The three Pillars of Sustainability

Juxtaposing two Swedish fashion companies and their corporate sustainability concepts

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**Abstract**

The fashion system has increasingly been imbued by ecology and sustainability. While in the recent years a lot on approaches to more sustainable consumption behaviour from the consumers’ side have been suggested, this study focuses on the very practice of how sustainability - in an applied matter - is realised within a fashion company. In this dissertation, two Swedish fashion brands, Nudie Jeans co and Filippa K, are being investigated and analysed due to their brand philosophies and concepts dealing with sustainability. If Nudie Jeans co’s first all-organic denim collection launched in Autumn 2012 or Filippa K’s emphasis to the longevity of clothing by classic shapes and plain colours; both ideas foster a slow fashion movement. One of this thesis’ implications is the fact, that the term sustainability is much more far-reaching and expansive as commonly defined. Also timelessness and tradition could be sustainable, if still taking care of environment and society. Finally, concepts of sustainability which are commonly not highlighted shall be identified and fill the yet existing gap.

**Keywords**

Sustainability, brand values, ecology, corporate responsibility, slow fashion, Swedish fashion
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Sustainability is more a journey than a destination, but it still pays to know where you are on the path. Esty (2009: 179)
1. Introduction

In her book *Clean Things* (2009), Kirsten Brodde, a German journalist now active for Greenpeace International as a Senior Campaigner in the Detox Initiative and hence a “known watchdog for consumers issues”, describes 15 rules on how consumers can start their green revolution in their wardrobes.\(^1\) The first three ones are: “Buy classics”, “rely on quality” and “change to bio-cotton” and later on it is suggested not to dump everything as well as returning clothes (2009: 215ff.). According to Brodde’s approach, everybody is able to become a sustainable fashion consumer, no matter how big one’s wallet is.

In the last decade, a lot has been written on ecological fashion or fashion and sustainability, but only since around two years, fashion disposal, re-/up-/down-cycling and reusing has been of greater interest within the academic discussion. Approaches from design, textile technology, consumption, empowered consumerism and production, but also marketing, have been stances dealing with issues of green/ecological, sustainable or fair and ethical fashion (Brown 2008; Fletcher 2008; Gwilt and Rissanen 2011; Clark 2008; Fashion Theory Vol. 12, 4). An evidence for the subject’s explosiveness and weight is also the fact, that the *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* launched a whole issue on sustainable fashion in 2012 (Volume 16, 2012). Often, these questions have been initiated and driven forward by the implementation and establishment of a corporate responsibility (CR) department, taking care of and particularly addressing corporate issues of sustainable care for nature and environment. Despite the global hype of CR, within fashion studies it has not got into the focal point of academic research yet.

According to the Cambridge’s dictionary, the word *sustainable* means: “able to continue over a period of time” or “causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time”.\(^2\) My stance towards a take-up of the known and widespread term sustainability shall fill the existing gap in academia, which until now has mostly referred to a common and narrow interpretation of sustainability.

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\(^1\) Available at: http://www.nordicfashionassociation.com/40511/Speakers [accessed 2013-02-14].

\(^2\) Available at: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/sustainable?q=sustainable [accessed 2012-11-21].
The dissertation at hand wants to contribute to an increasing awareness of sustainability within the company landscape and it wants to investigate how an overall concept of sustainability is constituted (by such as co-operations with third parties, improved quality or reuse projects) and finally which opportunities are opened and which perils have to be expected.

1.1 Aims and research question

Thus, the concrete aim of this research is firstly to analyse and reflect upon sustainability in the fashion industry based on a case study of two companies, the Gothenburg based Nudie Jeans co and Stockholm based Filippa K.

Secondly, with the investigation at hand, my dissertation aims to develop a broader discussion of different concepts of sustainability within the fashion system. This is the overarching goal of this study and will be conducted by means of the two Swedish fashion brands. By juxtaposing the two brands, Nudie Jeans co and Filippa K, I want to research similarities and differences between several different concepts of sustainability in the fashion business. It is going to be juxtaposition since I regard the two brands as enough different and therefore I do not want to simply compare them. Their similarities will serve to build a theory where I synchronise both differences and similarities. Thus, my research questions on each brand are:

- What are the brand’s philosophy and values and how do these subjects affect the brand’s sustainable profile?
- What are the concepts promoting sustainability, and which departments of the company are involved?

Sub-questions are:

- How do are these concepts differ?
- What is their role and how do different departments in one company use and apply the concepts?

At this point I want to outline the difference between value and concept. In this thesis, value means the brand immanent and corporately aware term of reference to which is referred and which is central to form a brand ethos and/or philosophy. In contrast, by concept I mean rather an applied version of these values, not only within the understanding of the brand but later on also within the scope of the fashion studies.

Thus, thirdly, I want to integrate my research into a wider frame of disciplines and thereby illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of fashion studies as well as sustainable concepts. By the same token, I wish to stimulate to a general awareness of different shapes of sustainability in everyday life of society nowadays. This, however, is rather an idealistic aim.
but somehow central to the inspiration of this work. Therefore, I have reason to develop this discussion.

To be able to start the discussion on a broadly used term, we have to pose the question: How is sustainability actually defined? Sue Thomas writes:

*Sustainability* is not environmentalism by another name because it is broader in scope and profoundly inclusive. (…) While the concept of a “sustainable fashion industry” could potentially refer to perpetuating the current industry with its outcomes and principle foci on profit, an environmental reading focused on corporate social responsibility would refer to an industry that sustains the environment without depletion. A more contemporaneous interpretation of *sustainability* refers to both sustaining and contributing more than has been used. (2008: 536)

Three points need to be highlighted within this quote. Firstly, that the sustainability approach is profoundly inclusive, much more than the term environmentalism ever can embrace. Secondly, that sustainability in the fashion industry is related to profitability. And thirdly, that it means sustaining and contributing the nature and what has been used of it. My thesis concentrates on how inclusively Filippa K and Nudie Jeans co handle sustainability issues, two brands communicating their value and purpose, and how they try to fight the fast fashion flow by promoting a good product.

### 1.2 Methodological considerations

The study at hand is achieved through a juxtaposing analysis of two fashion companies. It targets at a discussion of the different concepts, which are used within the business to implement sustainability. Even though these concepts might overlap as well as differ, it shall not be a comparative study. Rather, I wish to synchronise the findings and by this show different perspectives to explicitly expand the realm of the term and complete the interpretation of it by the variation of the concepts found. Consequently, I do not aim to judge or evaluate the brands performance. The goal is to use and profit from the diversity of the occurred concepts to gain more comprehension in how broad, respectively narrow, these ideas are scattered. To totally distance myself from comparative study might not be feasible either, since talking about two different brands will also bring about some comparative moments. Regarding the fact that CR embraces every effort of a company to become more sustainable and decrease any sort of ecological footprint, it can also be considered of impact for the brand identity (cf. Nudie Jeans 2011; resp. Filippa K 2011).³

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³ Ecological footprint can be defined by the human demand on the eco-system’s regeneration capacity (Vackár 2012).
1.2.1 Material and method

My materials consist of interviews with seven employees at the head offices in Gothenburg and Stockholm. Furthermore I use the corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports. Also, paper documents such as emails of correspondence or a certificate such as the Miljödiplom of Gothenburg city council are used. Regarding Nudie Jeans co, their brand own newspapers called The Nudie Jeans Post (autumn 2012 and winter 2013) play a central role. An important and central text is also the report of the UK based organisation Waste and Resources Action programme (Wrap) on how to value our clothes (2012). Finally, the concept sheet basing on the performance and all information provided on the websites is deployed within the inter-view.

My first case is the Swedish denim brand Nudie Jeans co, rooted in a philosophy of social, sustainable and ecological concerns and long lasting utilisation due to the fact of primarily selling jeans (The Nudie Jeans Post 2012: 16). Filippa K, a Swedish fashion brand with its main focus on classic shapes and timeless colours with a brand philosophy guided by and emphasising longevity of a fashion garment by virtue of style, simplicity and quality serves as the other study object (Filippa K 2011). It might be a provoking approach, to juxtapose two fairly different brands, one obviously “ecological” whereas the other communicating a rather simplistic fashion of sustainable timelessness. Precisely this friction is the peg on which this project is hung on.

First and foremost, I aim at identifying and mind-mapping all concepts within the firm (and particularly their profiling, ideological carcass and firm philosophy) dealing with and feeding into the wider discourse around issues of sustainability. To start with, I viewed the website of each brand, where I had a look at everything which I assumed to have an impact on how sustainability matters are dealt with within the company. Further, I developed my studies in direction of the concepts, which I have identified, to interrogate them, their roles within the firm structure and their contribution to the brand’s sustainability profile in a deeper manner. I assembled these concepts and constructed two concept sheets, which would be used in the interviews as tool of interrogation.

After analysing and mapping the websites, which resulted in the construction of the concept sheet, the interviews were conducted in a three-weeks research phase. Seven in all, three from Nudie Jeans and four of Filippa K, were asked questions on their perception of sustainability, in society, the business and personally. I assembled the interviewees among the
departments I contacted even though the classification of departments and tasks varies in-house. The complete questionnaire is attached in the appendices.

The interviews were open and semi-structured. This means that a guideline had been written, which gives a structure and order of the questions asked, but if an aspect seemed interesting the order was changed or some questions even be skipped. In fact, the interviewees often brought up relevant topics themselves, which is an indicator for the topic being reflected before. After having asked the questions on the brand’s core values, the interviewees were presented the concept sheets, which showed the mapping of the concepts, which slightly differed between the two brands (attached in the appendices). Both concept sheets contained the concepts “long lasting fashion”, “selling respectable quality”, “taking responsibility for humans and environment” and also “opening up an opportunity to prolong a garment’s lifetime” is mentioned. Nudie Jeans co’s concepts include as well the “all-organic production” and the “political commitment”, whereas Filippa K’s concept sheet contains the concept of “being simple”. They were asked to comment and modify the concept sheet according to their own reflection.

The interviewees were chosen due to their belonging to different departments so that I could identify if stances and attitudes are similar or differ within the departments. At Filippa K, I interviewed the supply chain manager, Sten Lundén, who is responsible for the whole production process, including production and logistics. I also interviewed Sarah Isaksson, a design assistant. Another partner was Christina Muljadi, the sourcing manager and in charge of sourcing the fabric and choosing “better” alternatives as well as quality management. Elin Larsson, the CR manager was also interviewed. At Nudie Jeans co, I conducted an interview with the person responsible for CR who is Sandya Lang. Then, I interrogated Peter Frank, the production manager who is organising the production process in general and together with Lang responsible for suppliers and the relationship with them. Last but not least, Finn Stenberg was interviewed about logistics and transportation.

The head office framed the research area and where the analysed discourse is situated in (Jones 2012: 3). For this reason, I contemplated to interview the marketing responsible person to gain more insight into the actual ideas of their profiling and how philosophy and central values are mediated by corporate identity and behaviour as well as the department for PR to be able to understand endeavours communicating the central brand values as well as the efforts of maintaining this particular reputation (which easily can be determined concerning Nudie Jeans and Filippa K). This was not possible since the marketing/PR departments were
too busy at that time. As I found out during the field phase, this has no major effect on the subject at hand. The missing perspective of the marketing departments merely shifts the focus from a diverse interrogation of all departments to the very creation of the product. The production department serves to inquire values and the brand philosophy in terms of analysing projects, which prolong a lifetime of a garment. And last but not least the Corporate Responsibility manager is interviewed to explore what has particularly and substantially been done over the last years as well as what can be improved in future.

The research project at hand is an ethnographic case study, built around the material and completed with insights and thoughts from the observational participation throughout my part-time internship at Filippa K in spring 2013. Since this topic is approached in an open nature, it will be an explorative and hermeneutical research project (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2010). By this means, my research aims at “gaining the ‘truth of a wider generality” (ibid.: 95). An important focus is the dialectic between the part and the whole, re-contextualising a certain meaning within its greater surroundings and finally formulating a context around the particular text (ibid.: 99f.). The relationship of the part and the whole in this particular case can be considered in different ways: The sustainability concepts are part of the greater whole which is the firm, but also of the greater whole of a general sustainability term, embracing the whole society. In the same token, the firm is part of a wider fashion industry, and the ideas and arguments discussed are part of a comprehensive discourse within the academic field. The re-contextualising process, thus, will be perceptible throughout the whole thesis. Hence, the brands and their key concepts will be discussed while framing and (re-)rooting them in wider discussion of the handling of sustainability. Conclusively, the thesis integrates and combines empirical research data with a theoretical discussion.

Liisa Malkki, professor of anthropology, describes the ethnographic process as “critical awareness of the invisible social fact” (2007: 177). An interesting notion is the stance towards “objects of knowledge” or subject of research not to be “out there”, or like Malkki describes them as objets trouvés (ibid.: 171). The process is not about searching “things”, which are waiting to be discovered, but rather the researcher’s active construction of setting information in a particular frame of questions and theories and by this integrate findings of a greater text (ibid.). The metaphor of improvising jazz has a lot in common with conducting ethnographic research (ibid.: 183). Like the musical act of improvisation, ethnography leans on “old bits” but adapting them to the very real time of fieldwork, being able to be sensitive to and responsive on what is dealt with in an explorative fashion. With this open and reflexive stance to-
wards my material but also theory, I wish to be lead into sideways and meandering flows, which would not have been detected while rigidly searching for the “right” answer. My choice of method and material shall guide me; it will not be me trying to guide the material.

1.2.2 Delimitations

A personal fact affecting this matter is my internship at the Filippa K head quarter during spring 2013. Since I will not be able to keep my researcher’s objectivity absolutely uncoloured as I am involved in Filippa K’s work but also as a agent of the sustainability idea as well as consumer of the fashion system I want to incorporate the special shape of my view. I consider my self as “outside” the Filippa K business, which makes me seeing things from another angle. However, having the opportunity to see inside, this leads me to gain more “inside” insight, which will help to complete the thesis from a unique position of observation.

Another delimitation is the fact that I did not conduct any investigation on consumers. Even though the brand’s performance is immediately targeted at an audience, I decided to only focus on the companies’ posture within the scope of this work. Regarding discourse analysis, it is of importance to understand the effect of the discourses on the subject: The subjects are decentralised and formed as an audience in consequence of the discourse’s ideology.

Also, I want to bring out that I am aware that National identity concerns might play a role in the discussion at hand. This, however, was not regarded in the scope of this work since it did not come out this clearly in the interviews.

1.3 Theoretical perspectives

The theoretical approaches I am going to introduce now function as frame and will affect the analysis from a stance of inspirational nature. The idea of an overall fashion system working globally, sustainability as a modern and current key concept, brand identity as a crucial cornerstone to the performance and advancement of a corporation but also as a key concept building reputation around the product will lay the foundation for the analysis.

1.3.1 The fashion system by Kawamura

The conception “fashion system” embraces the whole fashion industry, where brands are central players and stakeholders of any kind interact and communicate among each other but also with the brands. This constructs a relational network of contacts, which are in this case of
study foremost concerned with the supply and branding of the product. This is my interpretation of the fashion system. To gain an overall view over the system of fashion, I want to briefly introduce Yuniya Kawamura’s *Fashion-ology* (2005). Since she studies the institutionalised system of fashion from a micro as well as a macro perspective, the study is widely scheduled and of inclusive nature. This might appear as superficial and too inclusive, but still I want to mention a few points of interest for the examination at hand.

The sociologist Yuniya Kawamura defines fashion as a “system of institutions, organizations, groups, producers, events and practices, all of which contribute to the making of fashion, which is different from dress or clothing”, a system which is divided in subsystems (2005: 43ff.). She develops this argument by explaining how clothing is being converted, by the fashion system, to value bearing fashion, but manifested in the physical appearance of a garment (Kawamura 2004: 1 quoted in Kawamura 2005: 44). Further, she points out, that the whole system operates not only to reproduce clothing but to produce “stylistic innovations that satisfy the image of fashion” (ibid.: 45). Kawamura’s conception of fashion as a system provides a solid background for a study like this. The central entity in this study is the fashion company, located as a “mediator” between production and consumption and regulating the flows. The understanding of the relation between the whole (the system) and the part (the entity) is thus a prerequisite. The description of the current fashion system seems plausible, yet I criticise Kawamura’s too general and vague approach to the mechanisms within the system.

I disagree with her assumption of the fashion system still being located and bound to geographical areas. Kawamura has a special interest in national fashion systems and even if this might have had importance for historical explanations of the rise of nowadays fashion system, it seems implausible to exemplify the inclusiveness of fashion nowadays on the system’s nationality. There is definitely a Swedish fashion system. Nonetheless, in times of geographically dispersed production chains, globally diffused national fashion identities and the overlapping of systems and subsystems due to the interdisciplinary texture of the fashion system, as Kawamura describes it, I argue, that a “simple” and centralised fashion system, framed as a network around a capital city, does no justice to the complexity of the 21st century fashion world. Conclusively, I will use Kawamura’s fashion system idea to explain today’s industrial dispersivity.
1.3.2 Sustainability and Legitimacy

Sustainability is not only a philosophy of environmentalism and dealt with in CSR the company’s department. Much more comprehends also marketing ethics and brand ethos, which, if applied successfully, can lead to business success and profitability. Therefore, I will introduce texts opening up the horizon of a simple environmental understanding of sustainability towards a more institutional way of branding and establishing legitimacy by these means.

