

**Market-shaping and Sustainability Communication within
the Clothing Industry**

A Generation Y consumer perspective

Bianca Söderlund

Master's Thesis in International Business

Supervisor: Wilhelm Barner-Rasmussen

School of Business and Economics

Åbo Akademi University

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ABSTRACT OF THE MASTER’S THESIS

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Author: Bianca Söderlund
Title: Market-shaping and sustainability communication within the clothing industry: A Generation Y consumer perspective
Supervisor: Wilhelm Barner-Rasmussen
Abstract: <p>Climate change is progressing at an ever-increasing alarming rate with continuous proof of the devastating effects it brings with it. The clothing industry is one of the largest polluters, making up more than all emissions from both international flights and maritime shipping combined. If we are going to slow down climate change and stay underneath the critical 1,5 degrees Celsius, the clothing industry and all its actors must work towards making a complete switch towards increased sustainability.</p> <p>In this thesis, I study how companies can shape the market to increase sustainability, how these sustainability efforts are communicated externally and how consumers of Generation Y perceive this type of communication. Swedish Stockings was chosen for this case study as the company openly state that they are trying to conduct market-shaping to increase sustainability within the hosiery industry. Generation Y was chosen as it is one of the most important groups on the market purchase wise. The thesis has a multi-qualitative research method, meaning that the data was collected through a company interview with Swedish Stockings’ CEO Linn Frisinger and two focus groups with a total of ten Swedish speaking Finns between the ages of 23-29. The company interview was done over the phone and the two focus groups were conducted separately over Zoom with both video and audio. The focus group participants were shown a portfolio representative of the communication conducted by Swedish Stockings on their Instagram profile. All three occasions of data collection were recorded and subsequently transcribed and coded into different themes. The interview with Swedish Stockings provided a point</p>

of reference for what intent their social media communication had. The comparison between Linn Frisinger's answers with the brand perception of the focus group participants, it became evident that some of the company communication was successful, resulting in increased consumer interest and a chance for product purchase. A positive perception of the communication is significant for market-shaping and the change of consumer and competitor behaviour. However, not all communication was received well, and the campaign "This is us – this is them" was the cause of multiple participants' disapproval and negative brand perception.

This thesis shows the need for managers to understand the benefits and risks of conducting market-shaping and sustainability communication. When not done correctly, sustainability communication is perceived by some as excessively provocative or preachy. This may lead to negative consumer brand perception and may oppose or impede market-shaping as well as increased sustainability.

Keywords: Market-shaping, Sustainability, Communication, Consumer Brand Perception, Generation Y, Social Media

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1. Introduction

As awareness of the current climate crisis is spreading, companies and consumers alike have to rethink their behaviours and prepare for major disrupting developments in the near future. Firms must update their business models and invent new and more sustainable supply chains and products to adapt to imminent environmental and judicial changes, as well as become competitive in the long run (De Jong, Harkink and Barth, 2018).

The fashion industry is especially problematic from an environmental point of view, producing 10 % of all carbon emissions. This is more than all emissions from maritime shipping and all international flights combined (McFall-Johnsen, 2019). The industry further has a major negative impact on water usage and pollution as well as human and animal welfare. Companies operating within the industry must rethink their actions and their consequences more so than others and should promote competitors to do the same. One way of doing so, is through producing sustainable and environmentally friendly products, shape the market and make consumers choose their products above others.

People looking to make sustainable choices within the fashion industry have two ways to go. Either choose second-hand items or opt for ethically sourced products. When it comes to undergarments such as underwear or stockings, most people choose the latter as it is deemed more hygienic. This enables a market within ethically sourced undergarments to thrive and possibly take up a continuously larger part of the unethically sourced product market. That is, if the organisational actors know how to portray themselves and communicate information to consumers in a positive and convincing way.

This thesis explores the modern view of malleable markets and how firms can adjust markets to themselves instead of the opposite (Kjellberg et al. 2012). This way of thinking makes it possible for sustainable organisations to shape the market and make it develop in a certain direction which not only will help the market and industry but also offer more value to consumers and have a positive environmental impact. Furthermore, this thesis studies how companies can shape the market all the while gaining a competitive edge amongst consumers as well as gives an understanding of how consumers view these company efforts. It also discusses how these efforts affect

consumers' interest in the company's products. The method used is a multi-qualitative one that consists of a focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews with company representatives.

1.1 Problem definition

The current environmental situation crisis forces companies of all industries to change the way they conduct business and invent new ways of producing more sustainable products. Markets need to develop in a direction which puts less strain on the environment, all the while making it possible for organisations to remain competitive and offer products of great value to their consumers. Several businesses have already started to rethink their practices, and some are also encouraging others to do the same in an effort to create a more sustainable market. These efforts need to be conveyed in a way that positively affects the competition and consumers alike so that consumers chose sustainable alternatives over those offered by the competition.

1.2. Objective and research questions

This thesis is a case study of Swedish Stockings, a hosiery company which presents itself to consumers and competitors as a market shaper mainly within the stockings industry. The company mainly focuses on the Scandinavian market and is based in Sweden, however, it can also be seen as "born global", as it solely communicates in English, allows for online purchase worldwide and ships their products abroad, as well as the company's outspoken aims for future market positions (Yin Wong & Merrilees, 2012).

The purpose of this thesis is to offer further understanding of how sustainability efforts within market-shaping are communicated by companies and how consumers perceive and react to this communication. Sustainability is a more relevant issue than ever before, and companies need to take part in market-shaping and communicating sustainability efforts to their consumers as well as knowing how to do this in a way that will be positively perceived by consumers. This is not only true for the stockings and underwear market but all companies operating within the clothing industry.

Therefore, the three main research questions which will be answered through this thesis are:

- How do companies communicate their efforts to shape the market to achieve sustainability?
- How do consumers within Generation Y perceive and react to companies' efforts to shape markets in this way?
- How is Generation Y's perception of sustainability communication described in scientific research?

Due to its limitations, this study will not be able to answer any questions regarding what the future looks like for companies using sustainability communication as a market-shaping tool. It is however highly relevant and important to discuss potential future scenarios about what happens if companies like Swedish Stockings achieves their market-shaping goals and change the business into a sustainable one. As it is only possible to speculate about it, it cannot be one of the research questions, but nonetheless, it is discussed both in the company interview, focus group discussions, as well as in chapter 6. Discussion and conclusions.

1.3 Delimitations

The empirical research is geographically delimited to the two Nordic countries Sweden and Finland, despite the company in question being seemingly born global and is operating on an international scale. The interview was carried out with Sweden based CEO and co-founder Linn Frisinger over the phone as this was the easiest way of me reaching her and carry out an oral semi-structured interview. The focus group consists of Swedish Speaking Finnish individuals between the ages of 23-29 with mixed backgrounds, education, and occupations. These individuals are part of the target audience for Swedish Stockings' communication and are therefore legitimate focus group participants. That they all speak Swedish is needed for improving the flow of the focus group discussion. The study is limited to opinions of 10 cis-gender individuals due to the lack of availability of any LGBTQ+ individuals. This is important to mention and must be considered throughout the thesis and when reading the analysis later. In this thesis I have chosen to only refer to cis-men and cis-women as these were the only ones who participated in the study and are therefore the only

genders I can speak of regarding their opinions. The reason for having 3 men participate despite Swedish Stockings' target audience consisting of mainly women was to give more diverse opinions. This was further needed because of Swedish Stockings' recent move to enter the furniture market through their recycling program and venturing outside of the female-dominated target group.

1.4 Method

The thesis aims to develop a deeper understanding of Generation Y's perception of sustainability market-shaping as well as what effects companies seek to evoke by openly communicating about their sustainability and market-shaping efforts. This thesis uses a multi-qualitative method in the form of focus group discussions and a company interview as this is an adequate method for better understanding individuals' genuine thoughts and experiences. The method further allows for additional questions and interactions between the researcher and the interview subjects, as well as amongst the interview subjects themselves. The focus group discussions offer an in-depth insight into consumers' thoughts and perceptions, whereas the company interview further helps investigate the point of view of the organisation in question.

1.5 Key concepts

Defining key concepts within sustainability is sometimes avoided even by researchers as it is very complex, yet most people have an idea of what the concept incorporates (Salas-Zapata & Ortiz-Muñoz, 2019). The following chapter aims to define and clarify the key concepts used throughout the thesis to avoid any misunderstandings or misconceptions caused by the lack of definitions.

Market-shaping

Market-shaping is the process of change within a market, initiated by one or multiple actors (Nenonen & Storbacka, 2018). It is based on the modern notion that markets are not stable structures, but rather that they are very socially complex, always developing and therefore also highly influenceable.

Brand

The company brand identity is the only thing the company itself can influence to express themselves outwards and affect other market actors and consumers.

Consumer brand perception

Consumer brand perception is based on experiences or word of mouth and affects consumers' willingness to invest in the company. A positive consumer brand perception is crucial for being successful, changing consumer behaviour and shape the market.

Sustainability

Sustainability can be of social, economic, or environmental character or cover all three. Most deem it to be mainly of an environmental character (Salas-Zapata, Rios-Osorio & Cardona-Arias, 2018).

Generation Y

Generation Y, also called millennials, are a powerful cohort of consumers with a future full of potential consumer choices (Williams & Page, 2011). The generation's age range differs depending on the source and is therefore defined in this thesis as people born between 1981 and 1999.

Communication

Communication is essential for conducting market-shaping and affecting consumer brand perception. Communication can be carried out in multiple ways and is about transferring information between two or more actors. The actor expressing the information wants the communication to be received and understood in a specific way, but this is not always successful. Measures can be taken to improve the probability of

the communication being received in the way the expresser wants and consist of pictures, words, videos etc.

1.6 Disposition

The thesis is divided into six main chapters, followed by a Swedish summary, references and appendixes. The first chapter contains the *introduction* which offers a general overview of the thesis, its research area, and questions, as well as key concepts and delimitations. The second main chapter makes up the *theoretical framework* and *literature review*.

The third chapter, the *methodology*, covers the choice of research method, how the pilot interviews as well as focus groups and company interview were carried out. The chapter also explains how the focus group portfolio was put together, how participants were chosen, how all data was ultimately analysed and concludes in a discussion about the research method's credibility and trustworthiness.

The fourth chapter contains the *analysis* of the acquired data followed by the fifth chapter *results*. The final main chapter contains the *discussion* and *conclusion* which offers managerial implications, limitations to the research as well as highlights potential further research.

2. Market-shaping and sustainability

The following two chapters (2 and 3) make up the thesis' theoretical framework. The chapters discuss key concepts such as market-shaping, corporate sustainability concerning market-shaping and communication with consumer brand perception for Generation Y. These chapters offer a deeper understanding of the concepts and help answer the research questions, with the support of the data collected, analysis and results. First, the meaning of market-shaping and how it can be used by companies will be presented, followed by the use of market-shaping within sustainable development. Chapter 3 discusses the use of communication as a tool for achieving market-shaping and increased sustainability. The connections between all three concepts and their theories are highlighted.

2.1 Market-shaping

Market-shaping and its practices have received increasing attention over the last few years (cf. Baker & Nenonen, 2020; Baker et al., 2019, Kindström et al., 2018; Kjellberg et al., 2012, Nenonen & Storbacka, 2018, Nenonen et al., 2019). The concept has been discussed using different terminology, ranging from market-driving strategies, market scripting and market innovation to market-shaping (Nenonen et al., 2020). Drawing upon the ideas of Harrison & Kjellberg (2016), Kindström et al., (2018) and Nenonen et al. (2019), the term market-shaping is used throughout this thesis. Scholars such as Kindström et al. (2018) emphasize the need for more research within market-shaping and for more studies focusing on markets instead of only the organisations, as these have been previously overlooked (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2011). As markets become increasingly complex structures (Trim & Lee, 2008) and face more threats in the form of e.g., climate change and its effects or global pandemics, marketers, academics, and managers must continuously develop and deepen their understanding for markets and how these can be changed (Beninger & Francis, 2020). Markets can be described as living structures, as they are dynamic and continuously change. This change can be due to a multitude of factors such as crises or societal change but is even more so the effect of market actors' activities and market-shaping (Cova, Ivens & Spencer, 2020).

For years, markets have been considered fixed structures which may slowly develop. However, in later years, research suggests that such perceptions of markets are incorrect and outdated. Market-shaping in its core is based on the realisation that markets are dynamic, malleable, ever-evolving and socially constructed (Kjellberg et al., 2012). They make up highly complex systems yet are easily influenced and are therefore able to be caused to move in a certain direction (Baker et al., 2019). The market-shaping process is carried out through intentional activities by one or multiple companies or shapers in the aim to change the characteristics of a market and everything connected to it, including the behaviours, expectations, practices, structures, and norms of all stakeholders (Nenonen et al., 2019; Baker & Nenonen, 2020). By making the market move in a specific direction and go through changes, firms are not forced to adapt to the market to become successful, but rather have the market adapt to the company itself (Baker et al., 2019).

When carried out in the right way, market-shaping results in previously unexplored added value for both consumers and companies alike, as well as creates new opportunities in an array of areas, including innovation (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2015). Innovation and market-shaping go hand in hand, and companies who are leaders within innovation are usually also market-shaping leaders deciding in which direction the market should develop next (Kumar et al., 2000). Companies understanding the usefulness of market-shaping, and how to properly handle it, will have an immense competitive advantage to competitors. However, it requires companies to remain open and willing to develop together with each other and the market and be as dynamic as the market itself (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2015). Market-shaping is a collective and cooperative action of network actors. Market shapers looking to influence other actors should, according to Storbacka & Nenonen (2015), not learn about the market, but *with* it. Additionally, they must continuously focus on innovation and spreading their message in a way that is effective to them. Market learning is carried out in so-called market learning cycles, which encourages a constant state of learning, improvement, and change. This kind of complex and higher-level learning takes place in individuals' inner "rooms" and within the limits of the organisation in question. The focus remains on the cognitive processes which is the main method of learning, in addition to changes within the mental models both company employees and stakeholders have.

2.2 Ways of achieving market-shaping

As market-shaping is a relatively unexplored concept, managers need to understand how to execute it. Nenonen and Storbacka (2020), state, based on the current and emerging literature on market-shaping, that there are eight steps within the market-shaping process. These are “(1) determining whether to act now or actively wait, (2) deciding whether to be a shaper or supporter, (3) developing a scalable vision for the future market, (4) recognizing the minimum viable system linked in this vision, (5) driving changes in market-level properties, (6) securing that value quantified and shared, (7) inviting actor engagement for implementation, and (8) defending against possible retaliation from threatened market systems.” The process results in a market which has been shaped.

Step one requires the company to know the market and evaluate whether there are enough resources or any affecting additional assets which are needed. If so, it may be better for the company to wait to carry out its activities. The organisation must be able to decide when would be the best moment to act or stay put, depending on the current situation in society and on the market. The second step by Nenonen and Storbacka (2020) speaks about how companies must choose between taking on a supporting or leading role within market-shaping. Will the company become the innovator or imitator – make the first move, follow quickly, or make a late entry? Supporter companies are part of the collective effort to shape the market and see the benefits from the change in the market, however, they can also spend significantly less money and other resources on the market-shaping process. All the while being able to decide in which direction the market-shaping should move. Supporter companies should therefore also have an in-depth understanding of how to carry market-shaping activities and the process as a whole. The two roles of supporter and shaper may also change over time. It is recommended that companies are open to returning to questioning their role in market-shaping and remain dynamic throughout their “lives”.

The third point is to develop a scalable version for the future market. Many market actors start initiating market-shaping simply due to being heavily dissatisfied with the current situation, questioning the norms and how things are done within the market. In addition to being frustrated with the current state of things, market-shapers should create potential alternative ways of solving specific problems. By identifying the problems and innovating their solutions, the explanation can then be simplified and

transferred across market actor boundaries, which facilitates collaboration. The importance of understanding the entire market and other companies' value creation is once again emphasized, as this allows for other actors to see the benefits of participating in the market-shaping process (Nenonen et al., 2019). Creating a scalable version for the future market naturally demands collaboration with other market actors to be successful.

The fourth step according to Nenonen and Storbacka (2020) is recognizing the minimum viable system linked to market-shaping vision. To implement market-shaping, the firm and its managers must understand the different levels of the surrounding and affecting market, paying extra attention to the network interaction and key actors. The minimum viable system speaks of which specific market actors are needed to carry out the market-shaping in the most effective and straightforward way possible. Step five speaks about driving changes in market-level properties. The previous steps must be taken to initiate market-shaping; however, changes must also be made within market-level properties such as market agendas, practices, and structures (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2015). This is usually done by first researching what needs to be done within the minimal viable system, followed by the changes that should be done within the wider external environment. These changes consist of adapting business models through e.g., price adjustments, the network of actors and modifying the competing offerings' availability, or the market representations and actor behaviour norms (Nenonen et al., 2019). Securing that value is quantified and shared is the sixth step and entails the need for not only the company in the role of the shaper to change its activities but also other market actors. Value proposition is one of the key pieces of market-shaping strategies (Kindström et al. 2018), as it condenses the advantages for each specific market actor of the future market. In the future scenario, benefits should be made evident to all actors. The market-shaping strategy is further validated by the support of multiple market actors and is therefore essential to make evident to a larger group as early as possible. All above-mentioned strategies of the market-shaping process will be useless unless they can be implemented. Step seven is about inviting actor engagement to implement, which forces managers to opt for collaborative strategies instead of competitive ones and allow coordination efforts between companies. The collaboration ultimately allows for further added value for all actors within this network, as a single company can never seize the same

opportunities like the ones developed by the allocentric market view and network cooperation (Nenonen & Storbacka, 2020). This seventh step enables actors to engage in an open innovation process with collaborations extending over all types of boundaries, such as corporate or functional. The final and eighth step of the market-shaping process by Nenonen and Storbacka (2020) covers how to defend against possible retaliation from threatened market systems. As previously stated, the actors within the minimum viable system will benefit from market-shaping. However, external actors will naturally want to keep up their competitive edge and probably do not want to allow the market-shaping to happen, as it does not benefit them but rather damages them, their profit and growth, both currently and in the future. Companies wanting to be market-shapers must be ready for this kind of resistance and continuously manage it by actors outside the minimum viable system (Peters et al., 2020). This is mainly done by reallocating resources and providing additional support for certain organisations within the network or specific practices.

Kindström et al. (2018) view market-shaping activities according to three levels: system level, market offer level and technology level (figure 1). All three levels are made up of three activities each. The system level is about the norms and regulations which limit and rule the market. It is essential to understand the market as a whole and to view the producers', sellers', and institutions' part in both the problems and the solutions. Activities within this level that market shapers need to carry out consist of changing norms, affecting knowledge, and increasing morale. The second level according to Kindström et al. (2018) is named the market offer and is about the exchange of objects or the value of products and services. The associated activities are understanding value and consumers and building credibility. The third and final level mentioned by Kindström et al. (2018) is the technology level which focuses on the role of technology to create and develop a market which enables and facilitates the findings of problem solutions for current and future issues. The technology level's activities are building application knowledge, co-develop technologies and recreating processes. Kindström et al. (2018) state that market-shaping is heavily facilitated when one understands all three levels with their accompanying activities. The authors' research further highlighted the importance of carrying out activities from all three levels simultaneously to obtain the best results possible and see the full effects of market-shaping.

