Consumer attitude towards Corporate Social Responsibility within the fast fashion industry

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Todays’ consumer society has forced companies to work towards a sustainable society. Consumers consider a company’s work with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as necessary and expect companies to work ethically. However, fast fashion consumers’ also demand a low price and rapid changes in trends. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to understand fast fashion consumers’ attitude towards, and the importance of, companies working with CSR. By conducting a questionnaire on Cubus’ customers in Uppsala, information has been gained in order to investigate this phenomenon. The results show that the majority of the respondents have a positive attitude towards CSR, but were not a deciding factor when shopping at Cubus. From this study, we can draw the conclusions that even though the majority of the respondents had a positive attitude towards CSR, other factors were of greater importance. This validates the phenomenon about fast fashion customers’ demand for a low price and fast changing trends.

Key words: Consumer attitude, Corporate Social Responsibility, fast fashion
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1. Introduction

In this chapter, the background for the thesis will be introduced, which includes the concept of fast fashion, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and several researchers’ views on consumer attitude. The problem discussion will also be presented as well as the research question and research purpose.

1.1 Background

The fashion industry, CSR and consumer attitude

Today’s society could be considered as a consumer society (Martínez, 2015, p. xv). Scientists have long pointed out the consequences of consuming and using our resources in the amount and speed that we do. It is therefore important to find new ways to make our consumption sustainable, for example within the fashion industry. Due to rapid changes in trends, fashion consumers purchase and dispose clothes fast, which can have devastating consequences for the environment. This fast consuming phenomenon is known as fast fashion. Fast fashion is defined as the process of creating a collection of garments produced in a limited edition with a short lifecycle, to a low price with a high turnover (Byun & Sternquist, 2008). This phenomenon has emerged due to different reasons. Since the fashion industry today is more competitive, retailers must find new ways to attract their customers as well as new ones. One way to do so is by meeting and adapting to the customers’ demands for new trends at a low price. Due to the rapid changes in customers’ lifestyle, and their eagerness to follow new as well as the ever-changing trends, forces clothing companies to focus on adapting to this phenomenon (Gabrielli, Baghi & Codeluppi, 2013). Within the fashion industry, the speed of designing and producing new clothes is “normal” and it can take up to 12 months for a garment to be created before it sells in stores (Christopher, Lowson & Peck, 2004). However, the fast fashion industry is considered to have a faster creating process. Studies indicate that the concept of fast fashion has had a hand in creating more “seasons” than before. Instead of planned, seasonal collections, the collections are now smaller and occur more often, which has also increased the speed of the production process. (Guercini, 2001; Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Bruce & Daly, 2006). The fashion retailer Zara, considered the leader of the fast fashion market, can have as many as 20 seasons per year (Christopher et al., 2004).
While we live in a society of consumption, many consumers still find importance in companies behaving ethically. One reason is that consumers today expect companies to work with social activities (Epstein-Reeves, 2010). According to Creyer (1997), consumers also think it is of importance that companies behave ethically. This is something consumers expect of companies during the purchase decision (Creyer, 1997). One way for companies to meet these expectations is through engaging in activities related to the concept called Social Corporate Responsibility (CSR). According to the European Commission, CSR is defined as “companies taking responsibility for their impact on society” (European Commission, 2015). This responsibility is of importance for both the company and the society. This also means that companies should do more than what is expected of them or forced by law (European Commission, 2015). Since customers expect companies to work with CSR, researches about the relationship between CSR and consumer attitude have been made. Customers tend to have a more positive attitude towards a company in the long run, when their demands for CSR work are met or when they can identify themselves with a company’s CSR work (Hur, Kim & Woo, 2013; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). CSR could also be used in other ways, for example as a marketing tool (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). The authors also argue that CSR work can increase a company’s market value by increasing customer satisfaction. Pointed out by Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010), it is also important that companies are able to communicate their CSR work to their customers. The reason for this is to avoid customers misinterpreting or becoming skeptical towards the CSR work (Du et al., 2010). Companies who convey clear CSR communication tend to have customers that are more positive and open-minded towards the company’s CSR work. This is also due to the customers being aware of the company’s CSR motives. However, if customers lack knowledge about the company's CSR work, it could lead to them not responding to the initiatives done by the company. Increasing the knowledge and awareness amongst the customers is therefore of interest and importance for a company (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Two prominent researchers within the consumer attitude and behavior field are Fishbein and Ajzen. Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) argues that when a person’s view about a topic is created, the components attitudes, beliefs and intentions are equally important. According to Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), asking for a person’s opinion could be used as a basis when measuring an attitude of a person. It is not only the person’s attitude that affects the behavior but also intentions and beliefs (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).
1.2 Problem discussion

Fast fashion consumers’ demand for fast, cheap and trendy clothes while maintaining their expectations of companies working ethically has in turn caused a friction in the industry. Despite the several positive effects for companies working with CSR, this can also have a negative effect. Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) argue that customers are more sensitive towards CSR information that is negative. According to Grankvist (2012), the sole purpose of some companies working with CSR is to increase their profit. In such situations, the aim for the company is not to contribute to society or to meet their customer’s expectations but to use it as a promotion strategy (McWilliams, Siegel and Wright, 2006). As a result, this can have a negative effect on customers’ attitude towards a company. Under certain circumstances, customers’ likeliness to purchase a product from a company can decrease (Grankvist, 2012). It is therefore imperative that companies increase the understanding of their work in order to decrease this potential skepticism amongst their customers. Companies can therefore present their CSR reports and thus create transparency in how they work (McWilliams et al., 2006).

As previously mentioned, a clothing company’s work with CSR can lead to the customers having a positive and/or a negative view of the company. As far as we know, this issue has not yet been widely discussed within the Nordic countries. In order to increase the understanding of consumers’ attitude related to CSR, we have decided to investigate this topic further. It would also be of interest to investigate how important CSR is for the fast fashion customers and if they are likely to re-evaluate their attitude. Based on this, our research question is:

- What is fast fashion consumers’ attitude on CSR?