A non-fashion studies text, which will be central to the analysis of where the brands concerning the sustainability issues are standing, what the brand’s definition of sustainability is and how this is connected with the brand values and philosophy, is Daniel Esty’s compilation of theoretical approach and practical and recommended solutions *Green to Gold* (2009). Esty, Professor for Environmental Law and Policy at Yale University and former Obama Environmental adviser, makes the main point that nowadays companies only stay profitable and marketable if they see the world through a new, environmental lens, which entails the so-called “eco-advantage” (2009: 7ff.). He makes clear: “[A]n environmental lens is not just a nice strategy or tool to feel good digression from the real work of a company. It’s an essential element [remarks J.N.] of business strategy in the modern world” (ibid.: 3). In doing so, their sustainability becomes the cultivation management of a brand by which they not only protect the planet and its resources but also their own companies (ibid.: 3f.). Esty writes: “Environmental leaders see their businesses through an environmental lens, finding opportunities to cut costs, reduce risk, drive revenues, and enhance intangible value. They build deeper connections with customers, employees, and other stakeholders. Their strategies reveal a new kind of sustained competitive advantage that we call Eco-Advantage” (2009: 14). This includes the design of innovative and eco-friendly products, pushing the suppliers to become more ecological, collecting data to measure footprint(s), partnering with NGOs to stay up to date, building an Eco-Advantage culture permeating the whole company and all employees (ibid.: 21).

While other texts, which will be used are of theoretical and critical nature, Esty’s approach is of practical proposal; his tone of advice and counsel goes along with his rhetoric and clearly proposed solutions for the market. This style of writing might derive of his marketing background. Likewise, I will adopt this tone of solutions and tie on to these proposals in order to practically link findings with recommendations and advices and thus illustrating possible sustainable solutions.

David E. Hawkins, with expertise in exploiting relationship management and strategy development, locates CSR clearly in the realm of sustainability but pinpoints the complexity
of it (2006: 2ff.). This approach from management studies, describes interprets CSR as customer loyalty, product recognition, product reputation, stakeholder confidence as well as corporate values as crucial to the sustainable forming of the brand (2006: 133). Another interesting and this time fashion studies article has been written by Anika Kozlowski, Michal Bardecki and Cory Searcy, all working in environmental applied science and management or sustainable development, where the corporate’s side of social responsibility with a lifecycle and stakeholder approach is combined (2012). The increasingly important inclusion of stakeholders will appear as essential solution for sustainability issues in the analysis. These perspectives illustrate that CSR is not only the institutionalised thought of environmentalism. Far more, it deals with sustainability questions of all kind and incorporates communication towards production as well as consumption. This split relation is further discussed in detail in my last research called “...And who sewed your clothes? Alienation in the time of division of labour – A Marxist analysis on two contemporary Swedish fashion brands” (2012). In this research I focused on the impact CSR programs have on the alienated supply chain. There is definitely an impact, which can be identified and in conclusion, it can be said, that CSR revive lost communicational relations and bring the production side closer to the consumer’s again. CSR, as a result, affects the imbalance between producers and consumers and establishes strategies to counteract this fact (Nystler 2012).

The recently published research report by the Gothenburg based researchers Niklas Egels-Zandén and Ola Bergström on sustainable supply chains in the Swedish fashion system (Hållbara leverantörsled, 2013) put the focus on the implementation of Code of Conducts in factories in China and Indonesia. Finally, they propose solutions for how Sweden based companies can successfully tracing their suppliers’ chains. Hence, they list practical recommendations for firms. In order to get insight in how CSR departments are able to sustainably implement control on Codes of Conducts and suppliers’ behaviour, I will bring in this text and its perspective.

With all these questions goes the striving for brand legitimacy. I do not want to open the scope of this realm too much for a discussion of institutional and organizational theory, but since this phenomenon of striving for legitimacy by means of performing according to “public endorsement” becomes a central factor of the company’s conduct, I want to give some introduction into these matters. Mark Suchman, professor in sociology and law, defines legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and
definitions” (1995: 574). Not only CSR or Code of Conduct systems but also eco-labels help to answer on social norms, values, beliefs and definition. Also, this is closely connected to the phenomenon of active consumption today. Indeed and according to William R. Scott, sociologist in institutional theory, organizations will not survive if they are not legitimised by social acceptability and credibility (2001: 59). A further and crucial aspect, which has to be considered, is the instance from which legitimacy confers. David L. Deephouse, professor in strategic management and organisations, presents two principles: regulatory and public endorsement (1996). Public authorities such as the regulation of the markets, the stock market, standard setters and the state confer regulatory endorsement (Walgenbach and Meyer 2008: 66). Since regulators inhabit the authority position within the relation to the organization in need of legitimacy, the organization has to adapt to instructions, regulations and structures given by the regulator (Deephouse 1996: 1025). In my study, regulators will be the brand, the state and third companies. Public endorsement, however, is granted by instances such as media, the general public and social movements (Walgenbach and Meyer 2008: 66). In the case at hand, public endorsed legitimacy is foremost accomplished through the active customers. These instances inhabit the power to establish and maintain acceptability (Deephouse 1996: 1025).

1.3.3 Brand identity and discourse

Brand identity in the current context means the brand values, the consumer’s response and the conception of sustainability. A brand’s identity is shaped by means of relations between stakeholders and their communications, such as customers or employees for example. However, also ethos, brand ethics and the ethical dimension of a brand philosophy, the power of these ideas and the tension between product and branding, and finally also the business struggle between maintaining all these factors and still pursuing profitability constitute the discourse around brand identity. Hence, I will introduce texts dealing with these topics.

Mark Tungate’s book Fashion brands: branding from Armani to Zara (2005) describes the various sides of a fashion enterprise: from the brand’s image and identity building of telling a story over the designers and models to celebrities and fashion magazines and examines issues such as fashion, clothing, style or virtuality. Tungate’s background as a journalist helps him to uncover matters and contributes bluntly from a non-fashion studies stance. He high-

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4 In the interviews it was referred to this principle as the „intelligent consumer“. However, I prefer the term „active consumer“ since the fact of becoming involved in the fashion discourse on sustainability has nothing to do with intelligence but rather with active engagement.
lights aspects from a consumer’s perspective while he questions the brand’s perception of its taken-for-granted idea of brand ethos and ethics. By this, Tungate shifts the focus towards active consumerism, which will be a central concept in this work.

Celia Lury, director of the newly established Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies in London, highlights in her book *Consumer Culture* (2011) fashion branding as a complex mediation between supply and demand. While the product is the thing produced in the factory and the brand is bought of the consumer, branding happens between and is executed by the company (2011: 137). In her terms, branding nowadays is shaped by a multilevel existence of the brand, which “cannot be reduced to advertising or brand image – or even its cultural content – alone” (ibid.: 151). These “multiple levels of existence” will be returning in the analysis also by means of the different discourses and stakeholder dialogues the brands are part of. The most interesting point Lury is coming up with, is the notion of the brand as a media object framing communication between producers and consumers (ibid.: 152). Central is again the imbalance of the relation between producers and consumers: “However, although these exchanges are affective, dynamic and two-way, they are not direct, symmetrical or reversible. The interface of the brand connects the producer and [remarks by the author] consumer and removes or separates them from each other” (ibid.: 152f.). The consumers’ platform, hence, can never be left outside a brand analysis as I am conducting. To become even clearer, I want to point at the stakeholders who are involved. Even though the split up communication between producers and consumers depicts the globalised supply chain and the hard lines of the communication’s accomplishment, there are several stakeholders included. From farmers to manufacturers to agents (which assign these to producers and suppliers), over the company and its cooperation partners to the business customers and end-consumers, the brand is mediated through the object. Meyers, quoted in Lury, writes:

*Over the past 100 or so years, the term ‘brand’ has undergone radical evolution from commodity, to product, to experience, to relationship, to this book’s current usage – the interdependent living system of stakeholders. It’s our view that a brand, rather than being an object of exchange, can be viewed as the sum total of relationships among stakeholders, or the medium through which stakeholders interact and exchange with each other. This dynamic is true for all stakeholders, not just for the stakeholder class we call “consumers”. (2011: 159 [2003: 23])*

According to this definition of branding, communicational relations form the central matter and shift its structure from the linear exchange to the interconnected network. As a result, the subject, here the brand identity but later also the brand immanent conception of sustainability, is shaped by the discourse on it (Jørgensen and Philips 2000: 21). Identities, according to Jones, too, are always built in relation (2012: 19). These relationships central for the process
are between stakeholders such as suppliers, employees, consumers as well as the wider public. The interactions along the supply chain, hence, define the companies’ identities.

Since I look at utterances on the websites and of employees, for my study, discourse analysis designates the relation between sustainability, identity, corporate values and the brand. As employees (my interviewees) are considered and interpreted as another stakeholder group, they are probably the most influential players in the constitution of a brand and a direct medium of the brand identity (Esty 2009: 90f.). It has to be considered, that even though due to the fact that interviewees were interviewed as employees of one of the brands they are influenced by corporate behaviour (saying the “right” thing). Yet, they still might have brought in their own personal perceptions, reflections and ideas, since these topics are also borne by personality and interest of the employees. The passion about the brand, sustainability or a certain realm can be motivated personally but also as a matter of corporate loyalty. No matter which motivation this excitement may have, Arnold emphasises that it is human to easier believe passionate people with a vision than corporate giants without a face (2009: 11).

The discussion of the material will show, how the formation of sustainability is discursively constituted. However, I will not use discourse analysis as a major method but rather as a tool to handle the interwoven nature and different nexuses of the topics I will review. The construction of the brand is also a central matter of analysis.

Additionally, I will use Nathaniel Dafydd Beard’s article “The Branding of Ethical Fashion and the Consumer: A Luxury Niche or Mass-market Reality?”, published in Fashion Theory (2008). Dafydd Beard, an expert in fashion and the city from Royal College of Art, interestingly describes the struggle between possibility and constraint of ethical branding, not only from the firms’ stance but also from the consumer’s perception. Relating to current developments, he states:

In each of these scenarios, all fashion brands have to balance the need of growing and sustaining a healthy business, alongside accurately promoting their ecofashion [sic!] products, encouraging consumers to alter their shopping habits. At the same time, they must also be careful not to overemphasize any politicized ethical message at the expense of alienating their customers, since nobody likes to be dictated to, or feel they must make a decision purely because it appears to be the “right” action to take. (Dafydd Beard 2008: 452)

The company’s struggle between keeping up the business profitability but following it on sustainable ways and simultaneously being concern with consumer behaviour is summarised in his work and will be a central aspect arising again and again within this research.

A further management studies book is Chris Arnold’s Ethical marketing and the new consumer (2009). Arnold, with a background in journalism and business, dedicates a whole chapter to fast fashion, even though his text addresses ethical and green marketing in general.
Apart from his almost colloquial way of writing, he recommends to corporations to steadily be aware of the business ethos and its identity in a straightforward manner. He, too, writes in a practical proposal way, highlighting the “The Power of Brand Ethos” and other subjects related to brand identity (ibid.: 7ff.). He stresses the centrality of the ethos of a brand, permeating a firm’s identity and finally defining it: “A brand isn’t defined by its logo but by what it does. What it does is defined by its ethos, which gives it the why. It really is that simple” (ibid.: 8). Again and again, he discusses brand ethos, the ethical dimension of branding and the relation between firm behaviour and marketing. All these ideas will reappear in the analysis part as constituents of the brands’ sustainability concepts and profiles. Therefore, Arnold covers another interesting viewpoint I want to apply.

1.4 Previous research

While the theoretical approaches rather give some overall realm where I will locate my studies, within fashion studies but also interdisciplinary, the previous research section will zoom in on sustainability key concepts, which will be applied in the analysis. The purpose of the chosen texts is to introduce possible impressions and/or perceptions of what sustainability signifies in academia and research. In addition, I want to clarify my inspiration for my analysis and how I investigated the materials.

1.4.1 State of the arts in the Fashion Studies – some milestones

Within the last five years, a lot has been published within the field of the fashion studies discussing fashion from a sustainability and ecology approach. In her book, Eco Fashion (2008), Sass Brown, professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, introduces fashion brands dealing with several main concept groups of being ecological: fair trade, ecological and slow design, recycle, reuse and redesign or the initiatives by designers and corporations (2008: 5). Her aim is it to illustrate the eco fashion approach from a creational and design centred stance. She discusses several main concepts groups and assigns brand names to these concept groups. The momentum of creating ecological fashion prevails in this text and is especially for Filippa K’s definition and sustainability profile of significance. Brown’s clear and distinct definition functions as the main interpretation of sustainability:

Sustainability is the conservation of life through ecological balance – human, animal, vegetable and planetary. A self-sustaining system is a system that does not take more from the environment than it gives back; it does not deplete resources, but sustains itself. […] So what is sustainable design? In clothing, it means sourcing and production that do not pollute through the process of manufacture and do not deplete non-renewable resources, whether those are
planetary or human. It refers to clothing that can be absorbed back into the environment when it has reached the end of its life. (Brown 2008: 9)

Brown’s main focus lies on the ecological balance between the product and its surroundings, including the natural, human and corporate environment. In my opinion, sustainability should embrace thorough handling of resources and raw materials as well as discussing how to deal with consumption and the after-life of clothing. Thus, I consider this definition as adequate.

Another book with emphasis on design and textiles is *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles*” (2008) by Kate Fletcher, an independent consultant within the sustainable fashion arena. Compared to Brown, she covers a much more technical and factual stance on the sustainability discussion, both from a company’s but also consumer’s standpoint. Hence, her definitions and perspectives will be applied in the analysis.

The third important and basic work is a compilation edited by Alison Gwilt and Timo Rissanen (2011), both scholars with expertise in fashion and design connected to sustainability concerns, called *Shaping Sustainable Fashion: Changing the Way We Make and Use Clothes*. Compared to other literature, she focuses additionally on fashion consumption and use which will also be central points of discussion while getting together the key and sub concepts of the brands. The latter two texts take position in the material debate, delineate clear definitions and come up with new and interesting concepts, such as customization of clothing or developing a personal style, which will be employed and linked to the identified concepts.

Sue Thomas, a British fashion scholar with main focus on fashion design and social justice, tries to grasp all terms used in the area of sustainable fashion. According to her, sustainability should be used as a concept with broad scope and inclusive function (2008: 535). Whereas CSR focuses on matters of sustaining the environment without depletion, sustainability “refers to both sustaining and [remark: S.T.] contributing more than has been used” (ibid.: 536). Fletcher points out, that “[a]fter all, the challenge of sustainability – that is, of integrating human well-being and natural integrity – is such that we can’t go on as before. Business as usual or, more to the point, fashion as usual, is not an option” (2008: xii).

1.4.2 Slow fashion: A question of style

One of my concepts in the analysis is slow fashion. Slow fashion is constructed as a counter principle of fast fashion. Louise Morgan and Grete Birtwistle, doing research in division of fashion, marketing and retailing, investigated the disposal habits of young British fashion consumers and came to the conclusion, that an unawareness of fashion recycling exists and that fashion garments lose intrinsic value, which ends in a vast amount of disposal (2009:
In their understanding, fast fashion contains high impulse fashion purchase, short time cycles of about two weeks from design to store and the “chap chic” which allures foremost teens and early tweens (ibid.: 190f.). Hence, fast fashion is affected by the matter of demographical and lower socio-economical group trend: the younger the girls the smaller the investment for fashion, conclusively the cheaper the garments which means less interest to keep them for long (ibid.). The counter trend, thus, is slow fashion. If we simply turn the arguments of fast fashion, slow fashion is seasonally unbound, produced of high quality material and costs more. Due to this, the problem of the slow fashion might turn into a socio-economic discussion instead. Slow fashion can only afford who has the financial capacity. While this forebodes the luxury connotation I will discuss later in the analysis, slow fashion does not have to address a certain and wealthier target group. However, it certainly points at an audience, which is willing to pay for good quality, fashionable styles and timeless designs. This applies also to the consumer groups of Filippa K and Nudie Jeans co.

At the same time, the awareness of lost or fragmented (business-) relationships, split up and enormously dispersed production and supply chains and increasing loss of control from the company’s side as well as from the consumer’s, foster the questioning of the established apparel industry and its models. Hazel Clark, the dean of Parsons the New School for Design in New York, draws the bow from the slow food movement to slow fashion, thus stressing in her article “SLOW + FASHION – an oxymoron – or a Promise for the Future…?” (2008) the importance of local production knowhow and techniques (mentioning knitting skills). A further crucial concept, which is developed by her, is “sustainable sensoriality” (a concept originally by Giulio Ceppi, 2008: 440). Sustainable sensoriality stands for items such as the famous Hermes Kelly bag, economical as well as emotional investments, which remain fashionable (ibid.: 440f.). She argues that investment in a product retards its disposal due to the attraction it inhabits (ibid.). By the same token, the emotional investment, in fact an emotional subject-object relationship between the item and the owner, is being developed and of rather sustainable consistency compared to fast fashion “relationships” (ibid.). I will come back to the idea of sensorial products later on in the section for ethical marketing, but want to point out, that hand crafted high street products often stand for better quality and longevity. Kirsi Niinimäki and Lotta Hassi, connecting design and technology in their research, call this occurrence “empathetic design” and mention it in connection the tailor-made suit with its unique quality-durability-price connection (2011: 1879f.). On that account, slow fashion already exists as a matter of financial investment instead of a manner of production and discloses luxury
related drafts. The attribute high quality garments entail is the fact that they remain in a good shape and can be resold in second hand or vintage stores (Fletcher 2008: 98). High quality retards the disposal of a garment. Both brands sell a product designed for long living or offer the possibility to sell and buy second-hand garments of their label. I see the urge to relate the concepts to slow fashion as well as sustainable sensoriality or empathetic design.

