of actors take part in the different stages of the apparel's life cycle. A standard route in the life cycle does not exist as cotton may be cropped in one country, dyed and prepared in another and finally manufactured into textiles in a distant country in terms of the store. Due to the lack of standard procedures there are sustainability issues. In the report *Pulse of the Fashion industry* the authors state that by developing more efficient approaches, economic value could be gained from the efficiency (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017). The intense pace of human consumption and production of output joints to more pressure on resources. The Pulse of the Fashion Industry report shows the three categories that have most value at stake for the world economy, if these would be used in a more efficient way. These are water consumption, energy emissions and health and safety (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017).

There are more ways to gain economic value through efficiency, but the conclusion is that there is a €160 billion upside for the world economy annually which is possible through more efficient and persevering use of resources, managing workers in a fair manner and by developing a range of steps up and down the value chain (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017).

2.6. Linear and Circular Economy

2.6.1. Linear Economy

Today's society is based on the linear economy model which is established on the assumptions that natural resources are easily accessed and extracted in large quantities. Such assumptions do not match the reality (European Environment Agency, 2016). A production process within the linear economy has severe impact on the environment through pollution and the usage of natural resources that, in many situations, exceeds or pushes the planet's resource limits. It can be further explained as the take-make-waste model. Take the resources the company requires; make the output that is to be sold; and finally, waste when products that are no longer needed become discarded (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017).

2.6.2. Circular Economy

Circular economy is an alternative to linear economy as it is more supportive and less destructive for the environment. Circular economy essence is more manageable waste,

minimizing the amount of new resources flowing into the cycle of production, recyclable resources and an overall sustainable environment (European Environment Agency, 2016). By extending the lifespan of products through improved production processes and maintenance, the need for transforming old products into new ones will diminish. This will enable nature to keep its own natural cycle and the pressure on natural resources will ease (Murray et al, 2017). As opposed to linear economy, a circular approach has a more environmentally friendly perspective regarding the application of resources since this approach aims to minimize the intake of new raw materials (European Environment Agency, 2016). Circular economy can also be summarized in three words; reduce, reuse, recycle. Reduce the usage of existing resources and the inflow of resources that do not belong to nature's cycle, reuse and recycle resources (Murray et al, 2017).

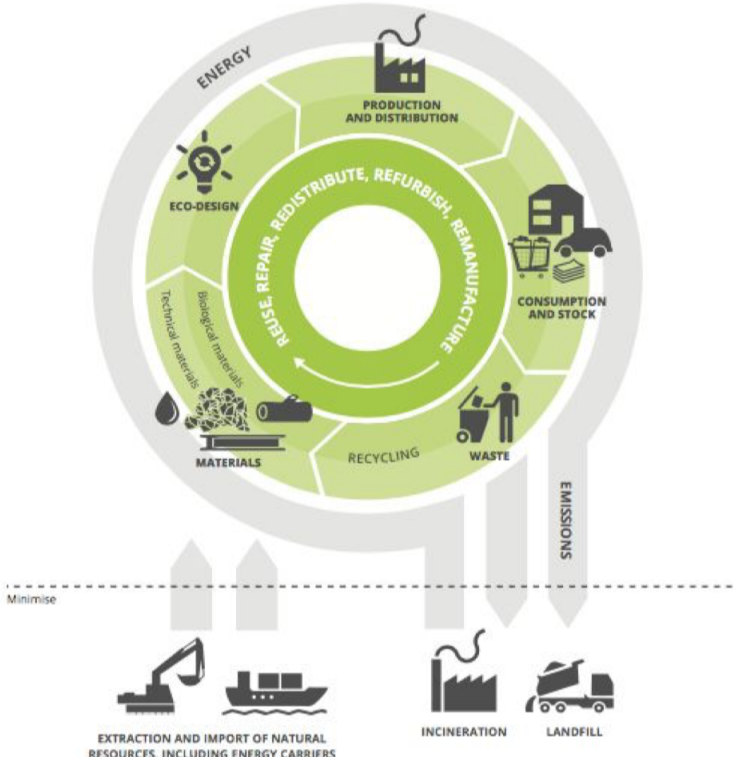

Figure 1. Illustration of *The Circular Economy* (European Environment Agency, 2016).

The external circle represents the general flow of energy from the total energy efficiency together with the amount of renewable energy-resources in the cycle. The middle circle consists of five different parts that demonstrate the flow of materials where technical materials are separated from biological materials. It is not unusual that biological and technical materials are interfused. The inner circle represents reuse, repair, redistribute, refurbish and remanufacture.

This inner circle focuses on avoiding waste generation and to expand recycling of products which minimizes the inflow of raw materials to the cycle.
(European Environment Agency, 2016).

The first part in the middle circle regards materials where the importance of minimizing material loss and increased utilization of recycled material is emphasized. Further on the second part represents eco-design which indicates that durability of products is influenced by the product design, if products are designed in ways that enables repairs and refurbishment. Additionally, the product life-span affects the way customers use products. A design for demounting products makes it possible to diminish costs later in the process as it increases re-use of outputs (European Environment Agency, 2016).

The production and distribution phases focal point are to strive for a production process that decreases the intake of new and non-renewable resources, and also to abate harmful waste from the production (European Environment Agency, 2016). The following phase is consumption and stock which describes consumers' choices regarding which products to buy, the use of the products along with attitude and managing of products which are no longer in use. These choices influence corporations, governments and individuals. Lastly, the most central part in circular economy, waste. The idea is to avoid materials from being incinerated. This enables materials to be reused and thereby, stay within the cycle. Thus, materials' worth is retained by diminishing the losses (European Environment Agency, 2016).

2.6.3. Challenges of a Circular Economy Within the Textile Industry

According to Euratex (2017) the textile and clothing industry accounts for more than 37% of European industrial activity which makes it one of the most fundamental consumer goods industries. With its various sub-sectors such as apparel, interior textiles and technical textiles, it represents a rather extended and complex supply chain. In addition to being one of the most important consumer goods industries, the textile and clothing industry is also defined as one of the more significantly socially challenged and polluting industries that exist (Boström & Micheletti, 2016).

In terms of a circular economy, Resta et al. (2016) have distinguished four pressing concerns related to sustainability challenges. These include: non-recyclable materials, water usage,

hazardous chemicals and human rights. The main challenge with recycling post-consumer textiles lies in the ability to maintain the quality of the fibers which is especially challenging due to the fact that most fabrics today consist of a mix of different fiber types. These mixed fibers within the fabric provide great benefits to users but today's technology is unable to determine the material composition which makes the separation process and recycling of these fabrics difficult (Franco, 2017).

From a production perspective of textiles within a circular economy, another issue is the amount of water and energy that is needed for manufacturing. Unlike dry processing (eg. knitting, fabric weaving), wet processing incorporates fabric preparations such as bleaching and mercerizing but it also includes coloring and finishing procedures. Wet processing is very water abundant, where the coloring process alone consumes over 100 L of water/kg of the refined fabric (Vajnhandl and Valh, 2014).

Apart from recycling issues and redundant water use, the contamination of hazardous chemicals is another challenge a circular economy encounters within the textile industry. Wastewater from wet processing contains hazardous chemicals that can cause severe environmental damage by polluting exhaust gases, wastewater and the fabric themselves, unless handled correctly before discharge. Furthermore, yarns consisting of synthetic fibers, like petrochemical base, lead to GHG emissions from processing fossil fuels. The fourth concern Resta et al. (2016) identified was regarding human rights which is a major problem within global textiles supply chains. Poor labor standards and conditions are evident in textile manufacturing in developing countries where child labor, poor safety infrastructure, forced labor along with low wages and long working hours are common practice. All of the discussed challenges within the textiles and clothing industry present a complex reality but also an evident need for sustainability innovations accommodating a more circular economy (Franco, 2017).

2.7 Material Longevity and Product Longevity

Goldsworthy (2017) describes an interval of two different types of products where the longevity is adjusted to the circular economy mind-set. The first approach is material longevity which focuses on possibilities of efficient recycling that enables repeated use of material resources. Product longevity is the second one, which insists on extending products life span through physical and emotional measures of durability in the design (Chapman, 2008).

Emotional durability describes the consumer's emotional connection to products and how long they are willing to use it. The problems that might occur when long-life products are designed, where extra resources are needed, is that these resources are used in vain. If the long-life products do not increase consumers emotional durability, the individuals will not use it for as long as it is designed for. Another problem is that products that are designed for longer durability contributes to a complicated recycling process due to various combinations of fibers that are difficult to separate (Goldsworthy, 2017).

2.8 A New Textiles Economy

A new textiles economy is based on the principles of the circular economy. The aim is to minimize adverse impacts that the textile industry has by implementing improvement measures. The improvements consist of; phasing out substances of concern and microfiber release; changing the way we design apparel, how these are sold and used; improving recycling by changing clothes design, collection and reprocessing; creating efficient use of resources and switch to renewable inputs (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017).

2.9 The Circular Slow Fashion Model

The Circular Slow Fashion Model created by Skoog and Olsson (2018) is a model adapted to the corporate perspective where a combination of slow fashion and circular economy is presented. The foundation for this model is generated from the circular economy structure as the Circular Slow Fashion Model includes the basal functions of a sustainable production cycle. Additionally, important aspects from the model A New Textiles Economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017), material longevity and product longevity (Goldsworthy, 2017) along with the characteristics of slow fashion are applied. The model presents tangible approaches for fashion corporations to work with, where the aim is to generate a business evolution that puts emphasis on slow fashion (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

This model allowed the authors to place the slow fashion concept in a context of fast fashion organizations. By applying the Circular Slow Fashion Model, the authors were able to gain valuable insights in opportunities and restrains throughout the model, thus, the role of slow fashion could be identified. Additionally, the model provided the research with a suitable

structure and allows the research to go through the different stages thoroughly, which is crucial in order to complete this research by placing the slow fashion concept in relation to fast fashion.