1.3 Research purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to get an understanding of consumers’ attitude towards, and the importance of, companies working with CSR within the fast fashion industry. To fulfill the purpose, we will investigate fast fashion customers’ attitude towards CSR, the importance of CSR in relation to other factors and if the customers are likely to re-evaluate their attitude towards a company that works with CSR. This will be done by conducting a descriptive study and performing a questionnaire on consumers in a fast fashion company.
2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the components of Corporate Social Responsibility will be explained in order to give the reader an understanding of the concept. Also, an explanation of how consumers’ attitudes are formed, and their attitude about ethical buying, will be made.

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

According to Carroll (1999), the modern era of the concept of CSR emerged in the 1950s but has been developing for many years before that and still is. There are different ways to define CSR. Researchers have, for a long time, been trying to find one answer to this question but have not yet found one unified definition. In an article written by Dahlsrud (2008), the author has analyzed 37 different definitions in order to bring clarity to this confusion. When investigating this problem, the author found that though different definitions exist, they are relatively congruent which makes the “problem” regarding several definitions not so problematic after all. In addition, Dahlsrud states that the many definitions are necessary because they are used in different contexts (Dahlsrud, 2008).

One way to explain the components of CSR is done by Carroll (1991). He has divided CSR into a pyramid that consists of four different areas of responsibility: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic. The economic responsibility implicates that it is in every company’s interest to make profit and to have it as a motive. The legal responsibility means that companies must follow existing laws and regulations in their daily work. The ethical responsibility refers to the performed actions not regulated by law, but should be in a company’s interest to perform. It is normally standards or norms that consumers consider as just or fair. The philanthropic responsibility refers to a company’s actions performed in order to live up to society’s expectations. Carroll states that the ethical and philanthropic responsibility is similar. Even though the pyramid is divided into different areas of responsibilities, Carroll emphasize the importance of using all the areas together in order to be able to use CSR to its fully extent (Carroll, 1991).

Another prominent researcher within CSR is Per Grankvist whose interpretation of the components made him divide it into three areas of responsibility; economic, environmental and social responsibility (Grankvist, 2012, pp. 9-19). His interpretation of the economic
component is similar to Carroll’s definition. The environmental responsibility requires companies to make choices that do not affect the environment’s resources in a negative way in the long run. The social responsibility means that a company should run their business in a way so that they are considered being a good member of the society. They should also take their employees’ health and wellbeing into consideration. This includes employees in the company, subcontractors, business partners as well as consumers (Grankvist, 2012).

2.2 Attitudes and the Tricomponent Attitude Model

The concept of CSR is viewed upon differently and consumers have different attitudes towards the concept. According to Hansen, Kanuk and Schiffman (2008, p. 254), “an attitude is a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to a given object.” (Hansen et al., 2008, p. 254). An attitude is assessed by researchers by asking the consumers questions or by making conclusions regarding consumers’ behavior (Hansen et al., 2008, p. 256). There are several theories regarding attitude formation and attitude change. One leading theory regarding consumer attitude is called the Tricomponent Attitude Model (Hansen et al., 2008, p. 256). This model consists of three components used when an attitude is formed: the affective, cognitive and conative component. These components are intertwined and if one changes, the other components might change or be effected as well (Triandis, 1971, cited in Mason, 2005, pp. 34-35; Hansen et al., 2008 p. 256).

![Figure 2. The Tricomponent Attitude Model (Hansen et al., 2008)](image-url)
The first component is the cognitive. That is when a person’s initial thoughts and beliefs determine the attitude towards a certain topic or object. These thoughts and beliefs can be the result of stereotypes or general opinions. For example, when a person hears the word “child labor”, the person might automatically associate the word with bad working conditions and low salary. If one has never heard the word, or does not know the meaning of it, the person’s attitude is neither positive nor negative (Triandis, 1971, cited in Mason, 2005, pp. 34-35; Hansen et al., 2008, p. 257).

The second component is the affective. This component is when the person has feelings towards a specific topic or object (Triandis, 1971, cited in Mason, 2005, pp. 34-35). A person can feel hate towards a company that uses child labor because they feel that child labor is bad. Therefore, when the person hears the word child labor, he/she feels anger or hate.

The third and final component of the Tricompotent Attitude Model is the conative. This is the step where the person makes a behavioral action (Triandis, 1971, cited in Mason, 2005, pp. 34-35; Hansen et al., 2008 p. 256). This action could for example be “I will boycott companies that use child labor”. This means that the person is acting, or taking a stand, from the attitude they have towards a topic.

2.3 Consumer Attitude to Ethical Buying

The researchers Carrigan and Attalla (2001) have developed a theory regarding consumers’ attitude when they are buying ethical products or services. To create a positive attitude towards ethical purchases, it is important to create awareness of the ethical product, and that the consumer has an ethical purchase intention. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) wrote a research paper where they created an attitude model. The model explains the consumer attitude towards ethical awareness, ethical purchases and the purchase intentions. The model consists of four types of consumer attitude categories: the oblivious, the confused and uncertain, the cynical and disinterested and the caring and ethical.
In the first category, the oblivious, consumers are purchasing either ethically or not. They are not aware of their actions since they are lacking knowledge about ethical purchasing and about the company’s view on ethical issues. Therefore, this group of consumers has low ethical purchase intentions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

The second category includes the consumers that are confused and uncertain. These consumers are the ones that want to purchase ethically but get confused about the information they are receiving from the company. They sometimes perceive that the company is not consistent with their ethical behavior, resulting in skepticism and confusion. According to Carrigan and Attalla (2001), companies would gain a lot by providing more information to these types of consumers in order to raise awareness regarding the company’s ethical behavior. These consumers are easily persuaded and therefore, clearer communication regarding the company’s ethical behavior would be very beneficial. This group of consumers has a low ethical awareness but high ethical purchasing intentions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

The third category is the cynical and disinterested consumers. These consumers are not affected by the information regarding the company’s ethical behavior. They are not convinced if the company is genuine or not. These consumers would only purchase ethical products if it would not affect their choice of product and brand. That is why it is important for the companies to create easy and practical ways to purchase ethical products. One example is that the company clearly can state what actions they are taking towards ethical behavior. They can for example focus on specific marketing policies that emphasize their ethical and CSR work in order to distinguish themselves from others. If they implement these ideas, they can attract
the cynical consumer. This group of consumers has a high ethical awareness but a low ethical purchase intention (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001).