1.4.3 Expanding lifecycles: reuse, reduce, recycle

To be able to work counter disposal of clothing, one has to know their lifecycles and –times. These thoughts are conducted by the brands as well. In order to prolong a garment’s in-use-time, the brand has to become active and incorporate rules of how to handle such questions. In my analysis, I will relate to discussed concepts, which I call the r-concepts, such as reduce, reuse, repair and recycle and how they are integrated (Fletcher 2008: 99). Therefore, I see need in introducing to background information and how these terms are defined by different authors in fashion studies. The earlier mentioned Wrap report will also be discussed in relation to the different terms. As a report deriving from research and giving practical tips for the industry, “Valuing our clothes” (2012) describes consumption patterns of nowadays and how and where the fashion industry and individual businesses can become active.

Reycling is considered a central idea to postpone textile disposal and is applied by one of the brands. Thomas defines recycling as the second life given to a garment, which is not longer of use to the former owner (2008: 534). Jana M. Hawley, doing research in textile and apparel management, writes on “Textile Recycling Options: Exploring what could be” (2011) in her article and describes the relationship between the throwaway society, textile disposal and second hand business, how the label “vintage” adds value to a discarded item and what chances of re-designing could be. Explaining different options of recycling, her text completes the recycling discussion with possibilities and ideas. Giving old clothing pieces to the second hand store or re-selling them vintage could be such a solution. Fletcher defines recycling as the supply of raw material being used to the manufacture of other goods and calls it “the least efficient of the strategies from a materials perspective” (2008: 99f.). Brown assesses the added value of a passed-on item, in an almost romantic way: “When wearing a pre-owned item of clothing, it is as if you inherit a history of lived experiences. You benefit from each piece’s own identity and character. The care and affection lavished on a well-loved piece of clothing remains with the item and is inherited and added to by new owners, giving each piece a life force of sorts that is almost tangible” (2008: 103). Additionally and rather unro-
mantic, recycling can be divided into *upcycling* and/or *downcycling*, as well as into pre-consumer and post-consumer textile recycling (Thomas 2008: 534ff.; Gwilt and Rissanen 2001: 147 respectively). To what extent recycling is a topic dealing with a brand’s sustainability profile will be reviewed in the analysis. Nonetheless, it is definitely a matter of fact. Fletcher links practices of recycling and reuse to “zero waste” (the concept of reduction), which is also in the companies’ interest not only to contribute to less waste but also from a commercial perspective (2008: 95ff.). I will come back to these interconnected concepts later.

*Reuse* means offering for redistribution and resale and delay disposal and is thus also a consideration when examining sustainability (Fletcher 2008: 100). Also, reuse is simplified by *repairing* and *reconditioning*, which means to keep products useful but require more resources (ibid.). The Wrap report agrees: Reuse and repair happens in the sections in-use and end-of-life-use, whereas recycling takes place when the garment is disposed off (2012: 3). According to the Wrap report (2012), the classification of reuse and recycle can be divided in an in-use and end-of-life section of a garment.

Additionally, *reduce* objectives are another concept which needs clarification. The fashion industry poses a big problem regarding the textile disposal, filling landfills and while decomposing – if ever – setting free gases, even though almost 100% of these clothes would be recyclable (Brown 2008: 103; Hawley 2011: 144). An upgrade in quality and personalised and customised products create a long lasting bonding between the owner and the good and can help to stretch a fashion item’s lifespan. Still, consumed fashion of low quality disposed of without turning a hair. To hinder such practices, the brands discuss and implement solutions and by this increase the awareness of their immediate business surrounding and the overall industry as well as fashion system.

In this section of previous research, I already introduced definitions of some of the concepts, which will be central to the analysis and thus divided the previous research in the concept groups. However, it seems obvious that it is hard to clearly and sharply separate these definitions of the terms since the different authors overlap in their interpretation as well as do not highlight the same aspects. Yet, the overview is adequate to built upon these interpretations later on.

1.5 Outline

In the next section, I will map my empirical findings and give insight how they profile themselves on the websites. Deriving from this mapping, I will continue with giving insights in
how the interviewees from different departments think about sustainability in general. This is followed by an extensive and versatile discussion of the analysed concepts. Since the identified sustainability concepts are rather diverse in formulation and conception and thus the discussion becomes complex, I defined three main groups of concepts. Ecology, social responsibility and commercial advancement will be the headlines, guiding through the inter- and cross-related examination. Finally, I will open up the discussion greater questions of sustainability and fashion studies.

2. Mapping the brand values and finding the concepts

2.1 Websites and published information

The websites of Nudie Jeans co (from now on called Nudie) and Filippa K present a mixture of story, history, values, advice and information as well as imagery. The company’s passionate beliefs find expression in values and the rather rational constructs are expressed in advices or information. In the beginning, I will introduce the structure and appearance of the websites in general, which is followed by an introduction to the brand’s values. Also, I will have a quick look at the imagery. Then, a “prime focus” is examined, which means certain information, which occurred frequently. After illustrating the particular field of how the brand takes responsibility I will conclude my mapping. Thereby, I will map the sustainability concepts.

2.1.1 Filippa K: Digital information and presentation

Since the very beginning of Filippa K in 1993, founded in Stockholm by Filippa Knutson and Patrick Kihlborg, the factor to create fashion surviving the seasonal trends of one of the most ephemeral industries on the globe has been central. Timelessness and longevity shall mark and embrace the classics or even evergreens which are designed and created at Filippa K. The website is alike: stylistically kept simply and plain. To find information about The brand or company is easy and also the further subchapters are held simple and are uncomplicated to navigate through. The pictures depict often the modern man and woman of today, for whom
the collections are designed, but are not of informative character. The imagery underlines the short texts and is part of the whole aesthetics of the brand.

Values
On the website under the chapter “The Brand – style”, it says: “The Filippa K brand philosophy is based on the values Style, Simplicity and Quality” (The style, 2012e). Filippa K’s core values are clearly stated and known by all the employees working in the head quarter and assumable also the ones in the Filippa K owned stores. Due to the fact, that these values are clearly written down, it is also easier for any distributor to find and communicate them.

To create “[s]imple fashionable garments with a clean design. Essential pieces to build a wardrobe around, easy to combine and long lasting in both style and quality” is described as the beginning of The Story of Filippa K (The story, 2012c). Quality is a central cornerstone of the Filippa K brand. Plain design, perfect fit and high quality is what defines their style. Furthermore it is stated that their aim is to create “[c]lothes that are easy to combine and create a modern wardrobe that makes modern life just that little bit easier” (The style, 2012e). This striving against the short-living fashion system has been the driver for the company, which rather builds its value on the need for clothing, not only in the rough weather of Stockholm but as a general basic need. Another central principle is the aim to disburden the modern man or woman, busy with work, family and leisure time, where Filippa K’s contribution might be to provide a wardrobe of sophisticated yet simple fashion, cross-combinable along the seasons, matching in colours and fitting in style; they should simply look fashionable and feel comfortable (The story, 2012c). This demands timelessness.

Timeless fashion is another central value. To “stand the test of time” is a constitutional factor of Filippa K’s basic thought (The story, 2012c). This can be observed from the appear-
 ance of the website, over the interior of the stores to the actual clothes. A photo taken of one of Filippa K’s concept stores is published on the website to illustrate also the simplicity in completion of everything they do.

Likewise, essential pieces build a wardrobe around pieces, which are not only long-lasting in quality but also style, which makes it easier to combine (ibid.). However, it is communicated that this targets the “challenges of modern life”, as the company “offers fashionable style solutions (...) [to] help women and men, on the move, to look fashionable and feel comfortable whatever the situation” (ibid.). The aim, which is communicated, is a simplification of the modern person’s wardrobe, where combination replaces daily sartorial struggles.

If we go on investigating the website, it stands out that the chapter CR (Corporate Responsibility) gets a lot of space quantitatively. Stating that “Filippa K’s model for corporate responsibility is based on four interrelated and equally important areas: environmental responsibility, social responsibility, financial responsibility and ethical responsibility” (CR, 2012a). Environmental responsibility stands for the aim to reduce the ecological impact by means of design and durability (ibid.). Social responsibility includes mutual growth with business partners on the base of honesty and openness (ibid.). Financial responsibility according to Filippa K means to approach long-term sustainability by financial growth and profitability (ibid.). Finally the most interesting, since the analysis of the material did not filter this aspect, is ethical responsibility. The overall mind-set and the fact that Filippa K aims “to be a part of the solution rather than the problem and are therefore always trying to find new and innovative ways of introducing constant improvements” finally defines their ethical stance (CR, 2012a.).

**Imagery**
The images on the website of Filippa K underline the text not as additional source of information but rather support the text in an aesthetic way. As throughout the brand concept, aes-

![Figures 2 and 3: Modern man and woman by Filippa K](image-url)
The aesthetics are central and this also when looking at the page as well as the content of the pictures. Even though I will not conduct an image content analysis here, I want to point at the simplicity and plainness of the pictures, often depicting the modern man or woman of today (The style, 2012c).

**Prime focus: Social initiatives**

Filippa K publishes four initiatives under the chapter of CR work on their website. The first one is the Filippa K second hand store, run by Judits second-hand, which is supported with previous collections or wardrobe favourites but without financial interest (CR, 2012a). The second charity project is *Lånegarderoben*, which equals the principle of a clothing library. This “loan closet” works like a library but with clothes; Filippa K supports the organisation with garments of previous collections for both women and men. The same is true for the third non-profit co-operation with *Stockholms Stadsmissionen*, an ideological association supporting people in need. The last project, *the Hunger project*, a project “empowering women and men to end their hunger” as it is stated on the project’s website, is financially supported by the brand but it is not completely clear how to invest in the project in future (Larsson 2013b).

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5 Available at: http://judits.se [accessed 2013-03-06].

6 On the right side all sponsors are listed, amongst others Filippa K, available at: http://www.lanegarderoben.se/ [accessed 2013-02-14].


8 Available at: http://www.thp.org/ [accessed 2013-05-04].
Taking responsibility by eco certifying the brand

Taking responsibility for humans and environment is a significant parameter of the company. The four axes of responsibility described under the category CR, incorporated in their daily work, are the cornerstones of the CR plan. The social compliance is ensured by and in cooperation with Fair Wear Foundation. The environmental responsibility is a rather complex matter and includes chemical, water and energy use. Regarding the chemical shape, Filippa K worked together with the Nordic Ecolabel/“Swan” in 2007 and 2009 (CR, 2012a). Concerning water usage, together with 23 other companies they started the Sweden Textile Water Initiative (STWI), a joint project between textile and leather retail companies in Sweden who work to ensure sustainable water consumption and discuss water related issues. Additionally, Filippa K is part of the Swedish Shoe Environmental Initiative (SSEI), creating “common sustainability guidelines for shoes to be used as a tool for design, product development and purchase that go beyond legislation” (ibid.). Further it is mentioned, that a list with banned chemicals is distributed to the suppliers and due to the membership in the Chemical group facilitated by Swerea (a research enterprise researching about material-, process-, and production techniques), Filippa K is able to continually update the list (ibid.). Also, Filippa K is part of a project by Kemi, the Swedish chemical agency, to secure a “healthier environment for our children” (ibid.). However, the chemical question enters not only the production side of the garment but also the use of clothes: ready-made garments shall be free of harmful substances. To comply with strict legislation is one thing, the other is what eco-labels or certificates to choose.

Conclusively, Filippa K clearly states clearly its core values Style, Simplicity and Quality, visually and verbally, on their websites and with this front its sustainability approach to business. Despite of their clear values, there is no detailed information given on various interesting aspects but topics are briefly named and introduced. The CR part provides information on the company’s politics of ecology, social compliance and initiatives. Visual elegance is the significant peg on which the website’s layout hangs on.

9 Available at: http://www.fairwear.org/ [accessed 2013-02-14].
10 Available at: http://www.nordic-ecolabel.org/ [accessed 2013-02-14].
11 Available at: http://www.swedishwaterhouse.se/en/STWI/ [accessed 2013-02-14].
12 Available at: http://www.agenturforetagen.se/2012/02/ssei-swedish-shoe-environmental-initiative/ [accessed 2013-02-14].
13 Available at: http://www.swerea.se/ [accessed 2013-02-14].
14 Available at: http://www.kemi.se/en/ [accessed 2013-02-14].
2.1.2 Nudie Jeans co: Digital information and presentation

The Gothenburg based denim brand Nudie Jeans co was founded in 2001 by Maria Erixon Levin, today’s creative director of the company. Since back then, efforts striving towards becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly have been in the minds all over the years, independent of demands from the market’s or the consumer’s side (Maria has the word, 2012O). Nudie’s website is a mixture with almost the nature of a “jungle of information”, web-shop and blog. Apparently, the brand wishes to inform so much that information becomes fragmented in dozens of sections. Certain information has to be searched rather than quickly found, the mass of text is vast and the tracks are not as simple as on the Filippa K website. The method just to click through and to hit upon interesting information is a common phenomenon while searching the website. The information texts as well as the blog entries are supported by imagery, which is of explanatory and story-telling nature.

Values

To be 100% organic is one of the brand’s core values today, namely to be an unbeatable organic denim brand. Maria Erixon Levin, one of the founders and Creative Director of Nudie states: “Since starting up back in 2001, we have remained focused on issues around sustainability and the environment regardless of the demands of the market or our customers, in a time when price has been a key factor” (Maria has the word, 2012O). In 2006 at the yearly

![Figure 5, top left, 6, above and 7, left: Cotton harvest in Turkey (7), storage of cotton (5; 6)]
kick-off, Nudie called all fabric suppliers and laundry operators to forward the sustainable development within the industry and announced one of their key goals: “In 2006, we invited all our material suppliers and laundry operators to join us in a discussion on sustainable development in the industry. And today, we are especially proud to say we offer 100% organic cotton across our entire range of rigid, stretch and selvage denim.

This is a vital stage in the evolution of the Nudie Jeans philosophy” (Maria has the word, 2012O). In autumn 2012, the brand could reach this goal after several years of struggle (100% Organic, 2012A). Their leading manufacturers are located in Italy and Turkey (ibid.). The latter is also major producer of organic cotton (ibid.). Collaboration with suppliers was necessary to be able to reach an organic high-quality denim jean (ibid.). Now, the brand sticks to its 100% organic denim.

The text window The Naked Truth about Denim, an ode to the complete and bare transparency, can be read on every subpage of Nudie. They clearly take a stand and want the visitor not to miss it. The story-telling in this short text is striking: There is a passion about denim, the worn-out jeans tell about a history, the notion of the close friend or the second skin point at the relationship between the consumer and the commodity, the rock’n’roll aesthetics depict the coolness a worn and torn denim incorporates and last but not least, every Nudie jeans transmit Nudie’s way of thinking. As the brand name tells us, Nudie Jeans co is basically a jeans brand. “We don’t just offer jeans. We offer a way of thinking, a concept, and an undying passion, fuelled by the traditions of denim and the characteristics of the fabric itself” (The Naked Truth about Denim, 2012). Only a “high-quality product made in a fair way” is the basis of general jeans. The website does not offer much information on the exact quality, even though it is mentioned several times that Nudie provides high-quality denim, but the cross reference to the durability of a Nudie jeans can be interpreted as an evidence for the weaves’ quality.

Furthermore, slow denim is another significant concept attached to the brand’s values of organic denim. Slow denim in a Nudie’s sense means to produce jeans with old-style shuttle looms called selvage denim (Slow denim, 2012E). Under the chapter “We love slow denim”
they state: “Selvage production is much slower than conventionally produced denim, and only
the best raw materials are used. It can be compared to the ‘slow food’ movement; this is slow
denim” (ibid.). Even though this denim is more expensive, the yarn is less stressed under pro-
duction and hence the fabrics are more durable (ibid.).

Nudie being a market leader within eco-denim business describes the core business ade-
quately (Maria has the word, 2012O). Going on the sustainable and environmentally friendly
way, investing in partnerships and drag others along this way could summarise the brand’s
core values.

Imagery
The images on the Nudie website are of a much more explanatory and educative nature than
Filippa K’s. Nudie’s images reflect an almost documentary and “interactive” sort of aesthe-
tics, completed with videos and animations. The images are not always photographs but
sometimes also interactive collages. Thus, Filippa K’s website appears in a plain and timeless
manner, formed around elegance and timelessness and informing the visitor foremost about
history and brand values. Nudie focus on factual information and documentation of happen-
ings, projects and news in the company and this in a rather blog like style. However, this does
not allude to a “younger” target group.

Prime focus: Repair your pair and take care
Words referring to “reparation” and “taking care” reoccurred during the analysis of the web-
site and the Nudie Jeans Posts (2012; 2013). Hence, the company’s main advice to the cus-
tomers is: let your clothing be repaired, learn how to repair it yourself and first and foremost
take care during its lifespan.

Buying denims is like the starter’s gun for a race, the break-in process like a sport. Nudie communicates a clear stand in regards of how jeans are used and its after-life: “We care
about it [jeans] when it’s worn out by repairing, reusing and recycling” (The Sustainable Jean,
2012B). A properly worn denim lives for ages. Though the process is a challenge, it has to be
broken-in, which means, worn unwashed for at least half a year, daily of course, to get the
wearer’s personal fit, so that the indigo colour can finally be “fixated onto the cotton fibres –
the colour will bleed and fade as long as the denim is worn – hence the term: ‘The Living
Colour’” (Wearing and Washing your dry denims, 2012P). Some call this challenging process
sports, other call it reunion of separate entities becoming one – therefore “second skin” (De-
velop a second skin, 2012C). The care of the jeans, its individual uniqueness and the relation
to the wearer seem to be central issues. Looking at jeans from this stance, hardly anything can replace Nudie jeans in ones wardrobe. When finally broken, the jeans refer with its stains, abrasions and scrapings to anecdotes (Repair your pair, 2012D).