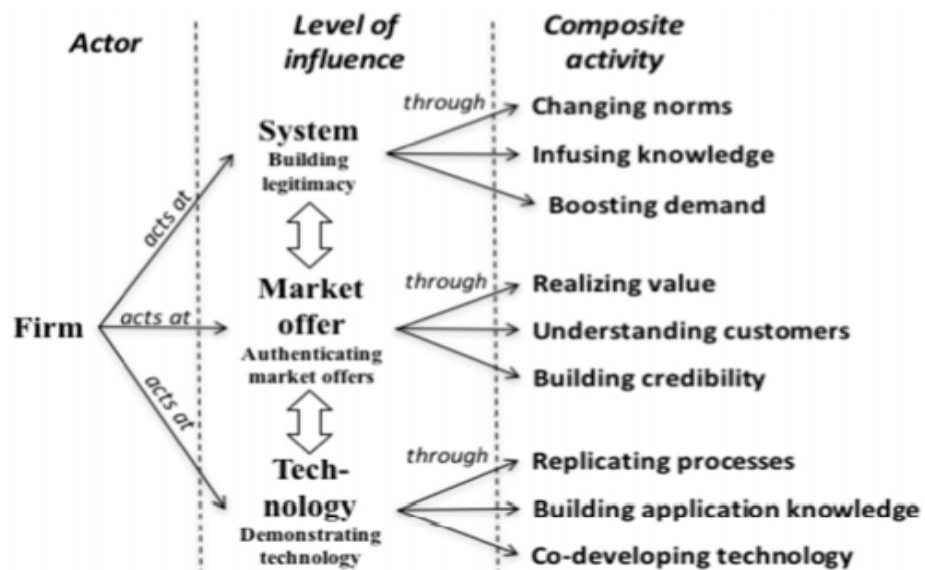


Figure 1. The levels of influence used by market shapers and their accompanying activities (Kindström et al., 2018).

The levels and activities suggested by Kindström et al. (2018) are similar to the findings of Nenonen et al. (2019), which discuss the needed capabilities for market-shaping and their underlying activities. Their findings conclude in a similar conceptualization of market-shaping and how to put it into practice but also go more in-depth by categorizing their findings in four triggering capability sets, eight triggering capabilities and twenty-five associated activities. Nenonen et al. (2019) also show that firms conducting market-shaping view the market as network-based and systemic. Market shapers do not only concentrate on what is within the limits of the own company, but also try to change resources managed by competitors, organisations, and individuals.

As previously mentioned, market-shaping is not an easy task, and to carry out the above-mentioned activities or levels, the market shaper or market actor must obtain a highly broad and varied knowledge level of it. A company wanting to conduct market-shaping must keep this in mind while recruiting and do so by focusing on hiring an array of different personalities and skillsets. The education of already hired and new employees is especially important within R&D and sales and should also be done through interaction with the target groups to gain the consumers' perceptions (Ottosson & Kindström, 2016).

So far, the discussion has been about how companies or organisations can use market-shaping to change the direction and behaviour of the market. However, it should be stated that not only firms and industry professionals can influence markets. Research within the fashion market shows that consumers who are very engaged and digitally connected can also heavily impact the market and the direction it takes (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015). This is one of many reasons for companies to remain well informed of consumers and their perceptions and behaviours and is also why this thesis further aims to understand how market-shaping sustainability practices can be perceived by a specific group of consumers.

In summary, market-shaping is a highly active market strategy which entails a continuous understanding of the dynamics of the market and its different levels to be implemented. Kindström et al. (2018) suggest carrying out as many activities as possible at the same time while ensuring they can interact and affect each other. The different activities can be developed and implemented for a short or long amount of time and can follow different time frames or cycles. They can also be used to focus on abstract or concrete subjects, i.e., changing specific areas within the market as unspoken norms or a certain target audience. Having the right kind of attitude is essential to remain dynamic and be able to carry out activities from all three levels. The importance of being able to change the way of learning and adapting is once again highlighted, in addition to the possibility of allowing so-called “triggers” to initiate new market learning cycles, no matter if these come from within or outside the own company or market network (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2015).

2.3 Sustainability – its definition and importance

As this thesis aims to better understand the consumer perception of companies' efforts to shape markets to become more sustainable, it is crucial to define the term *sustainability* and its importance for society and our future. Because it is a well-known term used in both the scientific and business world, one would assume that its definition is simple and straight-forward. However, this is not the case, as the term is highly complex and varies depending on whom you ask to define it. This ultimately results in many researchers avoiding to define the term entirely (Salas-Zapita, Rios-Osorio & Cardona-Arias, 2018). The following subchapters cover the importance of sustainability, the definition used for the complex term in this thesis, as well as how it can be achieved through market-shaping.

When addressing sustainability within the business and research world, multiple terms are used, and sometimes interchangeably, such as CSR, CS, sustainable development, and environmentalism. Often these terms are applied without any clear or differentiating lines drawn between the concepts (Montiel, 2008; Van Marrewijk, 2003). Avoiding clear distinctions prohibits managers to properly define sustainability within their own company, which in turn negatively affects the associated goals (Montiel, 2008).

Sustainability in the business realm is often referring to social, economic, or environmental issues and is then often discussed using the abbreviation CSR (corporate social responsibility). Camilleri (2017) explains CSR through the statement that “companies have responsibilities towards society beyond their economic and legal duties”. However, this description often undermines the importance of *environmental* sustainability and is therefore not explicit enough for this thesis. Therefore, when speaking about *sustainability* in this thesis, it is referring to *corporate sustainability* (CS) instead of CSR. CS derives from the Brundtland report (World Commission for Environmental Development, 1987), where it was described as:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs.”

Since then, CS has seen varying definitions among academics and researchers. Some see it as one-dimensional (environmental) and others as two-dimensional (environmental and social issues). A larger number of academics view CS as a three-

dimensional construct which, similarly to CSR, incorporates three aspects: economic, social, and environmental (Montiel, 2008; Bansal, 2005). This definition views all three aspects as pillars which interact with each other, while simultaneously being affected by external causes like legal, technological, or cultural (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010). The tri-dimensional construct can also be thought of as 3Ps, known as planet, people, and profit (Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014).

Sustainability used to simply be a voluntary action according to the European Commission, but as the understanding for the importance of sustainability and the effect our and companies' actions will have on our future grew, it was updated to obligatory (European Commission, 2011). Organisations within the EU must now disclose non-financial information, i.e., social and environmental factors, which prove that the company is working towards achieving their goals within those fields (European Parliament, 2014). Since their beginning, businesses have focused on exploiting nature in the aim of profit. This has been done without either fully understanding or simply caring about the final environmental results and negative effects on our planet and future society overall (Amaro de Matos & Clegg, 2013). We must change our current relationship with nature and our extreme dependence on it if we and future generations will be able to survive on this planet. The economy must become sustainable and be adjusted according to the natural resources and the frames of nature (WWF, 2020).

2.4 Market-shaping as a tool for sustainability

Changing businesses' organisational models to reduce the negative environmental impacts is more important now than ever yet creates an array of challenges for businesses and may seem daunting. Evolving and improving sustainability within businesses requires organisations to confront all problem areas involving waste and pollution. This further forces organisations to research and develop sustainable production alternatives, all the while providing positive shareholder value (Amaro de Matos & Clegg, 2013). Sustainability can be enforced and upheld by regulations and laws which forcefully make companies carry out practices in ways that are more beneficial to the environment, but it can also be introduced through other actions. One way of changing how the markets and companies engage with each other and carry out

their activities is through market-shaping (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2015). This subchapter discusses market-shaping as a tool for increased sustainability, as well as the various challenges traditional respectively new market actors may face.

Combining market-shaping with sustainability efforts offers an array of possibilities for companies to initiate change on the market and shape it towards sustainability. Increasing sustainability can be discussed through the three above-mentioned levels of market-shaping by Kindström et al. (2018): technology level, market offer level and system level. Market-shaping goes hand in hand with innovation, as it allows finding new opportunities within materials, resources, systems, and machines i.e., the technology level. A lot of innovation is received from collaborations with other firms through information and data sharing (Nenonen & Storbacka, 2020). This can be done by companies within mature markets as well as new ones, as long as the former type of company can convince its network of market actors of the benefits of information sharing and innovation. Despite the benefits, innovations have high rates of failure, which may scare firms off from focusing on innovation. However, the failures can often be avoided by not introducing innovations before they are ready, i.e., holding a good understanding of the market, its actors and how these will react to innovations (Peters et al., 2020).

The second level by Kindström et al. (2018), the market offer, is about understanding customers and realizing value, in addition to building up one's credibility. This level further highlights the importance of sustainability, as more consumers realize the current environmental crisis and demand increased sustainability (Dolbec & Fischer, 2015). By applying market-shaping and understanding the market, companies are forced to increase their technology level and transparently and credibly convey their sustainability efforts. This level is harder for traditional market actors, as they may be stuck in focusing on previous customer behaviour and struggle to realize the future value of sustainability. It may also be hard for a company which previously has not shown any interest in sustainability to come off as credible or truthful when trying to increase their sustainability efforts. It may appear ingenuine and as if the company is only conducting fraudulent marketing strategies such as *greenwashing*, i.e., consciously misleading consumers about the sustainability efforts carried out by the company (Delmas & Curuel Burbano, 2011). New companies entering markets or

creating entirely new markets are more likely to be seen as genuine and transparent as they are then able to portray their environmental practices from the beginning.

Finally, the third level by Kindström et al. (2018), further supports sustainability and facilitates for it to become a norm within society and amongst competitors through performing according to customer demand. By allowing it to become the norm within society, stakeholders are more likely to genuinely care about the need for the company not only to portray green actions but also act in accordance with these openly expressed actions. This is currently not the situation as stakeholders mainly emphasize the need for the company to communicate their environmental efforts, rather than putting these into action (Walker & Wan, 2012). This level of market-shaping may not necessarily be the cause of problems for traditional market actors, as this comes down to their behaviour. As a traditional actor is expected to be part of a strong and mature market and network, their waves of change, once created and accepted, might be the cause of larger norm changes than new challenging market actors. However, new firms are also able to change societal norms as the other two steps of the market-shaping by Kindström et al. (2018), maybe easier for these to achieve.

Overall, traditional market actors may meet more challenges than newer actors, as change and the unknown it brings with it may be too intimidating from both an economic and organisational point of view. A new business model can appear as highly uninteresting to stakeholders at first glance, which market shapers must overcome (Johnson et al., 2008). New structures can be perceived as daunting and distant by company employees, or even as a threat to the current structure (Kumar et al. 2000). That said, it is possible to carry out market-shaping within mature and unsustainable markets – if the market shaper has the right mindset and technique.

3. Communication efforts for achieving sustainability through market-shaping

One of the main research questions of this thesis is how companies communicate their efforts to shape the market to achieve sustainability. Communication heavily affects how company brands are viewed and perceived by consumers and must therefore be thoughtfully planned to avoid any misunderstandings or risks. In this chapter of the theoretical framework, how companies can communicate their sustainability efforts and why it is important for them to do so will be discussed.

3.1 Consumer brand perception

Brands are often thought of as logos or names but are rather the value that consumers associate with it (Papista et al. 2018). Because of the consumer perceived value of brands and the power and influence associated with them, it is essential to know how to work with brands within the business world (Schroeder, 2009). Company brands and brand identities can be used as tools for market-shaping (Onyas & Ryan, 2014) and can be used to e.g., emphasize the importance of sustainability to consumers, B2B customers and stakeholders alike (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014). Building on Lury's (2009) views, Onyas and Ryan (2014) underline the brand's role as an essential component which can alter entire relationships and even change market actors themselves over time. Therefore, it is imperative for firms wanting to influence the market to continuously analyse and understand their brand and how its identity can be changed through e.g., communication to adjust the outward image. Awareness of current and developing norms concerning e.g., climate change should be especially valued, and managers should ensure that the company brand reflects these changes (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli, 2015).

As stakeholders and policymakers pay increasing attention to the growing environmental issues, some organisations try to mirror the increasing interest by reshaping themselves and developing not only an environmentally sustainable organisation on all levels of the business but also the company brand (Sharma & Joshi, 2019). By pushing forwards and setting new guidelines for the rest of the industry, companies can lead the way while forcing their competitors to follow in their footsteps. If organisations are incapable of keeping up with the industry developments and

portraying a believable sustainable brand to the public, even top brands will be unable to remain leaders within their industries (Grant, 2008).

Multiple studies have been carried out regarding social media interaction between brands and consumers, as well as its effect on consumer brand perception and consumer behaviour. However, limited research seems to exist on this interaction, brand perception and consumer intentions in combination with Generation Y, sustainability, and market-shaping. Consumers' brand perception is based off the brand and is mostly not fact-based but rather based on their own and others' feelings and experiences with the product or service, in addition to word of mouth (WOM) and eWOM (Tjandra et al., 2013). When trying to assess the quality of a product, consumers will base it on the brand and their attitudes towards it when they do not have anything else to go on. Kong et al. (2014) state that consumers' evaluations of the brand results in perceptions of the brand, which ultimately affects the consumers' intentions to purchase an item or not. These purchase intentions are improved when companies openly communicate that they are carrying out sustainability efforts, especially if the consumer in question has a higher awareness of sustainability. According to Kong et al. (2014), brand attitudes are positively affected by communicated sustainability efforts and trust is crucial for increasing brand expectations and to prove that the company conduct is transparent and ethical. The absence of proper and credible sustainability effort claims which cannot be directly verified often result in consumers' perceiving the brand as deceitful and even as greenwashing.

By reviewing and understanding the consumer's perception or perceived value of the company brand, i.e., brand equity, organisations can decide in which direction to develop and what aspects of the company need to be reconsidered or restructured. (Lazarevic, 2012). Increased brand equity results in improved customer loyalty and retention rates. Added focus must be placed on increasing brand equity, as Generation Y is notorious for being immune to old-school marketing tactics and harder to retain as loyal customers (Lazarevic, 2012). Targeted and controlled campaigns, as well as fast feedback and genuine interactions, will help improve consumer brand perception and overall company growth, and it can be followed up with key performance indicators such as e.g., Net promoter score, measuring how willing customers are to recommend the company product or service to others (Raassens & Haans, 2017).

Surveys checking in on the consumer perceived brand and potential word of mouth give insight into individuals' thought processes and purchase intentions.

Brands' use of social media creates online brand communities, which also affect consumer brand perception. These communities enable consumer interactions with the brand and other consumers on multiple levels, as well as further deepen the customer-brand relationship (Bowen & Ozuem, 2019). The relationship enables companies to influence consumers more effectively. The community participants are not bound by any geographical restrictions, which further facilitates the spread of the communities and the sense of togetherness (Laroche et al. 2012). In-group favouritism (Turner, 2010) causes individuals of the same group to favour objects within the group than of those outside the group. This can be assumed to be the case for brand communities and will further establish the group members' membership and social identity through brand loyalty. Because of the influence of the communities, companies should not only create the brand communities but also continuously work on them and provide additional value for the members and potential consumers.

3.2 Sustainability communication and its risks

When it comes to successful sustainability strategies and market-shaping, communication and consumer interaction is key. Communication is an essential tool in everyday life as well as in business management, for all company sizes. Communication within businesses is used both externally and internally and informs, motivates, and convinces others, as well as helps create mutual understanding and encourage cooperation (Genç, 2017). Because of the important role it plays, communication can make or break a business. Companies must know how their externally communicated messages are received and perceived by stakeholders (Genç, 2017). The role of communication when trying to achieve a sustainable economy and market is central, and its goal is to create a shared understanding and ultimately change stakeholder behaviours (Kim et al., 2018). Research has continuously found that companies that gather information about the wants and needs of their customers, as well as respond to these findings through creating and implementing new strategies that focus on these needs heavily outperform companies that strategize differently

(Mena et al. 2019). This should be part of the communication strategy, as the need for sustainable alternatives become more sought after, especially by younger generations.

Sustainability is not an easy subject to communicate about, and its complexity must be considered when using it within marketing strategies. The complexity of sustainability can be described through three dimensions, all three posing challenges which need a deeper societal communication (Newig et al., 2013). The first dimension is about the complexity and uncertainty of sustainability. It requires a broadening of the basis of information and societal values, i.e., how we relate to society through e.g., respect, justice, and responsibility. The second dimension is about the contradictory goals of sustainability, with conflicts of interests and values. Communication is needed to create united goals which can be pursued, and which are of interest to people. The third dimension highlights the difficulty of governing sustainable development due to so many involved managing actors on multiple levels of decision-making and the sustainability goals that are agreed upon are hard to attain due to the difficulty in implementation. Coordination through networks increases the possibilities of implementation through social learning and argumentation. By considering these three dimensions throughout the sustainability communication, it is easier for the company in question to succeed and create perceived legitimacy and transparency. In addition to the above-mentioned potential problems regarding sustainability communication, other risks may arise and must be considered to achieve transparency and credibility. These are the risks of sustainability communication being perceived as greenwashing or as unnecessarily provocative. The reason for the latter issue can be conflicts of interests and values, as mentioned in the second dimension of the contradictory goals of sustainability by Newig et al. (2013).

When a company is unable or unwilling to change their business to incorporate these responsibilities due to potential financial short-term losses, yet want to make consumers believe they have changed, greenwashing arises. As noted in chapter 2.4, greenwashing, according to the definition by Delmas and Cururel Burbano (2011, p.66) is “the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company (firm-level greenwashing) or the environmental benefits of a product or service (product-level greenwashing)”. It is a way for the company to portray themselves as if they are performing better from an environmental point of view than they are actually doing. It is further possible to divide different environmental

strategies according to the company's environmental performance and the communication of this performance (Delmas & Curuel Burbano, 2011). The typology consists of two dimensions: environmental performance (green or brown) and communication about environmental performance (vocal or silent) with four cells in total. Companies that are *vocal green* positively communicate their environmental performance and the effects of it, while *silent green* firms do not communicate their environmental performance. *Silent brown* firms are signified by not having a good environmental performance, nor communicating anything about it externally. Greenwashing companies positively communicate their environmental performance even though they have bad environmental performance.