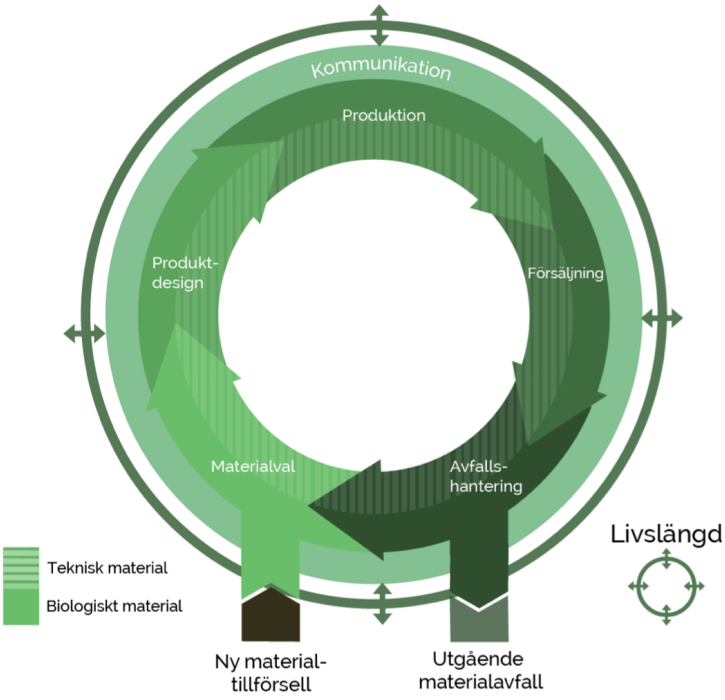

Figure 2. ***The Circular Slow Fashion Model*** **(Skoog & Olsson, 2018).**

The first phase covers material choices where it is examined what type of products are used in production, whether the material comes from nature fiber (biological material) or synthetic fiber (technical material) and if these are recycled or not. The material compositions are further investigated as the mixture of fibers and textiles aggravates the recycling process later on. Moreover, the quality of materials is of interest to get insights of the products' planned life-span and durability. The model strives to reuse the already existing material in the cycle, however, in a situation where recycled materials are non-existent, new resources have to be inserted. This stage is illustrated by the arrow "Ny materialtillförsel" (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

The following part is product design where the model accentuates a circular mind-set in the design process with consideration to the product life cycle and ability to be recycled after disposal. The state of seasonal product formation together with the amount of designed collection for one year is observed in order to further identify slow fashion attributes (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

In the third part, production illuminates the companies' number of products to be produced and whether the production takes place on local grounds or not (Skoog & Olsson, 2018). As slow fashion is characterized by local production processes, this is preferred (Clark, 2008). In this part the circular perspective continues with the ability to preserve effective production processes through diminished amount of waste, water and chemical usage (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

Sales forms the second last part where the companies' sales models are examined. The focus is on sustainable and alternative ways to meet customers' demand for products. There are key alternatives such as leasing as well as repairments of apparel. The model will also derive price of products as price is an essential part of slow fashion. This is to grasp real costs of output and to slow down the pace of consumption which will encourage the extension of the apparel life-span. Further on, it becomes of interest whether companies strive for low production levels to refrain from mounting, alternatively choose to produce an amount that is large enough and will always ensure the ability to meet customer demand (Skoog & Olsson, 2018). Firms attitude towards sell-outs along with the implementation of new collections and products is of importance since this is done to be able to introduce the customers to new fashion trends as soon as possible. The precipitation of new product lines goes against slow fashion as a main attribute in this concept is to slow down the consumption phase (ibid).

As an important aspect, waste comes last in the Circular Slow Fashion Model. It is in the firm's best interest to direct the slow fashion concept onto a circular path. This is because companies often prioritize lengthened usage of products and not necessarily a circular system. A company's ability to recycle clothes along with the efforts to collect textiles are of importance. As waste disposal is connected to choices of material, the aim is to maintain existing materials in the cycle. Such material that eventually becomes fruitless is illustrated by the arrow "utgående material" that points outwards from the circle (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

To complete the model there are two circles surrounding the model. The inner surrounding circle is communication, which is appropriate for firms to use. Communication with external partners creates helpful prerequisites that may lead to successful sustainability measures. A fully open communication along the value chain is essential, where transparency between the actors and common standards and goals are essential. That is why communication surrounds the model, it should be applied to all steps that corporations work with (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

The utmost circle surrounding the model involves products' life-span which is based on material and product longevity. The model indicates that it is important to produce products based on how they will be used by customers and this is done by applying resources to the right amount in the production (Skoog & Olsson, 2018).

3. Methodology

This chapter will present the philosophical assumptions and research philosophy of the thesis and will have the reader familiarized with the chosen methodology. It will include the arguments behind the chosen method and explain how the empirical data will be collected and analyzed. Lastly, the methodology chapter will discuss quality and ethics of the thesis, research trustworthiness, transferability and confirmability.

3.1. Research Philosophy

Saunders et al. (2009) explain how research philosophy can justify the formation and nature of knowledge, specifically how we decide to view the world. In this paper, epistemological relativism has been chosen as a philosophical perspective due to the exploratory nature of the study. The research questions in this thesis encourage reflection and analysis of several viewpoints which according to Al-Amoudi and Willmott (2011) is supported by the philosophy of epistemological relativism. In consideration of the fact that this philosophy imposes exploration from various perspectives, it was thought suitable as an approach in the process of examining corporate opportunities and restraints as well as the potential role of slow fashion in the Swedish fast fashion industry.

During the research process it is of significance to consider the context of assessment, meaning the context in which the knowledge attribution is being judged as either true or false (MacFarlane, 2014). MacFarlane's view of epistemological relativism emphasizes that the very same information can be judged from an endless amount of perspectives which is why it will not get its truthfulness validated in absolute terms, but merely relative. Bearing this in mind when researching the functionality of slow fashion, can be valuable in essence because

individual perception, habits of thought, motivating concerns, interests and values are all affected by the situational context (Lawson, 2003).

3.2. Research Approach

The study was executed by assembling primary data entirely in form of a qualitative approach. Following the gathering of primary data, analysis through an inductive research approach was conducted which was supported by the fact that the purpose was to examine the context of the research questions rather than forming and testing a hypothesis.

3.2.1. Qualitative Research Approach

Regarding the methodological research approach, focus on a qualitative research method was evident in order to obtain a deeper understanding from the corporate perspective in favor of the research questions. Consumer perspective was included nonetheless in form of secondary data in order to get a greater insight to the restraints and opportunities of slow fashion. Qualitative research is descriptive research, aiming to help the researcher understand the reasoning, actions and decisions made by high-skilled individuals within the area (Saunders et al., 2009). Saunders et al. (2009) continue to explain how qualitative research primarily puts emphasis on the expression of words rather than numbers. For this reason, the qualitative research method creates a new understanding due to the capability of categorizing the results from the collected data (ibid). Such categories in this approach aims to identify patterns and themes, and then discover and explain the relationships between the two (Guangming, 2007). The qualitative research approach provided the authors of this thesis with comprehensive and complete data that was collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions where focus was less on the metrics of the collected data and more on the distinctions of what could be found in the information, which allowed a more enhanced level of detail to the data.

3.2.2. Inductive Research Approach

The authors found it appropriate to apply an inductive research approach due to the nature of the qualitative research and the collection of primary and secondary data. Woo et al. (2017) state that the research approach in question can be perceived as “bottom-up” as it is data-driven and problem-focused with a generalizing appeal of the data while the goal is to be able to figure out what is happening and why. More specifically, this sort of research approach frequently starts with observations which subsequently leads to understanding the data and after data is gathered, patterns in the variables are recognized and concluded (Saunders, 2009). Inductive

research is not constrained to certain hypotheses or other expectations in a theory (Woo et al., 2017) which suited this study according to the authors.

The essence of applying the inductive research approach is, according to Thomas (2006), to let the research findings appear from recurring, frequent or specific themes wrapped in the data without restraints that follow from structured methodologies. The interviews for this study were few though eminently thorough. The structure of open-ended questions allowed each interviewee to elaborate their answers as much as they wanted. Through the inductive approach the authors could carefully consider the context of the interviews which, in turn, led to the understanding and identification of patterns.

3.3. Exploratory Research Design

The authors had realized that in order to identify new findings based on previous research there needed to be an exploratory research design applied to the study. The regular use of this approach was thought to lead to more reliable findings from useful material, improved design of the validated data, helpful scientific inputs and a better understanding of the findings. The exploratory research design often prioritizes patterns that seem most feasible and interesting in the research context (Jebb et al., 2017). The design was applied so that the authors were able to gather knowledge within the field so that a theoretical or hypothetical notion could be composed, which is advantageous when one wishes to clarify the nature of an issue. One important attribute is flexibility which indicates that one has to be prepared and above all, willing to change direction because as the research proceeds, new data and new insights will appear (Saunders et al., 2009).

This study is based on the search and findings of literature as well as through interviews with individuals who are experts within sustainability. As mentioned before, flexibility was critical for the exploratory research. The collection of information was flexible and unstructured initially but the more information that was gathered, the more structured the process became. The flexibility continued to underline the exploratory research approach as the interviews where bodied in a semi-structured manner with open-ended questions.

3.4. Data Collection

Throughout the essay a qualitative research approach has been carried out. The interest for slow fashion developed the question of by what means the concept could be valuable to the fashion industry. In order to collect relevant information, the possible opportunities of interviewing appropriate people were evaluated. While contacting competent individuals, the search for secondary data continued.

3.4.1. Secondary Data

Assembling secondary data was of great importance for this study in order to obtain a more extensive knowledge related to current research on the chosen topic of slow fashion. The secondary data supported the authors with the fundamentals regarding the prevailing discussion of restraints as well as opportunities with the concept of slow fashion and through the guidance of the accumulated data, the authors were also able to form the research framework as well as gain an insight on how corporations may view the topic. Sloboda (2016) defines secondary data as "the analysis of data or information that was either gathered by someone else or for some other purpose than the one currently being considered, or often a combination of the two". Collecting secondary data can be useful in the sense that it adds a practical way of understanding the research questions as well as serving the purpose as a tool to understand the answers from the primary data collection (ibid). In order to assist the analysis of the empirical findings in this thesis, the Circular Slow Fashion Model was chosen. This model worked well with respect to the topic and have served the purpose as a valuable guidance for drawing the empirical findings to analysis and discussion.