The jeans-experts teach: “All pre-washed and pre-treated denims have a shorter lifetime compared to dry denim, as the cotton fibres are softer and thinner after treatments. However, extending the life of your favourite pair is a fairly easy task” (ibid.). The Nudie Jeans Repair Kit (inclusive handbook) allows everybody to repair their jeans, easily and quickly where ever they are.15 However, long lasting is not forever: “Even though your jeans are made of tightly woven cotton twill, and originally made as a durable garment for workers, they won’t last forever” (Repair your pair, Repair and take care resp. 2012D;G).

But not only repairing is present and common at Nudie. The brand pushes also the re-use and recycling of garments. In 2007, Nudie launched the *denim* maniacs recycle project where textile students were asked to re-create clothing with old denim. The post-consumer recycling collection was produced in a limited edition of 500 pieces and resulted from the denim maniacs idea, was then further developed with the denim supplier ISKO™ (Postconsumer recycling, 2012H). On the website, the company explains:

The garments are cut into pieces, and then milled down to a cotton-like pulp, which in turn becomes new yarn, used for new fabrics. Since the fibres of pure recycled yarn are very short, virgin organic cotton is added in order to get a durable fabric. The final denim is slubby with a soft hand feel. The slubs are mainly a consequence of the natural irregularities of the recycled yarn. The fabric is a red cast pure indigo denim, the undyed weft yarn has its own blue grey colour coming from the recycled denim. Post Recycle Dry is made in two fits in a limited edition of totally 500 pairs. (ibid.)

Nudie’s opinion, that the right way to go is to “Repair, Reuse! Reduce” is also communicated with the latest campaign (Nudie Jeans recycle denim maniacs, 2012J).

*Taking responsibility by fronting initiatives*

Nudie got the label “Bra Miljöval” for the repaired and in the concept stores resold jeans in 2012 (Good environmental choice, 2012I). Either you get your jeans repaired and prolong their lifetime about some months or even years, or you get 20% discount on new purchase where as your aged jeans become a second-hand, resold in the concept stores (ibid.). The good environmental choice label is a co-operation with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), one of the leading environmental organisations in Sweden.

Likewise, the customer gets informed about the political commitment of the brand. Nudie has been cooperating with Amnesty International in Sweden over some years already. Up until today, Nudie launched two T-shirt competitions where for each sold T-shirt a percentage was donated to Amnesty International. The first competition was launched in 2007, where the competitors were to design/illustrate one of the articles of the UN declaration of human rights (Amnesty International, 2012K). The work was donated to the organisation.
2012, a second competition was launched, broaching the issue of empowerment (The Empowerment challenge, 2012L). The T-shirt was sold for 39 Euro whereof 10 Euro were donated to Amnesty International (ibid.).

Furthermore, information about the responsible production is published. Together with the factories, strive for responsibility in terms of safety, fairness and ethical working conditions “for all the people who are involved in the manufacture of our clothes” (Responsible production, 2012N). Nudie is member of the Fair Wear Foundation and all partners have to comply with the Code of Conduct (ibid.). The Code of Conduct is based on the laws of the International Labour Organization.\(^\text{16}\) Further, Nudie is member of the Textile Exchange, an organisation formed around the farming and trading of organically grown cotton (ibid.).\(^\text{17}\) Additionally, they write that the majority of the organic denim is Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certified; the dry denim is even GOTS-certified which means production to the ready-made jeans (ibid.). Even so, all denim weavers are certified according to the Oeko-Tex standard 100.\(^\text{18}\)

To sum up, Nudie’s clear statement of communication on their website aims at educating the customers. From this stance, the website is a strong reference of the brand and exhibits will to be transparent. However, the (sad) question remains, if customers ever will read this information and get educated, or not.

2.1.3 Final juxtaposition

While Filippa K, since the beginning of the brand, has clearly defined core values Style, Simplicity and Quality, Nudie has overarching goals, which become the character of preliminary core value. An example for this is 2012’s 100% organic cotton objective. Nonetheless, also Nudie is driven by rooted core values such as increasing sustainability within their business but also within the industry.

Regarding the layout and the imagery it can be said that Filippa K emphasises the visual elegance and timelessness whereas Nudie communicates via storytelling and mapping background information. However, also this way of communication is supported with imagery, though of a rather additive and informative way.

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\(^\text{17}\) Available at: http://textileexchange.org/ [accessed 2013-02-14].
\(^\text{18}\) Available at: https://www.oeko-tex.com/en/manufacturers/manufacturers.xhtml [accessed 2013-02-14].
The prime focus at Filippa K is the plural, social initiatives such as Lånegarderoben, Stockholm Stadsmissionen and The Hunger Project, which are support with garments but also financially. Nudie, opposite to that, foster a “repair your pair and take care”-attitude. Here, Filippa K supplies organisations while Nudie tries to inform and educate their consumers. Both are two stakeholder groups, which play a role in the sustainability discourse.

At Filippa K taking responsibility is foremost understood in terms of eco certificates, labels and cooperations, which are listed under the chapter CR. Juxtaposed, I identified at Nudie the effort to front to “label” their products with (“political”) initiatives such as the cooperation with Amnesty International or Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. The most clearly differences which sticks out is the blog like style of Nudie’s website. Even though this might lead to assume that they target another consumer group, I would not read this as an indictor therefore. Much more, their willingness to inform and lay open is noticeable. In order to communicate this information, Nudie adopts storytelling.

2.2 Interviews and outcomes

In the coming section, I will introduce to the perception of sustainability within the different departments. Since I am interested in how the understanding of one’s daily work and sustainability interact, I assembled the interviewees under the headlines of the departments. Again, the working tasks and departments are not divided similarly at Filippa K and Nudie.19 As mentioned earlier, a brand loyal employee perspective is assumably permeating all utterances which makes it hard to be able to identify and ascribe the motivation of these.

2.2.1 Supply chain

The supply chain department, concerned with the management of the passing through of a product, includes several sub-sections such as Sourcing and Logistics. Sourcing is the department, where the finding and evaluating of alternative fibres and fabrics and the encounter with suppliers happens. Logistics administers the flow of the products between the production site over the companies to the consumers. I was given the opportunity to interview the supply chain manager from Filippa K, Sten Lunden, as well as their sourcing manager, Christina Muljadi. From Nudie Finn Stenberg was the interviewee.

19 All interviewees agreed to be named by full name in this paper.
On the question, if the interviewee would consider the “own” brand as sustainable, answers were diverse. Foremost, the response was depending on the definition of sustainability, which was not given by the interviewer. Lundén answered that Filippa K is sustainable in terms of being long-term, though not yet in overall and absolute manner. The ambition to continually keep striving towards this goal is rooted in the grounds of Filippa K and building the foundation of the label. This is one of the key components Filippa Knutsson and Patrik Kihlborg set as foundation in order to cultivate a goal, a purpose, a long-term vision to do sustainable fashion; timeless and promoting durability. Unmistakably, this is against the common fashion idea of ephemerality and steady turnaround: a system, which nurtures itself by perpetuating its cyclic manifestations. Hence, Lundén refers to the challenge the production department has; to follow the fashion-typical “à la mode” yet still endeavour longevity. He mostly argues along the company’s profitability and marketability to be able to be sustainable; also embracing the commercial responsibility towards the suppliers. Central to this is the creation of a product, long lasting qualitatively and fashion-wise. A fashion garment produced of respectful quality and providing a good fit are the cornerstones for the customers’ to wear this piece a long time. Then, the company is able to reach an important goal: To create and provide sustainable fashion. If a company manages to balance these components, it is even possible to reach the favourite-piece-factor, where the relationship between consumer and commodity is longest. He also argues, that to lower the impact of waste clothing is as important as the advice to consume less. He calls this principle of considered choices “intelligent consumption”. Hence, the consumers’ (and indirectly also the companies’) contribution to post-consumer use of clothing is huge. At Filippa K, the goal of diminishing waste is borne in mind from the beginning of the creation process to the very ending of a garment’s lifespan. But also the impact on the environment during the producing process is regarded. The example of buying fibres seasonally unbound to target a bigger quantity and empowering the relation between buyer and supplier is discussed in the analysis section.

At Filippa K, in contrast, Muljadi’s statement “We will never ever be 100% sustainable” is straightforward. Therewith, she mainly points at the lack of clearly defined tools and facts for sustainable development within the fashion industry, such as not yet specified Life Cycle Assessments (LCA). Also the fact, that there is no defined structure how to approach and measure sustainability contributes to its under-definition. Nevertheless, according to Muljadi, Filippa K is continually striving towards that goal, has the target(s) in mind and tries to be as sustainable as possible. Muljadi is in charge for finding new alternative fibres with
less environmental impacts (such as chemistry or land-use). She alludes to the need of cotton
and required surface to be grown and that even ecologically grown cotton will not be any help
to counteract the lack of space for food growing. By the same token, synthetic fibres must not
be considered as a possible solution, since Peak Oil, the point where the maximum oil extrac-
tion is reached is another huge problem. Sustainability for the supply chain department
means, thus, also to be up to date with the latest research on alternative fibres and environ-
mental impact. Another main argument, which sticks out during her argumentation, is the
centrality of a good relationship between the company and its suppliers. Even though it is
hard to become a Filippa K supplier, they appreciate the hard work once they have reached it
and make progression within their business. When a supplier is evaluated and chosen (an
evaluation is only conducted with newly recruited suppliers), then the relationship can unfold
its potential. This is revealed by the membrane condition of the contact: The exchange and
communication happens back and forth. “Suppliers do not want to work together with butter-
flies, which fly around”, says Muljadi, pointing at the seasonal short-term relations between
buyers and suppliers, which are typical for the fashion supply chain. Audits and inspections
on site are all conducted by the CR-department in cooperation with third parties. It is of
important to the brand to be able to communicate its goals so that suppliers understand their advan-
tages as well. More and more, Filippa K wants be able to backtrack the whole upstream
value chain and to have access to all related information. By this, the company aims at fostering
the investment in suppliers which are willing and positive about Filippa K’s named goals
(Code of Conduct for example) but also to be more transparent in a sustainable way towards
consumers. This, in turn, promotes commercial sustainability.

At Nudie, Stenberg’s argument is rather positive regarding the sustainable standard of
the brand: due to the production, the core of how they do it and think, and last but most im-
portant due to the fact, that sustainability is central to their daily decision-making, he consi-
ders the brand definitely on the right track. He claims, that sustainability is the most important
issue; and this in financial aspects as well as quality. Stenberg’s position deals foremost with
logistics. Logistics take care of how goods are delivered, dealing with time and way of trans-
portation issues. The question of how to get the products home is obviously connected to the
environmental footprint, but also not an easy one to find a suitable solution for. The process-

20 Muljadi gives insight to an example in numbers: A mill might produce 25’000 metres of fabric a day, whereas
Filippa K orders 10’000 metres a season (Interview, Muljadi 2013).
es, how transportation is handled, tell a lot on the sustainability goals on a firm. Usually, import happens on “slow” ways such as trains within Europe (from Italy and Portugal to Sweden) and boat from overseas (India – Sweden). Freight on water, though, cannot be traced which is a disadvantage. This is also the cheapest way to transport commodities and supports the ecological thought. Notwithstanding, export from Sweden (including store refills) has to happen much quicker, which encourages transportation via air or road. Even though Nudie tries to increase the amount of boat and train transports, the lead times pose the main problem in these regards.\textsuperscript{21} The state Sweden, then, demands the reporting of statistics. To be able to plan processes more efficiently, which is much easier with suppliers who have been part of the supply chain for a longer time, is considered one of the key strategies to overcome the time problem. In this manner, sustaining and maintaining a healthy supplier relationship has a positive effect on the performance of a company. This commercial aspect linked to efficiency functions together with the quality of the material and the endeavour to promote long life-times of denims as the basic principle of Nudie, called “The naked truth about denim”.

Conclusively, the case of Filippa K illustrates the importance of the suppliers as a close stakeholder. Along this, also commercial advancement means sustainability. The case of Nudie shows that sustainability can be interpreted in a straightforward ecological way when talking about transportation. The supply chain department, thus, incorporates different definitions of sustainability. The supply chain department is responsible for the flow from the producers to the customers.

2.2.3 Product development and design

At Filippa K, the sections design and construction work closely together. Sarah Isaksson from the design department was interviewed. At Nudie, production manager Peter Frank was my interview partner. No information on the teamwork was mentioned.

Isaksson answered the question, if she would label Filippa K a sustainable brand, that she would claim it being sustainable, due to the creation of a long lasting product in quality and design. When designing a product, she points out, the main-focus lies not on the front of fashion but rather on the aspect of creating a classic. Sustainability in general, she would describe with the notion of balancing the resources, not wearing out what we were given, so that future generations have good circumstances and conditions. Foremost, this means not to live on the capital but in the interest of the world. Isaksson’s main emphasis in the interview lies

\textsuperscript{21} Lead time is the time between the placement of the order and the delivery if it.
in the use of the raw materials as a crucial and determinant factor. Firstly, she mentions the effects of cotton, as an example, which is grown on huge areas, needs a long time to regrow and fosters monoculture as well as a vast amount of water consumption. To be able to avoid a huge amount of raw material, the change from ordinarily grown cotton to organic cotton is not the solution, but rather to focus on alternative materials (likewise Muljadi above). Isaksson, thus, suggests consuming less, keeping the garments for a longer timespan and taking care of our clothing. According to her, Filippa K has already reached the state of being known as a qualitatively and fashionable long lasting brand, yet has to work on its ecological and social responsibility to follow a superior sustainability goal. This, she further affirms, can only be accomplished by thinking ahead. An example she gives is by choosing the right colour in time, and be open to compromise if necessary, and not being to finicking with shades. Not accepting a certain colour means to achromatis the fabric chemically and then dye it again. This dissipates a tremendous amount of water and involves chemical waste. When a fabric is dyed with a certain colour, Filippa K orders a sample to ensure that the colour is right. They order bigger surface of fabrics to ascertain that the supplier can manage to dye not only a bit. If the colour, then, is wrong, the cloth is being sent back to re-dye and forth to check it again. To prevent not only CO\textsuperscript{2} emissions but also a lot of chemistry or even textile waste, the design department has to learn to accept and compromise with shades of colours. Finally, she mentions, that such processes can be avoided by daily remembering the superior goals and increasing their awareness. As a result, quality, for her, is not only embracing the fabric’s standard, but the common denominator every single action at Filippa K should depict. Isaksson’s commitment and spirit has a personal character, whereof Filippa K can profit. She lists the successful projects with which the firm is an/or was working but still keeps the critical distance towards points such as greater tolerance (for example in colour shades) and the everyday mind-set which have to be improved. Frank zooms in on the time changes take and how the financial condition of the market, the industry and the company affect structural changes.

Similarly, Frank answered considering Nudie as a sustainable brand “in some parts”. He replied that the overall approach is present in the company’s mind-set, since this stance towards business affects the selection of fibres and raw materials, but also the post-consumer view. Nudie offers even a repair-service for denims or you get a discount if you provide yours as second-hand jeans and buy a new pair of denims instead. Conclusively, Frank acknowledges that the company takes quite good responsibility for the environment and humans involved
in the process. While he focuses on intelligent consumption on the one hand, he also takes account of the experience that the company’s influence ascends with higher quantity in orders. This implies that the firm underwent dynamics during the last years. Frank explicates the development that the company grew bigger during the years of the financial crisis (about 2008 to 2010) in the quantity of demanded denim. Even though Nudie set the goal of 100% organic cotton for all denims back in 2006 on their yearly kick-off, they only could achieve an amount of 30-40% until 2008. Due to the financial crisis, Nudie had difficulties to raise the amount of organic fibres in the fabric, but could steadily accumulate the order quantity. In late 2010, on account of their persistence and consistence in business, they could get started again, now with enough quantity to be able to demand a higher percentage of organic fibres in the denim fabrics. This is an example for how the ecology business is closely depending on the market’s condition and commodity prices of cotton for example which affects the brands and the industry’s potential to develop. Finally, in autumn 2012, the mission was accomplished: the 100% organic goal succeeded. According to Hawkins, this is successful brand management: “A sustainable company is clearly one that does not sacrifice long-term interests for short-term gains and has moved its corporate focus from a conflict between profit and the community towards an integrated approach that recognizes the need for balance” (2006: 134). By this, Nudie did not only introduce balance into their financial input and outcome but also in the supplier’s overall thinking by steadily demanding some percentage organic cotton. Today, Frank reports, they are struggling with the same problem: to reach 100% organic fibres in the rest collections. Frank also names the brand concepts connected to the denim industry and the jeans design. Even though he states, that jeans originally come from America, he says, that there is a certain Swedish background hidden in the brand charm. Not only that several good Swedish designers work for known denim-brands nowadays, but also in terms of the knowledge, the production, which partly takes place in Sweden, and style.