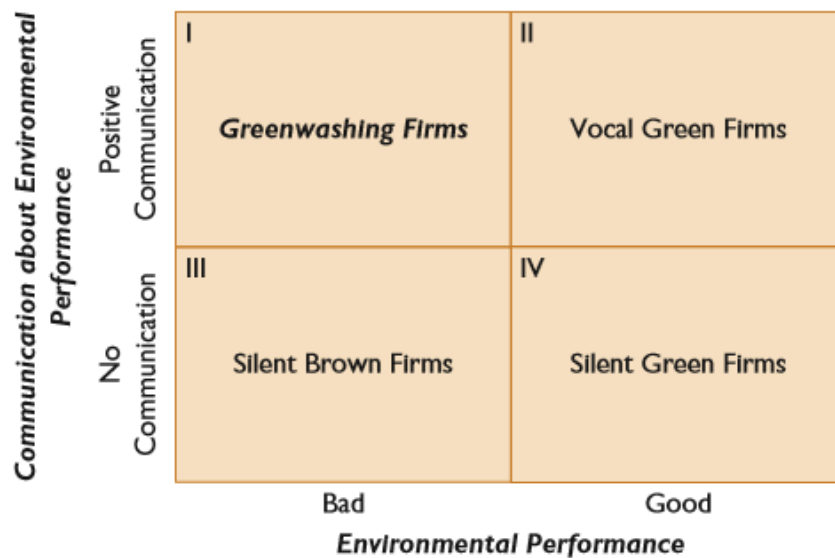


Figure 2. Environmental strategies (Delmas & Curuel Burbano, 2011, p.67).

The established trend of sustainability has led to significant growth of sales of green brands, i.e., brands who actively communicate how their environmental choices differ from their competitors (Papista et al. 2018). This is of interest for companies wanting to increase their short-term sales and profit. Greenwashing is ultimately done because of the potential benefits of carrying and selling green products, despite greenwashing not producing any positive effects. Research proves that greenwashing only offers limited benefits and has no actual long-term competitive advantage for those who use it (De Jong, Harkink & Barth, 2018). In addition to the limited benefits of greenwashing, Walker & Wan (2012) state that consumers are often able to see through misleading green company statements and are discontent with the company if these statements are unsupported and the organisation is not actually taking real actions

towards reaching their sustainability goals. However, simultaneously, external stakeholders emphasize the need for the company to portray green actions to the market. Whether the company is in fact improving their environmental impact and performing green actions is not as important (Walker & Wan, 2012). Despite some consumers being capable of telling when they are being lied to through greenwashing, it is evident that there is a large gap of consumers' awareness regarding companies' overall environmental and ethical impact (Hill & Lee, 2012).

It should, however, be stated that greenwashing is not black and white, and the concept must be viewed from a wider point of view. Companies looking to make green contributions and changes in the future or upcoming years may unwillingly use greenwashing to some extent as they move forward towards real sustainability. The fast-fashion giant H&M has, since launching its CONSCIOUS collection in 2019, brought out "sustainable" pieces of clothing, which supposedly are a sustainable alternative. The collection as well as the company itself were praised by headlines and stakeholders, claiming it as proof of the company becoming green. The collection has also received a lot of criticism, naming the collection as an example of greenwashing, and questioning how these garments could possibly even partly undo the damage done by the rest of the company production process and fast-fashion business model (Petter, 2020).

3.3 Generation Y

This thesis studies the consumer brand perception of Generation Y and how this group responds to sustainability communication. This age group is relevant as it currently makes up the largest number of consumers, which in turn make them an increasingly interesting target group (Taylor, 2018). Knowing this age group better gives an understanding of how companies should express themselves and communicate to improve consumer brand perception and behaviour, as well as impacting the rest of the market. Millennials, having grown up with fast-developing technology, are used to being surrounded by digital information and communication of all kinds. The constant accessible information enables Generation Y to be both attentive to and worried about human- or nature-initiated disasters worldwide (Bhaduri & Ha-Bookshire, 2011). The generation is highly concerned about the environmental crisis, more so than any

previous generations, all the while remaining largely unwilling to look for sustainable alternatives to products, as this requires effort and is time-consuming (Bhaduri & Ha-Bookshire, 2011).

Generation Y mainly uses social media as a means of communication (Bolton et al. 2013), which means that it is a suitable tool for organisations to engage with the generation in question. Fashion brands have taken Generation Y's use of social media to heart and use it to reach consumers and communicate with them through media platforms (Bowen & Ozuem, 2019). This strategy is highly effective and successful and can therefore also be used by sustainability-driven firms when communicating to this target group about their sustainability efforts.

A study conducted in the US researched Generation Y's knowledge level of sustainability within the apparel industry (Hill & Lee, 2012). The findings showed a distinctly low knowledge level of the industry's sustainability, as well as the wish for more educational and transparent marketing campaigns. The study participants stated the need for businesses to become more transparent in their communication regarding their sustainability efforts, yet the study also proved that most participants were positive towards any organisational efforts towards increased sustainability. No matter the size of the efforts. These results can be compared to the findings of Walker & Wan (2012), which claim that consumers are mostly capable of finding out whether a company is carrying out greenwashing and are discontent with companies using marketing strategies based on this. The general takeaway maybe, that consumers such as individuals of Generation Y, want to see an increase in sustainable products and sustainability efforts by companies and have an easier time making greener and more informed consumption decisions. The generation wants to be able to find out about easily and quickly whether a product is sustainable or not, without having to spend a lot of time and effort in researching this.

3.4 Summary of communication efforts for achieving sustainability

The literature and theories which have been discussed in this chapter make up the second part of this thesis' theoretical framework. The need for creating a sustainable economy and market is evident and can be done in different ways. One option for companies wanting to make a change within their market and influence others to make

environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable choices is market-shaping. Market-shaping is a highly complex concept which is based on the notion that markets are dynamic and malleable. This means companies can make the market and its competitors move in a certain direction which benefits the market-shaping company, without the latter having to adapt to the market. Market-shaping is beneficial to the initiating market-shaping actor, competitors, and consumers alike.

The need for transparency and credibility is essential when it comes to market-shaping and communicating the company's sustainability efforts. Innovation and communication are crucial for all companies but are especially important for companies wanting to conduct market-shaping. Communication can inspire, inform, and encourage consumers and competitors to think of their own choices and the organisations they collaborate with or support. When used correctly, communication can create strong brand communities and reinforce strong consumer brand perception, which makes the consumers more likely to invest in the market-shaping company's products and services, ultimately shaping competitors to take after the market-shaping firm.

4. Methodology

The empirical part of the study is done in the aim of understanding how Swedish Stockings communicates their market-shaping and sustainability efforts outwards, as well as evaluating how this communication is perceived by consumers, and how this perception, in turn, affects the company image. To do so, a multi-qualitative research design was chosen. In the following chapter, the choice of research method and the reason behind this choice will be presented. The chapter includes a presentation of the choice of research method, how the data collection was acquired, how the participants were chosen and how the data was ultimately analysed. It is concluded in a discussion of the method's quality criteria, how these were met and how it differs from a quantitative research method.

4.1 Choice of research method

When trying to decipher consumers' actual thoughts on a product, brand or company, it is crucial to choose the correct research method. In doing so, it is also possible to decide how to realistically carry out this method (Vogt, 2008). A quantitative research method would offer some insight into the research subjects' thoughts, however, would leave much to the imagination as it would be impossible to follow up with additional questions to the participants. As there are multiple qualitative research methods to choose from, the thesis' needs must be taken into consideration. Individual interviews would offer a significantly better understanding of the participants' perception of the companies than a survey yet would only provide individual opinions. A focus group offers the advantage of multiple possibly differentiating opinions turning into discussions and offering new insights and angles to the subjects in question (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

The interview with Linn Frisinger, CEO and co-founder of Swedish Stockings, offers a better understanding of what the company is actively trying to convey through their communication. This interview is a useful addition to the focus group discussion and will also be part of the method used to answer the thesis' research questions. This results in the use of a multi-qualitative research design. Two trials, so-called pilot interviews, were conducted before respectively the actual focus group discussions and

the company interview were carried out to improve the quality of the two methods as well as find and prevent any potential misunderstandings or issues.

4.1.1 Pilot interview

Pilot interviews were made before both the focus group discussion and the company interview based on recommendations by Bryman and Bells' (2011). These pilot interviews were made in the aim of discovering any potential issues with either the technique, focus group manuscript or interview guide. By conducting pilot interviews prior to the actual focus group or company interviews, the researcher can ensure that all questions are easily understandable to the participants or interview subjects, as well as avoid any potential misunderstandings. It further prepares the researcher for conducting the interview and handle any possibly arising issues.

The pilot interview for the focus groups was held on the 28th of May, on the day of the first focus group, with a 24-year-old student who fit the focus group participants characteristics and could give feedback regarding the questions and format of the focus group manuscript. The interviewee was given access to a portfolio before the pilot interview, which was referenced in certain questions of the manuscript, and asked to take 5-10 minutes to go through it. The pilot interview was based on the focus group manuscript, including an introduction and conclusion, yet followed a semi-structured form as the same would be done during the actual focus groups. The test resulted in some recommended changes to certain sentence formulations and behaviour of the researcher as a focus group moderator. The duration of the pilot interview reflected the predicted time of 20 minutes and assured that the actual focus groups would take about 1,5 hours.

The Swedish Stockings pilot interview took place on the 12th of May with a 29-year-old interviewee working in digital marketing. The interview was conducted over the phone as this was also the method in which the company interview was to be carried out and this helped confirm that the technology and audio recordings were not faulty. The pilot interview enabled the researcher to predict the time of the actual interview and edit the questions that were confusing or unclear to the interviewee, all the while considering how Linn Frisinger at Swedish Stockings would understand them.

4.1.2 Focus group

A focus group is defined by Powell and Single (1996: 499) as “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research”. When conducting a focus group, the researcher encourages group interaction which in turn leads to the participants engaging in a discussion and answering each other’s questions in addition to the ones made by the researcher (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explain that focus groups provide a way of connecting and getting closer to the consumer for marketing researchers. This is done mainly in the aim of researching consumers perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes towards e.g., certain products, communication, and advertisements (Morgan, 1997).

Two focus group discussions were carried out in the aim of answering this thesis’ research questions, one being held on the 28th of May and the other on the 1st of June 2020. Each focus groups consisted of five people. All ten participants are Swedish speaking Finns between the ages 22-29 and part of Generation Y. All discussions were done in Swedish which is the mother tongue of all participants. 3 men and 10 women participated. Because of COVID-19 and the Finnish health recommendations to social distance. the focus group discussions could not be made in person and instead took place over Zoom. They were video and audio recorded with the consent of all participants. The focus group discussion on the 28th of May lasted an hour and a half and consisted of two men and three women. The second focus group discussion lasted about an hour and consisted of four women and one man. During both discussions, the moderator followed the focus group manuscript which had been written prior to the meetups yet applied a semi-structured interview style with follow-up questions. All the while, the participants were encouraged to listen to and build on each other’s opinions while the moderator helped distribute the word.

4.1.3 Portfolio

The portfolio was constructed by the researcher before the focus groups and consisted of 32 screenshots of images and text posted by Swedish Stockings on their main digital communication channel with their consumers, i.e., Instagram. The screenshots were gathered continuously from December 2019 to May 2020 and presented different

themes on the company's Instagram feed and stories during that period. The posts and themes were chosen with the aim to offer a representative image of the Instagram account and Swedish Stocking outwards company communication. The screenshots were presented by theme and accompanied by a short introductory text which gave the context or necessary information to better understand some of the posts and themes. The screenshots consisting of both picture and text were in English and the added introductory text in Swedish, as all participants were fully capable to understand both languages.

The portfolio was intended to be short enough for the participants to be able to quickly look over and remember it without studying it for a longer amount of time. The portfolio was sent to each focus group participant before the discussions and asked to look over it without purposefully obtaining more knowledge about Swedish Stockings by googling the company. Before sending out the portfolio, its content was read through and criticised by a male and female student aged 24 and 26 to test whether all pictures were understandable and offered an adequate perception of the company in question.

4.1.4 Choice of focus group participants

Choosing focus group participants is a difficult task, as it forces the researcher not only to find an opinionated and diverse group of people, but also to remain realistic and to acknowledge the limitations of e.g., time, availability, and group dynamics (Morgan, 1997). The participants in this research's two focus groups were chosen based on certain criteria. These included being Swedish speaking Finns, as Swedish would be the language used during the focus group discussion to make everyone at ease by speaking their mother tongue, as well as possess a high level of English as this is the language used by Swedish Stockings for outwards communication over Instagram, and therefore also the language making up the portfolio. The previous need for the participants to be based in Turku to attend the focus groups in person was no longer necessary since due to the coronavirus, the focus groups were done online instead. However, the participants still needed to be able to attend the discussions within a two-week time frame at the end of May or beginning of June for the data to be collected on time. Other criteria were the participants' willingness to give up 1 – 1,5 hours of their

free time and talk openly about their genuine thoughts and feelings on the subject in question in front of other discussion group members, as well as preparing for the discussion by reading the portfolio beforehand. To achieve as a diverse mixture of answers and opinions as possible, different personality types were chosen as well as both men and women to ensure a different perspective.

The two focus groups consisted of five participants each, as this was considered a large enough group to encourage discussion in addition to avoid any confusion which might arise with a larger number of attendees when discussing online. Had the focus groups been done in person, a larger number of people would have been asked to participate. When asked to participate the focus group participants were asked to fill in times when they would be able to attend in a Doodle, and this was considered when forming the groups later on. In addition to matching schedules, I also considered the participants' personalities when forming the groups. I was able to do so since I personally knew the participants to different degrees before the focus group and therefore also knew how some individuals usually reacted in different settings and social groups. By considering their personalities I was able to avoid putting highly extrovert and loud people in the same group as more soft-spoken and shy individuals, as the latter could end up in the background without being able to express themselves fully. This resulted in some participants being friends with other participants of the same group and some being strangers. This is likely to have had an impact on the way the two focus group interactions turned out and the opinions which were expressed. This is further discussed in chapter 3.5.2 Authenticity.

4.1.5 Focus group manuscript

The manuscript for the focus groups, which is found in its entirety in Appendix 1, was written to offer a structure on which to base the focus group discussions and facilitate and outline the event for the researcher. The manuscript was tested during the focus group pilot interview with a 24-year-old student who gave feedback regarding the questions' formulations and my conduct as a moderator. The pilot interview highlighted any problematic sentences or unforeseen potential misunderstandings. However, as the manuscript was only used as a base for the focus group discussions, this was also considered during the pilot interview.

The manuscript consists of an introduction, participant presentations, followed by three themes: environmental sustainability, consumer perception through communication and market-shaping, and is concluded with time for additional questions and me to thank the participants. All parts have an estimated time duration which aided in not going over time, however, these were suggestions rather than strict time restrictions. The manuscript offers a short introduction about the subject, purpose and aim of the study, asks for the participants' permission to record them to facilitate the analysis later as well as ensures that everyone's thoughts and opinions are equally interesting. Following this, the themes are introduced and discussed one at a time and the participants are encouraged to express their thoughts and opinions as well as build on what has previously been discussed.

4.2 Company interview

An interview was made on the 14th of May 2020 with Linn Frisinger, co-founder and CEO of Swedish Stockings. The interview was made in the aim of offering further insight into the company views and whether the communication, brand and image picked up by the focus group participants reflect what the company is actively trying to convey. The conversation took place over the phone as this was the preferred method of Frisinger and was recorded with the permission of the interviewee to facilitate the transcription and analysis later. The interview lasted about 30 minutes and was based off an interview guide which had been tested out previously through a pilot interview. The language used was Swedish as this is both mine and CEO Frisinger's mother tongue, and therefore ensured fewer potential misunderstandings and me being able to pick up on nuances and potentially "hidden" meanings behind certain sentences. The main questions were sent to Frisinger in advance of the interview for her to prepare herself beforehand if she wanted to.

The interview guide can be seen in its entirety in Appendix 2 and was used as a support for the semi-structured interview with Swedish Stockings' CEO Linn Frisinger. It allowed for additional follow-up questions based on the answers given by Frisinger. The questions posed in the interview guide covered the themes market-shaping, sustainability, and communication within the clothing market in the aim of uncovering the company's point of view of these subjects. The guide also brought up less easy and

straight-forward questions, which allowed for Frisinger to speculate on what the future holds if the company does succeed with their market-shaping and the future of sustainability within the clothing industry. The interview guide and its questions were tested before the company interview took place, during a pilot interview with an interviewee knowledgeable within digital marketing.

4.3 Analysis

The analysis was done in multiple steps, from transcribing to coding to analysing the data. The first step of the analysis was to listen to all three recordings and transcribe them separately as soon as possible after the recording date to allow for a better understanding and remembrance of what was discussed and what was meant based on what was said during the discussions. The audio alone was enough to transcribe the company interview and both focus group discussions and catch the meaning behind the sentences said by the participants. Using the video during the discussion groups was an additional help in facilitating the discussion between participants and to improve the intimacy yet was not needed during the transcription. I initially intended to only transcribe the most essential parts of the discussions, yet quickly realized it would aid in later analysing and coding the content to transcribe everything word by word. Filling words which did not add anything to the meaning of the sentences were left out as these were deemed unnecessary. However, filling words which were of any significance were left in as to not change the intended meaning expressed.

Having transcribed both focus group discussions and the company interview, I started acquiring a general overview of what was said and the meanings behind the words and sentences which were uttered. I also put together a summary of each respondent's attitudes and values. I then compared the two focus groups individual and overall group answers and perceptions according to each separate question. The coding which I then initiated, was done in Swedish with some keywords in English, as the interviews and focus group discussions had been carried out in Swedish. I translated any quotations needed into English to support and add context to the results.

Potentially affecting factors were considered during the analysis and how this was visible in the participants' responses. These factors consisted of the group dynamic, previous relationships between certain individuals, i.e., friendships or acquaintances

and how these relationships showed through the group interactions and willingness to express differentiating thoughts and opinions in front of strangers or friends. The effect of gender interaction was also considered. These affecting factors are further discussed in the following chapter 4.5 Quality Criteria, as well as chapter 5. Analysis, as these should be considered when presenting the findings of the collected data.

The analysis is a central part of qualitative research, as it ultimately shapes the research's results and how these are understood (Flick, 2014). Qualitative data analysis is especially difficult as there are not any clear guidelines that can be applied to all research cases. There are two main strategies of analysing qualitative data, despite there being an array of other lesser-known strategies as well. One way of analysing data is by using *grounded theory* and the other is *analytic induction* (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Analytic induction follows a path of immediately examining the cases or answers collected during the research to see if they measure up to the hypothetical explanation. If not, the hypothesis will be reformulated before examining the cases once again. However, to best apply an analytic induction analysis strategy, there must be a big enough number of participants present in the data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Grounded theory emphasizes the close connection between data collection, data analysis and the resulting theories used. The theory is grounded in real data focusing on a specific case of data. The method and data collection help develop the direction of theory over time. There are multiple tools which can be applied when using grounded theory. Many researchers, however, simply decide to use only a few of the tools all the while still claiming they have applied the concept in its entirety (Locke, 1996). Despite this, grounded theory remains probably the most used strategy for analysing qualitative data.