The final and last category is the one with the caring and ethical consumers that willingly discriminate unethical products. This means that they chose to not purchase a product that is unethical or a product from an unethical company. However, it is important to note that these consumers are selective in their choices. The important factor for companies is to emphasize and focus on their most important question and deliver the message to the consumer in a genuine way. It is also important that the consumer has the same view on ethical buying as the company. This group of consumers has a high ethical awareness and high ethical purchase intentions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001).

2.4 Summary of the theoretical framework

This theoretical framework will be the foundation for the further analysis. From this point on, the definition of CSR will be a combination of Carroll’s and Grankvist’s definitions, where the focus will be on the ethical and social components. This is due to existing research stating that consumers now expect companies to take ethical and social responsibility (Epstein-Reeves, 2010; Creyer, 1997). As mentioned earlier, the ethical responsibility refers to the performed actions that are not regulated by law, but should be in the company’s interest to perform (Carroll, 1991). The social responsibility is, as stated earlier, that a company should run their business in a way that they are being considered as a good member of the society (Grankvist, 2012).

The reason for using the Tricomponent Attitude Model is to get an understanding for fast fashion customers’ attitude towards companies working with CSR. Based on the investigated customers’ knowledge about CSR, the model will be used to identify how the customers’ attitude has been formed.

The model of Consumer Attitude to Ethical Buying will be used to categorize the customers by their attitude on fashion companies’ CSR work. This model will be used to measure the customers’ attitude to, and their intentions for, ethical buying. This model, combined with the Tricomponent Attitude Model, will be used to identify if the customers are likely to re-
evaluate their attitude. The theoretical framework will lay the structure for the analysis as following: consumer attitude and CSR (5.1), the importance of CSR in relation to other factors (5.2) and re-evaluation of attitude (5.3).
3. Research methodology

In this chapter, the research method will be presented, followed by the selection of company and respondents. Also, an explanation of how the research was conducted and a table of the operationalized questions used in the questionnaire will be presented. Lastly, there will be a section emphasizing problems with the chosen method.

3.1 Research method

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012, pp.158-164), a qualitative, quantitative or multiple research methods designs can be used when conducting a study. A quantitative research method has mainly been used when undertaking this study since it is a technique used when collecting data (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 161). Initially, a focus group was conducted in order to identify the main attributes related to fast fashion consumption. This was followed by a pilot survey on Cubus’ customers. In order to get further information about Cubus, a pre-study with employers at Cubus was conducted. Finally, a questionnaire was conducted in order to answer our research question.

Focus group
Initially, we conducted a focus group study in order to identify and get an understanding for what attributes a regular clothing consumer find important when purchasing a product. The motive for our focus group study was to provide a solid selection of attributes for question 5 in our questionnaire. Using focus groups is advantageous when wanting to discuss a particular topic and the participants are selected due to them being able to relate to this topic (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 403). This study was performed on the 18th of April 2015 with a group of 6 participants and us as moderators. A typical focus group often consists of 4 up to 12 participants (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 400). We found out which attributes were important when buying a product, choosing a company to shop at and which attributes that were not important. The questions asked can be found in appendix 1.

Pilot survey
After the focus group study, we chose to compose a pilot survey in order to make necessary corrections before conducting the final survey. The pilot survey took place on the 20th April 2015 in Cubus store in Uppsala center. The intended audience (Cubus’ customers) was asked
twelve questions. We chose to go directly to the store since we thought it was the most efficient way to access Cubus’ customers. Saunders et al., (2012, p. 451) claim that performing a pilot survey is highly beneficial, especially when choosing to conduct a questionnaire as a method for collecting data. It helps us to get an understanding of for example how long the questionnaire takes to complete and if the instructions and questions are clear. We realized that some questions were misinterpreted and others were similar to each other. We then rephrased the ambiguous questions and removed and/or put together the similar ones. Even though a few changes were made, the structure of the questionnaire remained the same. However, it was shortened down to eleven questions instead of twelve.

**Qualitative pre-study**

In order to gain more information about how Cubus work with CSR, we conducted a qualitative pre-study. This was made with a store manager of Cubus in Uppsala, the Communications Manager at Cubus, the Marketing Coordinator at Cubus in Sweden and the CSR Manager at the Varner Group in Norway.

The store manager at Cubus in Uppsala center, Maria Ehrengren, gave us an insight on how they work with CSR. This was a face-to-face interview on the 25th of April 2015. We also had an interview through e-mail with Cubus’ Communications Manager, Julie Bragli Eckhardt on the 29th of April 2015. She gave us information regarding the Cubus’ production process. These qualitative pre-study interviews can be categorized as informant interviews. An informant interview is a qualitative pre-study research method where the interviewer interviews an informant who has knowledge about a certain subject (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 375). We were also in contact with Ulricha Ivares, Marketing Coordinator at Cubus Sweden, and Vegardh Krohn Neverlien, CSR Manager at the Varner Group in Norway through e-mail on the 20th of April 2015. Ulricha provided us with general information about Cubus in Sweden. We took contact with Vegardh because we wanted to gain more information about how the Varner Group and Cubus work with issues related to CSR. He sent us the Ethical Trading Report for 2014, which describe the work done during the last year. Additional information about the interviews can be found in appendix 2.

**Quantitative research method**

In order to fulfill our research purpose, which was to get an understanding of consumers’ attitude towards, and the importance of, companies working with CSR within the fashion
industry, we have chosen to use a quantitative, descriptive research method. A descriptive research method is often used when investigating attitudes or opinions. We chose to collect data using a questionnaire, which is normally used when conducting a study using a descriptive research (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 419). The questionnaire had the design of a self-completed questionnaire, which is completed by the respondent. Since we delivered and collected it ourselves, it is considered as a delivery and collection questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 419-421).