3.4.2. Literature Review Process

The secondary data was found by using the JU-library database Primo, as well as Google Scholar. The two databases provided the research with relevant and informative peer-reviewed articles from well-established journals. The journals and articles were found using different keywords such as "slow fashion", "sustainable fashion", "fashion industry", "slow production" and "slow consumption". Additionally, the journals were exclusively chosen based on these keywords. This implicates that by using only keywords when collecting data, it is possible that other relevant literature of value to this research was not found.

3.4.3. Primary Data

The source of primary data for this study was collected through three semi-structured interviews where all participants are employed at different fast fashion companies. By receiving information from various firms, more insights were gained as companies may vary in culture and have different perspectives. The researchers aimed at understanding the potential function of slow fashion within the fast fashion industry, where semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewees to answer with depth and without topical restrictions. Experienced professionals from three fast fashion corporations contributed with useful primary data. The main reason for why these individuals were chosen was because of their previous experience within the fashion industry as well as with sustainability.

3.4.4. Semi-structured Interviews

To collect the desired data through a qualitative research method, profound semi-structured interviews with corporate managers were conducted. All three interviews were held over Skype using video. The decision to conduct the interviews in this manner was to record the verbal communication and also encounter the non-verbal indications that might give the interview more depth (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). An interview can be conducted using a structured, semi-structured or unstructured approach (Collis & Hussey, 2014). A structured interview has predetermined questions and is mainly used under a positivist paradigm. On the contrary, the interpretivist paradigm uses semi-structured or unstructured techniques. By using the interpretivist paradigm, the research allows to further examine differences, or similarities, of the interviewees' opinions, experiences, or knowledge (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

The interviews of the thesis were semi-structured in nature, meaning that an interview guide with questions and topics that needed to be covered was created. The authors' decision to conduct semi-structured interviews was decided based on the opportunity for the interviewees to speak in broader terms about a few pre-determined topics. The authors focused on leading the interview in the right direction rather than keeping an exact order of the questions (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The interview guide was followed but when thought-out appropriate, deviations from the topic in the conversation that shied away from the guide were also pursued. This could provide more extensive answers from the interviewees and also allowed the interview to be more flexible and for the interviewers to be more accommodating towards the situation. The purpose was to be able to thoroughly analyze the material from the in-depth corporate interviews and thereby obtain a more extensive amount of knowledge. By using open-ended

questions, the interviewee elaborated on the responses further than a simple closed question, characterized by a simple factual answer. The authors also decided to hold the interviews in Swedish, which is the native language of the interviewees and the interviewers, to remove any language barriers that may occur otherwise.

Respondent	**Occupation**	**Interview duration**
R1	Head of Sustainability	49:06:00
R2	Environmental Sustainability Manager	47:15:00
R3	Design Manager	48:08:00

3.4.5. Interview Guide: Composition of Questions

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner where the authors chose to follow a predetermined structure and ask open-ended questions, as well as partly hypothetical questions. Open-ended questions are used to obtain more thorough answers and hypothetical questions are used to allow the interviewee to speak openly and elaborate on a higher level (Collis and Hussey, 2014).

The structure of the interview was based on the research questions of the thesis, as well as the different interpretations of slow fashion and previous research done within the area. The researchers aimed at grasping an understanding of the concept of slow fashion within the fast fashion industry. Moreover, to be able to get an understanding of the knowledge provided from the interviewees. The purpose was also to understand how the interviewees' previous experience within the area contributes to new insights and how slow fashion is positioned within the fast fashion industry.

3.4.6. Empirical Data

The empirical data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews with all three participants. Before an interview started, the topic of the research was presented to the respondents along with what sort of questions that would be asked. To get a better understanding of the experiences of the participants an interview guide was constructed beforehand which also enabled a proper structure.

All the interviewees have substantial experience within sustainability as they have high leadership positions in the firms' design and sustainability departments. The first interview was held with the Head of Sustainability, which the authors refer to as R1. This individual has worked in the retail environment with sustainability during the whole occupational life. For the second interview, the participant has been a part of a fast fashion company for approximately 20 years where the individual currently operates as Environmental Sustainability Manager, represented as R2 in this thesis. The authors of the study were also given the chance to talk to the Design Manager, referred to as R3. This last individual specifically works with product development which also includes sustainability issues. This occupational position differs slightly from the other two respondents' as it is targeted towards product design, therefore, a distinctive perspective in comparison to the other respondents was provided. These are fast fashion corporations that are profoundly established in the fashion industry as they have been operating within the industry for decades. Despite being considered as larger fashion retailers, they put considerable effort on sustainability in all steps of their business processes. Due to the high level of experience that R1, R2 and R3 possess, their knowledge and thoughts regarding the slow fashion concepts' role in the fast fashion industry were essential for this research. Further on, the respondents' answers enabled the authors to identify opportunities and restraints with slow fashion from a fast fashion corporation perspective.

Three interviews were held over Skype where two of the interviews used video function. As the corporations' headquarters are situated in other cities than Jönköping, this method was time effective for the interviewers. The authors gave the interviewees the option of choosing a meeting date and time and all three interviews were conducted over a 14-day period of time. All three authors were present during each interview and exchanged roles as the interviewer and note-taker. It was further argued as beneficial to conduct the interviews together to be able to detect any non-verbal biases. Furthermore, the interviews were recorded using two devices at each interview to assure that no information was left out due to technical issues or sound abruption. The decision to record the interviews also provided the opportunity to listen to the recording again after the meeting and get a second view at the material while also allowing the research to have direct quotes accessible in the analysis.

When approaching the candidates for the research, the interviewers and the interviewees agreed upon a draft of the final thesis to be sent for approval before publishing. This was to ensure that the interviewees feel comfortable with how the interviewers have put the findings into context.

3.5. Limitation of Method

This study regarding the implications of slow fashion within the Swedish fast fashion industry alongside the authors had certain limitations to be mentioned. To begin with, there were three different interviews with higher-up professionals within the Swedish fashion industry. This suggests that the findings from the conducted interviews may not be aligned with those potentially found from other higher-up professionals from different companies in the Swedish fashion industry. Another matter to consider was that the chosen companies all have various backgrounds, goals and current practices which implies that one can conclude that this will be the situation for many other fashion brands as well. Moreover, findings may differ not merely because of dissimilar company values but also due to personal values and beliefs.

3.6. Trustworthiness and Transferability

An important aspect of the interviews was to ensure transparency in order to encourage the interviewees to speak freely. Therefore, they were informed that the questions would be open-ended. Such an approach allowed them to talk openly about their experiences and thoughts regarding slow fashion which lead towards a direction that would limit biases. The authors of this study, also known as the interviewers, ensured that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. This initiated a relaxed climate in which the participants felt comfortable enough to answer all questions in their own words. Because of their top positions in the companies' sustainability and design departments they have considerable experience which they gained through many years of working in the fast fashion industry. These experienced participants served as a fundamental and trustworthy source of the findings regarding slow fashion's role in the fast fashion industry along with specific opportunities and restraints of the concept. Bowen (2008) states that researchers have obtained enough primary data when theoretical saturation is achieved, which is when no new findings emerge. After three interviews the authors saw it fit to not carry out any additional ones as the general result of the three conducted interviews were similar. Therefore, it can be confirmed that the trustworthiness of the interviews was high.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define transferability as "the applicability of the research findings to another setting or group". In order for research findings to be transferable to other contexts, the findings must be confirmed conceptually through defined patterns (ibid). There is an alternative way to achieve transferability by imposing a clear definition of the choice and attributes of the

participants, data findings, context and culture, and the analysis development. It is stated that there is no universal approach to achieve transferability (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). The primary data gathered from semi-structured interviews along with the secondary data allowed other researchers, who are in a comparable situation as the one demonstrated in this study, to draw findings and apply those for their own use.

3.6.1 Confirmability

Guangming (2007) writes that confirmability may be defined as "the research findings being reflective of the inquiry and not the researcher's biases" (p. 443). It is important to evaluate whether the findings are based on data or on the researchers own interpretations and biases (Guangming, 2007). To make sure that confirmability exists in the study the authors applied two different methods for the collection of data. The semi-structured interviews were essential and a natural choice in order to earn more valuable insights that could be gained from the different perspectives of the interviewees. Additionally, a considerable amount of literature from various sources were used to amplify the identified patterns. The authors were able to confirm most of the empirical findings through the literature review, even though the topic is somewhat scarcely researched so far. Lastly, the discovered patterns in the empirical findings are strengthened by the quotations from the interviewees.

4. Empirical Findings

This chapter will present the findings of the primary data collection. The empirical findings will follow the structure of the Circular Slow Fashion Model based on material from the semi-structured interviews.

4.1 Materials

To get a deeper understanding of the usage of recycled materials, questions were asked about the current work with recycled materials as well as future goals and potential. This was to understand the organizations' perceptions, attitudes and willingness to work with material choices. Although synthetic fibers are used as production material, more natural fibers are exploited which is unusual for a large company in this industry. R1 company's annual report reveals that 57 percent of their production lines are more sustainably sourced, while their goal

by 2025 is to evolve to 100 percent. Further, the report states that a majority of the cotton used in production is more sustainable (Appendix 1).

R1: *"We use a lot of natural fibers, other firms in the industry have 60 percent synthetic fibers, but for us it is the opposite."*

R2's company made it clear in their sustainability report that 38 percent of their output is made from synthetic fibers and 55 percent are manufactured from more sustainable fibers. The last number is due to the high amount of sustainable cotton used in production. The goal two years ago was to have approximately 80 percent of garments more sustainably produced by 2020. However, the situation today requires a bolder goal according to R2 (Appendix 1).

R2: "*...We are currently working on a new sustainability promise where we take more action ... It's going to be more about climate and circularity with larger focus on recycled materials."*

R3's company sell brands that they manufacture themselves along with external ones. This makes it difficult for them to determine the accurate amount of recycled materials used in production. Yet, in their annual report it is stated that 73 percent of the cotton for their own products came from more sustainable resources, while the goal for 2020 is to increase that number to 100 percent (Appendix 1).