One of the tools of grounded theory is *coding* (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Coding is described by Strauss (1987 s.25) as indicators being compared against one and other, followed up by coding them and naming them as indicators for an entire group of events or behaviours. Bryman and Bell (2011) bring up the three types of coding or levels of coding compiled by Strauss and Corbin in 1990. These are *open coding*, *axial coding*, and *selective coding*. Open coding is about breaking down, studying, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data, which leaves the researcher with concepts which can later be grouped according to their themes and reformulated into different categories. Open coding opens opportunities for interpreting the material

more, rather than adding preconceived notions to it. Axial coding is described as a procedure which is carried out based on open coding but goes further by creating new connections regarding i.e., as contexts and reasons between categories. Selective coding focuses on one central category and systematically relate it to the other categories, further validating these connections and acknowledging categories which need to be further developed. The central category in question is then seen as the common thread.

Using coding to analyse qualitative data has been criticised as some argue it heavily fragments the data and may result in losing the context of what was said. This may be true; however, it also allows for a clearer overview of the data and an overall improved analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Discussions have also been made regarding whether researchers can put their awareness to the side and become entirely objective. Nowadays it is widely agreed that what researchers see, and study is impacted by other factors such as what we as humans already know about the social world in which the study takes place.

I carried out the analysis based on inductive open coding following the above-mentioned approach by Strauss and Corbin (1990) together with deductive coding. The mix resulted in an abductive approach with a focus on the inductive coding, as I had already read and learnt about important concepts for the thesis such as e.g., market-shaping, which I had in mind while finding themes in the collected data. The coding itself was done by colour coding the transcribed data using highlighted markers in different colours, which helped distinguish certain keywords, themes and emotions uttered by the participants from one another. As I only had access to three colours of highlighters, the colours represent a different theme in each question, yet still allows defining similarities and differences amongst the answers. In addition to the colour coding, I wrote down emotions expressed both explicitly through the choice of words and indirectly through the tone of voice in the marginals to create a deeper coding. The coding for the company interview was not colour coded as the answers did not oppose each other like in the focus group discussions, and so the focus remained on the keywords and themes found in Frisinger's answers.

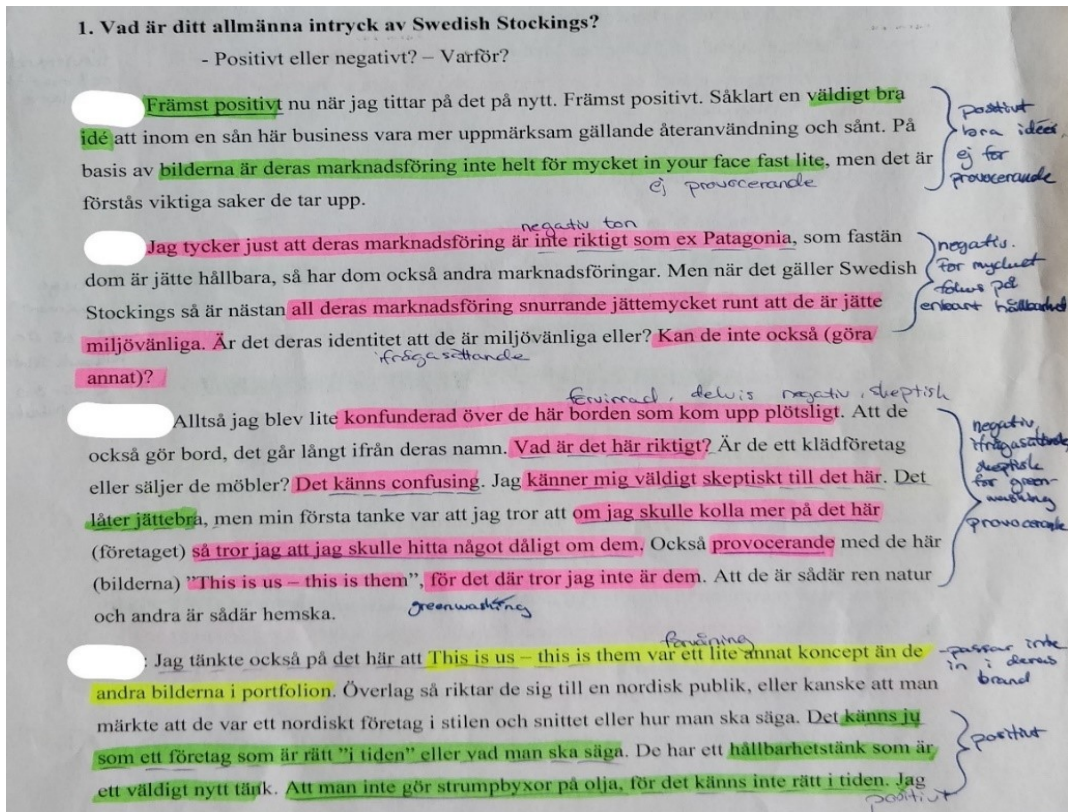


Figure 3. Example of colour coding and written coding of the first focus group discussion. Names are removed to ensure the participants' anonymity.

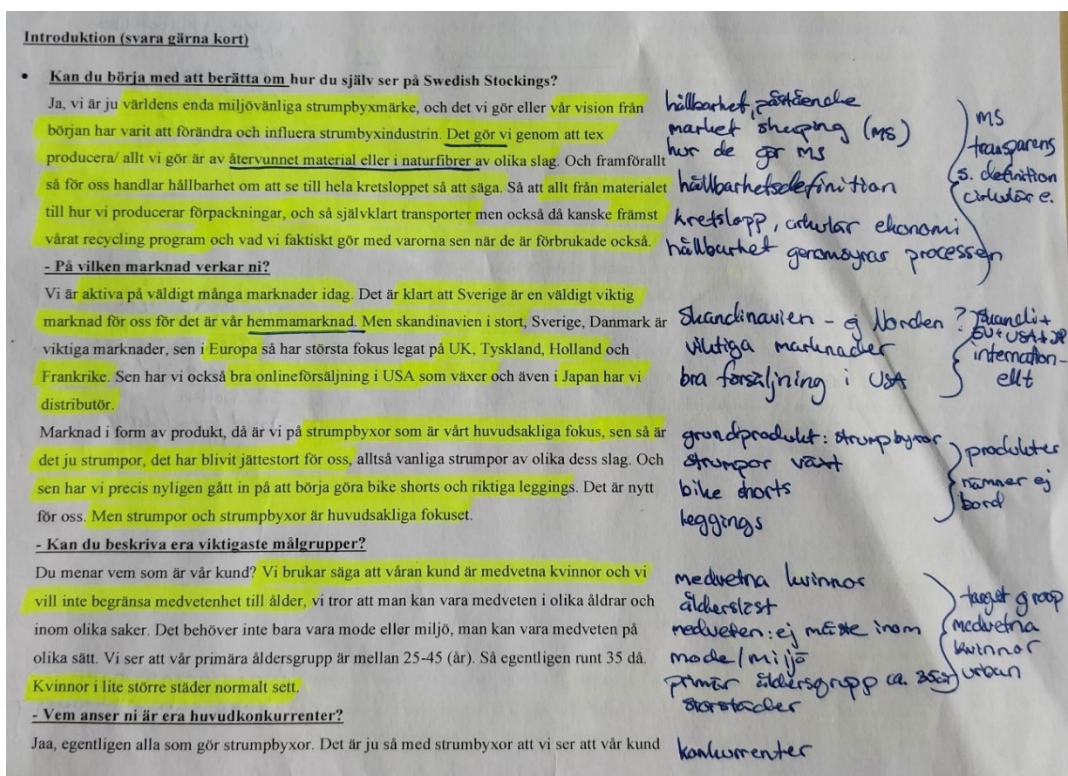


Figure 4. Example of coding of the company interview.

Based on the coding described above, I categorised all keywords, themes, and emotions in a separate document. This was done by first summarising each focus group participant's thoughts and ideas which helped distinguish the individual opinions of each participant. I then compiled three lists of the categories and keywords I had found within each focus group, as well as within the company interview. I placed the lists next to each other to facilitate a clear overview of the groups' similarities and differences. This also enabled me to note whether the company's intentions brought up by Frisinger during the interview corresponded with what the focus group participants experienced based on the portfolio. Comparing the lists showed distinctions between the groups and how the participants perceived the company and its way of communicating its sustainability efforts.

The entire coding process was done after the data collection period had finished, rather than in its midst, as is suggested when conducting grounded theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This was due to time restraints, however, it does not have any major effect on the coding made, as I had the audio from the focus group discussions to rely on, as well as a clear audio recording of the company interview, which allowed me to analyse certain emotions expressed through tone of voice or e.g., length of silence before answering a question.

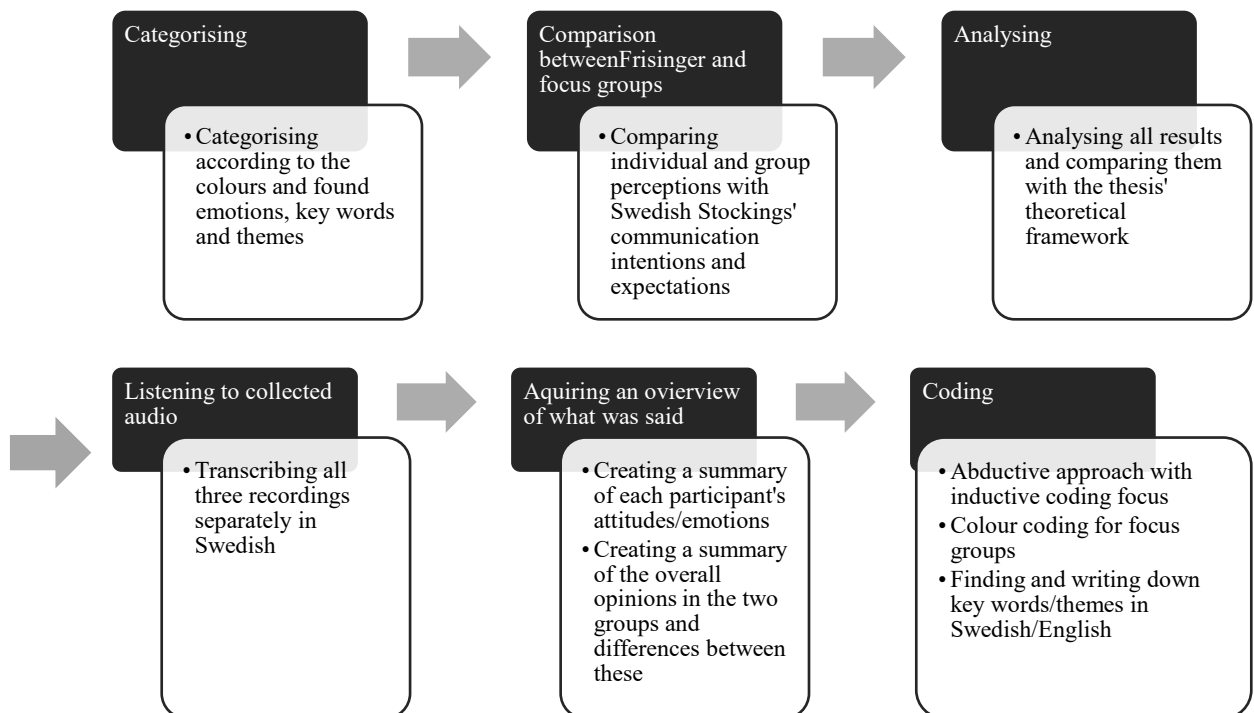


Figure 5. The analysis and coding process

4.4 Quality criteria

As quantitative and qualitative studies differ heavily from one another, they cannot be evaluated based on the same type of criteria (Cutcliffe and Mckenna, 1999). Measuring and acquiring an absolute truth of social reality is impossible and should therefore be assessed differently than quantitative research. The focus in this thesis, as is common for qualitative research methods, is on trustworthiness and authenticity, rather than reliability and validity. Bryman and Bell (2011) present the ideas of Lincoln and Guba (1985; 1994) to describe both former mentioned concepts. This chapter will further discuss the meaning of these concepts and how they can be used to assess the quality of the qualitative research.

4.4.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be divided into four criteria, all of which has an equivalent part of quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility can be established once the researcher has made certain that the research has been carried out correctly and that the findings are accurate.

The credibility of this thesis is supported by having multiple people take part in the focus group discussions, and to have two focus groups. It is further supported by interviewing the CEO of Swedish Stockings, who can be assumed to be competent and knowledgeable in her answers. Transferability shows whether the results can say anything about other contexts, despite that the research has used a limited number of participants for the data collection. As the research was conducted using Swedish speaking Finnish participants of two sexes, cis men and women within ages of Generation Y, transferability may be assumed to keep up within these set limitations. However, if moved to an international setting on a much larger scale, transferability cannot be ensured. Generalizability cannot be used as proof of the study's trustworthiness, as the small number of focus group participants cannot with certainty be representative of a much larger population. Dependability is ensured when enough information is kept and presented, so that future researchers can replicate the study. This is done through the detailed description of the data collection process in this methodology chapter and by that all recordings, both audio and video, are saved and

accessible. Finally, the confirmability ensures that the research is carried out without bias or potential personal motivations by the researcher which could affect the analysis or findings. This is ensured by the researcher not commenting on any of the responses in the focus group discussion except to clarify and confirm what participants were communicating. This was further ensured by practising the way of questioning before conducting the actual focus group discussions and adjusting both the questions and interaction based on the reactions received during the pilot interview.

4.4.2 Authenticity

The participants were chosen with the attempt to gather and hear as many diverse opinions as possible. I knew the participants, some on a more friendly level than others, who were just acquaintances. As I knew the participants to a certain extent, I was aware of the individuals' personalities and educational backgrounds before the focus group discussions. This enabled me to ensure that different viewpoints and characteristics were represented during both focus groups, as well as varying ages within Generation Y, and two genders.

I also made sure that the participants were put into groups where some knew each other from before, and some were strangers. I further assured that the personalities which were put into the same group did not clash too much and that shyer individuals would not be overrun by much louder and outspoken participants. I was concerned that people might be uncomfortable sharing their private views openly in front of others who may have different opinions. It could even be the case when all participants shared opinions. This was something I considered when dividing the participants into their groups, focusing on creating as a diverse and socially comfortable groups as possible. It is essential to remember that some individuals might express views they think they ought to have due to others' reactions, rather than their actual views and opinions. This is due to social pressure and norms and may indicate that people's real views are either less or more extreme than what they dare to openly say and discuss.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has covered the thesis' methodology which was used to obtain answers to the research questions which were posed in the first chapter of the thesis. Based on

the suggestions by Bryman and Bell (2011), the chosen data collection method for the qualitative case study was a company interview and two focus group discussions with individuals of Generation Y of ages between 23-29. The chapter discussed the reason behind choosing this method, as well as how the interview and focus group manuscripts were written and tried out before the actual event to avoid any misconceptions and ensure that the answers given were valid and lived up to the quality criteria. The data collected using the above-mentioned method is presented in the following chapter 5. Analysis.

5. Analysis

The following chapter presents the analysis of the study. Firstly, the focus will be on the focus group discussion analysis. The two focus groups are discussed based on the participants' individual responses, as well as the differences or similarities between the two groups. The second part of the analysis focuses on the company interview with Swedish Stockings and how they communicate their efforts to shape the market to achieve improved sustainability. This is done by analysing the interview made with CEO and co-founder Linn Frisinger. This is followed up by comparing the results from the focus groups with the company interview to answer the research questions: How do companies communicate their efforts to shape the market in order to achieve sustainability? How do consumers perceive and react to companies' efforts to shape markets in this way? All quotes mentioned in the following subchapters have been personally translated by me from Swedish to English while trying to keep the meaning and tone behind the original quotations as much as possible.

5.1 Comparing the two focus groups and their participants' opinions

The analysis of the two focus group discussions was made by going over all individual participant summaries and organising the answers according to themes, keywords, or attitudes. The summaries present the essentials of the transcribed collected data and contain quotations of more detailed thoughts, to further help sustain the idea expressed by the participant and its context. The participants' answers varied between the two groups and within the groups, however, also highlighted multiple similarities. I will now present these, before finally comparing the participants' answers to the ones of CEO Frisinger to answer our research questions.

The first focus group which was organised, hereafter referred to as FG1, consisted of two men and three women. 2/3 had previously heard about Swedish Stockings before the focus group discussions yet possessed no deeper knowledge of it. When describing what affects their decision to buy a product, 3/5 stated that the price was the most important. The same can be said about the second focus group that was held, i.e., FG2, which consisted of four women and one man. 4/1 had heard about Swedish Stockings before but had no further knowledge of the company. FG1 further stated the importance of material and quality, which only one individual from FG2 agreed upon.

The need for the product to fit the participants' style was only expressed by 2/5 from FG1 and no one from FG2. 2/5 of the FG1 participants further stated that the brand was an important factor in their decision to buy a product. This was further emphasized by 3/5 individuals from FG2, stating that marketing had an impact, but mainly when there had been negative publicity surrounding the company. One of the FG2 participants noted that marketing only played a role when they had prior knowledge of the brand, and not when coming across a new one. General sustainability no matter the product in question was only seen as an important factor for one of the FG1 individuals, yet 4/5 from FG1 and 4/5 from FG2 saw the need for sustainability in e.g., food and furniture. One FG2 participant suggesting that this might be due to how food directly affects the individual themselves and therefore it is important to know about its production. The same was not said for clothing, the production of which only affect others and not the purchaser of the garment.

“When it comes to the grocery store, I would take the organic option 9/10 times. It has to be a very pricy product for me not to take the organic one. But then when it comes to other products, e.g., clothes, I haven't done the sustainable choice. I haven't thought about how the piece of clothing has been produced or how large the environmental footprint it has. But if it's between two types of milk, I would take the organic one.”

“I think it has to do with that one actually ingests it when it comes to food. Then it affects oneself quite a lot.”

It seems as if people believe that the clothing industry's production does not heavily affect them personally. However, this is not true, as it does impact all the world's inhabitants through its pollution and use of resources. It may not feel like it to most, as the consequences are not as directly visible as when e.g., ingesting heavily pesticide covered food.

The importance of sustainability when deciding upon whether to purchase an item was further explored by asking whether the participants would be willing to pay more for sustainable products, and if so, how much. The answers ranged from yes, but that it is hard to distinguish whether a product is sustainable and that it is affected by the individual's current economy, to no, not for clothes but food. The overall opinion seemingly being that they are willing to pay somewhat more for a sustainable product, but a rather small amount.

When asked about the overall impression of Swedish Stockings, based on the portfolio I had sent them showing a wide range of the company's outwards communication, the two groups differed from each other. From FG1, 2/5 expressed a positive impression of the company, while the other 3/5 stated having gained a negative opinion. The positive opinions were based on the company having a great business idea and bringing up important themes, as well as the business being attentive to the current environmental needs. The negative opinions questioned the intense focus on sustainability, confusion about the brand, and the provocative marketing campaign "This is us – this is them":

"Is it their only identity that they're sustainable or what? Can't they do something else too?"