We conducted the study and handed out the questionnaire at two occasions. The first study was performed on the 6th of May 2015 in Gränby, Uppsala. The study took two hours to complete and we received 22 filled out questionnaires. The second study was in Uppsala City center on the 13th of May 2015. This study also took approximately two hours and we received 18 filled out questionnaires. The questionnaire can be found in the appendix 3.

3.2 Selection of company and respondents

Selection of company

We chose to investigate the Norwegian company Cubus’ customers and not fast fashion consumers in general. One reason for this was due to the restricted timeframe. If we would have had more time for our thesis, we could have examined several companies within the fast fashion industry in order to detect differences and/or similarities between companies. The reason for choosing Cubus was that Cubus is considered as an international and well known fast fashion company. In addition, before conducting the survey, we did not know how Cubus work with CSR. Therefore, we thought it would be interesting to learn about it and investigate what other consumers knew, or did not know, about it. Another reason for choosing Cubus was that, according to the Sustainable Brand Index for Sweden 2014, Cubus was found on the 219th place out of 242. This indicates that consumers do not think highly of Cubus as a “good CSR-brand” and this too made it interesting to investigate further (Sustainable Brand Index, 2014).

Cubus is a company owned by The Varner Group, a corporate group that owns several brands within the fashion industry. Cubus is described as a store for men, women and children, offering trendy clothes and meeting every customer’s demands (The Varner Group, 2015). In
total, there are 325 Cubus stores around Europe, and in Sweden they will soon open their 75th store (Ivares, 2015). For The Varner Group, it is important to take great corporate social responsibility. Cubus are working with CSR in different ways. They are for example only trading ethically and collaborate with UNICEF (The Varner Group, 2015; Cubus, 2015). In addition, they have launched a collection in their stores called “Organic”. The clothes in this collection are produced by ecological cotton (Cubus, 2015). As a fashion and retail company, it is important for Cubus to make sure that the process of producing clothes is done in a correct way. In order to control this, Cubus has developed ethical guidelines (Code of Conduct). Everyone involved in the production process is obliged to follow the guidelines set up, but at the same time also have certain rights, such as the right to safe and good working conditions. The suppliers have to respect laws and regulations, make sure they have reasonable salary and working conditions and are not allowed to use any form of forced or child labor. Cubus do not own any factories and because of this, they perform regular controls to make sure the rules set up are being followed. Since 2003, Cubus is a part of the Ethical Trading Initiative - Norway (ETI) and present each year an Ethical Trading Report on how they work with ethical trade within Cubus (Neverlien, 2015). In addition to Cubus’ work and awareness of ethical trading, the company is collaborating with UNICEF, the world’s lead agency for children, since 2006 (Cubus, 2015). The contribution to UNICEF is financial. On the one hand, UNICEF can decide where the need is greatest and where the money should go. On the other hand, Cubus invest in communities where they have their suppliers, for example in Bangladesh. From the collaboration with UNICEF, Cubus is helping victims of child labor and trafficking (Cubus, 2015).

Since Cubus is a well-established clothing company, it is assumed that they are economically stable and are taking both economic and legal responsibility. Therefore, these factors will not be investigated further. We will also not focus on the philanthropic and the environmental aspects. This is due to the fact that we thought it would be too many aspects to investigate. Also, the philanthropic aspect is similar to the ethical and thus we did not find it necessary to investigate both. Therefore, as previously mentioned, the thesis will focus on the social and ethical aspects related to CSR.

Selection of respondents for the focus group

The information from the focus group was only used in one of eleven questions in our final questionnaire. Because of this, we were not strict when selecting the respondents for the focus
group. According to Saunders et al., (2012, p. 451) it is preferable to perform a short pilot survey, or interview, where the participants are friends and family rather than having no pilot study done at all. Therefore, we decided to conduct a focus group with our friends since it was most time efficient. The number of participants was six people, four women and two men. We did not take the gender of the participants into account since the main criteria was that they were a regular fast fashion consumer.

Selection of respondents for the pilot study
The selection of respondents in the pilot survey was first and foremost Cubus’ existing customers. The most efficient way to locate these customers was in one of Cubus’ stores. The total number of respondents was twelve, eleven women and one man. The customers were chosen randomly and we primarily asked the customers who entered the store. According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 451), ten is the least preferable number of respondents when conducting a pilot survey as a student.

Selection of respondents for the qualitative pre-study
The selection of respondents in the qualitative pre-study was done mainly by their expertise. In a large company, such as the Varner Group, there are usually different departments where the managers have an area of responsibility. Due to lack of information on the Varner Group and Cubus’ webpage, we contacted the customer service in order to get into contact with their managers. The reason for choosing the store manager Maria as the interviewee was because of the favorable location of the store (Uppsala), and her expertise and experience as a store manager. Since the store is located in the city center, it was convenient for us to meet and interview Maria whenever she preferred.

Selection of respondents for the questionnaire
The selection for the quantitative study was similar to the respondents of the pilot study but to a greater extent. The respondents in the quantitative study were chosen using a convenience sampling technique, which is a type of non-probability sampling. This means that the respondents were not selected randomly but were available and suitable for the investigation (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 291). We decided to perform the survey on existing and potential customers at Cubus since they are most engaged in the questions we are asking. The survey was done in Cubus’ stores since this was the easiest way to get access to Cubus’ customers. We asked the customers that were present in the store and therefore, the respondents were
chosen using a convenience sampling (Saunders et al., 2012 p. 291). The sample size was not a representation of Cubus’ entire population, since the number and selection of respondents were chosen randomly. There were a total of 40 respondents in our questionnaire, 22 people in Gränby and 18 in Uppsala City center. The respondents consisted of 36 women and 4 men and the age ranged from 15 to 69. We asked approximately 70 individuals to be a part of the questionnaire and 40 of them participated. This gives us a response rate of 57,1%, which means the external drop off rate is 42,9%. According to Trost (2012, p.147), a normal response rate is 50-80%.
3.3 Operationalization