R3: "*It is hard for us to determine an exact percentage in total since we sell both our own products, which we produce ourselves, and external brands. We experience some technological challenges to determine an exact number and as of current state we need to manually count how we grade our sustainable materials in our clothes."*

Another aspect that re-occurred throughout the interviews was the lack of sustainable materials to be bought and used for production. R1 stressed that it is difficult to keep a sufficient supply of such materials available. The access varies among different materials as, for example, a sudden increase in supply of sustainable cotton happened because the actors in the fashion industry came together to increase production.

R1: *"It is a challenge to make sure that there is sustainable materials available. Some materials have exploded, like sustainable grown cotton ... Recycled polyester has been available as well*

… There has been little access to synthetic materials from recycled sources and polyamide has been a major challenge."

R2: *"Polyamide for example, which we use a lot for the underwear production, lacks the right technique for a working system in closed loop recycling"*

R3: *"The production of recycled materials is relatively low … "*

While a decent amount of polyester exists due to the collection and recycling of pet-bottles by individuals and organizations. Additionally, it was made clear that more alternatives to form recycled materials emerge through successful research.

R2: *"There is quite a decent polyester availability because pet-bottles are being recycled to a fair extent."*

R1: *"Nowadays you can create recycled materials from fishnets and orange peels, here we are hoping for more availability."*

Another factor relating to materials is price. Here the interviewees explain how high prices sometimes have to determine what materials are being used in the production processes.

R2: *"Some materials are more expensive but recycled cotton is actually not that much more expensive in most cases but much of the recycled polyester is significantly more expensive and so is recycled polyamide. So yes, there is matter of price in this as well."*

R3: *"It's more expensive to buy recyclables."*

4.2 Product and Design

In this section the respondents answered questions about the product and design process in order to gain insight to the level of circularity, which has a focus on the product life cycle. During the interview the respondents began highlighting the importance of clothes with longer durability. From the answers it becomes clear that durability covers two areas that go hand-in-hand: the quality of apparel and how consumers manage the products they purchase. It is argued that by

manufacturing clothes from more sustainable materials and by taking better care of textiles it becomes easier to make certain that apparel circulates.

R2: *"Maybe it's most important to consider the quality so that output means longer durability and has functions that enable you to use the clothes for a longer time."*

R1: *"What we see today is that the degree of exploiting has declined dramatically when it comes to apparel. We reuse clothes fewer and fewer times so their life span becomes shorter."*

Further on, the interviewers led the respondents into questions about the season intervals and units of new production. This was done to get an overview of additional potential slow fashion characteristics regarding product and design. The main content for this section was that all companies, in this case, mind the environmental impacts by analyzing all steps involved in the process of designing products.

R1: *"It is important to analyze in order to achieve a circular business model."*

R3: "*The core of our business is design, where we take our planet and sustainability into consideration at all levels."*

R2: *"Within design it is also much about educating everyone who designs. There we have brought forward a "design tool" for more practical advice on what to consider when it comes to designing for longevity."*

The interviewees were also asked about the design of the clothes produced, whether the companies use classic designs in their collections or not. For this section, the companies argue that the personal style is of great importance and that sustainable fashion is more than classic pieces of clothing.

R1: *"Sustainable fashion needs to be both trendy and classic. Assuming that sustainable fashion means only "classic" design does not sound right to me. It is all about finding your personal style and find the pieces for you. A leopard blouse for example, might be a classic piece for someone and something that will be used for 20 years. Some colors also have higher*

levels of chemicals, for instance black, which is a classic color, so it does not really make sense."

R2: *"We use the term style before trend and communicate the importance of finding your personal style and through that find your personal classic pieces. Many of our customers want inspiration and not just basic pieces so we see a demand for inspiration and news and that can be hard to meet."*

R1 continues the discussion about finding a personal style and explains it further, while incorporating the circular business model. It is argued that it should be possible to dress fashionable in ways to express oneself while at the same time applying sustainability, this is truly a circular business model.

R1: *"This is where we talk about the circular business model, which means purchasing what we need and doing so with responsibility. We need to put focus on building a sustainable closet, where all clothes are used and for a long period of time."*

4.3 Production

In addition, there were questions asked about the production process for each of the companies. Since these companies belong to the fast fashion industry, they do not use local production facilities. Instead, production occurs in large-scale abroad, usually where labor is inexpensive. The respondents explain complicated issues in relation to the production and location and that priorities might differ from country to country.

R1: *"… Textile production is usually placed in countries with access to cheap labor forces. That brings the risks …"*

R3: *"We work with other parts of the world that do not have the same point of view as we do … It is common to not know your human rights as a worker."*

In relation to the environmental issues, it is discussed that if the fashion industry were to function in a circular manner, an important step is to use less non-renewable energy and other resources which is a severe problem. The participant R2 points out the different considerations of such energy. Companies in the Swedish Textile Initiative for Climate Action (STICA)

cooperate in order to achieve the common goals of improved energy efficiency and shift to renewable energy. It is further stated that factories have to be restructured in order to achieve circularity.

R1: *"Regarding the term circular economy that you work a lot with today, it's built on renewable energy for the entire cycle, this is a great challenge in the textile industry ... We have to create a textile industry with a core in renewable energy. We work too much with coal, oil and gas."*

R2: *"It is a problem that a lot of the production occurs in Asia, from the material point of view. Renewable energy is not so common in those countries ... We and other businesses work together in a cooperation named STICA."*

R3: *"In order for the fashion industry to be circular, all factories have to reset and adjust. This involves huge expenses and changes."*

Since the companies work within the fast fashion industry, where production is situated abroad, the authors wanted to gain deeper knowledge about their attitude, values and current work with their suppliers. The interviewees put emphasis on the importance of having suppliers that follow their requirements concerning production processes.

R3: *"The importance for us is quality in all relations, not only in the quality of the fabrics or clothes. All our factories are continuously controlled, and we also have high demands regarding our external brands.*

R1: *"For us, it is very important that the demands on the suppliers match our values."*

R2: *"We cannot control them in detail but we can tell them about the agreement we have signed and encourage them to work towards the same goals. We can encourage and incentivise with more business to support sustainable practices. "*

The interviewers also received answers about the quantity of produced products and thoughts on the topic from the companies' point of view. Since the interviewees all represent fast fashion businesses, the authors wanted to gain further insight into this topic as smaller production scale is one of the main parts of slow fashion.

R2: *"we all have to think of the number of garments produced and make more business out of less materials."*

R3: "*The business model includes monthly deliveries. This is, rather than that we want our stores to deliver new pieces every month, to obtain a flow which works for our business… We work with both slow and fast production. It depends on what kind of product and in what country the production takes place."*

Both R1 and R3 shared their point of view on the pace of production. It became clear that research done by the Swedish Mistra Future Fashion implies that there needs to be even faster fashion products because of the intensive way consumers use apparel. Additionally, it is suggested how faster production approach could be used to meet customer demand.

R1: *"There is a need for both fast and slow fashion if you look at the pace in which we use our clothing. There is very interesting research within Mistra Future Fashion ... There it is emphasized that certain products actually have to be even faster, so there needs to be super-fast fashion."*

R3: *"If we obtain a technique which makes it possible to produce in a pace so fast that you can almost choose an item that is not yet produced and then one week later arrives in the mailbox, we would have new ways of thinking around retail. "*

4.4 Sales

For this section, the interviewees reflect on the actions taken by their respective company to meet customer demand and offer sustainable solutions. Different solutions to this was presented, sharing information on how to take care of products, offer tailors to repair or adjust clothes and assure that sustainable alternatives are available to the customer when requested.

R1: *"It is important that the customer takes care of the item so we can contribute with care instructions, sewing services and the collection of textiles if the item is no longer wanted. We can give advice on how you can wear your piece in different ways, all to inspire the consumer to make sustainable choices ... therefore also bearing slow fashion in mind"*

R2: *"In our new promise, again, we would like to enable a sustainable wardrobe, lifestyle and consumption … if more people are requesting sustainable consumption, we need to offer the solutions for it. That can be done in different ways, but it is always profitable to be customer-oriented and understand the customer's need."*

R3: "*We use tailors to repair or adjust our clothes when the customer need adjustments."*

Answers were also given on how the companies set prices. For this section, their reflections about the topic in relation to customer demand is discussed. All participants argue that setting high prices on clothes in exchange for sustainable production processes is not met by the customers.

R3*: "The consumers are not entirely there yet meaning that they are willing to pay the price at all times."*

R2: *"I think the customer is willing to pay for the sweater with better quality which for that reason lasts longer, but maybe it is harder to pay more for a recycled material."*

The authors asked the interviewees about customer preferences regarding slow fashion. R1 states that we see an increase the demand for fast consumption as well as an increase in demand for sustainable products. This is strengthened by R2 who also states that the customers seem confused in this matter as it is clear what is needed to be done, but the end result includes many different aspects beyond sustainability.

R1: *"Unfortunately, we see tendencies of not being willing to consume in a forward-thinking way. For example, in the latest "State of Fashion" report it is presented how millennials want to consume fashion even faster, but at the same time ask for it to be sustainable. It's interesting how the trends are.*

R2: *"It can be difficult as a customer, you may know what you need to do but it is not always very easy because there is social pressure as well as your social needs which are covered by clothing as well. It is not just about keeping warm, but also all the other needs we have such as belonging, showing who you are or standing up for things you believe in."*

R3: *"There is little in analyses or customer surveys saying that the sustainable process is the most important part for the customer, even though we all know it actually is. We know that we definitely shouldn't use fossil fuels etc., yet the consumer is saying something different. The consumers aren't really there yet in the aspect of being willing to pay more."*

The authors also wanted to gain understanding of what responsibilities the corporations have to make sustainable fashion more attractive. The interviewees argued that they have a responsibility to inform their customers more as the customer many times does not know how the production actually works or what sustainability implies.