"I was a bit confused about the tables which suddenly came up. The fact that they make tables is so far away from their name. What company is this? Are they a clothing company or do they sell furniture? It feels confusing. I feel very sceptical of this. It all sounds great, but my first thought was that I believe that if I'd look into them a little bit more, I would find something bad about them. Also provocative with these pictures "This is us – this is them", cause I don't think that's them – that they're so clean nature and the others are that horrible."

However, in FG2, all participants stated they had received a positive impression based on the portfolio. The overall opinion being that Swedish Stockings are transparent, genuine, and innovative:

"It seems as if they actually want to inform and not just sell. It seems as if they genuinely care".

"It was positive overall. The environmental aspect regarding the plastic and colouring seems especially good."

"I'm a person that really likes these types of things – companies which have thought outside the box when it comes to reusing and recycling things. I would've never come up with the idea of creating tables out of hosiery. That there's a way of reusing wasteful products, that is really nice! A positive for me!"

When questioned whether the participants would be interested in hearing more about the company and its products or business model, the two groups differed in the same way as above. Once again, all five FG2 participants, including one man, were interested in learning more about the company. In FG1, only 2/5 were interested in

learning more, none of which were men. The two men of the group both stated that they had no interest in the company at all, mainly due to it producing mainly women-worn products. However, it should be noted that one of the men participating had said that he had received an overall positive impression of the company but later stated that he had no further interest in it. The opposite can be said about one of the women participating, who previously stated having gained a negative perception of Swedish Stockings yet was interested in learning more about the company and its business model:

“Overall, I think it’s super interesting that they’re doing circular economy. I think it’s really interesting as a business model to think about how to make it work with other raw materials. Super interesting idea, but I think they have a problem with their name being “Stockings”, I think people get stuck there [...] I will definitely go google them more after this.”

The participants were further asked whether Swedish Stockings stands out amongst its competitors such as Welford, H&M and Lindex. All FG1 participants agreed that the company does stand out and accredited this to the lack of only product focus, the environmental aspect, the company values, as well as interest in style and choice of pictures. 3/5 FG2 participants agreed with FG1 and stated that Swedish Stockings stands out mainly thanks to the environmental aspect and its values. 2/5 of FG2 were unsure whether the company stood out as they felt they lacked in knowledge of the overall stockings industry.

When discussing what the company wants to accomplish with their communication, both focus groups gave various answers. In FG1, 2/5 stated that they thought the company’s communication wanted to gain more customers and potentially encourage consumerism. 2/5 of FG1 similarly thought the company was looking to find more customers yet emphasised the company’s desire to find customers with similar values and opinions. 1/5 thought the main goal was to gain visibility by provoking and initiating drama with competitors. As for FG2, 3/5 participants mainly thought the communication was done to inform consumers and encourage critical thinking while acknowledging the company’s desire to find and gain customers with similar values. 1/5 also suggested that the communication is a way to inspire competitors to change their ways, i.e., encourage market-shaping:

“It said that they are transparent regarding their production. Maybe they are this to inspire other companies. It can be something which ultimately makes people wanting to buy their products, knowing how they have been produced from start to finish.”

“I don’t really get the image that they’re trying to sell a lot, it seems as if they rather want to make you aware. Of course, they still do try to sell their products, but it’s nothing which can be seen in their marketing I think.”

“I think they want to make people more aware of the choices they’re making. But it also seems as if they want to make people realize that it doesn’t have to be really hard to do something on your own for the environment.”

One of the campaigns shown in the portfolio consisted of pictures of a tranquil lake and surrounding trees or a serene sea of jellyfishes, accompanied by the statement “This is us”, followed by pictures of clouds of dark factory emissions and plastic polluted water with the words “This is them”. This campaign was the most polarizing that could be found from Swedish Stockings’ communication at the time of the focus group discussions and was discussed by the participants. Once again, the two groups had opposing opinions on the matter, as 5/5 of FG1’s participants said they found it to be negative and unnecessarily provoking and or polarising, while 3/5 of FG2’s participants found it to be provoking yet positive and 2/5 thought it was provoking but personally remained emotionally untouched by the campaign. FG1 participants brought up how they think it is a PR trick to become more famous and increase sales, showing superiority complex, being problematic and irritating:

“I think they’re trying to create drama and become famous as many are doing nowadays, to end up in the news ... If they find another great way of bringing this forward, without saying ‘look, we’re better than you’ from a different perspective it would be more fun”.

“I agree, they achieve nothing by stomping down on others to prove that they’re better. They could just as easily show their good sides and then these aware customers would understand that this is good for the circular economy, without having to show it through some kind of superiority complex”.

“I have a problem with this. I think it’s very polarising and something I think we should move away from, putting things in groups. Even though they might be environmentally aware, nobody is ever perfect. Everyone can always strive for something better. Rather than being like ‘You’re the bad guy, we’re the good

guy', it's about who has a will, who is trying to move forward. I don't like this at all, it's very off-putting and unnecessarily polarising."

Only 1/3 of the FG2 participants who found the campaign to be provoking positively manner, stated that it was on the verge of crossing the line.

"Strong pictures, I think! Maybe a little bit too much, but I don't think the pictures really say that much".

The overall impression of the campaign from FG1 was that it gave a negative perception of the company brand and multiple participants claimed the campaign could have been improved by using solely the pictures with the text "This is us" while leaving out the comparison with competitors. Many of the participants agreed that the campaign made it seem as if Swedish Stockings thought of themselves as above others, described by one as an example of "superiority complex". The negative perception of the campaign might be a consequence of group dynamics, as even the individuals who had previously expressed that they had a positive perception of the company saw it as negative. FG2 agreed that it was either positive or not heavily affecting them personally, as they experienced the information given through the campaign to be fact, and therefore informative rather than accusative.

"I believe they're there to provoke the competition. It's not like it's super aggressive. I think it's a good thing to bring forward, but I think it may be a bit provoking towards the competition, but at the same time, this is what it's like. There's nothing they can hide behind."

"I also think it's a bit provocative, but I also think it's positive, because it makes you want to click through and read about who 'Us' and 'Them' are. I don't know, I wasn't provoked myself. It was more curiosity for me."

Following the campaign discussion, the participants were asked whether Swedish Stockings are trying to change the market and if so, whether they are likely to succeed. 3/5 individuals from FG1, as well as 5/5 from FG2, agreed that the company is trying to change the market and inspire competitors.

"I think they're trying to initiate change within the consumer society and encourage to reuse something rather than throwing it away when you're tired of it. I partly think it's about information and partly inspiration. When it comes to creating something new out of something broken or is no longer used instead of throwing it out, it's probably mainly directed at competitors."

“Yes, I’d say they’re trying to change the industry based on the pictures. They not only say that they are sustainable, but they also show in what way they are. I think they mainly want to change the customer behaviour – ‘buy from us cause this is how we do it’.”

“I think they’re trying to change both consumers and competitors. Inspire was a good word for it.”

However, some stated that it would only be possible for Swedish Stockings to inspire smaller companies, while others thought it would be possible to change also bigger companies if Swedish Stockings are first able to change the general consumer behaviour within the business and thus force companies to follow in the footsteps of sustainability thinking.

“I was going to say that they can surely also affect bigger companies if they get enough customers to change their minds. Because then bigger companies will also be under pressure to change. So yes, I definitely think they’re able to cause change.”

“I agree about the customers, that if they can change them and make them more aware, then the customers will also start asking other companies how their products are produced. More aware customers will demand change from bigger companies.”

This supports the idea that consumers are aware of if a company is trying to change the market to e.g. make it more sustainable. 2/5 from FG1 disagreed with the company wanting to initiate change, and one of the two even stated that he thinks they only aim to provoke to increase visibility and gain more customers, rather than shaping the market:

“I think they’re only trying to provoke people to receive more attention, but I think they do it in a bad way, in my opinion.”

From FG1, 2/5 believed that Swedish Stockings will be able to affect other companies, however, one of the two claimed that only the use of materials would be replicated by competitors, and not the brand nor external communication. 2/5 assumed that the company will not succeed in changing the business unless Swedish Stockings increases in size and thereby also in influence capacity. 1/5 from FG2 believed that the company would be able to initiate change within other companies, but only smaller ones, also due to the size and influencing ability of Swedish Stockings. 4/5 from FG2

agreed that Swedish Stockings will be able to create change within both bigger and smaller competitors, by initiating change within consumer behaviour.

Finally, the focus groups were asked to discuss a potential future scenario and whether it would be positive or negative for Swedish Stockings if competitors were to follow their lead and start producing stockings in a similar sustainable way. FG1 and FG2 showed similar results, with 1/5 from each group stating that it would be positive for the company, 3/5 from both groups assuming it would have a negative effect and finally 1/5 from each group remaining unsure of the outcome.

“I think it may be hard because then they’d definitely have to change their prices. But it could be that they’re then seen as some kind of precursor and that people still want to continue buying from them because of that. But it may be hard.”

“Then you have to be innovative and continuously make the entire process greener. There would be competitive prices if everyone starts producing in the same way. But at the same time, you want all the employees to get a proper salary. Maybe it’s rather about making the entire production process greener and be even more transparent.”

“It will probably become very hard if everyone has the same production procedure, then it’d be a lot about what or with whom the brand is associated with. In such a world they would probably have to be associated with influencers or people who have a large number of followers. They’d have to invest in a person that inspires others.”

An explanation for it being both a positive and negative situation for Swedish Stockings was how the price would have to or could be reduced. Some individuals saw it as a positive for the company to be able to lower the prices as this would lead to them being more competitive on that aspect, while others saw it as a nuisance for the company which would probably lead to more problems than solutions for the market actor. The company was expected to survive the above-mentioned scenario if they would have created a strong enough loyal customer base by then, as well as remain leading regarding innovations and quality within the industry.

“If the big market actors would copy Swedish Stockings, then all the oceans would probably run out of plastics, and that is the end goal. But then Swedish Stockings must [...] already have a well-established customer base. If they have a very stable one, they can surely survive, they just have to come up with another idea.”

“I think it would come down to the quality. I already think about that a lot when I buy clothes – quality. I don’t really think so much about the sustainability in itself, but rather how long I can use a piece of clothing and how good the material is. If one thinks about the durability, one often thinks that it’s good clothing. I think it’ll come down to that in the future – the quality.”

Figure 6 offers an overview of the opinions expressed by the two groups and how these compare to the intentions of Swedish Stockings as expressed by Frisinger.

5.2 Analysing the interview with Linn Frisinger

When asked to describe Swedish Stockings in her own words, Frisinger stated the following:

“...we are the world’s only sustainable hosiery brand, and what we do, or our vision has from the beginning been to change and influence the hosiery industry. We do that by e.g., producing everything we do from recycled material or different types of natural fibres. And above all sustainability for us is to look at the entire cycle so to say. So that everything from material to how we produce packaging, and of course transports, but also and maybe mainly our recycling program and what we actually do with the products once they have been used up as well”.

Frisinger claims that Swedish Stockings are the only sustainable hosiery brand worldwide at the moment of the interview. The reason why the company exists, as well as what they want to do is also evident. Swedish Stockings want to create change and influence its competitors to become more sustainable and leading by example. This is done through transparency and incorporating the sustainability mindset in all parts of the production process, as well as what is done to the product post-production. Additionally, the company collaborates with competitors to encourage a new way of production, engages in social issues, and increases visibility by focusing on communication.

Swedish Stockings main product is, at the time of writing and publishing this thesis, stockings. However, recently socks have also grown to become highly important for the company, and new products such as leggings, bike shorts and even furniture have now been introduced. That said, these products are not yet even remotely as important as the before mentioned stockings and socks. When asked about the company’s main

target group, Frisinger explains that it consists of informed women, mainly in urban areas, however, she adds that being informed is not confined to any age restrictions in the end. The consumers do not necessarily have to be informed about the state of the environment, sustainability, or fashion, as one can be informed in multiple different ways. Frisinger does ultimately state that their prime age group is between 25-45 years old, and averages at 35.

Swedish Stockings' competitors are, according to Frisinger, all companies who produce and sell hosiery. This includes fashion giants such as H&M and Woldford. However, she also notes that there still is not any real clear competition, as no companies that produce the same way and hold the same values exist yet. Instead, the competition is made up of companies where customers who are not informed go to purchase their stockings, i.e. to the fashion giants.

Sustainability is a key concept in all parts of the circle of life of the product at Swedish Stockings. Frisinger says that there is a lot of talking about materials, but that the production process itself and its emissions are often forgotten about. At Swedish Stockings, Frisinger claims both the production process and the material used are thought about, as well as what happens once the product has been used up.

“...our recycling program has become highly important. We pay a lot of attention to how to think outside the box and achieve a more innovative and sustainable development moving forward”.

Regarding the importance of innovation for the company, Frisinger says it is crucial as this is the only way they will be able to follow their vision and change and influence the entire stockings industry. The goal is to have as many companies as possible producing hosiery the same way Swedish Stockings do, all the while remaining in the lead of the competition regarding new materials and innovation. One of their newest innovations is making tables out of old broken stockings people send them.

Communication with customers and competitors alike is an essential part of expressing the company vision and initiating change within the industry. The communication strategy at Swedish Stockings is permeated by transparency. The goal is to be highly transparent in everything they do and openly communicate about how they work and produce their products. Transparency, Frisinger says, is also visible by openly talking about how Swedish Stockings cannot do everything, despite claiming to be the only

sustainable hosiery brand worldwide. Even for them, it is simply not always possible to do things in the best way possible, or how the company wishes they could have done things. On social media, the communication strategy also shows proof of transparency, however, focuses on being a bit more personal. Frisinger says that they aim to be seen as a person or friend people would like to spend time with. Their Instagram should show off a bit of the company's heart and soul, which is something they have seen consumers ask for from brands. Being its "own person" on social media also means that Swedish Stockings can show off a multitude of characteristics and not be confined to just fashion or a single theme, Frisinger says. This is evident in the multitude of subjects the company covers in their communication, from supporting the nurses and doctors during COVID-19 with free products to celebrating the first-ever US woman Vice President-elect. Furthermore, the communication strategy focuses on other ways of improving visibility and how to spread and share the knowledge acquired for the company's production process and mindset. This is done through somewhat surprising design collaborations with e.g. fashion companies Ganni and Filippa K, despite the two not being so-called sustainable organisations:

“We partly want to show that we can be ahead when it comes to research and innovation, but at the same time, we can do design collaborations with Ganni and lie at the forefront regarding design. We believe that combination is essential to be an interesting brand or an interesting person that people want to hang out with.”

Swedish Stockings may not have a strong community on Instagram yet, however, this is something they are continuously trying to develop. They aim to do so by increasing their consumer interactions, as well as meticulously planning the posts and campaigns which are run on the platform, Frisinger explains. The focus is not only on the products but also on other issues that are important to the company, which in turn adds to the company brand image. The themes brought up in their posts encourages the viewer to become more informed about and potentially help in social and environmental issues such as Covid-19, the Australian bushfires or whether a company is greenwashing. One of the campaigns was made to encourage customer's critical thinking and create a discussion, as well as choosing Swedish Stockings above other less sustainable manufactures. I refer to it as "This is us – this is them", simply due to the text placed on the photos of the campaign. The campaign portrays Swedish Stockings as a company that should be associated with clear lakes, serene landscapes, and healthy

marine life while opposing companies create heavy emissions and pollution. When asked about the posts in question, Frisinger says it was part of their communication strategy to clearly show customers what they and their competitors do.

“Communication in essence is about simplicity. It’s the key to everything, so we did them [the posts] to keep it as simple as possible. And it hasn’t been received negatively at all, nobody has commented that it wouldn’t be true etc., and that’s because it is. We are the only ones who make [hosiery] this way. [...] We want others to come and ask us about it – how do we do it? How can we produce the same way?”

When asked whether campaigns such as the above-mentioned is created in the hope of engaging competitors, Frisinger replies affirmatively and makes a comparison to another market-shaping company within the automobile market.

“We usually say we’re like Tesla. Tesla’s vision was obviously to stir the automobile industry and now one can say that everyone who doesn’t have a Tesla – or there are of course downsides to Teslas as well, it has been proven – but it turned into everyone who doesn’t own a Tesla has an environmentally destructive car. [...] Tesla has basically stopped now; they’ve done what they needed to do. And everyone who does anything similar [within the car industry] in the future will just be a copy of Tesla. But that’s great because that’s what Tesla wants. We think similarly, but when it comes to stockings.”

Inspired by Tesla, Swedish Stockings want to inspire other companies to follow their way of manufacturing. According to Frisinger, they have already started to see small changes. One of their previous collaboration partners, Filippa K, have started producing stockings in a similar way, and other competitors such as Wolford and Falke have also started doing so. Despite wishing the competitors would take advantage of Swedish Stockings’ transparency and particular know-how, they have only done so partly, which is something Frisinger hopes to see a change in in the future.

Regarding seeing a change in consumer behaviour, they have noticed an overall increase in interest for sustainability since Swedish Stockings entered the market in 2016, which has led to an increase in demand for such products. Frisinger herself believes that Swedish Stockings have played a part of the sustainability mindset development within the world of stockings.

“For us, it has been about making consumers aware of that this [stockings] is a petroleum product, because almost nobody knows about it, so that has

almost been the foundation. And I think we've succeeded doing that because there are quite a lot of people that have realised that 'oh, this product is actually made out of oil', and one hasn't thought about it before. We're starting to awaken this. Sustainability overall has proceeded a lot since we entered [the market], and there's now a lot more demand for such products. But I absolutely think there have been a lot of changes, and I think we've been a part of this within the hosiery industry."

When speaking about the future of the industry, Frisinger says she believes that it will move towards only using recycled material as well as obliterating the need for using oil, especially raw oil, when producing stockings. She does not see it as a negative if all competitors replicate Swedish Stockings' entire manufacturing process, but rather as a positive, as long as they can remain known as the originals, similarly to Tesla. She further emphasises the need for innovation within their company, stating that they may produce any stockings at all in the future, but rather only focus on recycling old broken stockings and remaking them into new objects. There will be a need for this as long as there is a need for stockings, as stockings are impossible to make unbreakable.

Ultimately, Frisinger is asked about the sustainability of companies and capitalism in general. She does not believe we will move away from consumption, and that the focus should rather be on changing the way we consume and how those things are produced:

"A company can be [sustainable]. But I don't know if I can say that Swedish Stockings as a company can ever be entirely that. The problem will not be the material, but the production in itself. We get that question a lot – that shouldn't one rather avoid buying hosiery all together then – but we still believe that the way forward isn't about prohibitions or that you should be punished for buying a certain product, or not to consume at all. Because I don't think that's the way it's heading, but rather that we'll continue to consume also after this Corona crisis. It's about how we need to start consuming in a different way."

She further explains her view on the importance of being able to show flaws within a company, and that it is okay not to be 100% perfectly sustainable. The focus, according to Frisinger, should be on making efforts for the better and constantly improving all parts of the company, without being scrutinized for the parts that still need to be worked upon.