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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Since there are multiple definitions of CSR, we have chosen to only focus on two components. We used Grankvist’s definition of social responsibility and Carroll’s definition of ethical responsibility.</td>
<td>When asking about CSR, the term ”social and ethical issues” is used instead of Corporate Social Responsibility. This is to make it easier for the respondents to understand.</td>
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| General Questions             | These questions were asked to get general information about the respondents.                                                                                                                                  | - State gender  
- State age  
- State occupation                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Lou & Bhattacharya (2006)     | These questions were asked in order to identify if there is a connection between the respondents’ view on Cubus in general and their view on CSR.                                                        | - What is your general opinion about Cubus?  
- What is your opinion on a clothing brand that takes ethical/social responsibility?                                                                                                             |
| Consumer Attitude to Ethical Buying | These questions were asked to get an understanding for the consumers’ awareness of Cubus’ CSR work, getting to know the customers’ opinions, how likely they are to be affected by the CSR work and how likely they are to re-evaluate their opinions. The reason for asking these questions was so we are able to categorize the consumers according to the different groups from the model. | - What do you think about clothing brands that present things they do to take ethical/social responsibility?  
- Are you aware of Cubus’ work with social/ethical questions?  
- How likely is it that a company that show their work with ethical/social question will affect you?  
- How likely is it for you to re-evaluate your attitude towards Cubus knowing that they work with ethical/social question? |
| The Tricomponent Attitude Model | These questions were asked to understand the respondents’ attitude towards companies that work with CSR. By asking the respondents if it is important/not important and good/bad that companies work with CSR, we get an understanding of their attitudes. | - What is your opinion on a clothing brand that takes ethical/social responsibility?  
- Do you think it is important for a clothing company to take ethical/social responsibility?                                                                                                           |
| Consumer Attitude to Ethical Buying and the Tricomponent Attitude Model | This question was asked to find out what attributes are important when the customers shop at Cubus and to find out how the customers rate the CSR attribute in relation to other attributes. This helps us categorize the respondents into the consumer categories as well as finding out their attitude towards CSR. | - What is important for you when you choose to shop at Cubus? Rank the most important factor 1, the next 2 and so on. Give the least important factor 5. Use every number only once. |
3.4 Method criticism

Focus group
Saunders et al., (2012, p. 401) explain that in a group, there are often a few participants that dominate the conversation and others that are being more introverted. This can lead to the participants being affected by each other’s answers and opinion. This is something we considered when we performed the focus group study but we did not encounter any issues regarding this.

Pilot study
One aspect worth mentioning is that the pilot study was conducted in a store with only a women’s department. Because of this, there was only one man and eleven women as respondents in the pilot study. Since Cubus’ regular customers are women, men and children, it could have been of importance to have a greater diversity.

Qualitative pre-study
When interviewing employees from a company, they can sometimes be biased which is something we took into consideration during the entire process for the thesis. When possible, we have double-checked the given information to see if it was in fact correct.

Questionnaire
Saunders et al., (2012, p. 291) point out that studies using convenience sampling are often not given high credibility. We can therefore only draw conclusions and generalize the sample investigated in this thesis, not about Cubus’ customers in general. In hindsight, we believe it would have been good to have “I don’t know” as an alternative to all, or to a few, questions in the questionnaire. This was due to one respondent requested the alternative “I don’t know”.

A problem related to conducting questionnaires “on-the-spot” is that some respondents might feel uncomfortable and stressed when answering. This could lead to them responding inaccurate and at random just to finish the questionnaire quickly. Another problem regarding “on-the-spot” and delivery and collection of questionnaires is the increased probability of the respondents misinterpreting the questions. Instead, we could have used an interviewer-completed questionnaire where we could explain the questions if needed.
Since we did the survey in Uppsala, we can only draw conclusions about the investigated customers in Uppsala. If we would have conducted the study in a larger city, for example Stockholm, we probably would have received different answers. If we had conducted the study in both Uppsala and Stockholm, we could have been able to compare the result from the two cities.

3.5 Reliability and validity

In order to reduce the risk for inaccurate results or answers to a research question, there are two factors to focus on; reliability and validity. According to Saunders et al., (2012, p. 192), reliability is when the findings from a research is consistent when conducting the survey again at another occasion or by another researcher. Since the method for our investigation is explained in a simple and thorough way, it is possible for others to conduct our survey again. We have also attached all of our investigated material, which increases the reliability for our thesis and makes it possible to measure the same factor at another occasion. Since we performed a pilot study this also increased the reliability. We have both been present at every survey occasion, which eliminates the risk for misinterpreting the result. Contamination could decrease the reliability (Saunders et al. (2012 p. 420). In our study, a few respondents were talking to each other when filling out the questionnaire, which might have affected and/or contaminated the result. In addition, a few respondents forgot to answer the questions on the back of the questionnaire, decreasing the response rate. If we had conducted an interviewer-completed questionnaire instead of a deliver and collective questionnaire, we would have ensured ourselves that the respondent answered the entire questionnaire and is in fact whom we want to investigate (a customer at Cubus). This would have improved the reliability of our data (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 420).

Internal validity is when we measure what is intended to measure (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 193). Since we wanted to investigate and measure Cubus’ customers, performing the questionnaire on customers in Cubus’ stores strengthens the validity if the thesis. This investigation cannot draw any general conclusions, which decrease the external validity. Therefore, conducting a more extensive survey would have been better.
4. Results

In this chapter, the results from the empirical study will be presented in various diagrams. Due to the uneven distribution of gender and the respondents’ occupation, question 1 and 3 will not be presented or discussed any further in the thesis. In the survey, there were 40 respondents. Due to the fact that some questions were misinterpreted, the response rates are not the same on every question.