For Isaksson, Filippa K can be considered being a sustainable brand in a sartorial way due to high quality or durable styles, but yet she sees space for improvement. Also she puts the nature and environment into focus. Frank, on the other hand, regards the mind-set and the overall approach as the part of Nudie, which is sustainable. He then introduces in how the all-organic goal could got along. In conclusion, in the design and production department handle several sustainability related issues. One is waste handling or compromising in creative facts for example shades of colour. On the other hand, the production department is depending on the market’s condition.
2.2.4 Corporate responsibility

Both brands have their own position for Corporate Responsibility issues. Filippa K’s CR manager is Elin Larsson, having this position since autumn 2011 and at Nudie is Sandya Lang, working on this position since autumn 2011, too.

Sustainability challenges are the central tasks for Corporate Responsibility managers. Even though the company as a whole has to work on the awareness of sustainability considerations during all processes and every day, the manager’s work is to keep track on all developments, improvements and defections, and communicate this between the departments and towards the general public.

Larsson at Filippa K poses the overall and crucial question is, if the fashion business ever can be sustainable. Nonetheless, Larsson mentions some aspects where Filippa K is working on contributing to a “larger” sustainability, not only within the brand but also in the wider industry. She mentions David C. Korten’s principle of the planet as a spaceship where all things used up cannot be replaced and all things taken on the ship additionally cannot be disposed of. In these terms, nature has to be preserved, resources reasonably handled and the awareness of this increased. Her interpretation of this zooms in to the whole production process, which is currently in the main focus and also that people along the supply chain are included and respected. This will serve to tackle diffusivity of the information of the product manufacturing and supplier relations. In her opinion, it is central to not only fight the symptoms, but to really erase them from the ground. As a result, a Sustainable Life Cycle Analysis (SLCA) was conducted in autumn 2012 to analyse where the company is standing. In the crossfire of investigation was the fine-line scoop-neck. This SLCA is for internal use only, however, it is of significance for a company to be aware of where they stand regarding sustainability. Accordingly, the upstream value chain is in the focus of investigation when improving the transparency of the whole chain. Transparency, in these regards, can be approached when working close with selected key-suppliers. These suppliers turned out to be loyal and trustworthy over time, providing the company with good work and material and thus shall be affirmed as such key-suppliers. Thereby, the target is delayed from the corporate level of proving to be sustainable to a rather global approach, where not only all parts from the chain but also other stakeholders or even governments are called in. Inspiration what to set

22 David C. Korten’s book When Corporations rule the World (1995) broaches the issues of the spaceship earth and the handling of resources as well as how men have to fit into the cyclic ecological system to be able to survive.
as short- or long-term goal comes from networking, Larsson affirms. Despite all these factors, she points out that fashion is not that easy to handle in regards of sustainability or ecological and social responsibility. Buying organically grown food is something completely different than equivalent fashion. Filippa K, so Larsson, directs its input first and foremost to the fashionable momentum: The company has not been communicating the percentage of organic fibres in its pieces and the discussion is still open if they ever will. The point is, that Filippa K centres its efforts on upholding the notion of being known for its style, simplicity and quality – which are also the core brand values of Filippa K – and not for being “green”.

As self-promoted by Lang, Nudie is a sustainable brand since the sustainability itself is incorporated in everything they do, which means products as well as at the head quarter. Nudie’s head quarter got certified with the Miljödiplomerings (environmental diploma) by Gothenburg’s city council, including concerns such as electricity, food, paper and waste. Lang asserts further that their superior goal with sustainability is, not only to diminish the bad outcomes but also to increase the positive effects. The aim is clearly to boost the positive footprint. In addition to the named matters of sustainability, such as material, design production and transportation, she emphasises the classic shape of the 5-pocket jean Nudie has. Even though Nudie actually also produces only classics, as Filippa K tends to, they do not eagerly point at that. They have been producing this classic since the very beginning and Lang sees within this fact also an eminent factor stimulating the success of the brand. One main task she is occupied with at the moment is trying to get all suppliers upgraded with the GOTS (Global Organic textile Standards) certification, for consequently being able to easily communicate the standards. Since the textile production chain is rather split up and diverse in regards of working expertise but also geographically, it is a chore to achieve the same standard along the whole chain. At the same time, Nudie is working on a transparency goal, which encompasses 100% accessible and transparent information throughout the whole supply chain and all processes. Here again, the supplier-company relationship is central and the base for further sustainable development. All information on a product’s origin and supply, called “100% transparency goal”, will be open to public and is not only for internal use. Actually, in the end, the information shall be published on the website.

The CR departments agenda is to set goals, developing a profitable business into the direction of decreasing negative footprints in the environment and contributing to the well-

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23 For more information, visit http://www.global-standard.org/.
being of society (Holme and Watts 2000: 3). While Lang is highlighting goals Nudie has reached, Larsson points more at future projects of the CR department of Filippa K.

2.2.5 The informants’ notion of the central brand concepts

When the interviewees got shown the concept sheet, based on a thorough analysis of the brand’s appearance and self-description on the websites, they agreed with the suggestions. Only some small changes had to be conducted. On Filippa K’s side, the interviewees wanted to change the key-word “being long-lasting” to “creating long-lasting fashion”, to pinpoint the tension between the fashion momentum and the longevity of the design – which is also the design and construction team’s challenge. According to Lundén, the main point of simplicity shall not be underestimated, since it contains also notions of colours, patterns and carry-over styles – the aim to simplify a modern person’s life. Further he explains the momentum of mainly focusing on that very point of persistence of the quality and the design, which then can be “tweaked” by adding some “last breath” when a garment is reused anyhow. Muljadi’s point regards the average lifespan of a piece of clothing. Hence, her main consideration counts the longevity factor as well. Isaksson from the design department at Filippa K looks mainly at the simplicity, longevity and quality parameters, which are part of her daily work. Elin Larsson, the CR manager, who has to do with all the concepts on a daily basis, associates the long lasting fashion concept with the core value named simplicity, also mentioned on website. Further, she adds to the prolonging opportunities besides the Filippa K second hand, the co-operation with Lånegarderoben and Stockholms Stadsmissionen (CR, 2012a).

At Nudie, the interviewees also had some suggested changes of formulations of the concepts on the concept sheet. Stenberg adds the commercial component. Sustainability, according to him, can only be long lasting when the relationship to the suppliers and the one to and with the end-consumers is intact. This bidirectional flow of benefit and influence is essential for the company’s survival. While Stenberg from the logistics department definitely would label the co-operation with Amnesty International as politically taking a stand, suggests Frank to label this rather (corporate) empowerment and views it as a charitable move. Frank, head of production at Nudie, moreover, highlights the rootedness of all these concepts and foremost sustainability, compared to pretending having a certain façade. Finally, CR responsible Lang agrees with the list by confirming that, she as well, deals daily with all concepts mentioned within her department.
It can be criticised, that the submission of black-on-white concepts already might channel the interviewee’s perspective or mind (as well as the current thoughts). Yet, I do think that the notion of brand core values and concepts covering sustainability issues could easily be blurred when not clearly described and provided. Hence, this might be a rather pragmatic way of interrogation. After the thorough analysis of the webpage from which I derived the concepts formulated on the concept sheets, the concluded concepts were fairly good grasped and formulated. The kind of how the companies approach the wider public is thus telling the same stories, which means core values, brand ethos and philosophy as well as applied versions of these in form of concepts and projects, as the employees do. This counts for both brands.

3. The Three Pillars of Sustainability

The fashion industry is not only dispersed in a geographical manner, but more and more also split into two groups of interest. Arnold writes: “There is probably no other industry in such an ethical conflict as the fashion industry. One part is championing ethics with innovation and passion, the other exploiting millions in sweat shops across the world in order to feed the desire for cheap fashion” (2009: 216). Whereas the sweatshop-party continues their exploiting crusade, the ethical thinkers foster innovation. The two cases can be ascribed the latter ones.

After the webpage analysis and the interviews, I will now interpret this information to the wider scope of the fashion studies. Practically, I will now assign the preliminary findings to three major pillars to open up the frame of the general and common understanding of sustainability: the key concepts of ecology, social responsibility and commercial advancement. Whereas the last chapter mapped the utterances regarding sustainability, given by the informants, this chapter analyses how perception of sustainability matters can be classified into the three pillars and their sub-concepts. The interviews are the sublime red thread in this part.

3.1 Ecology

The first pillar of sustainability I have identified is ecology. I want to classify all findings contributing to the ecological conception of sustainability into different sub-chapters such as fi-
bres and fabrics, chemicals, transportation, longevity, “re”-programmes (repair, reduce, re-use), planning and textile waste as well as certification.

3.1.1 Using the “right” materials: Natural versus man-made

One of the central arguments and a red thread through all interviews was the point that conventional fibres and fabrics will not be a sustainable solution. Alternative materials have to be sourced and should be replaced. This is also underlined by a majority of authors (Fletcher 2008: 3ff.; Gwilt and Rissanen 2011: 17ff.; Myers and Stolton 1999).

Organic cotton as the denim-solution

Nudie considers organic cotton as the fibre-solution, at least at present, and launched the first 100% organic cotton denim collection in autumn 2012 (The Nudie Jeans Post 2012). Since their main business is denim jeans, they will be in need of cotton also in future times. The action, thus, is not only a strategy to become more sustainable but also to establish the reputation as one of the market leaders within the denim industry. Erixon Levin is given the word on the website:

I am proud to say that Nudie Jeans is currently a market leader within organic cotton denim, and proud to be part of a denim industry which truly treats this issue seriously.

And I’m proud to meet more and more producers and weavers who realise organic denim is not only an eco-trend, but a sustainable way of working moving forward.

I’m proud we can resume our partnerships with the world’s foremost producers, partners who are now committed to investing time and money into organically harvested cotton plantations – not just as an avenue towards a quick return or another passing fad, but as a commitment to an important principle. (Maria has the word, Nudie Jeans 2012O)

The long-term aspect, in Erixon’s view, is in the commitment and the overarching principle of sustainable business. Also, the partnership with suppliers and other stakeholders is emphasised, who are also committed to the brand’s overarching goal.

But what is the problem with cotton? Conventional cotton fabrics entail a lot of chemicals: “In Sweden, for instance, every kilogram of textiles manufactured uses almost half a kilogram of chemical, most of which ends up in waste water” (Myers 1999: 10). In order to avoid any harmful substances, biological cotton, as Brodde calls the third advice given in her book, is a loophole to abandon chemicals (2009: 216). Organic cotton does not harm natural resources but requires more labour in the production process, “thereby leading to increased employment in rural areas with multiple socio-economic benefits” (Franz et al. 2009: 102ff.). Less ecological as well as social impacts are guaranteed (ibid.). These chemicals added at the stage of fabric manufacturing and finishing, hinder the cotton fabrics to biodegrade (Fletcher
et al. 1999: 50). Van Elzakker’s interesting approach compares the costs from organic to convention cotton and concludes: “The research [using a T-shirt as an example] demonstrates that the environmental costs of soil erosion, water usage, pesticides and aerial spraying are less for organic cotton production than for conventional. (...) When it came to assessing the post-harvest impact, the research showed no difference between organic and conventional T-shirt” (van Elzakker 1999: 98). Finally, the discursive and controversial discussion on organic cotton links ecology to ethical questions in a global and political way.

Whereas Nudie’s fibre strategy is organic cotton, Filippa K is rather sceptical towards natural fibres due to the ethical concerns such as vast land use of cotton farming. In this manner, Filippa K considers the change from conventional to organic cotton not as the ultimate solution, but rather invests a lot of resource into sourcing new alternative materials. Hence, Filippa K stresses the importance of non-natural though sustainable fibres.

*Alternative materials as part of the solution*

As cotton farming entails a lot of considerable disadvantages, such as land- and water use, foremost the interviews with informants from Filippa K pointed at looking for alternatives (Wrap 2012: 18). “We want to increase our amount of sustainable styles in all collections from 11% to 13% by the end of 2013”, says Elin Larsson, CR manager at Filippa K.

The design department at Filippa K tries to avoid cotton completely and instead find sustainable replacements. The long-term goal is to sort out all non-sustainable fibres. However, according to Brown, a “plethora of textures, shades and finishes allow designers to satisfy their conscience while expressing their creativity with minimal restriction” – a sign for how developed the creative alternative fibre market already is (2008: 57). To be able to choose sustainably more often, the design and production department at Filippa K made a Fibre Tool, marking fabrics as unsustainable, acceptable and sustainable. Also, latest researches and reports are considered. This tool will help to implement a sustainable thought in the daily work.

Filippa K highlights its use of Tencel (also known under Lyocell), a “cellulosic fibre technology”, invented by Lenzing AG in Austria. This is a fibre with closed look production process and is thus labelled by the company as “the fibre of the future”. According to Kožlowski et al is lyocell’s closed-loop production system the main advantage of this eco-fibre compared to organic natural or recycled synthetic fibres (2012: 32). As mentioned above, one of the main considerations for Filippa K is the area of farming. Alternatives, which do not

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need huge land-use are thus as good as organically grown fibres. It has to be critically considered which fibre type is chosen, because “[n]atural fibres also typically create slightly more waste in the production process than man-made fibres (…)” (Wrap 2012: 20).

Synthetic fibres can serve to produce a more sustainable blend in terms of waste: “(…) by switching 10% of cotton fabrics to a 50:50 polycotton blended fabric manufacturers might achieve a 2% saving in waste produced, reduce water footprint by 3% and cut carbon emissions by 0.4%” (Wrap 2012: 20). Synthetic materials, actually, are not gladly considered as future option. This discussion is not only about nature and man-made fibres but also about water and oil – both resources, which are going to take an end sooner or later (Gwilt and Rissanen 2011: 43ff.). Consequently, Gwilt and Rissanen speak of hybrids, where two different materials are brought together “to make a new one with enhanced performance characteristics” (ibid.: 51).

Indeed, even denim can be produced out of a textile blend: “Denims can be a blend of organic cotton/traditional cotton or cotton/lyocell, creating an alternative lightweight denim. The use of a lightweight material reduces drying time and transportation costs” (Kozlowski et al. 2012: 32).

Wool as another example of natural material regrows by its own and is decomposable, yet produces a lot of carbon and methane (toxic pollutants to water and air) and needs water above average (Wrap 2012: 20; Brown 2008: 103, Fletcher 2008: 98). Compared with polyester or polyamide, which shows less carbon exhaust, but is non-decomposable and completely based on petroleum (Gwilt and Rissanen 2011: 43ff.). The ecology concept is subdivided into organic natural fibres and oil-independent hybrids. However, at the moment balancing and compromising signify the everyday work decisions. Due to the described pro and contra facts regarding all the fibre types, alternatives are not easily chosen and need thorough examination. Nudie’s core business denim sets the frames for their selection and let them most favourably chose organic cotton. Filippa K with its different types of garments, thus, can chose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fibre type</th>
<th>Average footprint per tonne of fibre in clothing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carbon (tCO₂e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyester</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viscose</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acrylic</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wool</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyamide [nylon]</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13: Variations in footprint by fibre type – modelling estimates (Wrap 2012: 20)
among more different sorts. Nonetheless, compromises are unavoidable but will not be significant either, if not combined with individual and collective responsibility and action (ibid.: 52).

3.1.2 Establishing legitimacy: certificates, legislations, trademarks

At Filippa K, chemicals are mentioned in the ecology chapter in the CR agenda and several co-operations ensure that the brand steadily proves to ameliorate the handling of such issues (CR, 2012a). In regard to this, the brand keeps partners under surveillance, inspects and controls the ways of production to be finally able to ban all materials, which comprehend substances and chemicals that are not tolerated. The rigid legislation to follow is REACH, dealing with Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemical substances.25

Drawing on the idea of establishing and maintaining legitimacy, Filippa K acts as the instance conferring regulatory endorsement while the suppliers have to conform (Deephouse 1996: 1025). The regulator, here Filippa K, gives instructions, regulations and guidelines about chemicals, chemical usage and security. The company ensures legitimacy by controlling its suppliers. In the same way, governments are asked to intervene and set out legislations to drive for example mills to improvement. Instead, governmental regulators do not take their role yet even though changes in legislation are regarded as a huge driver for structural change in Europe. To work together with governments is suggested as a strategic smart move by Esty, and “creates successful environment programs” (2009: 78). Successful in this manner means not only successful in production. Indeed, it also means to grant legitimacy for the buyer company as well as the government of the production country (Scott 2001: 59). While Esty from a business stance might point at the successfully working production decreasing ecological footprint, the representatives of neo-institutional theory emphasise social acceptability and publicly endorsed legitimacy. Additionally, companies might be contemplating national conditions when choosing their site of production in future. Regulatory endorsement, conclusively, is not linear but defines power relations on several levels.

At Nudie the crucial objective is not to lose focus on legislations in all countries the brand produces in. This is a challenge, and as explained on the case of Filippa K, needs audition and control. Nevertheless, one of the most important points in these concerns is that certificates not only affirm legal compliance but also assure public legitimacy. Hence, Nudie is

25 Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach/reach_intro.htm [accessed 2013-02-14]. Other labels and cooperations are listed under chapter 2.1.
aware of the side effects of these labels and trademarks and adapts to them also due to public endorsement. Another example is Nudie’s second hand jeans being trademarked with bra miljöval (good environmental choice). This is not a regulatory affair by the Swedish Society of Nature Conversation but legitimates the brand by a governmental instance. “The Swedish Society of Nature Conservation (SSNC), the biggest environmental organization in Sweden, has operated a private eco-label on a wide range of products since 1989 (Rundgren and Hagenfors [Certifying organic production and processing] 1999: 76). Furthermore, the head quarter in Gothenburg got the Miljödiplomerings for their work and striving to be as ecological throughout the business including CO\textsuperscript{2} compensation, sorting of waste and/or training of the employees. Certainly, Nudie demands similar standards from their suppliers and endorses legitimacy as a regulator in that case. In this case of the bra miljöval certification, on the other hand, the governmental instances function as regulators.