Swedish Stockings part is to inspire and lead within innovation, despite not ever being able to achieve completely zero emissions, says Frisinger. This, however, somewhat

goes against what was expressed through Swedish Stockings' campaign "This is us – this is them", which compared Swedish Stockings and their production to their competitors. One may argue that this campaign criticised companies that are not yet great concerning their sustainability, which Frisinger herself expresses is problematic and makes companies less willing to share their sustainability efforts. However, Swedish Stockings may also only mean companies who are not carrying out any sustainability actions whatsoever in their campaign. There is nothing to clearly state which companies they were talking about in the campaign.

5.3 Focus group and company interview comparison

Having examined the opinions of the individuals of the two focus groups and the described intentions of Swedish Stockings' vision and external communication according to Frisinger, both dissimilarities and similarities are found. These will now be summarised.

Based on the visuals and text in the portfolio, the focus group participants mainly expressed positive perceptions of Swedish Stockings. This was especially true for FG2 where all participants agreed having received a positive perception of the company. The general agreement of the group might be due to it holding more personalities matching the characteristics of the company's target group than FG1. Frisinger describes their target group to mainly consist of women aged 25-45 years, mostly living in bigger cities than in the countryside and being aware, including but not solely within sustainability and fashion. FG2 holds multiple individuals fitting these characteristics, especially aware within the ethics of fast-fashion and sustainability.

The majority of the participants thought Swedish Stockings stands out amongst its competitors and attributed this to the very clear company values, the lack of solely focusing on the product in addition to themes such as transparency, genuineness and innovation. None of the participants' mentioned design when speaking about the company, which opposes the thoughts expressed by Frisinger. The CEO clearly states that they want to be at the forefront when it comes to design and that this was also the reasoning behind collaborating with Ganni. This discrepancy may, however, be due to the design aspect not being highlighted enough in the portfolio the participants were given. A majority of the FG1 participants further described Swedish Stockings as

“preachy” or portraying a “superiority complex”. The latter description was said concerning the marketing campaign “This is us – this is them”. The campaign, which Frisinger stated had not received any critical or negative responses, was met negatively by all five FG1 participants, and one FG2 participant stating that it was on the verge of being too much. The FG1 participants expressed how it was not in line with the company’s values, was provocative, polarising and not transparent enough – with one participant stating that she did not believe that the campaign’s content was accurate. 3/5 FG2 participants did see the campaign as positive, with the remaining two remaining neutral to it which is also not good. It appears as if the campaign mainly received a negative response by the focus groups of this study. The fact that FG1 obtained a more negative perception of the campaign than FG2 may be due to the differences in ages between the groups, or the result of having two men in FG1. One may also question, however, whether this could be down to cultural differences between Swedish and Swedish speaking Finnish mindsets.

The company’s vision of wanting to change the hosiery industry, Frisinger believes, is evident through the company’s communication. She appears correct, as all but two participants state that they do believe that the company is trying to shape the market and initiate change. The remaining two participants do not see the attempted market-shaping, but rather attribute the behaviour to a publicity stunt for increased visibility or view the business plan and brand to be too simple for such a difficult task. The focus group participants mainly agree that to succeed with shaping the market, Swedish Stockings must also change consumer behaviour and its associated product demand. The company should also focus on becoming known as the original of sustainable hosiery and thereby establish a strong customer base which will remain loyal to the company even if or when competitors offer cheaper alternatives. Frisinger claims she has already seen proof that the consumer behaviour is changing, having noticed switches towards a more sustainable thinking and an increasing demand for greener products. She also believes that Swedish Stockings have been part of initiating that change. She further agrees with the focus group participants’ concerning the importance of being remembered as the original, comparing her company to Tesla.

Finally, the group participants mainly agreed that carrying out market-shaping would result in negative consequences for Swedish Stockings. The repercussions would be due to the company losing its competitive edge and not being able to adapt to

competitors' prices. Frisinger disagrees with the participants, explaining that as long as the company is remembered as the original, they may move onto producing other products than hosiery. One option would be to focus entirely on the company's recycling club and solely create new products made from old and ripped stockings instead of them ending up in landfills. Swedish Stockings, Frisinger says, is present on the market to inspire, not provoke.

FG1	FG2	Swedish Stockings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally more critical • 2/5 men • Ages 23-29 • 5/5 negative towards "This is us - this is them" • Described Swe.S as preachy or showing proof of superiority complex ("This is us - this is them"). • 3/5 believe Swe.S. are trying to change the industry • Swe.S. can change the industry if they change the consumer behaviour • Should be seen as the original, be innovative • Negative if the market-shaping succeeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally more positive • Match Swe.S.'s target group more • 4/5 women • Ages 27-30 • More aware of fast fashion and sustainability • 3/5 positive towards "This is us - this is them", 2/5 neutral • 5/5 believe Swe.S. are trying to change the industry • Swe.S. can change the industry if they change the consumer behaviour • Should be seen as the original, be innovative • Negative if the market-shaping succeeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to change the hosiery industry • Want to collaborate with competitors • Important to be transparent and share information and innovation • Want to inform consumers without preaching • Have already seen changes in consumer behaviour • Think it is important to be seen as the original, like Tesla • Positive if the market-shaping succeeds, can then focus on the recycling program and change the business model

Figure 6. Comparison of focus group perceptions and company communication intentions and expectations

6. Results

The following chapter makes up the results of the thesis. The data I collected and analysed in the previous chapter will now be compared with the theories discussed in the theoretical framework. This comparison culminates in results which can be used for managerial implications or support future research, but mainly aims to answer the thesis' research questions:

- How do companies communicate their efforts to shape the market to achieve sustainability?
- How do consumers within Generation Y perceive and react to companies' efforts to shape markets in this way?
- How is Generation Y's perception of sustainability communication described in scientific research?

The main themes mirror the ones mentioned in both the theoretical framework and analysis, i.e., market-shaping, communication, and consumer perception concerning sustainability. The results present an interconnection between the subjects, as well as provides evidence of how Swedish Stockings' communication and market-shaping intentions are perceived by Generation Y. The themes will be presented and highlighted using translated quotes from the company interview and focus group discussions.

6.1 Market-shaping efforts and how companies communicate them

In the theoretical framework, the ways in which companies can carry out market-shaping to achieve sustainability and communicate this was discussed. The ideas of Storbacka and Nenonen (2020) were presented, but since several of the 8 steps appear targeted towards firms contemplating whether to initiate or take part in the market-shaping process, whereas Swedish Stockings have already chosen to take action, the suggestions by Kindström et al. (2018) were chosen. The answer to the research question: How do companies communicate their efforts to shape the market to achieve sustainability?, is explained in this chapter by comparing the three levels of Kindström et al. (2018) and the statements given by Frisinger in the company interview.

Market-shaping is a highly complex concept and managers must be aware of how the market is dynamic and ever-evolving rather than a stable structure. Firms must acquire and uphold a deep understanding of markets and how these can be changed (Beninger & Francis, 2020). They must also be able to remain dynamic in response to external threats such as e.g., climate change. By doing so, threats can transform into competitive advantages through innovation and technical progress. It is evident from the interview with Frisinger that Swedish Stockings have a deep understanding of market-shaping and how they conduct it. Market-shaping is part of the company's vision and has been a core element since the beginning, as "changing and influencing the stockings' industry" has always been the aim of the company according to Frisinger. Swedish Stockings have also understood that climate change and the restrictions it brings, can be turned on its head and become an advantage and source of innovation. They were able to enter the market as late as 2016 and still become successful by making the market move in a more sustainable direction and thus not have to adapt to the market (Baker et al., 2019). They try to change the market and make it sustainable through their way of product manufacturing, choice of material, transparency, communication, and collaborations. Frisinger stating the importance of collaborations and communication to change and/or influence the stockings' industry shows an understanding of the basics of market-shaping and its associated actor activities and collaborations (Nenonen et al., 2019; Baker & Nenonen, 2020).

As innovation and market-shaping are heavily affected by one another, companies who are market leaders within innovation are usually also market-shaping leaders and decide the direction in which the market develops (Kumar et al., 2000). Frisinger emphasized the importance of innovation for the company by saying that the only way to change and influence the industry is by "constantly remaining in the lead when it comes to research and innovation".

According to Kindström et al. (2018), the system level is about building legitimacy and incorporates the following three activities: changing norms, infusing knowledge, and boosting demand. When asked whether the consumer behaviour has changed, Frisinger believes that it has, and that Swedish Stockings have been successful in informing consumers of the negatives of hosiery as well as how it can be produced in a more sustainable way. Based on Frisinger's statements, it appears as if Swedish Stockings have been a part of boosting demand, informing consumers, and changing

norms within their industry. Frisinger stating seeing a change in consumer behaviour, i.e., changing norms is not evident within the focus groups. Even so, this does not necessarily disprove Frisinger's observations, as the demand for sustainable products and alternatives have noticeably generally increased in demand.

The second level by Kindström et al. (2018) aims to authenticate the market offer and consists of the following three activities: realizing value, understanding customers, and building credibility. Realizing value is referring to the firm's ability to make the customer aware of the benefits in the offer and for the company to become a unique supplier for the customer. Swedish Stockings officially single themselves out from competitors by stating that they are "the only sustainable hosiery brand worldwide" and provide information about the industry as well as current events worldwide which either affect the environment or specific social issues like feminism. The information provides additional value to the consumers, as it allows the consumer to see how their products have been made and how the company they choose to support gives back to the community. This is further supported by the level activity of building credibility, which calls for presenting the supply chain's trustworthiness and ability as well as by explaining the propositions of added value which are achieved using new technology (Kindström et al. 2018). Both activities are carried out by Swedish Stockings, as they openly show where, how and by whom their products are made, as well as how their recycling production enables the company to create new products such as furniture. The added value which is achieved by using new technology is proven by the company through collaborations with companies to show the way of using the technology:

"So we've been open to showing other brands how we produce, and that they can do it the same way. Filippa K started doing some things the same way as we have been doing."

The third level by Kindström et al. (2018) which suggests how companies should conduct market-shaping is about technology and how to demonstrate it through replicating processes, building application knowledge and co-developing technology. Carrying out activities on this level results in deeper relationships with customers and simplifies development as well as helps increase customers understanding of the technology. This can also be done on social media where consumers can give feedback about the products as well as receive information which explains the production process and its benefits in detail. The third level may also lead to co-developing

technology with consumers; however, this does not appear to have happened yet within Swedish Stockings. Partnerships with external experts is another consequence of this level and have been done on multiple occasions by the firm. Swedish Stockings have partnered with design-focused Ganni, Filippa K, as well as a furniture designer for creating tables out of old and broken stockings.

Sustainability has been present from the very beginning for Swedish Stockings. It is something that can be seen in every level of the supply chain and production process, all the way to after the stockings have been used and broken. Some may claim that a product which breaks cannot be sustainable, nonetheless, the company continuously claims to be the only sustainable hosiery brand worldwide. When asked about what sustainability means for Swedish Stockings during the company interview, Frisinger responded that “it is about looking into the entire life cycle of the product, from beginning to end”. The brand communication done by Swedish Stockings is based off sustainability but also covers multiple other subjects. It follows a communication strategy and is planned on both a long and short-term basis where the content is based around the idea of Swedish Stockings being an individual, or a friend, rather than a company:

“We usually look at Swedish Stockings as a person. We want to be perceived as a person that you want to spend time with. That means being able to have multiple sides to oneself. Partly by showing that we can be ahead of the game when it comes to research and innovation, while simultaneously collaborating with Ganni and be a frontrunner when it comes to design.”

6.2 Generation Y consumers’ perception of market-shaping efforts

Having gone over the first research question and its answer above, the following two research questions will be covered. The way in which Generation Y’s perception of sustainability communication is described in previous research and how consumers of Generation Y perceive and react to companies’ efforts to shape the market will now be presented.

Generation Y is more aware of and worried about the environmental crisis than any other generation before them. Despite their concern, the generation is largely unwilling to put effort into researching sustainable alternatives to products and want to have all

information easily and directly communicated to them (Bhaduri & Ha-Bookshire, 2011). Consumers of Generation Y are critical to information due to years of receiving it through multiple channels having access to it on a much bigger scale than ever before. They are known for not responding well to old-school marketing and respond better to targeted and controlled campaigns, in addition to fast feedback and genuine interactions. The use of social media is crucial when communicating about sustainability with Generation Y, as online brand communities affect consumer brand perception and deepens the customer-brand relationship (Bowen & Ozuem, 2019). Following up with surveys on the consumer brand perception and WOM are also effective.

The focus group participants' perceptions of Swedish Stockings' communicated market-shaping efforts varied. It was evident that some of the communication expressed by the company was received in the way it was intended, while some of it was not. The participants' general opinion was that sustainability is important and impacts the purchase decision when it comes to food and furniture. They did not, however, consider sustainability within clothing purchases to be important as it e.g., takes too much effort to research which clothing company is genuinely green.

The activities carried out by Swedish Stockings and suggested by Kindström et al. (2018)'s second level appear successful when comparing them to the focus group participants' opinions. The participants mainly had positive perceptions about the company, particularly the participants who matched the characteristics of the company's target group. Nonetheless, even two individuals that in theory match the characteristics of this target group, did not have a positive perception of the company. This was either due to feeling of confusion about the company brand or genuineness.

“[...] My first thought when I saw the first page [of the portfolio] was “grandma”. Like what, is this their look? When I continued it felt very all over the place, they have no coherent red line though what they do or try to communicate.”

Most of the participants thought that Swedish Stockings stand out amongst its competitors, in more ways than one. This is attributed to the company's clearly communicated values, the lack of product focus and emphasis on the company's and its products' environmental impact. One focus group participant stated that “it is clear that they differentiate themselves mainly through their values, while H&M and Lindex put the profit first. It's an entirely different approach”. Some of the participants

commented on the difference in presented the products and the style used to do so. One participant thought the visual communication looked aged and stood out compared to other popular fashion brands because of it. Frisinger highlighted the importance of design for Swedish Stockings in her interview. The communicated design aspects were not received by the focus group participants in the way that the company was hoping for. Multiple participants stated that the tables were a strange step to be taken by a hosiery company, while others stated they did not believe the design of the product was as important to the company as promoting the sustainability of it.

Frisinger emphasized the importance of transparency within all parts of the company, throughout the entire production process. The transparency is key as it enables competitors to view their manufacturing process and become informed and inspired and ultimately allows for market-shaping through a transfer of knowledge. It also allows consumers to become aware of how the majority of companies produce different pieces of clothing, and what effect this has on society and our environment. By informing consumers, Swedish Stockings encourages them to make informed choices in all areas of consumption, as well as to start questioning companies who are not doing their part when it comes to societal and ecological sustainability. This will further support the market-shaping, as consumers choices and demand shape companies need to adapt and develop. Generation Y, growing up surrounded by information, react well to transparency and the feeling of genuineness. It was touched upon by several group participants, mainly when discussing greenwashing and how Swedish Stockings do not appear to conduct any, despite being very vocal about their sustainability efforts in their communication. The company's communicated social and environmental actions, their production process, and its goals appear transparent and genuine enough to not be questioned by most of the participants.

In addition to the risk of sustainability communication to be perceived as greenwashing, it can also be perceived as too provocative, which also has a negative effect on the consumer, their behaviour and purchase intentions. The campaign "This is us – this is them" is an example of such a risk. The campaign had not received any criticism or negativity according to Frisinger, however, was met with varied opinions by the focus group participants. All five FG1 participants disliked it, some even claiming it to be proof of the company being "preachy" or having a "superiority

complex” and stated that the company does not gain anything by putting down others. The group felt that the campaign went against the values communicated by the company and that there was no need to negatively communicate about competitors.

“I have a problem with this. I think it’s very polarising and something I think we should be moving away from, to put things into groups. Even if they’re sustainable nobody is ever perfect.”

2/5 FG2 participants were neutral to the campaign, while the remaining three found the campaign to be positive. Based on these findings, the success of the campaign is must be questioned. The campaign was met with more negative perceptions than positive ones regarding the company, despite the message of the campaign being that competitors are not acting in a sustainable way which will benefit the planet. The message of the campaign is lost by making it too simplistic and polarising, accusing the competitors instead of highlighting the positives of the own innovation and production process. Participants of Generation Y are known for being highly critical of the information they are fed, and this was supported by the focus group participants’ reactions.

7. Conclusion and discussion

This chapter makes up the conclusion and discussion of the thesis. It further encompasses managerial implications, limitations and how these could have been avoided, as well as suggestions for future research to further study and develop the knowledge of the subject of this thesis.

7.1 Conclusion

This thesis has studied the way of which a company within the clothing industry communicates its efforts to shape the market to achieve increased sustainability. Swedish Stockings officially state that they are trying to change and shape the hosiery market to become more sustainable within production, use of material and way of recycling. They often highlight how they are the only sustainable hosiery brand worldwide and have a strong focus on social media for communicating with their target group as well as competitors. Their communication strategy for social media is based on simplicity, transparency, genuineness and informing consumers with a twinkle in their eye. Swedish Stockings want to be seen as an individual that consumers want to spend time with all the while learning about the products and production process within the hosiery industry. By learning of the damage caused by most stockings due to them being made of raw oil, they want to change the consumer behaviours and invite competitors to take part in Swedish Stockings' innovations, production, and recycling program. By encouraging and offering to help competitors, the company hopes to change the entire industry. The communication on Instagram is nuanced and varies from other clothing companies. As the company wants to be seen as an interesting individual and have a community of informed consumers, they do not only speak about their products but aims to incorporate multiple different aspects to the firm's personality and brand. Such things include informing of current environmental crises and how to help, speaking of how to support healthcare workers during the 2020 pandemic and questioning other companies' behaviours.

With this thesis, I have studied how consumers within Generation Y perceive and react to companies' communication efforts to shape markets to achieve sustainability. Consumers within Generation Y have a different perception of marketing and appreciate two-way communication between the consumer and the company. Having

conducted two focus group discussions with individuals from Generation Y, it became evident that the generation has varying opinions and perceptions of companies such as Swedish Stockings who are trying to communicate their efforts for increased sustainability. The focus group participants had both negative and positive reactions to the company's communication on the social media channel Instagram. Most individuals formed an interest in the company and its business model or products, and multiple individuals stated that they could be future customers. The positive feedback shows how the company communication has been successful. However, not everyone agreed, and it appeared to mainly be contributed to personal interests, values, or the campaign "This is us – this is them", which was perceived by many as unnecessarily provocative and even preachy.

Prior research studying Generation Y's perception of sustainability communication has shown that the generation holds a general interest in sustainability and find it to be highly important to communicate about. The generation differs from older generations as it has a deep understanding of social media and the communication done over its platforms. Generation Y analytical of companies' efforts to communicate about sustainability and are often able to understand when a company is greenwashing instead of carrying out sustainable activities. However, simultaneously, some research states that the generation is mainly interested in the firm externally stating their efforts for increased sustainability, without further investigating whether such statements are true or not. Research has also shown that Generation Y often wants to know that their purchases are sustainably and ethically produced, although they are not willing to put any effort into researching the sustainability of products. They want to be presented with the information without having to put in any work themselves.