R1: *"We have to reach out to the consumers and make them understand that they should buy products needed, that they know they will love and will use many times… Our role is to make sure that consumers, though they may not know themselves how to consume fashion sustainably, are inspired by us and show that it is actually possible."*

R3: *"The brands' and retailers' objective are to inform the customers. I don't think there are many people that know about the production and what is sustainable or not. It is not just about quality and that part but also about the social aspects. Much clothing is produced in countries where women are not allowed to go to school for example. When a blouse costs 20 kr you should probably think: hmm, how can this be? Because the truth is that everything may not be legitimate."*

4.5 Waste and recycling

To further get an understanding of the corporations' approaches and abilities, questions regarding the recycling of apparel along with the collection of apparel were asked. All the interviewees expressed that the firms are constantly working on improving their level of sustainability. When it comes to the waste and recycling process there are several issues pointed out. R1 and R2 declare that the mix of various materials in garments obstructs or even hinders the recycling process while R3 clarifies the reason for the obstructions.

R1: *"Today, there is no way to convert it to new fibers, but there is a lot of ongoing research."*

R2: *"When garments consist of many different types of materials they become difficult to recycle because it is only possible to recycle pure material in most cases, when garments consist of one material to 100 percent."*

R3: *"In order for used apparel to become new garments we have to know exactly what type of fabric and color they acquire and how old the garments are … and the separation facilities are very few and extremely expensive at the moment"*

R1 continues to argue that there is no possibility to close the loop because large-scale technology for recycling of fibers does not exist at the moment and modern innovation within the fashion industry is needed, this is the most severe issue. The lack of technology issue is recurring throughout the interviews as the participants share their insights of the current state of the fashion industry.

R1: *"We have actually not achieved a good innovation when it comes to more sustainable fiber-production, so this is connected to more innovation."*

R2: *"The amount of total fibers that actually is being recycled back into the industry is way too small. That is because there is a need for new technology and the existing new technology need to increase to large-scale. "*

The respondents mentioned that a key issue to developing the recycling process of clothes is the collection of apparel that consumers do not want to use anymore. The respondents also discuss that, even if proper recycling systems could be developed and applied to large-scale establishments, it would be of no use if apparel is not collected and delivered to places where recycling is possible. R1 and R2 expressed that they do offer the possibility for their customers to drop off used clothes at their stores, later to be resold at second-hand stores or down-cycled. However, the issue of an undeveloped system for the collection of used garments remains.

R1: *"There is not a developed collection system of the apparel which means that we cannot be certain that the products we create actually are recycled because we don't know if the customer makes sure the clothing ends up there…"*

R2: *"The first step is to collect the apparel and even if all solutions for how to take care of them do not exist yet, we would not have anything to work with if we did not collect them."*

R3: *"The circular economy cycle is very hard to manage as of current state. What we do is that we try to get it delivered to second-hand stores. That is as far as we can go right now. At this point we do not have the opportunity or systems to collect the clothes after use."*

4.6 Communication

As part of the communication section of the model, the respondents have explained the implications of communication within their operations. The importance of communicating with external as well as internal parties in order to create opportunities for successful sustainability work is highlighted. Open communication is crucial for circularity and needs to be present in all steps of the value chain with transparency and mutual standards and values.

R2: "*If you consider sustainability, it is reflected by this new promise that we have. We want to work with both social issues, like human rights and environmental concerns throughout our entire value chain and all departments. "*

R3: *"We do everything together at our company. All our departments work with each other in some way. We are very personal towards colleagues, externally and internally."*

R1 and R2 point out that there is cooperation between many fashion organizations in relation to sustainability where communication is essential amongst the parties involved. R3 agrees with the significance of communication and further implies that the positive impact of coopering together is that more people will be inspired and latch on.

R1: *"We have for example introduced the Swedish Textile Initiative from Planet Action, working for the entire industry to cooperate with each other and trying to take action as fast as we can."*

R2: *"There is a new announcement called "Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action" where all fashion brands have committed to minimizing emissions with 30% by 2030."*

R3: "*More people need to take action together in order to make a change. If someone starts, then others will latch on and this in combination with technology will make things happen."*

Also, the interviewees answered that communication is of great importance in order to move the industry forward and relates to how the fashion industry functions altogether.

R2: *"The entire fashion industry is cooperating very much, and we are working with similar questions as much of our competition, so we are actually cooperating there."*

R3: *"Everything is run by people, information and dissemination of knowledge. If companies and brands who are able to close the loop are brought in, other companies will join. Then it will be a great thing to discuss. Communication is everything."*

The interviewees also see potential to affect the fashion industry further by mediating positive communication to other companies that work less with sustainability and hopefully contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry.

R3*: "We do not align with a brand that does not live up to our demands, but sometimes we help their business establish a foundation that we can approve."*

R1: *"We face a challenge to lift the entire fashion industry and make sure that our requirements are being analyzed further … We still have a lot of work to do regarding human rights and living wages. It is because we still struggle to reach out to everyone buying textiles, as it is still very easy to find buyers who have lower requirements but still maintain the production."*

4.7 Life-span

Since slow fashion implies a longer life-span than fast fashion products, questions were asked regarding the firms' points of view on the matter. The interviewees emphasized that long durability in clothes is crucial. R2 expressed that it is sometimes difficult to attain products that are made from recycled materials and at the same time have good quality with long durability. It may be so, that the some of the firms have to prioritize either fine quality or outputs with longer durability, depending on the product type.

R1: *"We want to bring durable products but also make sure the apparel gets a longer life."*

R2: *"Some recycled materials, for instance cotton, does not have the same level of quality. That is where we face difficulties since we want high durability in our products and therefore*

recycled materials are hard to work with in those cases … It also depends on the type of clothing. Some might be more suitable for short durability. Then, that apparel should be made from materials which makes it easy to recycle. Our denim for example, is a construction where we do not find that quality is much impaired. There we have tried to mix in as much recycled cotton as we can without compromising quality."

R3: *"We value durability highly and that our products have a longer life-span … For products of this sort we like to keep the style and design instead of remaking them in three months … The circular cycle is very hard to attain. What we do is that we turn to second-hand organizations instead."*

It is further discussed that the companies strive to make the customers understand that they need to use the purchased clothing items more. Extending the utilization of apparel is perceived as an easy move to make in order to lengthen products life-span and enable outputs to circulate. R2 applies insights in what can be done if companies cannot inspire customers use their clothes longer.

R1: *"Our focus is to make it attractive for the customer to extend the lifetime of their clothes. This is aligned with our business model as we see that the key for a sustainable fashion consumption is to make it attractive for all … Where we can consume fashion using sustainable materials, taking care of our products and make them circulate."*

R2: "*The first step that requires least resources is to just wear the item, but if that is not possible maybe you can remake it. That is for example why we had the "remake collection" back in 2017 where we tried to find ways to remake items, so they become reusable. If that is not possible, maybe you can use the material in some other way and then lastly recycle it into new fibers."*

5. Analysis

This chapter provides a deeper understanding of how the empirical findings are related to previous research. This part follows the structure from the Circular Slow Fashion Model and

connects the interview findings to the theoretical framework.

5.1 Materials

From the interview findings it stated that a large part of the companies' materials come from synthetic fibers (Appendix 1) which is in line with Eder-Hansen et al.'s (2017) report where approximately 60 percent of the total fibers used for production in the world consists of synthetic fibers, however, the companies have quantities lower than 60 percent. It is obvious that the interviewees' companies cannot and do not work with slow fashion products as Fletcher (2010) stated that material used in the slow fashion process are made from sustainable materials. Eder-Hansen et al (2017) defined these as organic, recycled, re-generated or fair-trade materials. Synthetic fibers can therefore not compose slow fashion products. From the companies' annual reports, it is clarified that they all have goals to increase the number of garments made from more sustainable materials.

The empirical findings entail that the supply of sustainable materials is low in the market, which makes it difficult for firms that are willing to buy and use them in production, however the availability of materials varies. It is understood from the empirical findings that the variations may depend on the fashion industry's efforts to produce such materials but also on technology, clarified by Naturvårdsverket (2014). As Skoog and Olsson (2018) expressed in the Circular Slow Fashion Model, when there are no recycled materials, new resources have to be applied in production which forces companies to take in non-renewable resources as production has to go on. Another restraint with slow fashion is that recycled and sustainable materials are often more expensive. According to the empirical findings this affects companies' incentives to purchase sustainable and recycled materials and then use in production. Franco (2017) also explained that production and certification costs are higher. Gam & Banning (2011) confirm that the cost of materials affects firms because of the heavy competition in the fast fashion market as brands tend to choose cheaper alternatives to be able to push prices.

5.2 Product and Design

According to Fletcher (2008), slow fashion emphasizes higher quality products where motility throughout the value chain is considered. From the interview material we see how the respondents argue for the importance of quality and how the consumer chooses to manage the

products that are purchased. Clark (2008) indicated that durability is one of the three core elements of slow fashion. The importance of durability is strengthened by the respondents, who indicate that durability is an important aspect in order to make certain products circulate.

From the interview material, information about the design analysis process relating to production was presented. According to the respondents, sustainability and longevity are taken into consideration when planning production processes and are also important parts in their process towards a more circular work and by being fast fashion retailers, production intervals are seasonal. Mistra Future Fashion (2018), stated that it is important to, rather than hindering consumers from buying new products, produce products that are sustainable and recyclable.

Using classic design was according to Fletcher (2008) and Skoog & Olsson (2018) important aspects within both the slow fashion concept and the circular slow fashion model. According to the interview material, to produce only classic pieces of clothing is not aligned with how the respondents view a sustainable closet. The respondents rather argue for a personal style, which is sustainable for each individual as their own closet contains pieces of clothing which suits their personal closet. According to the respondents, sustainable fashion needs to be both trendy and classic. Clark (2008) confirmed this by stating that using timeless designs in multiple different styles is an important aspect within slow fashion from a consumer's point of view. This is further confirmed as LeBlanc (2012) and Johansson (2010) both argued for the importance of consumers to appreciate the products and their versatility in order for a product to function within the slow fashion system. According to the interview material, it is also one of the main goals to achieve within the corporations, to allow the customer to build a sustainable closet where all clothes are used and over a long period of time.

5.3 Production

The respondents from the interviews all agreed that a pressing concern and restraint was that their production facilities are based in Asian countries. As Fletcher (2010) argued, fast fashion companies have responsive supply chains in which the companies produce and deliver new designs within few weeks in their retail stores. Clark (2008) further strengthened that output of this kind is designed to be inexpensive, fast and easy to manufacture based on short lead times, low-cost fabrics and labor and effective mass-productions. Nonetheless, Fletcher’s (2007) research in relation to slow fashion reveals that as quality is costly, fewer, but more high-value

products will be purchased instead. The result of this slower design will allow abundant interaction within the supply chain and strong relationships can be assembled.