**Question 2: State your age.**

![Figure 3. Respondents’ age](image)

In question 2, there were 40 respondents. 10 were 20 years old or younger, 16 were between the ages of 21-30, 5 were between the age of 31-40 and 9 were 41 years old or older.

**Question 4: What is your general opinion about Cubus?**

![Figure 4. The respondents’ general opinion about Cubus](image)

In question 4, there were 40 respondents. As the diagram shows, the majority of the respondents’ general opinion about Cubus was positive since 24 out of 40 answered good/very good. 12 respondents answered that their opinion about Cubus was neutral and 5 answered bad/very bad.
Question 5: What decides when you choose to shop at Cubus? Rate the most important factor 1, the next 2 and so on. Give the least important factor a 5.

Figure 5. The respondents’ ratings of the five attributes

In question 5, there were 31 respondents. 9 respondents did not answer or misinterpreted this question and therefore, the internal drop-off rate was 29%. This diagram shows how the respondents have rated the five attributes. For example, 11 respondents gave the CSR factor a 5 and rated it as the least important factor.

Figure 6. Compiled chart of the total rating

The compiled chart shows the sum of the respondents’ ratings of each factor. For example, the sum of the factor style is calculated as $(2 \times 5) + (10 \times 4) + (6 \times 3) + (5 \times 2) + (8 \times 1) = 86$. Since style received the lowest calculated sum, 86, it is the most important factor for the respondents’ when they choose to shop at Cubus. The second most important factor was price, which had the sum 89. The least important factor was CSR since the total sum was 112.
Question 6: What is your view on a clothing company taking ethical/social responsibility?

Figure 7. The respondents’ view on a clothing company taking social/ethical responsibilities

In question 6, there were 36 respondents. 4 respondents did not answer this question and therefore, the internal drop-off rate was 10%. As the diagram shows, 25 respondents had a positive view towards a clothing company working with CSR. There were no respondents whose view was very bad. However, 2 respondents thought it was bad. 9 respondents were neutral to this question.

Question 7: Do you think it is important that a clothing company takes social/ethical responsibilities?

Figure 8. Importance of a clothing company taking social/ethical responsibilities

In question 7, there were 37 respondents. 3 respondents did not answer or misinterpreted this question and therefore, the internal drop-off rate was 7.5%. 29 respondents found it little important/important that a clothing company takes social/ethical responsibilities. 6 respondents were neutral to this matter and 2 respondents found it less important.
**Question 8:** What do you think of clothing companies that demonstrate their work with social/ethical issues?

![Bar chart showing respondents' view on clothing companies demonstrating their work with social/ethical issues.]

Figure 9. The respondents’ view on clothing companies demonstrating their work with social/ethical issues

In question 8, there were 37 respondents. 3 respondents did not answer or misinterpreted this question and therefore, the internal drop-off rate was 7.5%. 14 respondents found it to be less manipulative/manipulative and 10 respondents thought it was little genuine/genuine. 13 of the respondents chose to be neutral regarding this question.

**Question 9:** How likely is it that you will be influenced by a company that shows how they work with social/ethical issues?

![Bar chart showing respondents' likeliness to be influenced by a company that shows how they work with social/ethical issues.]

Figure 10. The respondents’ likeliness to be influenced by a company that shows how they work with social/ethical issues

In question 9, there were 37 respondents. 3 respondents did not answer or misinterpreted this question and therefore, the internal drop-off rate was 7.5%. 22 respondents were likely/very likely to be influenced by a company that shows how they work with social/ethical issues. 10 were neutral and 5 were not at all likely/not likely to be influenced.
**Question 10: Are you aware of Cubus’ work with social/ethical issues?**

![Figure 11. The respondents’ awareness of Cubus’ work with social/ethical issues](image)

In question 10, there were 37 respondents. 3 respondents did not answer or misinterpreted this question and therefore, the internal drop-off rate was 7.5%. 27 respondents were not aware of Cubus’ work with social/ethical issues and 10 respondents were aware. This means that almost 73% were not aware and 27% were aware of Cubus’ work with social/ethical issues.

**Question 11: How likely are you to re-evaluate your attitude towards Cubus based on how they work with social/ethical issues?**

![Figure 12. The respondents’ likeliness to re-evaluate their attitude towards Cubus based on how they work with social/ethical issues](image)

In question 11, there were 36 respondents. 4 respondents did not answer or misinterpreted this question and therefore, the internal drop-off rate was 10%. 10 respondents were likely/very likely to re-evaluate their attitude and 5 were not at all likely/not likely. However, a majority of 21 respondents were neutral to this matter
5. Analysis

In this chapter, the collected data from the empirical study will be analyzed based on the theoretical framework. As mentioned, no further comparison will be made regarding gender and occupation. From the theoretical framework, the analysis is divided into three parts. The structure of the analysis will be as following: consumer attitude and CSR (5.1), the importance of CSR in relation to other factors (5.2) and re-evaluation of attitude (5.3).

5.1 Consumer attitude and CSR

The respondents’ attitude

The result of the quantitative study shows that a majority of the investigated customers at Cubus thought it was good/very good and important/very important that clothing companies work with issues related to CSR. Their attitude towards CSR in general is therefore considered as positive. The survey showed that those respondents, who thought it was good and important that companies works with CSR, had a better view of Cubus in general. This could, according to Luo and Bhattacharya (2006), be due to the fact that thoughts about CSR can affect a consumers’ attitude towards a company (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). In our study, a positive attitude to CSR led to a more positive opinion about Cubus as a company. Also, according to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004), consumers tend to have a more positive image of a company when they are able to identify themselves with the company’s CSR-work. This could also be the reason for the respondents having a more positive opinion about Cubus in our study.