In conclusion, adapting to normative legislations and regulations, labels and trademarks shows that it is not only a matter of acting ecologically but serves further to gain regulatory and public legitimation. Filippa K follows Esty’s interpretation of certifications and eco-labels being means to signal environmental commitment (2009: 129). Nudie is aware of the effect these signals inhabit and applies them as a point of references for consumers. Often trademarks and labels are the only hallmarks which can be read by consumers: “(...) [I]t is the logos and brands, (...), that are sometimes the only thing that consumers are able to latch onto with any confidence, acting as points of reference where the choice of availability is overwhelming” (Dafydd Beard 2008: 448f.).

3.1.3 Aspiring the closed-loop mind-set: repair, reuse, reduce

Originally, the 3-R-concept stands for reuse, repair, recycle and was later on developed to the 5-Rs, including re-design and re-imagine (Hawkins 2006: 4, Esty and Winston 2009, Thomas (2008), Fletcher (2008), Gwilt and Rissanen (2011) Ho and Choi 2012 resp.). However, it seems more reasonable to apply Nudie’s slogan “Repair, Reuse! Reduce” as the “central” three Rs in this context not only due to the fact that Nudie calls one of the latest campaigns alike, but also due to the companies’ awareness of prolonging the products’ lifetimes. This sectioning seems much reasonable to me, since repair comes before reuse, while reusing strategies, as I will explain below, also include recycling. How the brands interpret the understanding of these terms is discussed below.
Repair

Nudie’s marketing idea “Repair, Reuse! Reduce” draws attention to their standpoint regarding sustainability on the website, advertisement and the Nudie Jeans Post (2012). Therefore, the brand’s own repair service supports consumers to get expanded use from their wardrobe, which is also a suggestion by the Wrap report (2012: 6). While the history of repairing refers to economic savings, nowadays this is seldom the incentive to fix a garment (Fletcher 2008: 101). Much more, “ethical factors or lifestyle choices” are the cause why clothing is repaired. In the case of a Nudie denim, reparation is presumably an ambiguous mixture of motifs: On the one hand the company’s idea to offer a repair service and by this prolong the in-use-time as well as postpone disposal; on the other hand, the emotional attachment to the second skin causing the will to postpone disposal, too. Niinimäki and Hassel affirm: “These services extend the enjoyable use time of the product as well as postpone the psychological obsolescence that consumers themselves feel about the product” (2011: 1880). Nudie, particularly, invests resources in the required infrastructure of this service (Fletcher 2008: 100). Up till now, there is no repair service for Filippa K garments, however it is considered to do so. This could also be due to the different aesthetics the brands stand for.

While in a Nudie way it looks cool to wear worn and torn and repaired jeans, Filippa K customers might not be regarding this as cool and hip. While Nudies is already strong at developing ideas and implementing repair as an indispensible part of a jeans’ lifetime, Filippa K does not yet actively boost this idea.

Reuse – redistribution or recycle

Valuing or clothing and reusing them reasonably are the topics of this section. “Around 350’000 tonnes of clothes go to landfill at the end of their usable life – despite the materials having commercial value, either reused garments, or when recycled into wiping cloths, felts and other non-clothing uses” (Wrap report 2012: 12). We have to consider, that one tonne has an average resale value of £410 (ibid.: 33). As we might forget easily, disposing of this huge amount of textiles is not only environmental nonsense but also a financial one.

Nudie fosters a reuse of the denim by selling jeans second hand in their concept stores. Furthermore, fashion designers in education can profit from the unwanted garments and recycle them, as we could see in chapter 2.1.2 (denim maniacs, Thomas 2008: 534). Nudie, in cooperation with one of their denim suppliers ISKOTM, invented also post-consumer recycled jeans. Reuse, in these regards, is a matter of reusing the fibres, not the garment and I thus call it recycling. Unfortunately, the project failed due to too little return flow of used denim. The
latest recycling-project from 2012/13 by Nudie is the recycled denim rugs project (Fletcher 2008: 103f.).

However, I want to mention Fletcher’s comment regarding the apparent irrelevance when discerning the transitive character of recycling: “Yet, recycling on its own will never bring big change. It is ultimately a *transition strategy* [remarks by the author]; useful while society transformed into something more socially aware and less energy intensive” (2008: 107).

Filippa K stresses the core concept of timelessness. According to Filippa K, a perfect wardrobe is seasonably independent. This style and attitude refers to the idea of expanded lifetimes of clothing. Today, the average lifespan of a garment is 2,2 years (Wrap 2012: 23). According to this calculation, the environmental impact of one garment could be decreased by 20-30% if its lifespan were expanded by 9 months (ibid.: 22). At Filippa K, with the core concept Style, Simplicity and Quality, priority is given to the extension of the useful lifetimes of garments. Reuse of clothing as fashion is most obviously achieved by redistribution or resale as second-hand clothes, which is also one of Filippa K’s stance towards elongation of clothes’ lifetime (Fletcher 2008: 99). Secondly, the brand donates store and customer claims to two charitable organisations. Donation is legally complicated which might hinder other brands to act this way. For that reason, one of the CR goals for 2013 is to increase the second hand sales, says Larsson. The redistribution idea is from a consumption stance the perfect solution for not having to abstain from buying but anyhow not disposing the garment yet.
Simply, it counterworks the fact that people get tired of their clothes and satisfy the desire of consumption.

To sum up, Filippa K’s and Nudie’s redistribution and Nudie’s solely recycling projects antagonise fashion disposal in general. Redistribution seems to be less resource craving and thus is easier implemented whereas recycling projects also ask for the manufacturer’s cooperation. Yet, both brands want to expand their range: Filippa K by increasing redistribution sales and Nudie by frequently new upcoming ideas how to recycle the denim fabric.

Reduce: Water and emissions, planning fabrics, less textile waste

Along Esty’s definition of any business’ ecological advantage to not only devoting effort to clean-up strategies but moreover to counterwork any signs of inefficiency, such as emissions, solid waste, energy or water usage, I will discuss the concept of reduction applied at Filippa K and Nudie in this section (2009: 107).

Water usage is not only a part of fibre production but also of the in-use-phase of a garment. Reducing laundry seems to be the least developed aspect discussion reducing the ecological footprint. Even though Nudie suggests not washing a newly purchased pair of raw denims before six months of usage, this is the only comment, which could be related to this, actually – as we know – not aiming at reducing water usage though (The when to wash flowchart, 2012Q). Fewer laundries, lower temperature and less to no tumble-drying could decrease the footprint by 7% (Wrap 2012: 30). According to Kozlowski et al, “[t]his [Nudies] branding strategy reduces the consumer’s environmental impact and creates a competitive advantage. Using raw denim, Nudie decided not to treat the fabric in any way” (hinting at no use of sand blasting or bleaching either, Kozlowski et al. 2012: 31).26 At Filippa K, the laundry and drying aspect is not considered when choosing a material.27

Transportation is a central topic to the sustainability performance of a company nowadays. However, transportation emissions cannot be completely avoided. A solution suggested from Nudie’s is to improve the planning to avoid quick transportation, which often means increased emissions, in the garment supply. Above all, the longer the work with a supplier, the more trust exists on both sides, which has a significant and consequential effect on routines as well as efficiency and planning. The participating observation at Filippa K showed

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26 Sand blasting means „the erosive/abrasive process applied to denim by air compressors blowing out sand under pressure in order to bleach and to batter the denin” (Clean Clothes 2010). None of the brands conduct this technique.

27 I will highlight when an information I mention derives from my internship at Filippa K’s HQ during spring 2013. This chat on laundry is one of these.
that the handling of transportation numbers is not yet as structured as it could be. Also, the negative connotation of the means of transportation, their emissions and the impact on the climate seem to complicate an open discussion sometimes. Filippa K pushes forward these concerns, yet there is plenty space for improvement.

Less textile waste is produced when a company only produces as many garments as are sold. Overproduction, hence, is an indicator for bad planning or overestimation. For Nudie’s rest pieces there is an outlet located in the Quality Outlet in Barkarby, Sweden, where regular styles are sold 30% under the concept store prices.\(^{28}\) Another idea to prevent a lot of textile disposal is, to compromise in fabrics and colours, which also means to “carry-over” fibres or fabrics. Either, the fibres are manufactured to the same fabric any season later or into another type if the former one was not sold successfully. This goes with the colour of the fabric. This strategy serves to avoid wastage and enables a more profitable future position regarding deals with the supplier due to a higher amount of bought fibres/fabrics.

Conclusively, at Filippa K, the turnaround point is expected to be the closed-loop mindset: fashion shall be designed recyclable, resources shall be minimised and as much as possible shall be reused and recycled to fight overconsumption. In contrast Nudie advertises the “Repair, Reduce! Reuse”-philosophy. Both stances lean on McDonough Braungart’s cradle-to-cradle idea. To ensure ecological compatibility of the next life, all industrial products must be designed to fit into one of two cycles: a biological cycle – where the loop is closed by returning products harmlessly to biology/nature (through composting); and an industrial cycle – where the loop is closed by recycling non-degradable materials and products completely and continually (Fletcher 2008: 108f.). The reuse/recycle and reduce factor are the two common concepts of this theory. To actively prolong lifetimes by repairing, however, is only fronted by Nudie. Even though the fashion industry is not an industry where things are not repairable or “built in obsolescence” and by this immune to reparation, I claim that there is still too little emphasise on the industry’s side (Arnold 2009: 144). The applied concepts of repairing, reusing and reducing fashion show how the brand handles this aspect of ecology in the business. Despite the approaches, there are as similarities as differences. The actors of the actual implementation of these concepts, however, are stakeholder groups and discussed now.

\(^{28}\) Available at: http://qualityoutlet.com/vara-butiker/nudie-jeans [accessed 2013-03-06].
3.2 Social responsibility

In this chapter, I will analyse how social responsibility is conceptualised and then applied within the companies. Firstly, I look at how the companies describe their social performance at the factory sites. Secondly, I will discuss their relations to the suppliers. Thirdly, the consumer relations and the growing interest to be transparent towards the focus group will be analysed. Finally, the co-operation with third-companies shall be investigated.

3.2.1 Workers and working conditions

On a first level, social responsibility applied on workers’ and their working conditions means to facilitate a healthy working environment. Due to the high standard garments Filippa K is selling, suppliers have to conform to certain demands and standards, which put a lot of pressure on them. To be able to control the happenings and conditions on site, it is an aim of Filippa K to inspect and audit 90% of the suppliers in risk countries. The same problem as with chemical issues occurs again: Governments do not control any realisation. CR manager Larsson argues: “We need more support from the governments to be able to drive these questions. We need to work as a global collective, otherwise we will be too slow and the crisis will catch us.” This is one of the reasons why production is moved to Europe: Control over and knowledge on the supply chain nowadays is valued so highly that it is a safer strategy to keeping track than only saving money in cheap production countries.

Since Nudie mainly produces in Europe (Portugal and Italy) and only has one supplier in Asia (India) they only have one risk country to inspect (Nudie Jeans pays living wages to workers in India, 2012S). Since autumn 2012, Nudie also pays living wages (which equals a raise of 17% of the annual salary compared to the former paid minimum wages, ibid.). As Egels-Zandén and Bergström propose in the recommendation 6 of their research, they call for increased teaming up with other companies or branch organisations to secure code of conducts and working conditions (2012: 97). This motivates Nudie to work together with other buyers to clean up working conditions (Nudie Jeans pays living wages to workers in India, 2012S). However, audits and inspections shall not be permeated through hierarchy or imperi-

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29 The aim for 2012 was to audit at least 90% of the risk country suppliers. Finally, 87% were inspected in 2012 (Social Report Filippa K 2012). The term is defined by FWF (for low risk countries visit: http://www.fairwear.org/ul/cms/fck-uploaded/documents/companies/ManualsReports/lwiriskpolicyfwf-mar2009.pdf [accessed 2013-05-09].

30 This discourse of who is responsible for what, is current due to the horse meat which was found in instant meals (available at http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/hastkott-i-findus-lasagne [accessed 2013-05-26]) and lead to public disturbance.
alism. Egels-Zandén and Bergström recommend the company to agitate proactively on site by supporting local organisation and trade unions (recommendation 8 and 9, 2012: 98). Empowerment is here not the buzzword to legitimate “compassionate capitalism” – as Dinah Rajak defines the confluence of economy and ethics in CSR – but rather to assure control and productive efficiency (2008: 300). Audits and assessments drive the never-ending breakdown of working conditions, Codes of Conducts and the company’s performance abroad, where several actors are involved. Third parties are consulted due to expertise and granting for legitimacy – similarly to the handling of certificates and trademarks – an as a result campaigns are launched driving suppliers to improve.

For the future, Filippa K wishes to be able to cooperate closer with governments in situ. Nudie just made the effort to pay living wages. However, in future they will focus on an even more transparent way of handling working condition problems. The overarching question, though, is, if the quest for legitimacy drives these issues or if it is ecological and humanitarian concern. Even though there might never be a clear answer to that and borders getting even more blurred I claim in this case that the end justifies the motifs.

3.2.2 A central tie: company-supplier relationships

It needs temporal effort for any supplier to become a Filippa K-supplier. The company deliberately wants to take a stand and counter the habits of frequently changing its suppliers by choosing few reliable and approved key-suppliers with whom the business-partnership will be intensified. This shall in turn contribute to the successful uncovering of all steps along the chain. Still, representatives of Filippa K name the hard job to become a supplier. In this case, legitimacy is a mechanism working in two directions. On the one hand, regulators demanding accordance with legislations and standards serve to ensure regulatory endorsement of legitimacy. On the other hand, exactly this fact caters to ensure public legitimization since mainly public stakeholder groups demand any compliance of the company. Because of the high quality standards Filippa K stands for, they have to ascertain that this standard is maintained. I will discuss these components in depth later on.

Nudie confirms that the condition of the supplier-relations is defined through loyalty on both sides. Along this, trust, routines and efficiency will increase. It nurtures a win-win situation and leads to commercial welfare. Hawkins reassures:

Collaboration rather than conflict will do more to build long-term strategic approach, which does not preclude the ability of organizations to benefit from implementing a truly sustainable programme (...). The more wealth that is created throughout the value chain the greater the opportunity to spread it through to those areas that need support. (2006: 8)
Suppliers are even involved in the product-creating process and it already happened, that fabric suppliers suggest techniques or ideas (see chapter 2.1.2). Finally, their handling of partnerships with suppliers finds expression in the transparency goal, where information on audits, conditions and addresses will be published. Publicly endorsed legitimacy, I claim, is the driver for this objective.

At both firms, the relations to business-partners inhabit the current centre of attention. Indeed, the on-going work is all about establishing and maintaining long term relations with business partners at Filippa K and Nudie. These goals are named several times and also present on the website at Nudie or in the head quarter at Filippa K. The condition of the membrane relationship between production, branding and consumption is a sign of the current fashion system: “[T]he distinction between production and consumption is becoming increasingly hazy and blurry” (Kawamura 2005: 78). I relate this shape or relation between supplier and buyer to Lury’s point on branding, where the communication among stakeholders is considered being a significant part of branding nowadays (2011: 147ff.). Branding, then, is not the label a manufactured product receives, but permeates every action the companies undertake as well as every up- and downstream communication. For that reason, the companies shift their focus on each part of the chain, not only to control any kind of sustainable conformity and hence protecting legitimacy, but also to brand the product with social compliance. Yet, Nudie uses this instrument of sustainable branding more than Filippa K does.

Generally, there are two main effects long-lasting supplier relationships entail: Firstly, the ecology concept meets the discussion of social responsibility. To reach the eco-advantage in Esty’s understanding, a company has to “push suppliers to be better environmental stewards or even to select them on that basis” (2009: 21). Secondly, efficiency can be increased (Wrap 2012: 35). The social sustainable concept, then, meets the one around all commercial and financial debates. This happens at Filippa K and Nudie. The longer firms do business with a supplier, the more they can demand with time. This can be giving input, but also the economic factor of demanding quality where as the supplier, likewise, would demand quantity and continuity. Hence, the relationship is vital, functioning like a membrane back and forth, and central to the company’s working performance. Simultaneously, a discourse on new power relations can be observed: Suppliers are empowered to become active partners.

31 This is also an observation I could make during my internship.
32 Upstream is the business closer to production than to sale, whereas downstream is the business including marketing, sales, order entry, packaging or shipping (available at http://www.thefreedictionary.com [accessed 2013-05-07]).
3.2.3 Consumer relation - Laying the foundation for a good reputation

As my analysis of the websites showed, Nudie strives to inform the public in detail. Apparently, Nudie is consciously tackling the problem of consumers complaining about too little environmental information on products purchased, as the Wrap report states (2012: 19ff.). Now, the brand wants to reach a next level. All information on suppliers shall be uploaded on the website. This milestone is equally valued as the sustainability objective building one of the pillars Nudie wants to build its philosophy and values but also reputation on. The information will be accessible from June 2013, published online as a virtual map. The tool helps customers to read on business contacts. Dafydd Beard claimed already five years ago, that authenticity and ecological fashion go hand in hand: “In terms of eco-fashion, the pressure to be authentic and transparent is co-dependent between smaller, pioneering designers (…), larger retailers (…) and the consumers they serve” (2008: 458). He continues: “(…) [T]he importance of authenticity for consumers is becoming an increasingly essential component as they seek out products and brands that meet their expectations and aspirations” (ibid.). A vast amount of information is available to consumers, business and employees nowadays, informing them about right and wrong and moving them into a position of knowledge, which was not accessible before, raising curiosity and questions (Esty 2009: 66; 155). Therefore, I consider this device as a means of taking the wind out of their sails by publishing internal information as well as, again, securing one of the main concepts of public legitimacy.