Although the respondents agreed to the risk of having their production sites in these countries, they also emphasized how important it is that their suppliers follow the requirements. They realize that they cannot control them entirely but as one of the respondents mentioned, cooperation will end unless the manufacturing units live up to minimum standards. From the environmental aspect, one problem with having production facilities in Asia is that renewable energy is not developed as a functioning system in many of those countries. This means that it is important for the companies to conduct regular quality controls on site in order to make sure that environmental and social standards are met. On a more positive note, one of the respondents expressed that a change within the Asian countries has started to form in the sense that they too have started to invest in more sustainable processes, because they know what is being requested from them and the majority of brands have committed to being more mindful of the environment as well as labor conditions. The respondents expressed that it is difficult to implement circularity in the processes as they are today. All factories have to reset and be adjusted to the circular approach, but the immediate costs of doing so will be extensive. However, Eder-Hansen et al. (2017) explain in their report that there is an opportunity to gain approximately €160 billion annually for the world economy if the fashion industry were to develop and be more efficient in the proceedings up and down the value chain.

Viewing slow fashion from a corporate perspective, slow production is of significant importance as Cataldi et al. (2013) have mentioned earlier. The interviewees were certainly aware of this too, although they are all part of what makes up the fast fashion industry. Further on, it is mentioned that monthly deliveries are included in the business model but that is not because they want to "stack up" on inventory but rather to obtain a flow that works for the business. A certain amount is purchased which needs to be sold before new supplies are ordered and it is agreed between the respondents that it is optimal to produce a smaller amount that truly sells.

5.4 Sales

In relation to sales, one of the prominent restraints has been the dilemma of meeting the continuous customer demand that is mentioned from the interviews. As LeBlanc (2012) states,

even the most sustainable company can become unsustainable if consumption is overstrained. It is evident for the interviewees that consumers are not only interested in just purchasing and wearing basic pieces. They want inspiration and news in order to keep up with the current trends which Gam and Banning (2011) further confirmed as one of the challenges, being the ceaseless fashion trends that fast fashion retailers encourage consumers to follow. These never-ending fashion trends disrupt the most important focal point for consumers regarding slow fashion, which according to Pookulangara and Shepard (2012) is slow consumption. One respondent continued to explain how the sustainable approach is not always a priority for the consumer even though we all know by the book how important it is. Moreover, as a consumer, there is also the social pressure of belonging and expressing oneself through clothing which can be an obstacle for slow fashion.

Instead of just pushing for sales, a couple of the respondents shared that in order to inspire the consumers, they could give advice on how to wear items in different ways in favor of a more sustainable consumption which aligns with Clark's (2008) definition of slow fashion. Another one informed the authors that tailor services were offered to repair or adjust clothes when customers needed it which can be considered as a contributing factor to diminish consumption. LeBlanc (2012) confirms that in order to reduce the environmental impact of clothes, consumers should use the apparel for a longer time-period.

When setting prices, it is highlighted that many consumers are not entirely there yet, meaning that they are not willing to pay the price for such "slow fashion products" at all times and as Fletcher (2010) further implied these products are typically not inexpensive. Paying for a high-quality product is probable but paying a superior price for a recycled item does not seem as likely always. That is why the respondents emphasized the importance of keeping their customers informed. If an item is considerably affordable, it does probably not stem from a fair production process. It is not just about the quality of the product but also the social aspects around the production. By obtaining accurate information, perhaps the consumers will find it reasonable to pay a certain amount of money and simultaneously feel secure that they can wear the item with a clear conscience. The companies' purposes are not to discourage their customers from purchasing from them but rather to make them realize that they should opt for products they need and will love to wear and use many times. These findings are supported by Pookulangara and Shepard (2012) as they state that consumers need to gain more knowledge

and thereby be willing to think from a slow fashion perspective where they choose quality instead of quantity, decrease consumption and contribute to a longer life-span for clothes.

5.5 Waste and recycling

The empirical along with the theoretical findings show one of the more complicated issues with the slow fashion approach in this section. The problem lies in the manufacturing of products as most apparel is made out of mixed materials in order to enhance the functionality and durability of the products. The interview findings present that it is not possible to recycle mixed material clothing, it is only possible for pure material. This was consolidated by Naturvårdsverket (2014) who underlines that garments need to be made of one fiber type in order to be processed and recycled. As a lot of products are made from mixed materials it is understood that all types of fibers have to be separated from each other to enable a functioning recycling process. However, the separation process is complicated due to all the different fiber characteristics that have to be detected. This is further explained in the empirical findings as a manufacturer needs to know what type of material the product has, what color it is, as well as the age of the garment. Naturvårdsverket (2014) stated that there is no such automatic separation technique that can detect all essential product characteristics. As slow fashion corporate activity includes manufacturing recyclable apparel according to Mistra Future Fashion (2018), the issues that regard the recycling process mentioned above prevent firms from manufacturing slow fashion outputs. Hence, these are restraints that aggravate a slow fashion approach.

The empirical findings imply that this type of recycling is not completely non-existent, however, the technology has to be developed into large-scale so that it can be used by fast fashion firms and their large production facilities. There needs to be innovation in sustainable fiber production as the empirical findings entail that new innovation is connected with new technology. Naturvårdsverket (2014) agreed that effective process comes from innovative technology. Additionally, they add the importance of specifically developing separation techniques because without this, the industry cannot attain economic benefits from recycling mixed materials nor boost the supply of recycled materials. As the lack of proper technology disrupts the supply of recyclables, fashion firms cannot purchase these nor offer recyclable products to consumers to a larger extent.

5.6 Communication

All respondents agree that transparency and open communication both externally and internally is crucial for circularity, which according to Fletcher (2010) was an important part of the slow fashion concept. James et al. (2017) and Perry & Towers (2009) further argued that more companies are embracing the CSR approach in general, which we see through the interview material that all respondents stand for and work towards. The respondents also argue that it is important that transparency is implemented throughout the entire value chain. Clark (2008) stated that this is one of the three core elements of slow fashion. It is also found from the interviews that the different corporations are working together in order to find sustainable solutions within the business operations, moreover hoping to inspire and get inspired by others to find new innovative methods to work with. Fletcher (2010) confirmed the importance of adjustability as she claimed that it is crucial for corporations to be able to change their view of the slow fashion concept and that a change is needed within firms in today's society. Krause et al. (2009) further confirmed this by arguing that a company is no more sustainable than its supply chain, which has left fashion brands starting to question traditional fast fashion practices.

From the interviews knowledge was also gained regarding how the respondents hope to influence other companies and thereby contribute to a more sustainable fashion industry. According to the interview material, efforts to influence and raise the entire fashion industry is something the corporations have been working towards for a long time. Kotler et al. (2005) stated that through discretionary business practices, corporations are committed to CSR and thereby better the well-being of society. CSR in its turn, is directly linked to the slow fashion concept (Fletcher, 2010), and since the interviewees are aligned with values related to the CSR approach, a resemblance between the slow fashion concept and work from fast fashion business can be distinguished.

5.7 Life-span

LeBlanc (2012) determined typical slow fashion products as long-lasting in both quality and design. The fast fashion companies in this research have embraced a part of the concept since long durability is highly prioritized for all of them. However, they find it difficult to manufacture products from recycled materials while at the same time maintaining high quality products with long durability. Recycled materials do not obtain the same quality as new fibers which is stated by Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017). Interviewee R2 suggests that some

types of products may be more suitable for short durability and therefore, such apparel should be made from materials which simplify the recycling.

According to Skoog & Olsson (2018) the Circular Slow Fashion Model indicates that a product's life-span regards both material and product longevity. From the empirical findings it is clear that the participating companies in this study put focus on both of these longevity aspects. WRAP's report (2015) emphasized that reductions in waste, water utilization and carbon emissions are possible if the life of apparel is extended by 9 months.

The empirical findings declare that the companies aim to create an understanding of why it is important for consumers to wear the clothes for a longer period of time before disposal. The companies' incentives to encourage consumers to extend utilization signify the product longevity aspect. Goldsworthy (2017) described the consumer emotional connection to apparel and how long they are willing to use it as emotional durability. The author further implied that when long-life products are designed, extra resources are required and if this long-life output does not increase the emotional durability for consumers, those extra resources are used in vain. The non-increase in emotional durability means a non-extensive utilization of clothes.

According to Goldsworthy (2017), material longevity aims at efficient recycling that enables companies to use materials repeatedly. This does not match the empirical findings in "4.5 Waste and Recycling" as mixing materials in products is necessary for the durability and functionality. As stated earlier in the analysis, mixed materials contribute to a complicated recycling process due to the various fiber types in clothes.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter the authors conclude their findings from the theoretical framework and empirical data. Together with the analysis, the research questions from chapter one is answered.

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research was to identify the opportunities and restraints of slow fashion within the fast fashion industry as well as understand what impact and role slow fashion can have in this context. In order to answer the research questions and

guide the authors through the study, the Circular Slow Fashion Model was applied. The theoretical framework along with empirical findings provided the authors with the significant opportunities and restraints connected to the fast fashion industry which also led the authors to understand how the slow fashion concept could be placed in relation to fast fashion.

Restraints found in the research:

1. Corporations do not work with slow fashion products primarily due to relatively low availability of sustainable materials together with heavy competition and high price.
2. Suppliers' production method includes the use of non-renewable resources. This is a problem because renewable energy is not developed as a functioning system in that part of the world where production facilities are.
3. Mixed material apparel cannot be recycled immediately. First, all fibers need to be separated from each other as only pure materials can be recycled. At the moment there is no automatic separation technique that is able to detect all different garment characteristics.
4. The ceaseless consumer demands and the intense production from companies do not meet the standards of slow fashion.
5. Consumers are not willing to pay a higher price for recycled products.
6. It is difficult to manufacture products from recycled materials while at the same time maintaining high quality products with long durability.