The attitude towards CSR amongst the majority of the respondents was positive, and this could be explained by the affective component in the Tricomponent Attitude Model. The affective component explains that the respondents have feelings towards a certain topic/object, in this case feelings towards CSR. However, several respondents answered that their opinion about CSR was neutral. This can be connected to the first component in the Tricomponent Attitude Model, the cognitive component. It explains how a person, who has no knowledge or information about a topic, often has neither a positive nor a negative attitude, i.e. a neutral standpoint (Hansen et al., 2008 p. 256).
The respondents’ awareness and attitude

The respondents who had a more positive view of Cubus in general were also aware of Cubus’ CSR work. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004), customer awareness is of importance for companies that want their customers to react to the CSR work. The majority of the respondents were not aware of Cubus’ work with CSR. The reasons for this could be many and one could be due to the lack of communication to the customers. According to Du et al., (2010), it is significant for a company to communicate their CSR work to their customers in order to avoid misinterpretation.

The lack of awareness amongst the respondents could also be due to lack of interest for how Cubus work with CSR. Uninterested consumers can be categorized as the oblivious ones (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). The oblivious consumers are the ones with no particular interest in ethical issues and will therefore not search for information on their own. If the problem is lack of communication, there is a large audience that can be attracted by improving the communication of CSR at Cubus; the confused and uncertain customers (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). Carrigan and Attalla (2001), emphasize the importance of clear communication and information from the company in order to attract consumers that have ethical buying intentions but are lacking knowledge and information.

When the respondents were asked what they think of companies showing how they work with CSR, most respondents answered that it was manipulative rather than genuine. Some of those who answered genuine also stated that they know that Cubus work with issues related to CSR. Many that answered manipulative stated that they did not know about Cubus’ work. The fact that many did not know about the work could be due to Cubus not having the transparency needed to make the customers aware (McWilliams et al., 2006). As McWilliams et al., (2006) also states, CSR could be interpreted as a publicity tool and not as a genuine way of making the society better. According to Luo and Bhattacharya (2006), if consumers interpret the CSR work as a marketing tool, this could make them think of it as manipulative and not genuine.

5.2 The importance of CSR in relation to other factors

Even though the attitude towards companies working with CSR was in general positive, this was not the most important factor when the customers chose to shop at Cubus. When
calculating the score of the rated attributes, it showed that the CSR attribute was of least importance for the respondents. The most important and second most important were style and price. However, there were a few respondents who rated the CSR attribute as most important or second most important. This can be connected to the category of the caring and ethical consumers since they highly value if the company works ethically and socially (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). The respondents who rated the CSR attribute highly, and were aware of Cubus work with CSR, could be categorized as the caring and ethical consumers. Within this category, it is assumed that consumers make purchases based on if a clothing item is produced by an ethical company or not. These respondents can rate the attribute highly because of the third component in the Tricomponent Attitude Model. This is when a customer makes a behavioral decision, in this case purchasing a clothing item, based on the company’s ethical stand (Hansen et al., 2008 p. 256).

This connection can also be made the other way around. A number of respondents that rated the CSR attribute as least important or second least important, were also the ones who were not aware of Cubus’ CSR work. Those respondents can be categorized as the oblivious consumers (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). This is due to the fact that they do not have the knowledge about CSR and therefore may not think CSR is important. The survey also showed that a number of respondents that rated the CSR attribute as least important, or second least important, considered work related to CSR as manipulative. These respondents can be considered as the cynical and disinterested consumers (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). They are the ones that are unconvinced if the company is genuine in their CSR work or not.

Since the CSR attribute was rated as least important, it is clear that other attributes determine if the respondents shop at Cubus or not. As mentioned, the attributes style and price were most and second most important. This can relate to the fast fashion phenomenon where the consumer demands and buys trendy clothes to a low price (Gabrielli et al., 2013).

5.3 Re-evaluation of attitude

When the respondents were asked if they were likely to be affected by a company and their work related to CSR, many respondents answered that they were likely/very likely to be affected. Since many were likely to re-evaluate their attitude, companies can attract those who
consider themselves as possible of re-evaluating their attitude. These respondents could have intention to shop ethically, but do not yet have the information. This group can be categorized as the confused and uncertain customers (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). Since they have a positive view on CSR but not the knowledge about how Cubus work with CSR, these consumers are the ones that Cubus should attract since they can be more easily convinced. In addition to this, in order to be able to make the respondents aware of how a company work, and give the customers an opportunity to re-evaluate their attitude, transparency is important according to McWilliams et al., (2006).

When asking if the respondents were likely to re-evaluate their attitude towards Cubus, most respondents answered that they were neutral. This indicates that the information the respondents have about Cubus’ work with CSR are not enough or that they do not have an opinion about it. The respondents who answered that they were likely to re-evaluate their attitude can be categorized as the confused and uncertain consumers. They are more prone towards re-evaluate their opinion about Cubus. However, even though some stated that they were likely to re-evaluate their attitude, this is not the only factor that leads to certain behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.15). This means that even though several respondents were likely to re-evaluate their attitude towards Cubus, positive or negative, this might not affect their behavior.
6. Discussion

In this chapter, the analyzed empirical results will be discussed and suggestions to further studies will be made.

The result of this investigation showed a general positive attitude towards a company’s CSR work. However, when deciding to make a purchase, the CSR attribute was rated as the least important. This could be due to the young age of the respondents in our investigation. They might not have the knowledge the adults have, and they might also be more concerned about the price and style of the clothing item. These results emphasize the problem within the fast fashion industry, which highlight the issue where consumers value a company’s CSR work, but other factors such as price and style determine a purchase. Companies of the fast fashion industry usually focus on the price and style of the clothes since the fast fashion consumer prioritizes these factors. Therefore, other aspects such as CSR work are often not prioritized.

One interesting factor we noticed was that many respondents thought of a company’s CSR work as manipulative and also answered that they did not know how Cubus work with CSR. We can interpret this as an indication that the information from Cubus does not go through to the customers, which in its turn can be a reason for the customers thinking of it as manipulative. Due to the fact that the respondents do not know how Cubus work, they become sceptic and consider it as manipulative. By increasing the transparency about how Cubus work, we think this could lead to the customers being aware of the CSR work done by Cubus and in addition, consider it as more genuine. We found that on one hand, the respondents stated that they were not aware of how Cubus work, but on the other hand they are likely to re-evaluate their attitude if a company shows how they work. This indicates that the customers want to know about the work. This too could be a reason for that Cubus should communicate their CSR work better.