The results show some conflicting evidence of what Swedish Stocking want to communicate about their market-shaping efforts of increasing sustainability. The campaigns presenting how the company gives back to the community by supporting healthcare staff and informing of how individuals can help during the Australia bush fires were met with positivity and interest from the focus group participants. This mirrors what the company was trying to achieve with these subjects of external communication and supported an optimistic consumer brand perception. The campaign "This is us – this is them" did not receive as good feedback as most focus group participants either felt neutral or repelled by the visuals and message. The

negative feelings obtained from the campaign appears to have affected some of the participants' overall opinions of the brand and made them uninterested in the company in addition to their actions and products. The fact that Frisinger stated that the campaign had not received any backlash could be due to consumers either feeling neutral about the campaign or unwilling to take up a discussion of the subject. Most of the participants who disliked the campaign did not feel so because they believed the campaign to be incorrect, but rather because of the way it portrayed the two types of companies in such a black and white fashion, when humans and company rarely if ever show such polarising extremes. The lack of criticism of the campaign may also be explained by the cultural differences of Swedes and Swedish speaking Finns. It may be that Swedish speaking Finns are less likely to appreciate a campaign which brags about themselves while claiming to be better than one's competitors. However, as cultural differences were not brought up during the discussions, this explanation can only be speculated about.

The participants expressed varied opinions and some even changed their minds during the discussion. This may be because of the group dynamics and how individuals subconsciously or consciously adapted to the general mindset of the group and the opinions expressed. Had the groups been formed differently or using other participants, the effects of the group dynamics may have been either stronger or lesser. The group interaction is likely to have affected the data collected and thus also the analysis and results. FG1 consisted of more out-spoken individuals, not afraid to speak their minds. They might have been impacted by each other's negative or sceptical views. FG1 also had two men, while the other group only had one. As men are normatively less likely to have an interest in stockings this may also be an explanation as to why two out of three men expressed not having any interest in the company, its business model or community activism. The effect of having mixed groups of two genders may have impacted the opinions or expressed opinions of all participants. That said, having groups of two genders may also have not had any impact whatsoever.

7.2 Discussion

Previous research has shown that Generation Y reacts differently to previous generations regarding marketing. They value sustainability, genuineness, and

transparency within brands and are mostly able to tell when a company is conducting greenwashing. However, they are simultaneously not willing to put effort into researching whether a brand is sustainable or not, as they want the information to be openly communicated and easily accessible. Based on previous research, one would expect the focus group participants to name sustainability as a factor affecting purchase decisions, also regarding clothing purchases. However, in this thesis, it quickly became evident that the focus group participants did not think of the sustainability of a garment and were not willing to pay a lot more money for an item that has been produced sustainably. There appeared to be a difference between the participants' purchase choices at the time of the discussion and the kind of products they wish they were investing in. Multiple participants openly stated that they wish they could make better purchase choices when it comes to clothing but are not willing or capable of doing so at the time of the discussion. This conflict can be explained by the ages and life situations of the individuals. All participants were either still studying towards a university degree or had recently received one and entered the working market. Some participants stated that once they are in a more stable economic situation, they want to make improvements in their decisions. It was further accentuated that some participants already wanted to choose sustainable alternatives, but that they found it hard to find enough and legit information regarding brands' sustainability. They were not willing to put effort into researching and would therefore end up making uninformed decisions. This supports the results of previous studies and further emphasizes the need for sustainable companies to openly communicate their environmentally and socially responsible actions in a way which grabs consumers attention and facilitates their purchase decisions.

The results of the study were expected to an extent, as I anticipated some participants would not show any interest in the product and the brand's sustainability, knowing some individuals' views on sustainability. However, some group participants that I had expected to not show any interest did like the company and wanted to know more and vice versa. However, certain parts of the company's communication strategies were met with more scepticism than anticipated, e.g., the campaign "This is us – this is them" or the heavy focus on the company's view on sustainability, as the entire FG1 disliked the campaign. This discrepancy of anticipated and unanticipated opinions may be the result of the choice of method and how it was carried out. Opting for focus

group discussions rather than conducting one-on-one interviews with the participants did lead to them influencing each other, which, as previously stated, can be both good and bad. The discussions may cause the individuals to think further based on the declarations of others and go deeper into otherwise undiscovered thoughts and opinions.

I believe that the group dynamic impacted the participants' opinions, no matter if this happened subconsciously or if the participants adapted to the other group members' opinions on purpose to better fit in with the group. However, as all members of FG1 have strong personalities and are generally known for not struggling with expressing themselves, it can also be assumed that the individuals were not as affected by the others' beliefs but rather happened to sometimes think very similarly. The group dynamic of FG2 must also be considered, as it might have also played a part in its members expressed opinions. A member in FG2 that I did not expect to show any interest in the product nor the company or the business plan surprised me by stating that they would be interested in learning more about the company, their recycling program and activism. He also expressed an interest in the production and supply chain. The overall beliefs of FG2 were positive, especially when compared to FG1. It may be that the aforementioned individual was impacted by the overall mindset of the group and therefore also showed more interest in the company and their actions.

The results were both in congruence and conflict with the theory presented in the theoretical framework. The communication conducted through social media is a good channel for targeting Generation Y as they are very comfortable with the format and can form quick opinions with short texts and a lot of visual communication. The theory by Newig et al. (2013) on the complexity of sustainability could be seen in the type of communication Swedish Stockings conducted, and most of the participants appeared to receive a perception of the company as a sustainability-focused brand. The communicated goals which should be of interest to both the company and the consumers were not successful amongst all focus group participants. This, however, supports the third dimension by Newig et al. (2013), which states the difficulty in uniting actors on different levels and work towards the same goals. As two of the focus group participants did not view Swedish Stockings as a market-shaping company, but the rest of the group members did, it appears as if the company has succeeded at least partly with their sustainability and market-shaping communication.

What further suggests a successful communication strategy conducted by Swedish Stockings, is how all but two group members positively perceived the company as a vocal green firm, which in turn means that they can tell that the company is not greenwashing. However, as some participants stated, Swedish Stockings are a company and therefore must sell things to be able to remain on the market and carry out market-shaping. This brings forward the question of sustainable capitalism, and whether it is even possible. As companies claim to be sustainable and not greenwashing, is it valid to take them by their words? Or is sustainability at its core in a business setting an impossible feature which can never be fully achieved, or even achieved to a significant enough level to benefit society?

These questions have been heavily discussed especially in the last few years, as the climate crisis concerns have steadily increased and left people in fear of the future. Initially when climate change was starting to arise concern, businesses no matter the size contradicted and downplayed the effects of climate change and attributed its consequences to natural events. However, in recent years, organisations are no longer able to deny the current climate crisis and their part in it (Baer, 2012). Researchers such as Newell and Paterson (2010) state the need for climate capitalism, all the while acknowledging the difficulty in putting it into practice. The questions regarding sustainable capitalism should be considered further and could hold a much larger place in future research.

7.3 Managerial implications

This subchapter discusses how the results can be used as potential managerial implications. Based on the findings of this thesis there are some things managers should consider when conducting market-shaping and communicating in the aim of achieving sustainability within the clothing industry.

When trying to communicate sustainability and market-shaping efforts to Generation Y, managers should focus on using channels on social media such as e.g., Instagram, as this is a successful marketing tool and Generation Y spend a lot of time on social media. The type of communication is, however, also essential. This thesis shows that managers must carefully consider their communication, both visually and by choosing the right words and message. Swedish Stockings' social media strategy is based on

transparency and the want to inform consumers about the issues with the hosiery industry and its products. They focus on simplicity as they judge it to be the core of communication. This may be successful in some campaigns; however, it may also be perceived as too aggressive and preachy. Managers must consider this, especially when communicating and informing about the difference between their own company and its competitors. Most of the focus group participants stated that the campaign “This is us – this is them” would have been more believable had it solely focused on the benefits and positives of Swedish Stockings, rather than showing the supposed behaviour of their competitors. Although, some individuals also found the campaign to be provocative but in a positive way which makes the viewer question companies’ production processes and one own’s consumer behaviour. By considering the way this type of communication may be perceived by different cultures, the negative effects can be avoided, which will result in more people appreciating such a campaign.

Informing about the environmental and social benefits of a sustainable product throughout its cycle of production and use were met with overall positivity and appears advantageous as focus group participants openly expressed a wish for learning more about the business model and production. This also led to several participants also showed a genuine interest in becoming

7.4 Limitations

This thesis is subject to multiple limitations which should be considered and improved upon in case of future research. These limitations are due to restraints such as focus group participants’ availability and wiliness to participate, time, money, and place. As I aimed to study the beliefs of Generation Y, I had to ensure that all focus group participants were within that age group. This impacted the number of people I could ask to take part in the study. This was further affected by the need for all participants to speak Swedish to allow them to speak in their mother tongue freely and fully understand the other participants. The groups further needed to understand English to be able to understand the portfolio representing Swedish Stockings’ communication on Instagram. The limited amount of people who could be asked to participate was further subject to the willingness to participate and availability during the established time of research. The thesis was written during the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore

all focus groups were conducted online over Zoom rather than in person, due to social distancing recommendations. This restriction, however, also facilitated a more diverse group of individuals living in different cities to participate. The individuals who participated in the focus group discussions have grown up in multiple different cities over southern and middle Finland. They have similar cultures and upbringings due to all being part of the Swedish speaking minority in Finland. If the same study would have been conducted in Sweden or within a broader group of Finnish speaking Finns, the answers may have been more varied.

When using focus group discussions as a method for gathering data, it is ultimately impossible to know how any group dynamics or personality interactions may have affected the individuals' statements. Nonetheless, by carefully considering the participants' characters before attributing them to one of the groups, and by initiating the discussions by emphasizing that there is no right or wrong answer and ensuring that every member got to speak their mind, I hope to have eliminated this probability as much as possible.

As always when conducting interviews and focus group discussions, the interviewer must always remain as objective as possible and not influence the interviewee or group members. However, it is impossible to remain 100% objective during the analysis and result presentation. As I had already read up on the themes which I had an interest in studying, I knew what I was looking for when analysing the transcriptions. Though I constantly attempted to remain open to the meaning of the data, I cannot with certainty state that my previous studies of the subjects did not impact my thinking and way of analysing. It may be that another research conducting the same research with very similar personalities and themes were to reach a very similar analysis of the collected data. It may also lead to a different analysis due to that individuals' previous experiences, whether they be scientific or not.

As it is a thesis, the research had to be carried out within a specific time frame and could not be made into a long-term study. Consequently, the results cannot say anything about the future, although assumptions can be made based on the data and previous studies. In addition to the limited timeframe, the study is always affected by the researcher's previous experiences and knowledge. Despite trying to remain objective throughout the research, data collection, analysis and presentation of results,

the researcher's own opinions may subconsciously have affected the study.

7.5 Future research

As stated within the thesis' limitations, due to this study being subject to time restraints, it was impossible to measure long term effects and whether the focus group participants' opinions could have transformed over time. This would be expected, as all individuals progressively change. Future research could, however, measure future market-shaping efforts and sustainability communication, as well as how it is received by either Generation Y or Generation Z. Carrying out a similar study with different individuals of the same Generation Y could strengthen the results of this study, as it would offer a wider range of personalities and opinions.

Another thing to consider for future research is the possibility of adding the opinions of competitors or other market actors. This thesis has focused on what Swedish Stockings was trying to convey through their communication and achieve market-shaping, in addition to the perceptions of this communication by potential consumers and target group individuals. A future study could combine these findings with the opinions of other market actors and competitors and see whether the market-shaping conducted by Swedish Stockings has had an effect on increasing the sustainability by changing business models or ways of production for other firms.

Future research that would cover the success of market-shaping strategies for increased sustainability would also be interesting, as well as what happens if a market-shaping company such as Swedish Stockings have succeeded in transforming the market and all firms are operating in similar ways and producing equally sustainable products. Frisinger stated that the scenario would be ideal and that they only want to be remembered as the original if that were to happen. One focus group participant had an equally positive view of such a future scenario, however, most of the participants agreed that such a scenario would mean the end of Swedish Stockings unless they could retain a loyal consumer base or further focus on their innovation. Only future research can tell what will happen.

8. Summary in Swedish – Svensk sammanfattning

Marknadsutformning och hållbarhetskommunikation inom klädindustrin

Generation Y:s konsumentuppfattning

Inledning

Allt eftersom kunskapen om den nuvarande klimatkrisen sprider sig, måste företag och konsumenter överväga sitt eget beteende och förbereda sig för enorma förändringar inom en snar framtid. Klädindustrin är särskilt problematisk från ett hållbarhetsperspektiv och producerar 10 % av alla koldioxidutsläpp i hela världen (McFall-Johnsen, 2019). Företag inom industrin måste tänka om sitt agerande inom alla områden samt vilka negativa konsekvenser det har, och få konkurrenterna att göra detsamma. Denna avhandling baserar sig på den moderna insikten om att marknader inte är stabila strukturer, utan tvärtom. Företag kan omforma dem istället för att behöva anpassa sig själva till marknaderna och på så sätt skapa miljömässigt positiva förändringar (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2015).

Syfte och forskningsfrågor

Avhandlingen är en fallstudie av företaget Swedish Stockings, ett strumpbyxföretag som framställer sig själv som en marknadsutformare. Företaget kan räknas som born global i och med sin internationella inriktning, enbart engelska kommunikation och globala nätförsäljning. Trots detta är huvudmarknaden fortsättningsvis Sverige och Skandinavien där företaget är baserat. Syftet med avhandlingen är att ge en djupare förståelse av hur hållbarhetsansträngningar inom marknadsutformning kommuniceras av företag, samt hur konsumenter uppfattar och reagerar på denna kommunikation. Detta är viktigt för att företag ska veta att deras kommunikation tas emot på rätt sätt av konsumenterna och får goda konsekvenser. Med utgångspunkt i syftet har jag identifierat tre forskningsfrågor som jag ämnar besvara genom denna avhandling:

- Hur kommunicerar företag sina försök att forma marknaden för att uppnå hållbarhet?
- Hur uppfattar och reagerar konsumenter inom generation Y på företags försök att utforma marknaden på detta sätt?

- Hur beskrivs generation Y:s uppfattning om hållbarhetskommunikation inom forskning?

Metod och datainsamling

Eftersom avhandlingen undersöker konsumenters uppfattningar om Swedish Stockings hållbarhetskommunikation används en multikvalitativ forskningsmetod. Datainsamlingen gjordes i form av en företagsintervju med VD Linn Frisinger och två fokusgruppdiskussioner med fem deltagare per grupp. Totalt deltog 3 män och 7 kvinnor och deltagarna valdes ut baserat på vem som var tillgänglig, villig att delta och passade in på kriterierna, dvs. tillhörde generation Y, hade svenska som modersmål och kunskaper i engelska, samt var finländare. Jag kände alla deltagare mer eller mindre, och kunde därför besluta vem som skulle vara i vilken grupp. På så sätt kunde jag minska antalet eventuellt påverkande faktorer som personlighet och relationer. Fokusgrupperna fick en portfolio med bilder från Swedish Stockings instagram publicerade mellan december 2019 och maj 2020. Bilderna valdes i ett försök att ge en så representativ och mångfacetterad bild av företagets kommunikation som möjligt.

Jag gjorde pilotintervjuer innan de riktiga intervjuerna som bidrog till att försäkra att frågorna var rätt formulerade och undvek missförstånd. Datainsamlingen för fokusgrupperna gjordes på Zoom och företagsintervjun på telefon. Jag spelade in båda och använde ljudfilerna för att transkribera alla diskussioner. Jag gjorde en öppen abduktiv kodning på insamlade data och färgkodade och kategoriserade dem för att kunna jämföra resultaten.

Redogörelse för undersökningen

Jag jämförde först data från de två fokusgrupperna (FG1 och FG2). Båda grupperna ansåg att hållbarhet är en viktig och påverkande faktor vid inköp av t.ex. livsmedel eller inredning, men ej vid klädinköp. FG2:s deltagare hade överlag en positivare inställning till kommunikationen i portfolion och till företaget som en helhet. Majoriteten av FG1 tyckte att en av kampanjerna som använts var särskilt provocerande och fick därefter en mycket negativ inställning till företaget, vilket drog ner på deras köpbeslutsvilja. Flera av deltagarna såg kampanjen som ett bevis på att

Swedish Stockings anser sig stå över andra företag. Kampanjen fick både positivt och neutralt bemötande av FG2, som överlag hade en positivare inställning till företaget och dess kommunikation. Alla i FG2 var intresserade av att få veta mer om företaget flera av deltagarna nämnde att de kunde tänka sig köpa deras produkter. Majoriteten ansåg att företaget var transparent och att fokuset inte enbart låg på produkterna, på gott och ont.

Swedish Stockings menar att de är det enda hållbara strumpbyxföretaget och att deras vision från början har varit att förändra hela deras marknad. Hållbarhet och innovation är essentiella delar av företagets företagsmodell, och kommunikationen är ett verktyg för att förmedla företagets vision utåt. Kommunikationen baserar sig främst på transparens och att visa att företaget gör mer än bara skapar strumpbyxprodukter genom att exempelvis engagera sig i samhällsproblem och informera sina följare om detta.

Fokusgruppernas svar överensstämde till viss del med vad Frisinger beskriver att Swedish Stockings vill åstadkomma genom sin kommunikation, men belyste även en rad skillnader. Kampanjen som mottogs väldigt olika inom de olika grupperna beskrevs av Frisinger som mycket lyckad och fick inga negativa reaktioner. Som nämndes reagerade alla inom FG1 negativt på kampanjen och flera uppgav att det gav en negativ uppfattning om företaget som helhet då de ansåg att det är onödigt att tala illa om andra företag. Detta kan bestridas med Frisinger, som menade att de enbart är transparenta och visar sanningen.

Resultat

Resultaten tyder på att företag måste ha en god känndeom om hela marknaden för att influera konkurrenter och positivt påverka konsumenterna att ändra sina vanor. Swedish Stockings metod för marknadsutformning går i enlighet med de aktiviteter som rekommenderas av Kindström et al. (2018) för en lyckad sådan. Dessa aktiviteter består av att förändra normer, ingjuta kunskap, öka rätt sorts efterfrågan, förstå värde och kunder, bygga upp trovärdighet, återskapa processer, bygga applikationskunskap och utveckla teknologi.

Det är förvånande att deltagarna inte anser att hållbarhet är en viktig inköpsfaktor vid klädinköp, utan främst vid inhandling av livsmedel, då klädindustrin ansvarar för det

största koldioxidutsläppet (McFall-Johnsen, 2019). Det är trots detta positivt att kommunicera om sin hållbarhet, något som borde göras på ett transparent och genuint sätt som inte leder till att konsumenterna uppfattar det som gröntvätt (Delmas & Curuel Burbano, 2011).