While Filippa K conducted an SLCA in autumn 2012, the aim was to “collect data to track their performance and establish metrics to gauge their progress” (2009: 21). Now, Filippa K pursues a similar goal as Nudie does. The sourcing department works daily with digging into supplier registers and detecting information, prioritises the traceability of the goods and strives for transparency as a long-term goal. They, however, will begin with using the information internally and, in return, give “no opportunity” to consumers. By offering all garments of good quality, fit and style as well as produced and processed according to controlled and proper principles, the consumer can only purchase a wholly proper product. This utterance is alike the objective and philosophy Filippa K stands for: To help customers to assemble a timeless wardrobe. This idea presents the solution to the individuals’ chore to “navigate their way through the offerings of the fashion brands, deciphering for themselves which brands and products have genuine ‘green credentials’, from those that do not” (Dafydd Beard 2008: 450).

Nevertheless, a long-term approach will not prohibit the brand to be transparent. To make sure that the consumers understand how properly produced the purchased good is, is
only achieved by taking position. I propose Filippa K to take a stand for what is the actual background of the product, which does not mean they will have to market the brand in the same way as Nudie does. The background, the story and today also the responsibility of a company is part of its brand:

> Consumers want to know what’s behind the brand – what it can give back to them. Sometimes it’s just a question or value: the best quality for the price. When people buy a very high-priced garment, they want to see the patience and the craftsmanship that has gone into it. They are paying to possess a beautiful object. And sometimes, when it’s a famous brand, they are paying to be part of the story. (Genevieve Flaven in Tungate 2005: 26)

Above, Flaven, co-founder of a company specialised on monitoring and predicting consumer behaviour highlights the active consumer’s position of influence and the brand’s value. While the consumer inhabits a position of power, where transparency and accountability are asked and legitimacy can be endorsed, the company, simultaneously, sells the product by answering to these demands. I call this concept now responsible storytelling and branding, where ethos, reputation and legitimacy are interwoven (Arnold 2009: 7ff.). The active consumer “becomes increasingly important as it is incorporated into mediated economy” (Lury 2011: 163). The respected consumer is empowered as a stakeholder contributing from bottom up to the fashion system and affecting a company’s career. Filippa K thus puts efforts on satisfied consumers and a good reputation, whereas Nudie traces the supply chain to be able to front their transparency goal.

In conclusion, sustainability concepts seem to initiate a fashion system reformation. Not only workers are empowered, but also customers: “If companies only adopt CSR and sustainability to provide good public relations, then they will never derive any significant long-term benefits. To add value to the business, it must be based on values that are relevant to the business and its stakeholders, otherwise it simply becomes expenditure aimed at being able to get a tick in the box on investment portfolios” (Hawkins 2006: 257). Endorsing legitimacy as single incentive of striving for transparency, however, will not work. Active consumers look at the actions of a brand that is also a fact why marketing strategies cannot lure consumers anymore. “Show me, don’t tell me” becomes the slogan driving active consumers to do research on their favourite brands while the companies have to adapt to some extent.

### 3.2.4 Co-operation with third parties

The co-operation with the third parties is a mutuality the two brands share and occurs similar at both brands. One of the main co-operations of Nudie and Filippa K is the work with Fair Wear Foundation (FWF). Both companies have been audited by FWF: the “Management Sys-
tem Audit Report” of Filippa K (2011) and the “Performance Check” on Nudie (2012) can be seen on the respective homepage. FWF is foremost consulted for audits and their evaluation. The Social Reports, though, communicate results (internal and external), performances and management strategies, inform on complaints and gives prospects (Filippa K Social Report 2012; Nudie Jeans co Social Report 2012). Yet, this co-operation applies foremost to the social compliance whereas no particular third party was named in the interviews with which the companies – this applies to both of them – would conduct ecological analyses. Esty describes to “partner with NGOs and other stakeholders to learn about and find innovative solutions to environmental problems” as one of the central characteristics of ecological tinged businesses (2009: 21). He points at the expertise and infrastructure such “neutral” partners have. Improvidently, he does not interpret this co-operation as granting legitimacy. I argue, that regulatory meets public endorsement here. By working closely together with third companies who ensure regulatory endorsement, the brands simultaneously initiate public endorsement. Authenticity and transparency legitimate publicly and credit with liability and accountability.

### 3.3 Commercial advancement

After talking about the first two pillars, namely the ecological and social concepts, I want to introduce the concept of commercial advancement. This one seems to be the least expected one, however, is crucial to the sustainability of any business. Hence, it is ascertained as the third pillar. I allude to the effectiveness and profitability of the company. It ensures a successful financial and commercial path, which also feeds into the sustainability of a company: “No business can be sustainable if it pursues environmental purity without regard to business consequences” (Esty 2009: 254). This effectiveness is the consequence of responsibility in all processes and actions throughout the business. On that account, sustainability, shall be rooted in the daily work and thinking and will affect the degree of environmental commitment a company is willing to make (ibid.).

#### 3.3.1 Pricing – a strategy with hidden agenda

Regarding the price-level, Nudie and Filippa K are not completely similar but can be located in the same area. The average price of jeans is at 1300-1400 SEK for both brands. T-Shirt prices vary around 500 SEK. Usually, the sales department is in charge of pricing.

At Filippa K I come across the “quality-durability-price connection” (Niinimäki and Hassel 2011: 1880). This means, that the customer could interpret the price as an indicator for
quality. Even though Niinimäki and Hassel write about the tailor-made suit juxtaposed to the ready-made-wear, Filippa K has the connotation of a luxurious ready-to-wear fashion brand. The price level is to locate at the upper middle-class and the simple and classic style caters to people, who are living a settled life and have found time to pursue their passion. However, Filippa K is not communicating in advertisement, what exactly the price stands for. The customers, so it is assumed from the brand, know that they buy a properly produced high-quality fashion piece but without any knowledge on what this actually involves. Filippa K drives the “green” issues via Esty’s “third button”, though unconsciously (2009: 129). The “third button” is defined by the effort to mind primarily the product’s quality, the firm’s demeanour and the mechanism, that if these aspects are controlled, the third aspect is that the brand has capacity left to contemplate the green aspect (ibid.). Along this, Filippa K emphasises the notion of being known for its style, simplicity and quality and not mainly for being know, as Nudie for example, to be a “green” brand. This is also affirmed by Kozlowski et al, who point at the “importance of a designer creating apparel that appeals to consumer purchasing the product, thereby ensuring financial goals while pursuing objectives of enhancing environmental and social sustainability” (2012: 26). Indeed, the price level implicates the connotation of luxury. Clothes that cost more are generally also more valued. To infuse sustainability products with rare availability and social acceptability promote their popularity (Fletcher 2008: 96). The quality-durability-price-connection counteracts also the classic fast fashion movement, often cheap and according to research, mainly bought by young people in their mid-teens and mid-tweens (Morgan and Birtwistle 2009). Fallen prices allure to buy more which immediately increases consumption, carbon emissions and textile waste (Wrap 2012: 10). Filippa K launches goods on higher prices, better quality and durable style and thus addresses another clientele. This price-value-connection is of interest when peering luxury. However, luxury is socially constituted and thus changes the meaning with time and space.

At Nudie the commercial component is named as one of the key aspects of sustainability, which entails to look at the business in financial long-term manner. In fact, more conscious choices are made due to the increase of cotton prices, for example, or the active consumerism. Jeans could be bought for much less money than a Nudie jeans costs. To rather produce garments, which cost a bit more but are produced under safe conditions, is not only in the company’s but also in the consumers’ interest, representatives of the brand admit. This stance is mediated by the “Reduce, Reuse! Repair”-campaign. Nudie markets itself as an ecological brand. However, they have not become more expensive because they launched organic
cotton denims. They absorb higher prices of organic cotton with their margins.\(^{33}\) In other words, Nudie does not want customers to pay for their branding philosophy. Esty writes: “If you have a new product that’s cleaner and greener, marketing these advantages can make sense. But be careful. Customers need other reasons to buy. Price, quality, and service will remain core concerns for most of them” (2009: 129). Hence, the quality-durability-price strategy is regarded, too.

To be competitive and profitable, pricing is a basic component. According to the utterances in the interviews, being sustainable means being profitable and marketable and able to ensure corporate growth. This includes all strategies of more extensive influence on suppliers due to larger order quantities or the fact that companies get their production in the safe harbour already today by moving the production back to Europe. However, we deal with two different perspectives in these matters. Filippa K who, on purpose, does not communicate being ecological, where as Nudie profiles its brand basically by being an eco-denim vendor. Even though the viewpoint differs, both brands offer products with a reasonable price, high quality and a good service, called quality-durability-price strategy, whereas the green connotation functions as third button.

3.3.2 Slowing down the fashion pace

After having described techniques and strategies prolonging a garment’s lifetime in chapter 3.1.3, in this section I will discuss all matters feeding the sub-concept “slow design”, such as colours, style, fit and also (weaving) techniques and how the idea of selling evergreens and essentials contributes to commercial sustainability. Niinimäki and Hassel write:

A “slow fashion” approach aims to prolong a product’s lifetime and to deepen product satisfaction. Slow fashion is designed to be used over a long time period, and it is made with high quality and high ethical values; it is durable and made of sustainable materials. The design lasts over time as styles and colors are classical, and the materials age well. This affects aesthetic longevity. (2011: 1879)

According to the authors, slow fashion and design is aimed at being used for a long time, and it’s the outcome of high quality and sustainable materials combined with high ethical values. Since the brands relate to this aspect in different ways, I will this time split up the discussion into two sub-chapters.

\(^{33}\) Net Profit margin = (net profit/revenue)\(^*\)100, when: net profit = revenue - costs; if the brand absorbs the higher production costs with the margins it simply means that they have less profit on the product.
Filippa K’s long-term fashion, consisting of essentials timeless in colour and style, is according to Clark an advantage on the market: “[T]here is significant potential in being recognised as a brand whose clothes look good for longer” (2008: 440). Indeed, a garment is worn longer if it makes you feel and look good. But also quality feeds into this argument. On one hand, Filippa K’s interpretation of quality is something that can be worn often, though is not loosing fit or is getting out of fashion. On the other hand, it is considered the way of working and affecting every single task, which is done. However, literature foremost refers to the quality of the material. Along these lines, the definition of quality can be considered a matter of discursive negotiation in itself. According to Niinimäki and Hassel, “biggest dissatisfaction in the area of clothing is with the low quality, especially (...) during use and maintenance stages” (2011: 1879). Likewise, the Wrap report defines a good of proper quality as lessening the need for repair as well as allowing it, tolerating several laundries, keeping the fit and living for longer (2012: 35). Is high quality a product produced of the finest fibres, such as a silk top or a merino wool sweater, thus in need of accurate treatment and not easy to keep? Or is high quality solid fibre fabric sewn to a fabric for frequent use yet not living for ages? Filippa K as well as Nudie satisfies consumers with their high quality garments. If we agree on a definition of quality meaning solid fabrics, designed to an everyday garment (such as jeans) with instructions on how to treat the piece; this combined with a good fit and timeless style become unbeatable parameters to measure sustainability.

For Nudie, long lasting and slow fashion have been the core of business since the start of the company. The brand would define slow design with features such as long lasting fashion including wearable and timeless design, classic, regular jeans, optimal cut and fit, no crazy colours, sometimes even seasonally unbound styles (such as T-shirts), repairable, and then sold as second-hand. Accordingly, the firm only sells the classic 5-pocket jeans, which has been a hit since the 70’s and not changed the fit since then I was told in the interview. On the website, however, they also describe the way of denim production with old shuttle looms, which is a much slower procedure but produces a less stressed thus stronger denim instead. The idea of traditional manufacture is nothing new to Brown, who associates slow fashion with the fact, that an increasing number of designers return to “old craft techniques and practices (...), who adhere to age-old traditions of handcrafted skills and/or combine those traditions with all that the technological age has to offer their craft” (2008: 57). For this reason, Nudie’s defini-
Empathetic design, emotional attachment, sustainable sensoriality

Developing the argument of high quality garments further, we reach the point where a fashion piece is so dear to the wearer, that this person might not throw it away due to personal affinity. This idea is clearly fostered by Nudie, who talks a lot about the second skin jeans become during the six-months break in phase (Develop a second skin, 2012C). Filippa K, on the other hand, strives to capture the place of the “favourite piece” in a wardrobe. While wearing a pair of denims every day or dressing frequently in your favourite piece, it is not that farfetched, that a commodity can grow dear to the wearer. Especially, when stains and scratches tell anecdotes you share together (Repair your pair, 2012D). The notion of the second skin implicates even a substance, which is closer than a friend. The counsel not to wash jeans for at least six months opens up concepts such as commodity-friendship, fetish and luxury. Like a traditionally inherited Hermes bag, jeans worn daily during six months bear more than common sartorial meaning. This is, what Clark calls sustainable sensoriality and Niinimäki and Hassi empathetic design (2008: 440ff.; 2011: 1879 resp.). The relationship between the commodity and the wearer is of utterly remarkable texture and again, the luxurious connotation breaks through. Sustainable sensoriality definitely has a big impact on the lifetime of a garment and thus on the sustainable profile a brand portrays. Bringing back Lury’s aspect on branding, she argues that “[i]mportantly, the communication of the brand is not only to do with price, but also of emotion or affect, intensity and qualities” (2011: 152). Slow fashion means also tying emotions, affections and sensoriality to a purchased commodity. While Filippa K hopes that the customer reacts which such a bond, Nudie markets affinity and virtu directly.

All these ideas bring me back to Marx’ notion of the fetish (Nyfeler 2012). While the fetish is a sign for a consumption-addicted society and as I illustrated, CSR more and more counteracts this fact by integrating different stakeholders along the chain, it might indeed be a possible solution to build and foster relationships between commodities and consumers to counteract the disposal of fashion garments (ibid.). Marx’ plea for not engaging with fetish and my claim, that sustainable sensoriality actually might be a mechanism avoiding mindless amounts of clothing disposal contradict profoundly. Even though customers keep their garments for a time above average as a result, brands are commercially profitable when their garment is “able” to offer a certain attraction to their customers: “Here, the sustainable argument is a simple one; when the product is an investment, has functional longevity, and also
remains ‘in fashion,’ [sic!] it retains its attraction for the particular consumer or user beyond the fashion season” (Clark 2008: 440f.). The concept of sustainable sensoriality comprehends similar characteristics as the common definition of luxury, however, the personal relationship is highlighted not the pecuniary value. Therefore, I interpret this as a new and sustainable concept of aesthetics.

Prospects: Local production and personal style

In conclusion, simplicity, as one of Filippa K’s core values, targets at making life simple by providing colours and patterns, which cross-match over seasons. Thus, the Stockholm based brand inhabits a creative and material approach to slowing down the fashion pace. The Gothenburg based Nudie, on the other hand, approaches the idea from a technical and material point of view where manufacture happens in traditional ways. Both brands are concerned with finishing their products with high quality. While Filippa K supplies customers with potential favourite pieces and evergreens and thus strives to develop empathetic design, Nudie promotes a commodity-wearer-relationship by constructing a second skin and emotional attachment. Both strategies I would assemble under the umbrella term sustainable sensoriality.

Another point, which completes the slow fashion approach, is to combine the sartorial creativity and techniques with local production (Niinimäki and Hassel 2011: 1881). By now, both brands let produce some product groups in Europe (Italy, Portugal and Turkey).

Remembering Brodde’s first two advices of a green revolution, to buy classics and rely on quality, we are actually back at what is also considered slow design and long lasting fashion according to this analysis. Beginning with the designing process and the perspective for a in-use time above average over timeless colours or flexible cuts and fits to a solid quality, slow fashion is a concept, “that could reduce the amount of excess consumption by honouring local and authentic, high quality and taste education. One way to initiate slow fashion is to develop personal style” (Gwilt and Rissanen 2011: 153). Here we dive into the discussion on the lack of consumers’ consciousness, which was not investigated in this research yet needs to be taken into account. If consumers learned from anew to develop an own personal style instead of following the common trend, the fashion cycles would loose their power, price would no longer be as important and nothing would ever grow out of fashion (ibid.). Similarly, the centrality factor, which is important in Kawamura’s view, would be deprived of significance. I do not believe that mass- and fast fashion will disappear; but the slow fashion lifestyle could be a solution, gaining advocacy in the future. Yet, the slow fashion sub-concept let companies as well as consumers become involved in an interdisciplinary dialogue.
3.3.3. Consumer satisfaction – Reputation - Sustainability

Even though I did not do any consumer analysis or asked about reputation in particular, I will focus on how reputation appeared in the interviews as a concept, which strengthens sustainability. The concept of reputation is closely linked to the brand core values: It is “what others say about you, it reflects your true values” (Arnold 2009: 9). I want to analyse how the brand core values bi-directionally affect the company’s reputation and how this, then, leads to consumer satisfaction and legitimacy.