Opportunities found in the research:

1. Corporations have the ambition to use more sustainable materials and work towards a more sustainable fashion industry together.
2. Personal style vs. classic design. This creates an opportunity for slow consumption since the consumer is able to find a personal style and thus adjust consumption.
3. There are current methods to work against the unsustainable consumer demand and encourage the customer to wear and use products for a longer period of time.
4. Strategic planning is used in the process of designing for durability.
5. In the third world more investments in sustainable production processes have emerged as fast fashion brands request this.

The following opportunities and restraints argue that slow fashion as an *entire* concept does not have a role within the fast fashion industry. This is because, as of current state, it is not realistic

for fast fashion companies to apply all slow fashion attributes throughout the cycle. However, there are certain components of slow fashion where potential can be found that can work well in order to develop a more sustainable fast fashion industry. It is evident that slow fashion has a clear role in relation to slow consumption where there is much room and potential for future improvement. Still, it is apparent that slow fashion does not have a role within slow production as of current state according to the standards of slow fashion.

7. Discussion

In order to finish this thesis, following chapter discusses the contributions made to current research, limitations of this research as well as suggestions for future research.

7.1 Contribution

Previous research has focused on explaining and discussing slow fashion in its own nature rather than its actual significance in a broader perspective. There is existing research that relates slow fashion to a consumer perspective, but this study has been conducted from a corporate perspective. The authors have applied the Circular Slow Fashion Model in a context that has not been researched before. The model introduced opportunities and restraints as new findings and through this, the authors intend to inspire continuous research on the relationship between slow fashion and fast fashion in order to work towards a more sustainable fashion industry overall. This exploratory study has given real life examples on the perspective of how fast fashion corporations view and work with the slow fashion concept. Valuable information on companies' reasoning regarding slow fashion and sustainability was obtained and further analyzed. This has contributed with new knowledge and new angles that can be investigated in further research but also new ideas for companies to consider.

7.2 Limitations

There is the issue of writing from different perspectives regarding the slow fashion concept. Previous research of the concept mainly accounts for a positive perspective, meaning that all desirable aspects are in focus while negative characteristics are being left out from the discussion. This leaves other researchers with little information about potential negative aspects

which hinders a fully critical assessment. Additionally, there is a lack of existing research where slow fashion is examined in a fast fashion context, how the concept can be used, implemented and what effects it might have on the industry. This means that the authors of this study could not compare findings with other previous research. The positive angle that previous research is leaning towards may distort the actual implications of the term and combined with the non-existent research of how slow fashion would fit into today's fashion industry, it might make the term misleading as the actual implications of imposing it in a fast fashion context is absent.

For this study there were three interviewees, each of them representing different Swedish fast fashion companies. This study aimed at examining fast fashion corporations located in Sweden which limited the findings. Therefore, if other non-Swedish fast fashion companies were included the results may have reflected other patterns or behaviors that were not identified when analyzing merely how such firms relate to slow fashion. Additionally, if more individuals with experience of the fast fashion industry had been interviewed the reliability of the study could have been even further enhanced, though, the experience and profound knowledge of the participants led to highly reliable answers.

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

As a suggestion for future research, the authors argue that it would be of significance to continue studying the *opportunities* of slow fashion found in this research. By focusing on the opportunities, the findings might give valuable insights and knowledge on how to practice a more sustainable fashion industry. Not only would this contribute with new perspectives, but also extend the current research and allow for it to grow into more generalized assumptions. We also argue that the restraints found in this research are mainly due to lack of technology, which therefore awaits improvements in which fashion retailers do not actively work with. Therefore, it seems difficult to further elaborate on the restraints from a fashion retailer's point of view.

One opportunity found in the empirical data was the mindset from the corporations. Since this is one crucial component in order to make the slow fashion concept work in the fast fashion industry, it would be of interest to further elaborate on how far the mindset and willingness to work with sustainability could affect the entire fashion industry. A suggestion may also be to examine the slow fashion concept as a whole through the mindset from others. This would

potentially allow for more extensive and varied research about the perceptions of the slow fashion concept not only in today's society, but also in the future.

To bring further depth to the research, a suggestion for future research may also be to investigate the relationship between slow production and consumption, and fast production and consumption more broadly through other industries. By looking at the relationship from yet another point of view, new patterns might occur which would extend results found in this study.

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9. Figures

Figure 1

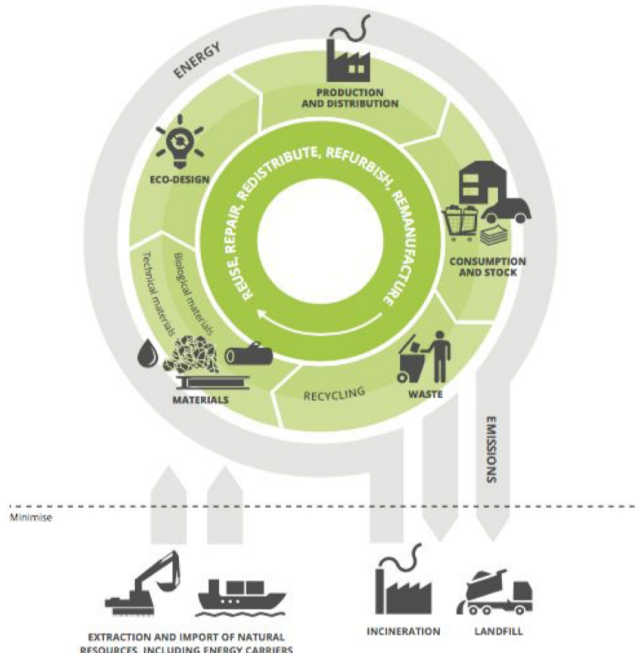

Figure 1. Illustration of *The Circular Economy* (European Environment Agency, 2016).

Figure 2

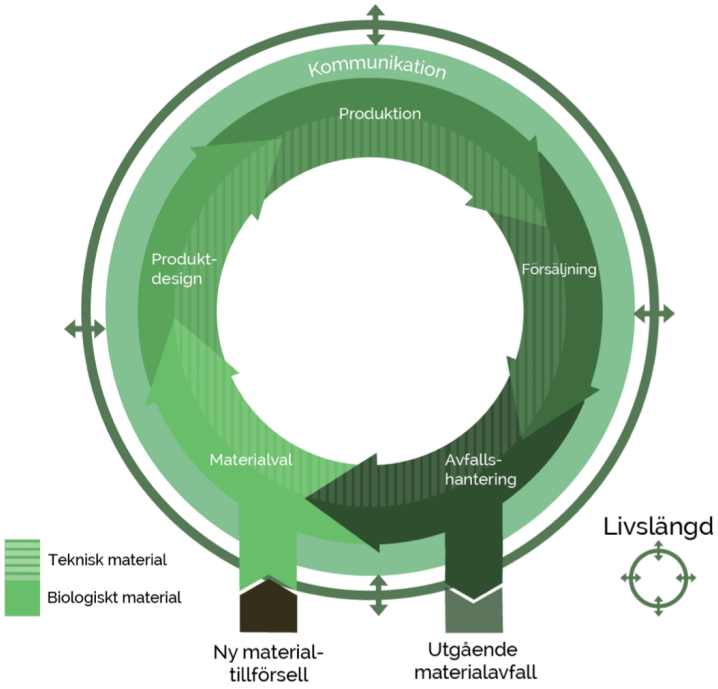

Figure 2. ***The Circular Slow Fashion Model*** **(Skoog & Olsson, 2018).**

10. Appendix

Appendix 1

Secondary Data: Information About the Corporations

Information about R1's company, taken from their annual report.

The company strives for circular economy and contributes by working with sustainable materials as well as production processes. The company wants a longer lifespan for their apparel and for it to fit into a circular flow of textiles. In order for the company to reach the goal that by year 2025, 100 percent of the assortment should consist of more sustainable materials, they focus on buying cotton, synthetic fibers and cellulose fibers from more sustainable resources. Around 86 percent of the cotton comes from more sustainable sources and 3.7 percent of the total synthetic fibers purchased were recycled. The remaining fibers come from non-renewable raw material. The firm's goal by 2020 is to purchase viscose that comes only from closed production processes. 57% of their production lines are now made from more sustainable materials.

Information about R2's company, taken from their annual report.

Out of all of the company's output in 2017, around 55 percent were made from more sustainable fibers. In their sustainability report from that same year, the firm states that this number is due to the successful progress in the use of more sustainable cotton which was at 95 percent at the time. Synthetic fibers stand for 38 percent of the garments and such fibers are made from non-renewable raw materials which has a negative environmental impact. A small percentage of the produced garments consists of cellulosic fibers.

Information about R3's company, taken from their annual report.

The company has an aim is to offer fashion that is manufactured in sustainable processes and have products that customers can wear for a long time. In 2017, 73 percent of the cotton came from more sustainable sources. By 2020, according to predetermined goals, that number should reach 100 percent.

Appendix 2

Semi Structured Interviews

The purpose of these interviews is to conduct primary data of how large fast fashion companies view the slow fashion concept. The interview will include questions regarding company perceptions, consumer responsibilities, future potential and current restraints regarding the implementation of slow fashion within the fast fashion industry. This interview will give the authors an in depth understanding of the slow fashion concept within the fast fashion industry as well as the corporations current work with sustainability. The interviews have different structures to some extent as the authors wanted to gain in depth information about each of the company.

Syftet med dessa intervjuer är att samla primärdata gällande hur fast fashion företag ser på slow fashion konceptet. Intervjuerna kommer innefatta företagens visioner, konsumentansvar, framtida och nuvarande möjligheter samt svårigheter. Dessa intervjuer tillför författarna en djupgående förståelse för slow fashion konceptet från ett fast fashion perspektiv samt företagens nuvarande arbete med hållbarhet. Intervjuerna har delvis olika struktur då författarna ville få detaljerad information om var och en av företagen.

Interview with R1

Introduction

Introduktion

1. Can you tell us about yourself and your position within the company?

Kan du berätta om dig, dina arbetsuppgifter och din position i företaget?

2. Can you give us an introduction to the company, what you do, your vision and your values?

Kan du ge oss en introduktion till företaget, vad ni gör, er vision och era värderingar?

3. If we view the world as it is today, how much do you consider your organization's work to affect a sustainable fashion industry?