This investigation showed that an attitude re-evaluation is possible based on how a company works with CSR. However, since we have not investigated if the customers’ re-evaluation is positive or negative, we cannot draw any conclusions regarding this. We think the respondents’ general attitude towards the company, could affect if the re-evaluation is positive or negative.
Even though consumers of the fast fashion industry have a positive attitude and outlook on CSR, we have not investigated, and therefore cannot prove, that the behavior will change. This would be interesting for others to investigate further. Since the majority of the respondents were likely to re-evaluate their attitude towards a company by how they work with CSR, it would also be interesting to investigate this further in order to see how, why and in what way consumers’ re-evaluation of attitude could be affected.
7. Conclusion

The research question for our thesis was: “What is fast fashion consumers attitude on CSR?”
In order to answer this question, we investigated fast fashion customers’ attitude towards CSR, the importance of CSR in relation to other factors and if the customers are likely to re-evaluate their attitude towards a company that works with CSR.

From the empirical results from our study, we can draw the conclusions that the investigated customers of Cubus have a positive attitude towards companies working with CSR since they find it good and important. Also, the majority of the investigated customers were likely to re-evaluate their attitude towards companies working with CSR. However, we draw the conclusion that the investigated customers find other factors more important and CSR is not the deciding factor for when they shop at Cubus. Factors that were more important were price and style, likely due to the fast fashion phenomenon were a low price and trends are of importance. This validates the phenomenon about fast fashion customers’ demand for a low price and fast changing trends.

The theoretical conclusion is:

1. Despite the positive attitude towards CSR amongst the majority of the respondents, several answered that they were neutral. Therefore, we believe that the Consumer Attitude to Ethical Buying Model needs to be elaborated and include a category for the neutral consumers. As the model is now, there is no middle ground between high/low and as we can see, a middle ground as an option is needed.
2. However, we believe that both the Tricomponent Attitude Model and the Consumer Attitude to Ethical Buying have helped us explain and understand the investigated customers’ attitude towards companies working with CSR.


*Sustainable Brand Insight*, 2014. “*Sustainable Brand Index 2014*”. Retrieved May 10, 2015, from
http://static1.squarespace.com/static/54c4e6dee4b0b73c478f6496/t/54fc14bce4b08f27bc89b842/1425806524150/Sustainable-Brand-Index-2014-ranking-Sverige.pdf

http://www.unicef.org/about/structure/

**Interviews**

Eckhardt, J., Communications Manager at Cubus, April 29, 2015, Cubus, Uppsala. E-mail interview.

Ehrengren, M., Store Manager at Cubus, Uppsala, April 25, 2015, Cubus, Uppsala. Personal interview.

Ivares, U., Marketing Coordinator at Cubus Sweden, April 20, 2015, Cubus, Uppsala. E-mail interview.

Neverlien, V., Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Varner Group, April 20, 2015, Varner Group, Uppsala. E-mail interview.
### Appendix 1: Focus Group Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Study</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which factors are important when you choose a company to buy clothes from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which factors are important when you buy a clothing item?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is not important when you buy a clothing item?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Summary of the qualitative pre study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julie Bragli Eckhardt</td>
<td>Communications Manager</td>
<td>Internet mediate through e-mail</td>
<td>29th of April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegardh Krohn Neverlien</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility Manager</td>
<td>Internet mediate through e-mail</td>
<td>20th of April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Ehrengren</td>
<td>Cubus’ Store Manager in Uppsala center</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview</td>
<td>25th of April 2015, Uppsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulricha Ivares</td>
<td>Marketing Coordinator at Cubus, Sweden</td>
<td>Internet mediate through e-mail</td>
<td>20th of April 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: The Final Survey

Enkätundersökning

Denna undersökning syftar till att ta reda på hur Cubus kunder ser på klädföretags och Cubus arbete kring social och etiska frågor (Corporate Social Responsibility). Exempel på detta kan vara samarbete med hjälpsorganisationer och goda arbetsförhållanden. Vänligen ringa in det svarsalternativ som stämmer bäst in på dig.

Fråga 1.
Ange kön:
Man  Kvinna  Vill ej definiera

Fråga 2.
Ange din ålder:_______

Fråga 3.
Ange din sysselsättning:

Studerande  Arbetslös  Arbetande  Pensionerad

Fråga 4.
Vad är din generella uppfattning om Cubus?
(Mycket dålig)  1  2  3  4  5 (Mycket bra)

Fråga 5.
Rangordna följande faktorer som avgör när du väljer att handla på Cubus.
Ange en siffra mellan 1-5 (1 mest viktig och 5 minst viktig). Använd bara en siffra en gång.

Pris:___
Kvalité:___
Att företaget arbetar socialt/etiskt:___
Utbud:___
Stil:___

VÄND BLAD →
Fråga 6.
Vad är din syn på att ett klädföretag tar etiskt/socialt ansvar?
(Mycket dåligt) 1 2 3 4 5 (Mycket bra)

Fråga 7.
Anser du att det är viktigt att ett klädföretag tar etiskt/socialt ansvar?
(Inte viktigt) 1 2 3 4 5 (Mycket viktigt)

Fråga 8.
Hur upplever du att klädföretagen visar de saker de gör för att ta etiskt/socialt ansvar?
(Manipulativt) 1 2 3 4 5 (Genuint)

Fråga 9.
Hur sannolikt är det att du blir påverkad av att ett företag visar hur de arbetar med etiska och sociala frågor?
(Inte alls troligt) 1 2 3 4 5 (Mycket troligt)

Fråga 10.
Känner du till att Cubus arbetar med sociala/etiska frågor?
Ja Nej

Fråga 11.
Hur sannolikt är det att du omvärderar din inställning till Cubus utifrån hur de arbetar med etiska/sociala frågor?
(Inte alls troligt) 1 2 3 4 5 (Mycket troligt)