Swedish Stockings inser problemet med avsaknaden av generationens förståelse för hållbarhet och klädindustrin, och försöker informera och inspirera konsumenterna genom sin kommunikation. De tar upp exempel på hur hållbara företag beter sig, vad man ska ifrågasätta och varför det är viktigt göra detta. De samarbetar med konkurrenter för att skapa ett starkt nätverk, vilket krävs, åtminstone temporärt, för att kunna utföra marknadsutformning (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2015).

Fokusgruppsdeltagarna uppfattade företagets värden som tydliga, och förstod även deras vilja att informera om de egna aktiviteterna utöver enbart produkterna. Detta innebär att Swedish Stockings varumärke tydligt framkommer på det sätt som företaget avsett (Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015). Eftersom varumärkesuppfattningen starkt baseras på vad andra konsumenter tycker, så kan gruppdynamiken inom fokusgrupperna ha påverkat den allmänna känslan inom gruppen för företaget. Swedish Stockings informerar inte bara om sina produkter, utan tar även upp aktuella ämnen som är viktiga för samhället, som Australiens bränder eller vårdpersonalens insatser under coronapandemin. Företaget belyser även hur man som konsument kan veta om ett företag är genuint hållbart eller bidrar till negativa effekter på miljön eller på individens välmående. Swedish Stockings uppmärksammar även hela produktionsprocessen, från början till slut, i ett försök att vara transparenta och hjälpa konkurrenter byta till ett mer hållbart system. Genom att ta upp dessa ämnen bidrar företaget med mervärde till både konsumenterna och konkurrenterna, samtidigt som företaget själv gynnas om dessa grupper tar åt sig av informationen och väljer Swedish Stockings produkter eller produktionssätt framför andra strumpbyxmärken.

Diskussion och avslutning

Vad som händer om Swedish Stockings lyckas med sin marknadsutformning och att skapa en hållbar marknad är en relevant fråga och detta diskuterades både inom fokusgrupperna och i företagsintervjun. De flesta deltagarna såg det som ett problem för företaget, men Frisinger sa att detta är målet. Om det händer kommer Swedish

Stockings frångå sin grundidé och fokusera på sitt återvinningsprogram som skapar nya produkter av gamla strumpbyxor istället.

Inom framtida forskning kan man undersöka andra marknader och se hur uppfattningarna skiljer sig mellan generation Y och generation Z. Det skulle även vara viktigt att ta med icke-binära individer för att ge en mer varierad översikt över olika individers tankar. Eftersom denna avhandling bygger på en kvalitativ forskningsmetod kan resultaten inte generaliseras på samma sätt som kvantitativ forskning. Resultaten kan dock ge en överblick över hur individer inom generation Y reagerar på hållbarhetskommunikation och hur företag kan använda sig av detta för att förbättra marknadens hållbarhet genom marknadsutformning.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Focus group discussion manuscript

Introduktion (5 min)

Tusen tack till alla er att ni tagit er tid att delta. Jag ser fram emot att diskutera er syn på hållbarhet, marknadsutformning och kommunikation inom kläindustrin idag. Jag vill börja med att be er alla lägga era mobiler på ljudlöst och lägga dem bort från datorn för att inte störa nätet.

Dagens diskussion kommer ta ungefär 1-1,5 timme och ljudet kommer spelas in. Materialet kommer enbart användas för min forskning här vid ÅA/Handelshögskolan och ni kommer alla förbli anonyma. Datasamlingen är en del av min gradu inom marknadsutformning och hållbarhet. Är alla okej med att jag spelar in? Sen för att jag ska kunna höra alla efteråt när jag lyssnar på bandet så ber jag er försöka prata bara en person i taget.

Jag har sammanställt en portfolio som jag skickat till er innan det här mötet, och jag hoppas alla hunnit kasta ett öga på den. Portfolion representerar strumpföretaget Swedish Stockings, och det spelar ingen roll om ni hört om detta företag före idag eller inte. Dagens diskussion kräver ingen förhandskunskap förutom portfolion. Jag är intresserad av det här företaget och deras beteende utåt på marknaden, och vill ni höra era tankar kring detta.

Allas åsikter och tankar är lika viktiga och av lika intresse, så tveka inte att uttrycka vad ni tycker, även om ni inte är 100% säkra på att det är relevant eller att det hör hit. Det finns inga rätta eller felaktiga svar. Mitt mål är att föra en avslappnad och aktiv diskussion idag.

Några frågor så här långt?

Presentationer (5 min)

Till att börja med skulle jag vilja att ni presenterar er själva en åt gången. Vänligen säg ditt namn, ålder, studieämne eller arbete, samt om du någonsin träffat på Swedish Stockings i sociala medier eller hört talas om dem någon annanstans förut före idag.

- Försäkra att alla har kommit ihåg att presentera sig själva ordentligt och svarat på alla frågor.

Tema A: Miljömässig hållbarhet – viktigt vid inköpsbeslut eller inte? (20 min)

Vi kommer börja med att diskutera hållbarhet som en påverkande faktor vid köpbeslut.

1. Vilka aspekter påverkar dina beslut när du ska införskaffa en ny produkt tex ett klädesplagg?
2. Hur mycket påverkar produktens hållbarhet ditt beslut (mat, möbler)?
 - Gäller detta enbart vissa produkter eller alla?
3. Är du villig att betala mer för en hållbar produkt?
 - Hur mycket mer? Varför/varför inte? Vilken slags produkt?

Tema B: Konsumentuppfattning (25 min)

Vi kommer nu att gå in mer specifikt på strumpföretaget Swedish Stockings.

• Be alla ta upp portfolion som skickats ut tidigare under dagen och som de redan tittat igenom. Diskutera följande frågor:

1. Vad är ditt allmänna intryck av Swedish Stockings?
 - Positivt eller negativt? – Varför?
2. Vem riktar sig deras produkter till?
 - Den vanliga konsumenten/miljömedvetna/alla kvinnor?
3. Står de ut från andra företag inom samma bransch? Ex. Lindex, H&M, Woolford, Ikea?
4. Intresserar de dig? Skulle du vilja veta mera om dem? Om koncept eller tillverkningsprocessen?
5. Vad vill de åstadkomma med sin kommunikation?
 - Vad uttrycker de?
6. Vilka känslor väcker deras kommunikation med omvärlden hos dig?
 - Ex. This is us – this is them, eller Utbilda

Tema C: Marknadsutformning (market-shaping) – reaktiv eller proaktiv (20 min)

Dagens sista tema är marknadsutformning eller så kallad market-shaping. Det innebär att man påverkar och försöker förändra marknaden och fungerar som en slags ledare inom en viss industri eller bransch.

1. Är Swedish stockings marknadsutformare?

- Försöker de förändra marknaden? Ja/Nej – På vilket sätt?

- Försöker de få konkurrenter att göra lite mer som de själva? Försöker de förändra strumpindustrin?

- Tror du att de själva anser att de lyckas?

2. Kan Swedish Stockings faktiskt få andra företag att ändra sig och bli mer/helt hållbara?

3. Kan ett företag ta på sig rollen som en miljöaktivist? Är det vad Swedish Stockings gör?

- Vad innebär det att vara en aktivist?

4. Hur kommer framtiden inom marknaden se ut om andra företag efterapar produkten?

- Vad händer om alla gör samma sak?

- Hur utmärker sig företagen och håller sig konkurrenskraftiga om alla gör detsamma?

Avslutning

Fler tankar – idéer?

Det var min sista fråga, jag vill än en gång tacka er alla för att ni deltagit. Kommer hjälpa mig massor i min avhandling. Ha en fortsatt härlig kväll!

Appendix B - Swedish Stockings company interview with CEO Linn Frisinger

Introduktion (svara gärna kort)

- Kan du börja med att berätta om hur du själv ser på Swedish Stockings?
 - På vilken marknad verkar ni?
 - Kan du beskriva era viktigaste målgrupper?
 - Vem anser ni är era huvudkonkurrenter?

Hållbarhet

- Vad innebär hållbarhet för företaget?
- Vilka faktorer är viktigast för er framtida utveckling?

Kommunikation

- Berätta om principerna för er kommunikation med omvärlden - Har ni en kommunikationsstrategi?
 - Hur ser kommunikationsstrategierna ut för sociala medier?
Det verkar som om det skapats ett community mellan Swedish Stockings och era följare på instagram.
 - Håller du med om detta?
 - Är det något ni kontinuerligt utvecklar och funderar på?
 - Vilka slags personer består communityt av?
 - Hur tror ni era communitymedlemmars uppfattningar om er skiljer sig från deras uppfattningar om konkurrenterna?
- Ni postar inte enbart inlägg om era specifika produkter utan ni tar också upp företagsvärderingar/informerar om exempelvis Rachel Carson (the mother of the environmental movement), Australiens bushfires, tar upp hur ni skiljer er från konkurrenterna.
 - Vad vill ni kommunicera med dessa inlägg (det blir nästan lite miljöaktivistiskt)/ vad vill ni att de ska leda till?
 - Hur har dessa inlägg bemötts? Ex. This is us, this is them

Marknadsutformning/marknadsutveckling

Med marknadsutformning syftar jag alltså på hur en eller flera aktörer på en marknad kan förändra en marknad genom sitt beteende och sin kommunikation med omvärlden. Tex hur Apple gjorde om telefonbranschen när de introducerade Iphone.

- Hur vill ni påverka resten av marknaden ni är aktiva inom?
- Har ni sett en förändring bland konkurrenternas utbud eller konsumentbeteendet under åren?
 - Konsumentbeteendet, har det ändrats?
- Hur ser framtiden ut inom er marknad?
 - Åt vilket håll eller hur vill ni se att marknaden utvecklas? Tror du att företag kommer bli mer eller mindre hållbara?
- Vad händer om konkurrenterna utvecklar liknande produkter för jämförbara priser – hur håller ni konkurrenskraften? Det kanske är just innovationen som du nämnde tidigare?
 - Hur ofta har ni nya innovationer?

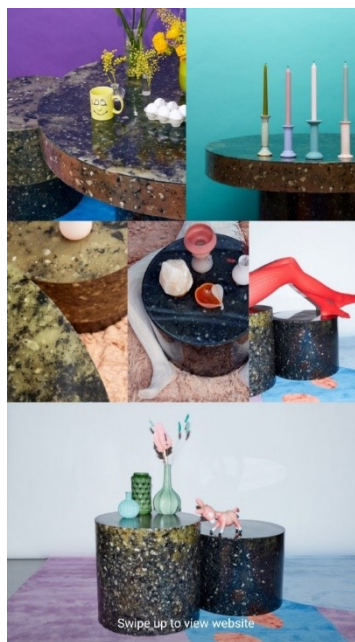
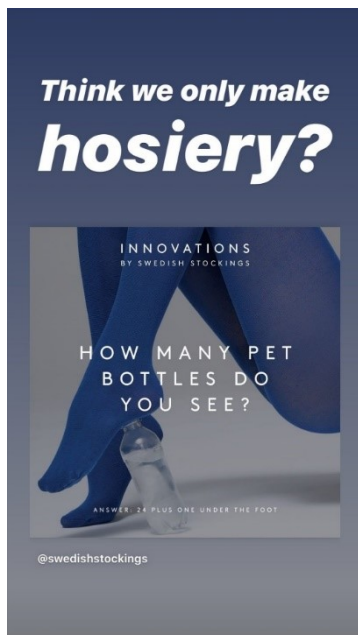
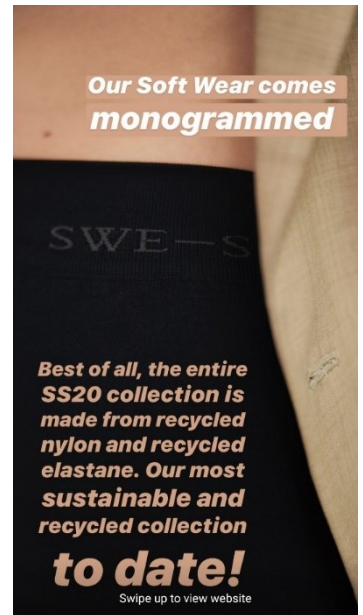
Avslutande frågor

- Är det något vi inte talat om ännu som är viktigt för mig att förstå angående företagets kommunikationsstrategi eller marknadsutformning?
- Kan ett företag vara helt hållbart?

Appendix C - Portfolio used during focus group discussions

Produkter

Swedish Stockings är enligt dem själva: “the only sustainable hosiery brand worldwide”. De producerar strumpbyxor, sockor, leggings, cykelshorts och bord. Alla produkter hittas på deras hemsida, de har inga fysiska butiker utan samarbetar med återförsäljare.



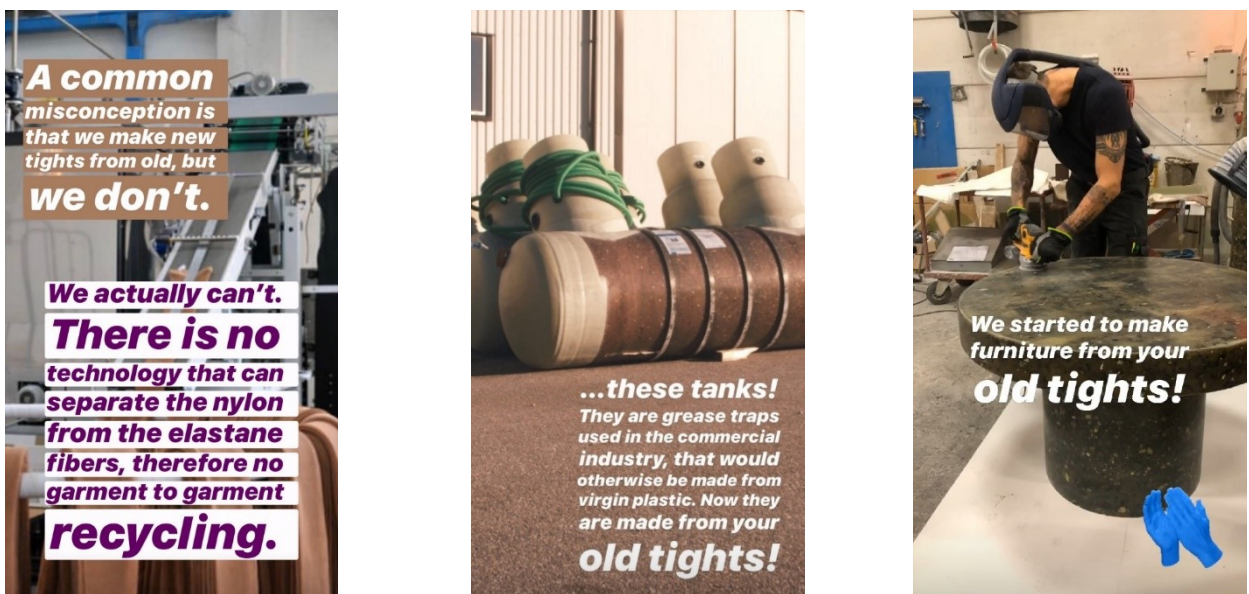
Produktionsprocessen

Vanliga strumpbyxor är gjorda av ren olja. Swedish Stockings undviker detta genom att skapa deras produkter av tex. återvunnet material, gamla plastflaskor och kaffesump.



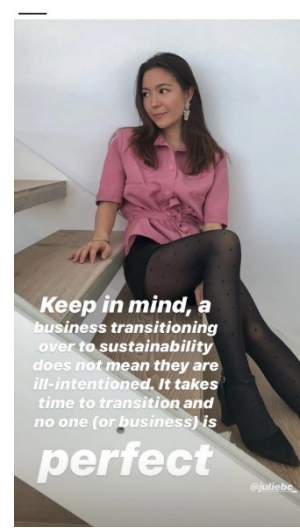
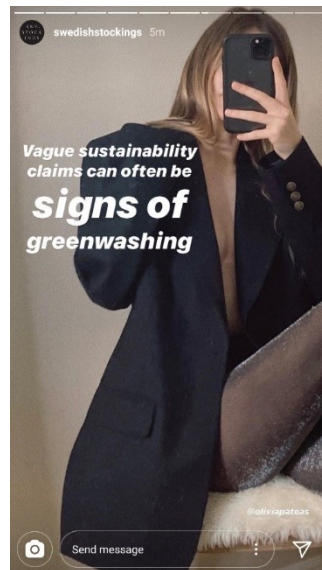
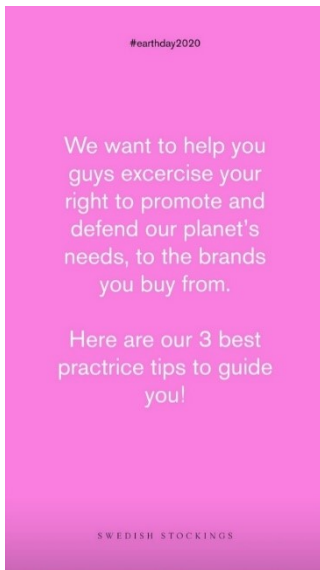
Återvinningsprocessen av gamla strumpbyxor

Konsumenter kan nu skicka in gamla, trasiga strumpbyxor oavsett märke till Swedish Stockings återvinning istället för att de hamnar på soptippen. De återvunna strumpbyxorna blandas med återvunnet glasfiber och blir till rör som annars skulle vara gjorda av plast, eller så blir de till bord.

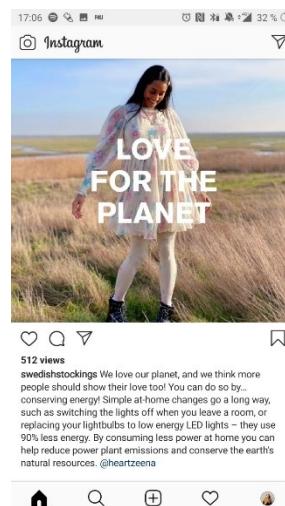
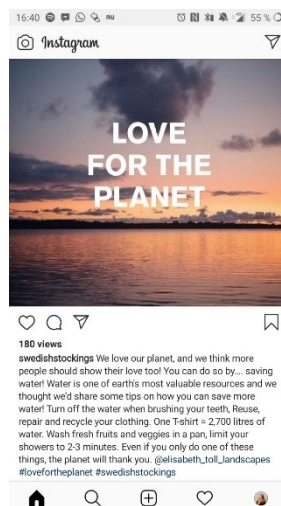


Utbilda

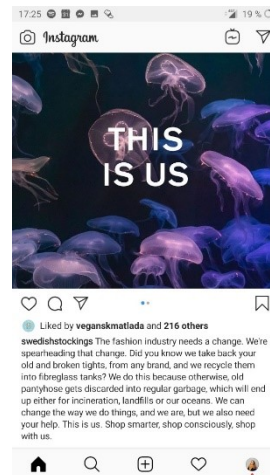
Swedish Stockings vill utbilda sina följare och påverka dem då de gör konsumentval.



Love for the planet – Kärlek för planeten



This is us – This is them



Samhällsproblem Bränderna i Australien



Stötta våra hjältar – Corona