Filippa K’s not-giving-any-option-attitude for right or wrong purchase refers to the strong integrity of the brand: there will never be an either-or-solution. On the other hand, consumers can only rely on the quality-durability-price indicator but do not know if they buy the ecological product or not. Thus, philanthropy cannot be identified as a motif for consumer to buy a Filippa K product. Satisfaction is framed by the end-consumer usage, which is prolonged due to the longevity of the premium-quality garment and the unique contribution of look and design to convince with timeless style. Correspondingly, the core values Style, Simplicity and Quality encourage not only the sustainability conception but lead to effective implementation of it. The fact that the firm considers ecology and social responsibility as central ideas, which is communicated on the brand’s CR website, is consolidated by “reducing environmental impacts of clothing and demonstrating corporate responsibility” (2012: 6). Material consumer satisfaction enhances the brand reputation and finally endorses public legitimacy.

Likewise, Nudie’s consumer satisfaction is doubtlessly connected to the denims’ durability and the classic fit as well as simultaneously buying “right” due to 100% organic material. Consumer satisfaction is divided into quality and style satisfaction as well as a possible philanthropic motif. Furthermore, the third button effect plays a further role: Buying all organic jeans satisfies probably even more than buying high-street jeans for the same price. Ethos and ethics tell not only the story but simultaneously prevent the consumer to buy non-eco jeans. For this reason, Nudie actually follows Filippa K’s not-giving-any-option-attitude, too. All jeans are organic; the consumer cannot buy “wrong” and the product is also legitimated as a “right” and good. Hence, Nudie is part of the solution for a more sustainable future fashion industry: To design “innovative products to help customers with their environmental problems or even create new eco-defined market spaces” is suggested as a possible solution (Esty 2009: 21).

To sum up, if the material is of good quality and the garments last long, endure laundry, keep the fit and are flexible in cut, the consumer is satisfied. If such aspects are communicat-
ed word of mouth, it has much more impact on the company’s reputation than any marketing or PR strategy. “People trust people more than advertising“ (Arnold 2009: 237). Consumer satisfaction nowadays is the A and O of a company’s commercial prosperity and business success. I claim, that Nudie and Filippa K are both brands with a strong sense for corporate values, brand ethos and philosophy and meet the ability to combine this with the creation of proper products, which guarantee customer satisfaction and a good reputation. The successfully commercial advancement of the brands could, hence, be due to the fact, that “[t]he combination of a strong ethos and a strong personality is one of the most powerful things you can take to market” (Arnold 2009: 11). Brand personality, which is reflected in the core values, again, brands the communication between producers and consumers and bears and supports sustainability in the company (Lury 2011: 152). I want to point out, that actually any stakeholder standing in contact with the brands could replace the “consumer”. Reputation, hence, indicates the willingness to do business with a company. What a company mirrors to stakeholders defines how much these are interested in not losing this business relation and affects the company’s sustainability and profitability. As a result, branding is linked to reputation, which is defined by firm behaviour and manners.

4. Conclusion

The contribution of this research to fashion studies lies in the mapping and analysis of handling sustainability supporting concepts within two medium-sized Swedish fashion companies and how these concepts contribute to ecological, social and commercial sustainable advancement. I claim that designing fashion pieces with a yet uncommon longevity and durability is the clou of the firm philosophies and affects their reputation and finally (public) legitimacy.

Filippa K’s brand philosophy bases upon the creation of high quality and timeless fashion garments, which are combinable and seasonally unbound. Therefore, their brand values are Style, Simplicity and Quality. Hence, Filippa K’s sustainability profile is a fashion collection, highlighting the creation of a high qualitative, stylistic but simply designed product. Nudie Jeans co’s brand philosophy is much more rooted in its efforts of social and ecological compliance. Due to jeans being known as evergreens, the brand profiles itself by means of 100% organic cotton goal or the “Repair, Reuse! Reduce”-attitude. Hence, Nudie Jeans co’s
sustainability profile is a rather “political” one. By “political” I mean in terms of pursuing and realising aims and also inform customers about this. Thereby, Nudie Jeans co takes a stand and positions itself as a sustainable brand.

The question, on which departments are involved within the firm structure, can simply be answered with: all. All departments, which were conducted for the interviews are also involved in, contributing to and part of the sustainable profile of the brand. Even though one might expect the CR departments to be closest to the sustainability processes, the other departments seem as crucial for the establishment of sustainability issues within the company. Sustainability as an overarching firm philosophy has to be rooted in and borne by all departments. Furthermore, employees who can identify with these goals are bringing forward the brand more effectively.

To simplify the analysis of the sustainability promoting concepts, I introduced the three pillars of sustainability, ecology, social responsibility and commercial advancement. These stand for the three main groups I use as umbrella concepts where the sub-concepts can be divided. The ecology pillar includes the fibre-discussion. While Nudie Jeans co, as a genuine denim supplier, invests in organic material, Filippa K principally tries to get away from natural as well as synthetic fibres. Thus, Nudie Jeans co promotes the concept of 100% organic cotton, while Filippa K pursues the concept that cotton is not the optimum solution. The concept dealing with fibres, hence, differs within the two brands. A further significant concept I could identify is the one called brand legitimacy. Brand legitimacy is foremost endorsed by labels and certificates. Nudie Jeans co and Filippa K have adopted this concept and apply it in their everyday work. While the companies control the supply chain, they enforce legislations and standards to become legitimated by stakeholders such as inspecting third parties or customers. This is called regulatory endorsement (Deephouse 1996). Likewise, this concept includes also two points from the chapter of social responsibility yet endorsing brand legitimacy: Inspecting workers and controlling their working conditions and the cooperation with third companies. Nudie Jeans co and Filippa K similarly handle the situation at the factories and working conditions, which is certainly also due to their membership at Fair Wear Foundation. Finally, third parties scan the firms and, thus, as regulators legitimate them publicly, while synergies can be used and services bought. As a result, these approaches serve the brand legitimacy. Moreover, the R-concepts contribute to the sustainability profile in a fairly applied sense. So far, only Nudie Jeans co tackles the fashion disposal problem with repair. The brand offers a repair-service in their stores, motivates customers to reuse their pair of
jeans or give them 20% off on a new pair if bringing back the old one, as an incentive to not simply dispose of them. Reuse as the umbrella term for redistribution and recycling is the second sub-concept of the R-concepts. While both brands redistribute their clothes second hand, only Nudie Jeans co supports post-consumer recycling projects. Reduce as an active way of diminishing the ecological footprint (usage of water, way of transportation, considerations regarding the planning process and less textile waste) is adopted by Filippa K and Nudie Jeans co and the every day awareness shall help the concept to become part of the company’s mind-set. However, the handling of the concepts differ in that sense that Filippa K, basically, wants to tackle these issues bottom-up and therefore discuss a lot in the head quarter. Disposal, yet, is still a vast debated topic and will need more discussion on all levels of the supply chain (Morgan and Birtwistle 2009; Fletcher 2008: 95ff.; Hawley 2011: 143ff.).

Under the major concept of social responsibility I could assemble the concept of transparency. This has two different peculiarities depending on which brand to focus on. Nudie Jeans co interprets transparency in the way of providing all information on suppliers, working conditions including addresses and maps to customers and publishing these on the website. This enables the active consumer of today and other stakeholders to read into the brand and its (sustainability) efforts and to observe the company’s contacts. Finally, this shall lead to public legitimacy. Filippa K, on the other hand, zooms in the relation to its suppliers. The objective is to choose key suppliers with which – if so wished – business relations will be assessed and then extended. The relations shall be based on long-term development to build solid, honest and loyal partnerships.

The two first pillars (and main concepts) use to be summarised in CSR policies. Koźlowski et al define CSR principles clearly as a medium to establish and incorporate sustainability within apparel design and the fashion industry (ibid.: 33). However, regarding the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, “CSR is increasingly viewed, not only as making good business sense but also contributing to the long-term prosperity of companies and ultimately its survival. Being a good neighbour and showing that you care on the one hand and being a successful business on the other hand, are flip sides of the same coin” (Holme and Watts 2000: 3). This leads us to the third pillar, which I called commercial advancement.

Talking about the commercial advancement, I want to highlight two main concepts, which I came across during the mapping and analysis of the material collection. The first is the concept of sustainable sensoriality by Clark (2008: 440). The perception of a garment be-
ing “mine” and sharing experiences and a tradition with it prolongs its disposal. This approach can furthermore be related to the concept of the fetish (Nyfeler 2012). The unique value of an owned fashion piece brings in the connotation of luxury. Nudie Jeans co reach this by selling second skins, Filippa K emphasises the quality standard and the favourite piece momentum, which shall introduce a certain relation between consumer and commodity. While the mechanisms of luxury lead to a prolonged lifetime of the fashion piece, it is thus not the pecuniary value, which counts. Rather, it’s the empathetic and emotional momentum connected to the commodity yet affecting the perception of this new and sustainable concept of aesthetics. The other concept, which shall be explained in detail is the one called slow fashion. For Filippa K, slow fashion simply means long-living and long-lasting design, quality and style, including aspects such as material, cut and colour. Nudie Jeans co, nonetheless, perceives this challenge not only by means of emphasising the evergreen character of the jeans. Far more, they hark back to traditional ways of manufacture and let its denim produce by old shutter looms. While at Filippa K slow fashion is interpreted as a creational and material challenge, Nudie Jeans co handles the question with a rather technical or even traditional understanding.

Finally, some of these concepts endorse public or regulatory legitimacy, other delay disposal or diminish the ecological footprint of the company. However, all these concepts derive from the thought of a maintainable handling of resources but still being able to cope with the fashion industry’s challenges. Only talking about ethical correct and politically sober produced garments does not guarantee sales. The brands, according to Tungate, “must ensure that their designs are as irreproachable as their ethics” (2005: 242). The third button effect, a concept by Esty does not legitimate the brands demeanour, whereas third parties and consumer satisfaction endorse brand legitimacy regulatory and publicly, respectively (2009: 129).

The application of these concepts occurs in different ways due to the concept’s different roles within the companies’ sustainability profile. As I could show, Nudie Jeans co and Filippa K aim for selling a good and proper product; a product which is sold successively due to the brand’s reputation of taking responsibility for processes along the production chain and the fact, that they also act alike. Nevertheless, Nudie Jeans co does front mainly the current “Repair, Reuse! Reduce”-campaign, whereas Filippa K communicates majorly through their corporate values Style, Simplicity and Quality. Nudie Jeans co and Filippa K strive for imbuing the whole business and embracing processes from A to Z with their will to become more sustainable. Sustainability, according to Esty, is equal to the cultivation of the management of
a brand’s resources, including natural, human or financial resources (2009: 3). He illustrated successfully while simultaneously proposing several solutions, that sustainability is not only about protection of the planet but also of the company (ibid.: 4). After having done my research, I claim, that financial sustainability is at least as present in the corporate mind-set as a good profitability strategy. Both philosophies, Nudie Jeans co’s and Filippa K’s, centre the product and build around this artefact their reputation and success. Central to the branding strategy is the communication between the brand and its stakeholders/ customers.

Nowadays, the fashion system requires a new way how the individual-society relation is comprehended and motivated. Since the 20th century, fashion discourses involve also ethics (see as an example how subcultural communities counter-move the hegemonic culture/ tradition of ethics, Hebdige 1987). Today, ethics of production and consumption are increasingly examined. Several stakeholder groups who are involved in the fashion business, are interested in how fashion is produced and consumed. To understand the three pillars of sustainability, ecology, social responsibility and commercial advancement, as a matter with which the general fashion system will be confronted with in the near (or far) future can change the scene of fashion and how it is positioned in culture and society. From the epistemological point of view, fashion is changing its role in the organisation of both knowledge and power in our society. This means, that knowledge is easily spread through different channels, empowers and equips the active consumers of these days with knowledge they did not have and could not reach before. On the other hand, workers are increasingly empowered to take a stand for their rights. Consequently, hierarchies melt, relations become bidirectional or even relationships as communication and information flows become reformatted and finally, the former shape of the production chain only keeps its frame by following up the garment’s production process. The rest of the formation and organisation of the business around the fashion piece, however, looses its linearity and shifts towards a networked entity where the production is the purpose, but branding is the reason and the legitimacy the cause. Therefore, I claim, the fashion system is obliged to change its ways of conceiving knowledge and power, which could be called the politics of fashion, but also aesthetics. Slow fashion is quality and style, which I consider a new and sustainable aesthetic including the time component, slow versus fast, durability versus ephemerality. This nexus of time and fashion incorporates the new and sustainable aesthetic, which is similar to the mechanisms of luxury. Tradition, which tells a story, a relationship is alike a fetish and thus ensures a long lifetime and appropriate high quality frame a possible definition of luxury. Luxury, in this sense, is a matter of symbolic and eternal value,
which can unify real and symbolic economy. Contrarily to Simmel (1901), who states that fashion is exclusive and distinct, I claim that the fashion structure nowadays includes all groups of interested stakeholders and distinct is only the productions cycle of processes. In her definition, Thomas points at the profound inclusiveness of sustainability concerning all actions and stakeholders (2008: 536). I even claim that the profound inclusiveness sways further power relations, structures of knowledge and the perception of fashion. The anatomy of the fashion system, however, is fuzzy and obscure. Under these circumstances, my research calls for a reformulation: Today, fashion is much more inclusive and ambiguous and often the fashion system functions in a multidirectional and interrelated way regarding its politics, economy and culture.
5. References

5.1. Literature

(2013): How long will your jeans last?


Wrap Report (2012): Valuing our clothing. The true cost of how we design, use and dispose of clothing in the UK. Waste and Resource Action Program (Wrap).

5.2. Internet


5.3. Interviews

All interviews are recorded and available in audio-format.

Lundén, Sten, interviewed Monday, 2013-01-21
Isaksson, Sarah, interviewed Wednesday, 2013-01-23
Lang, Sandya, interviewed Wednesday 2013-01-30
Frank, Peter, interviewed Wednesday, 2013-01-30
Stenberg, Finn, interviewed, Wednesday, 2013-01-30
Muljadi, Christina, interviewed Friday, 2013-02-01
Larsson, Elin (2013:a), interviewed Wednesday, 2013-02-06

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Figure 5-7: Cotton harvest in Turkey (X), storage of cotton (X; X), available at http://www.nudiejeans.com/100organic/ [accessed 2013-01-15].
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Figure 16: The final recycled rug with its unique structure and colour, measuring 1,5x2 metres, available at http://www.nudiejeans.com/recycled-rugs/ [accessed 2013-05-09]
7. Appendices

7.1 Questionnaire

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<td><strong>Brand/Location:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Interviewee:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Department:</strong></td>
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**General corpus**

1. Would you label Filippa K a sustainable brand?
   1.1 Why? (motivation)

2. What does sustainability mean in a broader, more general manner (e.g. general industry, everyday life, society)?

3. What does sustainability mean in your business (fashion)?

4. And what does it mean particularly in your department [name of department]?

5. What does it mean in other departments? [list of departments]
   5.1 How they contribute to the sustainability goal:

6. What is your department’s particular contribution to the brand’s overall goal?

7. Could you name some goals your department already reached?
   7.1 What could be improved within Filippa K and within the department?
       - short-notice
       - long-term
   7.3 What is the very specific “part” (process, material, technique…) where you have to put most focus onto to not get away from the sustainable objectives?

8. Are there any objections from the state in regards to sustainability questions?
   8.1 Regarding which concerns?

**Specific department questions**

9. What are your brand core values?

   → **THE CONCEPTS**
   *(I have identified some concepts supporting and fostering your image and profiling as a sustainable brand.)*

10. Would you like to add something?

11. Which concepts are discussed in your department?
   11.1 Which are part of your work?
   11.2 Where is your department located within these concepts?
7.2 Concept sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE CONCEPTS</th>
<th>[Nudie Jeans]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CREATING LONG-LASTING DENIM/ FASHION</td>
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<td>PRODUCING ALL-ORGANIC</td>
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<td>TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR HUMANS AND ENVIRONMENT</td>
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<td>OPENING UP THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROLONG A GARMENT’S LIFETIME</td>
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<td>(re-use project: Bring your jean, get you new ones cheaper)</td>
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<tr>
<th>THE CONCEPTS</th>
<th>[Filippa K]</th>
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<tr>
<td>CREATING LONG-LASTING FASHION</td>
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<td>SELLING RESPECTABLE QUALITY</td>
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<td>BEING SIMPLE</td>
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<td>TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR HUMANS AND ENVIRONMENT</td>
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<td>(re-use project: Second hand in Stockholm)</td>
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## 7.3 Overview Interviews

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<th>Brand/responsible person</th>
<th>Supply chain/logistics</th>
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<th>Product development</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Filippa K</strong></td>
<td>Sten Lundén, <a href="mailto:Sten.lunden@filippa-k.se">Sten.lunden@filippa-k.se</a> Monday, 2013-01-21</td>
<td>Elin Larsson <a href="mailto:Elin.larsson@filippa-k.se">Elin.larsson@filippa-k.se</a> While intern</td>
<td>Sarah Isaksson (design) <a href="mailto:Sarah.isaksson@filippa-k.se">Sarah.isaksson@filippa-k.se</a> Wednesday, 2013-01-23 Christina Muljadi (sourcing) <a href="mailto:Christina.muljadi@filippa-k.se">Christina.muljadi@filippa-k.se</a> Friday 2013-02-01</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nudie Jeans</strong></td>
<td>Finn Stenberg <a href="mailto:finn@nudiejeans.com">finn@nudiejeans.com</a> Wednesday, 2013-01-30</td>
<td>Sandya Lang <a href="mailto:sandya@nudiejeans.com">sandya@nudiejeans.com</a> Wednesday, 2013-01-30</td>
<td>Peter Frank <a href="mailto:peter@nudiejeans.com">peter@nudiejeans.com</a> Wednesday, 2013-01-30</td>
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