Om vi ser på världen som den är idag, hur mycket ser du att er organisations arbete påverkar en hållbar modeindustri?

Slow Fashion

4. What does the concept slow fashion mean to you and your organization?

Vad betyder konceptet slow fashion för dig och din organisation?

5. If we refer to the circular model that you mention in your sustainability report, does slow fashion have a significant part within the different stages of the model? If not, why? Do you think it could be implemented and useful in some of the stages?

Om vi utgår från cirkelmodellen ni nämner i er hållbarhetsrapport, har slow fashion en roll i de olika stegen i modellen? Om inte, varför inte? Tror du att den skulle kunna införas och göra nytta i något av stegen

6. A. What challenges do you see with slow fashion in your operation?

Vad ser du för svårigheter med slow fashion i er verksamhet?

B. Which opportunities do you see?

Vad finns det för möjligheter?

7. How important do you think slow fashion is? What impact do you think it has in the fashion industry generally speaking?

Hur viktigt tror du slow fashion är? Vilken inverkan tror du att det har i modeindustrin generellt?

8. Do you think it can be misleading that slow fashion sometimes is brought forward as a solution for unsustainable consumption?

Tror du att det kan vara vilseledande att slow fashion ibland framställs som en lösning på den ohållbara konsumtionen?

9. How do you think consumers view slow fashion in general? Do you think there is a need, desire etc.

Hur tror du generellt att konsumenter ställer sig till slow fashion?

10. This question can be viewed both from what role the organization may have but also as a consumer. What changes do you think are necessary within the fashion industry to increase the desire and attitude towards sustainable fashion?

Den här frågan kan ses både utifrån vilken roll organisationen kan ha men även som konsument. Vilka förändringar tror du behövs inom modeindustrin för att öka behovet och inställningen till hållbart mode?

Production and materials

Produktion och material

11. We saw that your goal for 2020 is to have 80% of the fabrics made from a more sustainable production process. In 2017, that number was 26%, what is required in order to reach the goal?

Vi såg att ert mål till 2020 är att 80% av tygerna är gjorda med en mer hållbar produktionsprocess. År 2017 va den siffran 26%, vad behövs för att uppnå det målet?

12. Will you need more advanced technology before this is possible or what would you say the last piece of the puzzle is?

Hör detta ihop med att ni behöver nya teknologi innan det är möjligt eller vad är den sista pusselbiten?

13. Is it more expensive to use recycled material?

Är det dyrare att använda återvunnet material?

14. Finally, is there something you think we have forgot to ask you and that you would like to add?

Slutligen, är det något du tycker vi har glömt att fråga om som du vill tillägga?

Interview with R2

Introduction

Introduktion

1. Can you tell us about yourself and your position within the company?

Kan du berätta om dig, dina arbetsuppgifter och din position i företaget?

2. Can you give us an introduction to the company, what you do, your vision and your values?

Kan du ge oss en introduktion till företaget, både vad ni gör, er vision och era värderingar?

3. What does the concept slow fashion mean to you and your organization?

Vad betyder konceptet slow fashion för dig och din organisation?

4. If we view the world as it is today, how much do you consider your organization's work to affect a sustainable fashion industry?

Om vi ser på världen som den är idag, hur mycket ser du att din organisations arbete påverkar en hållbar modeindustri?

Slow Fashion

5. How do you think consumers view slow fashion in general? Do you think there is a need, desire etc.

Hur tror du generellt att konsumenter ställer sig till slow fashion?

6. What changes do you think is needed within the fashion industry to increase the need and attitude towards sustainable fashion?

Vilka förändringar tror du behövs inom modeindustrin för att öka behovet och inställningen till hållbart mode?

7. In year 2015-2016, 38% of your clothes were sustainable clothes. In 2016-2017 it increased tremendously to 53%. Finally in year 2018 it increased to 57%. How do you explain the relatively large increase between 2015-2016 followed by the smaller increase in 2018?

År 2015-2016 räknades 38% som hållbart mode, 2016-2017 ökade det till 53%, och slutgiltigen förra året slutade det upp på 57%.
Hur kom det sig att det skedde en så stor ökning mellan åren 2015-2017? Och vad är anledningen till den mindre ökningen det följande året?

Production and materials

Produktion och material

8. We see that a lot of your production takes place in both Bangladesh and China, does your agreements regarding production differentiates from other corporations who also use suppliers from Bangladesh and China?

Vi ser att mycket av er produktion sker både i Bangladesh och Kina, skiljer sig era avtal i verksamheten från andra företag som också producerar till stora delar i Bangladesh och Kina?

9. You also have limited edition collections which are to offer unique clothes and contribute with fashionability. How do you look at those in relation to slow fashion?

Ni har ju också limited edition kollektioner som ska erbjuda unika plagg och bidra till en högre modegrad. Hur ser ni på dessa kollektioner i förhållande till slow fashion?

10. How does your baby-collection contribute to your work with sustainability?

Vilken roll skulle du säga att er bebis-kollektion har i er hållbarhets rörelse?

11. Could your baby-collection function as an opening for a wider sustainability work in general?

Skulle er bebis-kollektion kunna vara en "ingång" till en mer omfattande hållbar verksamhet gällande hela ert sortiment?

12. Your baby-collection seems to have a lot of focus on staying timeless, sustainable and inexpensive. Could the adult clothes be produced in the same manner with the same level of sustainability?

Er bebis-kollektion verkar ha mycket fokus på att det ska vara tidlöst, hållbart och prisvärt. Och det går bra för det märket. Skulle vuxen-modet hos er kunna tillverkas på samma sätt med den graden av hållbarhetstänk?

13. How much of your sortiment is made from recycled materials as of today? According to your sustainability report 50 % should be this in 2025?

Hur stor andel av era plagg är återvinningsbara i dagsläget? Från rapporten kan vi se att ert mål är att 50% av plaggen ska vara detta inför 2025.

Circular Economy

Cirkulär ekonomi

14. You have mentioned the circular business model throughout your sustainability report, there are many different models for this method but if we go through the fundamentals, that is: production, consumption, waste and recycling. Can you describe where you are at right now with your work with sustainability and what is the next step in this process for you?

Ni har nämnt cirkulära affärsmodeller i er hållbarhetsrapport, det finns många olika modeller för detta men om vi kollar på övergripande områden så tänkte vi att vi går igenom dessa stegen och se var ni som verksamhet befinner er i? Produktion, konsumtion, avfallshantering, marknaden för återvunnet material. Vad är nästa steg för er i den cirkulära modellen?

15. What do you think is the largest obstacle for you to implement more sustainable fashion in your business?

Vad tror du är det största hindret med att införa mer hållbart mode i er bransch?

16. Finally, is there something you think we have forgot to ask you and that you would like to add?

Slutligen, är det något du tycker vi har glömt att fråga om som du vill tillägga?

Interview with R3

Introduction

Introduktion

1. Can you tell us about yourself and your position within the company?

Kan du berätta lite mer om dig och dina arbetsuppgifter och din position i företaget?

2. Can you give us an introduction to the company, what you do, your vision and your values?

Kan du ge oss en introduktion till företaget, både vad ni gör, er vision och era värderingar?

3. If we view the world as it is today, how much do you consider your organization's work to affect a sustainable fashion industry?

Om vi ser på världen som den är idag, hur mycket ser du att er organisations arbete påverkar en hållbar modeindustri?

Slow Fashion

4. What does the concept slow fashion mean to you and your organization?

Vad betyder konceptet slow fashion för dig och din organisation?

5. If we refer to the circular model that you mention in your sustainability report, does slow fashion have a significant part within the different stages of the model? If not, why? Do you think it could be implemented and useful in some of the stages?

Om vi utgår från cirkelmodellen ni nämner i er hållbarhetsrapport, har slow fashion en roll i de olika stegen i modellen?
Om inte, varför inte? Tror du att den skulle kunna införas och göra nytta i något av stegen?

6. A. What challenges do you see with slow fashion in your operation?

Vad ser du för svårigheter med slow fashion i er verksamhet?

B. Which opportunities are available in your situation?

Vad finns det för möjligheter med det i ert fall?

7. How important do you think slow fashion is? What impact do you think it has in the fashion industry generally speaking?

Hur viktigt tror du slow fashion är? Vilken inverkan tror du att det har i modeindustrin generellt?

8. Do you think it can be misleading that slow fashion sometimes is brought forward as a solution for unsustainable consumption?

Tror du att det kan vara vilseledande att slow fashion ibland framställs som en lösning på den ohållbara konsumtionen?

9. Circular economy is something you connect to sustainability, however, we do not see that you have mentioned that in your sustainability report. Is it something you work with?

Cirkulär ekonomi är något som man kopplar samman med hållbarhet, men vi ser inte att ni har nämnt det er i hållbarhetsrapport, är det någonting ni jobbar med eller strävar efter?

10. How do you think consumers view slow fashion in general? Do you think there is a need, desire etc.

Hur tror du generellt att konsumenter ställer sig till slow fashion?

11. This question can be viewed both from what role the organization may have but also as a consumer. What changes do you think are necessary within the fashion industry to increase the desire and attitude towards sustainable fashion?

Den här frågan kan ses både utifrån vilken roll organisationen kan ha men även som konsument. Vilka förändringar tror du behövs inom modeindustrin för att öka behovet och inställningen till hållbart mode?

Production and materials

Produktion och material

12. We have seen that most of your production is located in China. Does your agreements differentiates from other corporations who also produce in China? We see that you follow Business Social Compliance Initiative grading scale as factory-evaluation, but is there anything else you do as well?

Vi har sett att de flesta av era leverantörer är från Kina och att det är mest fabriker där skiljer sig era avtal i verksamheten från andra företag som också producerar till stora delar i Kina? Ni följer tex eran Business Social Compliance Initiative bedömningsskala vid fabriks-utvärderingar men är det nått annat som bara ni har?

14. How is the percentage on recyclable materials on your A to D categories look respectively?

Hur ser % fördelningen ut på hållbara material inom de kategorierna A till D som ni nämner i hållbarhetsrapporten?

15. Finally, is there something you think we have forgot to ask you and that you would like to add?

Slutligen, är det något du tycker vi har glömt att fråga om som du vill tillägga?